

## **Fully Fund Children's Integrated Services (CIS)**

My name is Heather Wilson. I live in St. Albans Town and work for the Parent Child Center of Northwestern Counseling & Support Services (NCSS). I am here to speak about an important system of early childhood services in Vermont: Children's Integrated Services (CIS). CIS has been underfunded and we need an additional \$2.4 million to close the gap. We need to determine if this should come from the General Fund, or if Medicaid matching funds could be used.

CIS teams across each region ensure that families have access to services to not just solve the problems they face, but to thrive, in every sense of the word. We have expertise in child development, parenting, mental health, nursing, and early care and education. We are in homes, child care programs, classrooms, phones, and computer screens across the state.

The state of Vermont conducted its own study over a year ago. The actual cost of providing CIS was determined to be \$634 per client per month, but the state only offers us \$502. The need has only increased in the past year, despite the pandemic.

In Franklin/Grand Isle counties, my PCC staff moved all of their work to telehealth for months, while also remotely schooling their own children. They returned to home visiting, working in homes across the community, in June. The work in CIS has always involved the challenges of poverty, child abuse and neglect, substance use, and unmet mental health needs. We continue to see these types of needs becoming more severe, and each member of my team is serving more families than ever before. We see depression and anxiety rates are going up. We continue to help parents navigate the challenges of substance use. We try to help the children who are being expelled from child care for difficulties with coping. And we answer calls and texts from families that can't buy groceries or diapers or winter boots for their children. CIS is vital to addressing the growing needs of our pregnant/postpartum parents and our very young children, and we need your support to close our funding gap.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Heather Wilson  
Licensed Psychologist-Master  
Parent Child Center of Northwestern Counseling & Support Services  
St. Albans