



Date: January 28, 2022
To: Chair Lyons and Members of the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare
From: Dr. Morgan Crossman, Executive Director, Building Bright Futures (BBF)
Re: BBF's role in supporting accountability for Vermont's Early Childhood System (Parent Child Center Network Example per discussion of S.91)

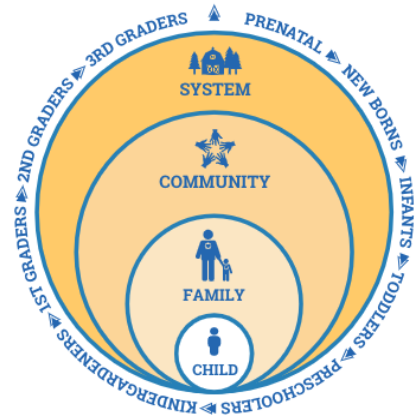
Executive Summary

- Building Bright Futures (BBF) is charged with maintaining and monitoring the vision and strategic plan for Vermont's early childhood system.
- There is no centralized place where data across all sectors is integrated and housed within or across State Agencies.
- BBF worked with over 450 partners within the State Advisory Council Network to identify indicators/data points to monitor outcomes and goals of the Vermont Early Childhood Action Plan (VECAP). We also hold partners accountable to the vision articulated.
- BBF developed Vermont's Early Childhood Data and Policy Center at Vermontkidsdata.org to centralize 40 indicators/data points across different domains of well-being and services (child development, education, health, basic needs, communities, etc.), many of which are presented through the State of Vermont's Children report annually.
- The Parent Child Center Network represents a private partner that provides data on the number of children/families served annually. They provide this data to contribute to Vermont's ability to monitor the VECAP, although it's not formally required.
- BBF can be instrumental in supporting the Government Accountability Committee, the Child Development Division, and other Agency leaders in developing strong performance measures aligned with the VECAP to ensure we're able to document the impact of programs, policy, and the overall early childhood system and consistently use data to inform decision-making.

Building Bright Futures' Role in Vermont's Early Childhood System

BBF is Vermont's early childhood public-private partnership charged under Title 33, Chapter 46 to serve as Vermont's Early Childhood State Advisory Council, the mechanism used to advise the Governor and legislature on the status of children in the prenatal period through age eight and their families. State statute charges BBF with maintaining and monitoring the vision and strategic plan for Vermont's Early Childhood System, and holding partners accountable to the vision articulated.

The [Vermont Early Childhood Action Plan](#) (VECAP) outlines the following vision: *Vermont aspires to realize the promise of each and every Vermont child by ensuring that the early childhood system is an integrated, continuous, comprehensive, high quality system of services that is equitable, accessible and will improve outcomes for children in the prenatal period to age eight and their families.* The following 4 goals were developed with input from over 450 early childhood public and private partners through the State Advisory Council Network to align with the 4 layers of the ecological systems model: child, family, community, and system:



Goal 4: THE EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM WILL BE INTEGRATED, WELL-RESOURCED, AND DATA INFORMED

Goal 3: CHILDREN HAVE ACCESS TO HIGH QUALITY OPPORTUNITIES THAT MEET THEIR NEEDS

Goal 2: FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES PLAY A LEADING ROLE IN CHILDREN’S WELL-BEING

Goal 1: ALL CHILDREN HAVE A HEALTHY START

Monitoring & Accountability through the VECAP

In order to know whether Vermont has been successful in improving outcomes across the early childhood system, indicators have been identified at each of the 4 layers of the system to monitor progress over time: child, family, community and system. One critical note is that there is no centralized place where data across all sectors is integrated and housed within or across State Agencies. To meet the need until a formal state integrated data system is created, we developed Vermont’s Early Childhood Data and Policy Center at Vermontkidsdata.org where BBF has centralized over 40 indicators or data points in a data dashboard to monitor our strategic plan across different domains of well-being and services (child development, education, health, basic needs, communities, etc.), which we also present through the State of Vermont’s Children report annually. To centralize this data, we partner with data stewards across all of the agencies, departments and divisions that support children and families (AOE, CDD/CIS, DMH, ESD, FSD, MCH, DCF, etc.), alongside private partners (PCCs, Head Start Directors, Let’s Grow Kids, Hunger Free Vermont, Education Development Center, etc.) and pulling national data, to compile and make data publicly available. This data is then featured in the State of Vermont’s Children report and in a data dashboard within Vermont’s Early Childhood Data and Policy Center. Of note, we are in the process of updating and uploading this year’s data into the dashboard, thus multiple indicators may read “data and visualization coming soon”.

BBF consistently reviews and presents this data to inform priority setting and recommendations at every level of the State Advisory Council Network (12 Regional Councils, 7 VECAP Committees, and the State Advisory Council). Decision-makers, including the Governor, the Administration, and the legislature review this data to inform financial, programmatic, and policy decisions.

BBF’s Partnership with the Parent Child Center Network

The Parent Child Center Network represents an example of the private entities we partner with to document the impact of the early childhood system for children and families. The former President of the PCC Network, Amy Johnson, serves as an engaged, voting member of the State Advisory Council. In addition, members of the PCC Network serve as active members of their respective Regional Councils and VECAP Committees. The PCC Network were active participants throughout the creation of the VECAP.

The work of the PCC Network clearly aligns with Goals 1 and 3 of the VECAP. Annually, we reach out to the PCC Network to identify the total number of children/families served through their network as one



indicator to monitor Goal 1 and 3 of the VECAP, specifically within Objectives 1.1., 1.3, 3.1, and 3.3. Currently, the PCCs are not required to report this data to BBF but have agreed to provide it annually to support their ability to document their impact in the early childhood system.

Opportunities for Continuous Quality Improvement on Monitoring the VECAP

The number of children served across sectors is only one type of indicator to show the impact of a program or policy. Strong performance measures aligned with the VECAP are critical to the success of the early childhood system. Once established, it is just as important that the data is shared with BBF so we can review and centralize the indicators and develop visuals/graphs in order to monitor the system through the VECAP data dashboard and the State of Vermont's Children. Centralizing this data allows Vermont to examine the collective impact of the resources, services, and policies in place; identify gaps and opportunities to align efforts and reduce duplication; and use this data to inform future policy and financial decisions.

BBF can also be instrumental in supporting the Government Accountability Committee, CDD, and other Agency leaders in developing strong performance measures aligned with the VECAP to ensure we're able to document the impact of programs, policy, and the overall early childhood system. Developing and refining performance measures over time will only strengthen our ability to document the impact of Vermont's early childhood system, identify challenges and areas for improvement through an annual continuous quality improvement cycle, and allow us to truly know whether we've created a system that meets the needs of children and families under the age of eight.

More broadly, because there is not centralized data collection mechanism or system currently in place, there's an important opportunity to do the following:

- Implementing continuous quality improvement (CQI) cycles for evaluating the early childhood system
- Develop standard measurements for documenting program impacts
- Developing common definitions
- Using BBF's VECAP Data and Evaluation Committee to support the development and alignment of performance measures for the early childhood system
- Developing performance measures focused on equity and determining how to best disaggregate data for marginalized populations and subpopulations.

Thank you for continuing to keep children and families at the center of our decision-making.

Sincerely,

Morgan K. Crossman, Ph.D., M.A.

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