

SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS GRANTS (SAG)

Stabilizing Care and Education for Young Children with Disabilities and Special Health Needs

BACKGROUND

The State of Vermont has for many years offered Special Accommodations Grants (SAGs) to early care and learning providers to assist with the expense of caring for children with special needs. Most often SAGs pay for a one-to-one aide to support children with special health needs, such as a feeding tube, or children on the autism spectrum, or with behavioral issues who need extra support to stay safe in the early learning setting.

With this extra support, children are then able to participate and benefit from high-quality early care and learning, and in turn, their parents are able to work. Without the support, these children are often not able to stay in child care settings, facing expulsion and/or exclusion from programs.

The SAG grants have always been in high demand across the state, and \$300,000 in annual funding is usually depleted by February or March of each school year, leaving some children without critical supports.

PROPOSAL

To better meet current and expected needs, we request that the state fund SAGs in the amount of \$500,000, an increase of \$200,000 from the amount allocated in the Governor's Recommended and the House FY22 Budget.

This investment will give children with special needs increased access to early childhood education, support the work of early childhood educators and CIS providers, and is in keeping with the state's goal to provide truly integrated services for families.

Further, we ask that funding for SAGs be placed in a separate line item in the budget, as opposed to being embedded in the overall CCFAP line item (603500). Creating an individual line item will allow providers, legislators, and administrators more carefully follow program usage and allow for greater transparency and accountability.

SENATE REQUEST

- Increase funding by \$200,000 for FY22
- Create a unique line item in the budget for SAGs

LEAD ORGANIZATIONS

- Child Care Resource
- Vermont Family Network
- Winston Prouty Center for Child & Family Development