



Voices
for Vermont's Children

Issue Areas & 2024 Policy Priorities

Economic Justice

Voices emphasizes systemic investments to address the root causes of economic disparities. We believe the basic needs of children and youth are best ensured through the equitable distribution of cash resources.

2024 Priorities: *Increasing Reach Up grants to meet children's basic needs; investing in 'baby bonds' for low-income children; Direct Cash Transfers for foster youth; expansion of the Vermont Child Tax Credit and EITC; preservation of SSI benefits for children in foster care.*

Child and Youth Safety

Voices approaches the fundamental inequities at the root of our child welfare system in partnership with the families and communities most impacted by family separation. We center the creation of supportive structures that are accountable and responsive to the unique and evolving needs of families.

2024 Priorities: *Creation of an updated DCF Data System; ensuring youth who were in state custody have access to their records; increasing the minimum age for juvenile delinquency proceedings; banning restraint, seclusion, and solitary confinement across settings; accommodating youth voice in court custody decisions.*

Education Equity

Voices supports the creation of fair funding models for public education and systemic policies that ensure equitable, culturally and developmentally just educational experiences for every child.

2024 Priorities: *Investment in community schools as a comprehensive strategy for tackling inequities while building on community strengths; full and fair funding of schools; banning harmful restraints and seclusion addressing the root causes of bullying and harassment and its impacts on student mental health; youth participation on school boards; funded youth equity work in schools.*

Health Equity

Voices considers health policy both in terms of access to person-centered health care as well as attention to the social determinants of health. We are committed to the passage of public health policies that dismantle structural inequities and build systems that support the wellbeing of every child and youth.

2024 Priorities: *Advocating for Medicaid coverage for community doulas, developing a network of community advocates for oral health equity, expanding access to mental health and behavioral health support and recovery services.*

Environmental Justice

Voices is dedicated to cultivating collective investment in responsive, sustainable solutions that safeguard every child's right to a livable planet and center the knowledge and leadership of those communities most directly impacted by longstanding environmental and climate destruction and injustice. At this time, Voices primary engagement in this area is through support for the efforts of partner organizations committed to taking a just, intersectional, and child-oriented approach to tackling some of the most consuming and existential challenges of our time.

Youth Voice

For too long, policy solutions to issues impacting child wellbeing have been designed without the benefit of the voices and experiences of children and youth themselves. As a part of our effort to center the leadership of those communities most impacted by inequitable systems, Voices is working intentionally to respond to and support existing youth-led efforts across the state. In addition to centering the efforts of organizations like the [Vermont Student Anti-Racism Network](#), we prioritize policies that promote the inclusion of youth voices in the structures and institutions impacting their lives.

Contact:

Amy Rose, Policy Director

amy@voicesforvtkids.org
802-229-6377 (message line)
www.voicesforvtkids.org

Our Values

Just Transformation

We are committed to the transformative work of naming and understanding the roots of injustice so we can work towards equity. Transformation is multi-level and happens from the roots up. We prioritize relational engagement with communities and partners. *How* we reach our goals is just as important as reaching our goals, because policy change may be vulnerable if not built on a strong relational base.

Belonging

Voices is committed to fostering community by building trust through listening and learning; sharing resources, holding space for different experiences, ways of knowing and perspectives; and by centering equity.

Integrity

Voices will align our actions with our values and be transparent about decision-making. We are guided by compassion, conviction, and respect.

Courage

Voices is willing to challenge dominant power structures and our own assumptions, and to highlight contradictions occurring both internally and externally between stated intentions and actual impact.

Building Power and Power Sharing

Voices is working toward understanding the breadth and depth of its organizational power and privilege and how to use it and share it.

Curiosity

We are attuned to the continuously changing possibilities of our work, and its impact on people and our environment. We consider the lessons of the past, the lived experiences of the present, and emerging perspectives as we collectively create a future where every young person thrives.