

I am reaching out in hopes of talking about Vermont's childcare subsidy program (CCFA). Five of the seven Head Start programs in Vermont rely on childcare subsidy as one of the legs of their financial stools. The effects of the pandemic have dramatically reduced the reimbursement Head Start programs are receiving from that source. Due to the way the state administers CCFA, Vermont Head Start programs combined received \$950,000 less than anticipated between early March and the end of December 2020. For our Capstone Head Start program received roughly \$200,000 less than budgeted/anticipated for this same time frame.

There are two chief reasons for problem this. At the outset, child cares and Head Start program followed CDC guidelines for classroom size, and therefore reduced the number of children enrolled per class. In addition, several families enrolled with our program are not comfortable receiving in-person service at this time. However, we continue to provide virtual services to these families. Capstone continues to provide those families with activity packs, meals, virtual sessions with teachers, social services support all on a weekly basis. Additionally, families are provided with diapers/wipes and consultation with mental health consultants, dental hygienists, registered dietician, and registered nurse, all as needed.

Unfortunately, in Vermont the childcare subsidy does not support us in this service. Massachusetts and Rhode Island are currently reimbursing based on enrollment and states like California always reimburse based on enrollment.

For this reason, we are advocating a change from attendance-based reimbursement to enrollment-based reimbursement. This change would allow us to receive financial reimbursement for these services which families are requesting and receiving.

The Office of Head Start at the federal level has been very flexible regarding attendance obligations during the pandemic. Our Head Start receives financial subsidy for the number of children enrolled in the program whether they are in person or remote learners.

The state's decision not to subsidize remote services may cause financial risk, and potential failure for some Head Start programs due to this CCFA budgeting shortfall. It would be a shame to no longer have those federal dollars coming in to support the youngest, most vulnerable Vermonters to thrive and to be ready for the future.

Please let me know if you have any questions or need any clarification and thanks for all of the work that you do,

Christy

Christy Swenson

**Head Start Director
Capstone Community Action
20 Gable Place, Barre, VT 05641-4138
"Please visit us at: <http://www.capstonevt.org> or on Facebook at:**

<https://www.facebook.com/VTCommunityAction>"
(Direct Line) | (Cell) 1-802-622-4686
(Main Line) 1-802-479-1053 | (Fax) 1-802-479-5353

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