



# Building Bright Futures Role in Vermont's Early Childhood System | Act 76 Monitoring & Accountability

Presentation to House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development  
Dr. Morgan Crossman, Executive Director; Anna Brouillette, Policy and Program Director

January 23, 2025

# VERMONT'S EARLY CHILDHOOD STATE ADVISORY COUNCIL

## MISSION

To improve the well-being of each and every child and family in Vermont by using evidence to inform policy and bringing voices together to discuss critical challenges and problem solve.

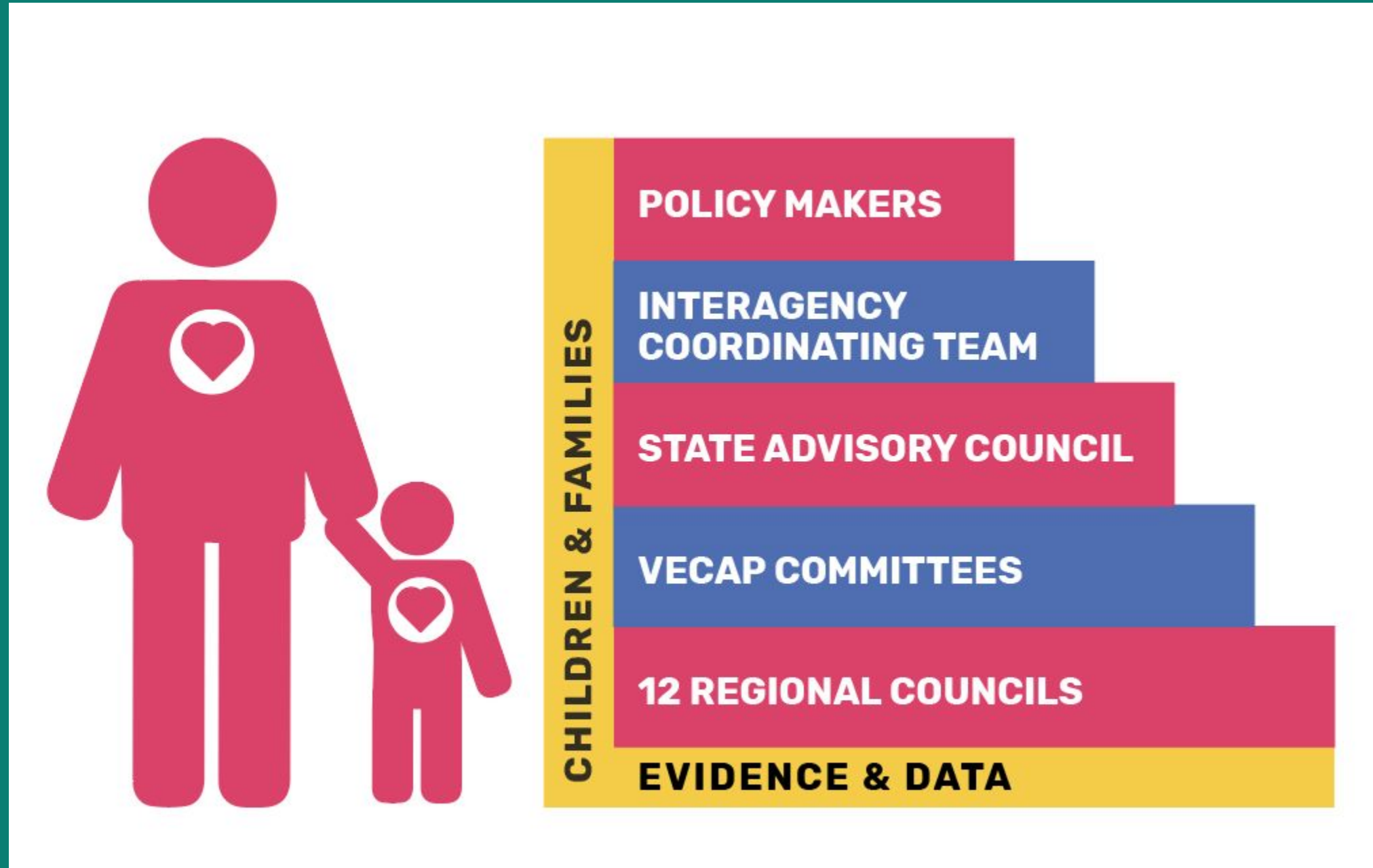


## VISION

BBF maintains the vision and strategic plan for Vermont's Early Childhood System. Vermont's vision for the Early Childhood system is to be an integrated continuum of comprehensive, high quality services that is equitable and accessible and will improve outcomes for each and every child in the prenatal period to age eight and their family in Vermont.



# Building Bright Futures Early Childhood Infrastructure and 450+ Person Network



The Building Bright Futures State Advisory Council and network infrastructure is charged by Act 104/Title 33, Chapter 46 to use evidence and data to monitor the system of services and provide the mechanism to support accountability.





# Vermont's Early Childhood State Advisory Council

January 2025



## Public Members

\*Ilisa Stalberg, Vermont Department of Health, MCH  
 \*Renee Kelly; Head Start Collaboration Office  
 Janet McLaughlin, DCF Child Development Division  
 Jessica Vintinner, Agency of Commerce and Community Development  
 Cheryle Wilcox; Department of Mental Health  
 Monica Ogelby, Agency of Human Services, Secretary's Office  
 Zoie Saunders, Agency of Education

## Public Non-Voting Members

Monica Hutt, Chief Prevention Officer, Gov's Office  
 Miranda Gray, Deputy Commissioner, Economic Services  
 Carlie Thibault, Quality Assurance Administrator, Family Services

## Legislative Members

+Rep. Jessica Brumsted, Vermont House of Representatives  
 +Sen. Ruth Hardy, Vermont Senate

## At-Large Members

\* Flor Diaz Smith; Vermont School Boards Association  
 \* Rebecca Webb; Barre Unified Union School District  
 Libby Daghlian, Parent Representative  
 Debra Hartswick, Retired Pediatrician  
 Amber Hewston, Parent Representative  
 Carol Lang-Godin, Parent Child Center Network  
 Sharon Harrington, Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children  
 Erica McLaughlin, Vermont Principals' Association  
 Kiona Baez Heath, Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence  
 \*Christy Swenson, Capstone Community Action/Head Start  
 Xusana Davis; Office of Racial Equity  
 Danielle Lindley Mitchell, Washington County Mental Health Services  
 Eddie Gale, A. D. Henderson Foundation  
 Dimitri Garder, Business Leader

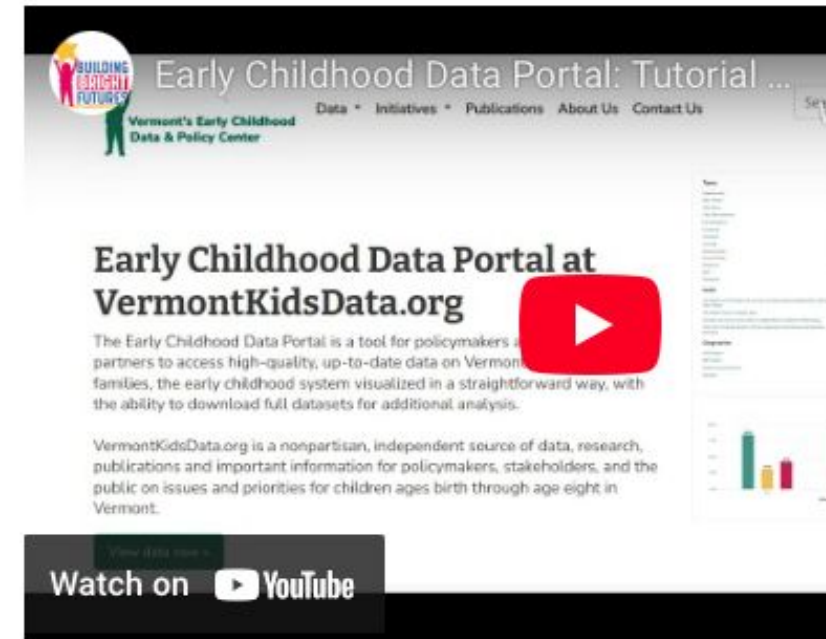
\*Executive Board denoted with an asterisk, Updates forthcoming denoted with a +



# Vermont's Early Childhood Data and Policy Center

## How to Use the Portal

1. Scroll down on this page, then click on a topic, VECAP goal, or geography on the left. Of note—geographic data may not be in the visualization, but rather in the full downloadable dataset.
2. Select an indicator to review.
3. View the data, with the opportunity to download the full dataset if desired.
4. Click on the title for narrative context and the data source.
5. Scroll back to the top to review a different indicator for a more complete picture of the early childhood sector.



- **DATA:** A data portal, National and Vermont-specific datasets, data spotlights, and fact sheets
- **POLICY:** Early Childhood Policy updates, SAC Network recommendations, and BBF Legislative Testimony
- **PUBLICATIONS:** Reports and publications from BBF, agency, community and national partners, recorded research presentations, webinars, and Early Childhood Grand Rounds

### Topics

#### Basic Needs

- Challenging Childhood Experiences
- Child Care
- Child Development
- Demographics
- Economics
- Education

### Indicators / Basic Needs

#### Cost of Living

- Children Receiving Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP) Bene
- Children Living in Poverty (Vermont)
- Households with Children Spending 30% or More of Their Income on Hous
- Birthing Parents without Paid Parental Leave
- Children Served by the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program
- Wage Benchmarks



# 2025 Policy Recommendations

- The 2025 Policy Recommendations include priorities like:
  - Enacting best practices statewide for elevating the voices of families and community members
  - Investing to ensure families have access to safe and secure housing in the immediate term and long-term
  - Supporting families, children, staff, and providers navigating the child welfare system by investing in system improvements, like the CCWIS
  - Investing to ensure inclusion and meet social-emotional health needs in early education and afterschool programs
  - And many more: see the [handout on policy recommendations](#)



# Act 76 Monitoring



- Building Bright Futures, is charged with monitoring Act 76 and is tracking both **implementation and impacts** related to the law's significant changes to and investments in Vermont's child care system
- In order to do this well, BBF **collaborates with a wide range of partners** including state agencies, Vermont's federal delegation, community partners, early childhood educators, and families

# Act 76 Implementation in 2024



Implementation Progress: Since our previous annual report on Act 76 monitoring, many key elements of Act 76 were implemented. Some of these include:

- CCFAP eligibility increased to 575% of the Federal Poverty Level (**now the highest threshold for child care assistance in the country**) and copayments eliminated for families up to 175% FPL
- Implementation of the primary funding mechanism of Act 76, a 0.44% payroll tax and 0.11% self-employment tax
- Launch of the Child Care Quality and Capacity Incentive Program
- Increased reimbursement rates available to programs through CCFAP by 35% (December 2023) and by 50% of the difference between registered family child care rates and licensed program rates for Family Child Care Programs





# Implementation and System Successes and Challenges in 2024

## Implementation Successes in 2024

- CDD's intentional review and update of policies related to CCFAP
- Progress towards improving technical and data infrastructure
- CDD's strong commitment to community and partner feedback.

## Implementation and System Challenges in 2024

- Ongoing workforce shortages
- Concerns over the transition to enrollment-based reimbursement
- Limited outreach among vulnerable populations
- Continued uncertainty regarding the rate cap, and
- The expansive charge of the Prekindergarten Education Implementation Committee.



# The Prekindergarten Education Implementation Committee



The PEIC was formed to support the potential expansion of the universal pre-K program by 2026. Over 16 months, the committee engaged partners, compiled data, and issued a final report with four recommendations, including:

- Maintaining benefits for 3-year-olds
- Expanding access for 4-year-olds
- Commissioning a report on pupil weighting, and
- Reviewing the methodology for updating the rate for non-school-based programs



# Strengths and Challenges Related to the PEIC



## Strengths of the work of the PEIC:

- Strong facilitation
- Data-driven decision-making
- Committed members

## Challenges of the work of the PEIC:

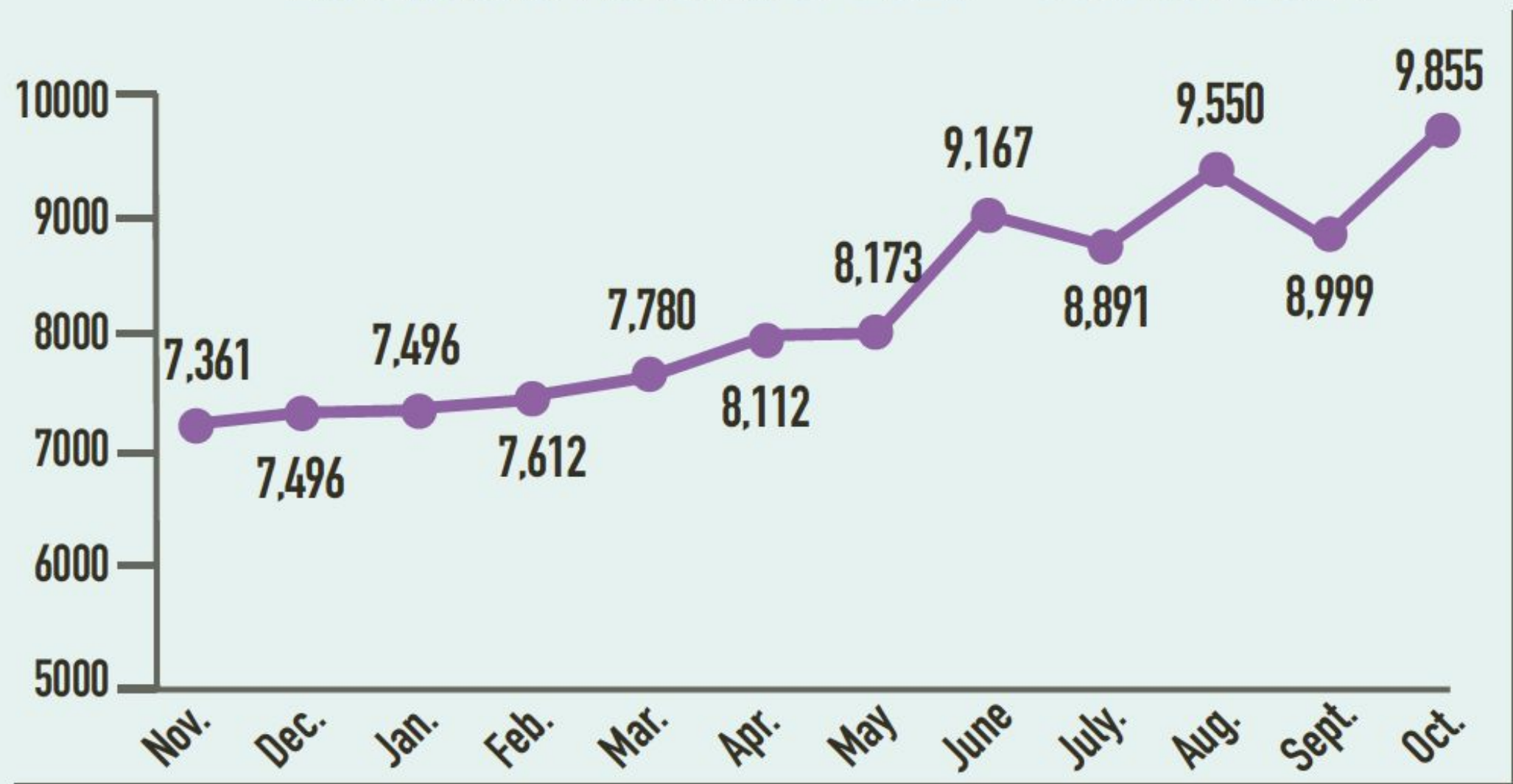
- Unrealistic timeline
- Insufficient data systems
- Leadership transitions
- Evolving political priorities

**The PEIC's challenges highlight the need for strengthened data systems to inform pre-K policy and accountability.**



# Indicators to Watch on Child Care Access and Affordability

Child Care Financial Assistance Program Enrollment November 2023 - October 2024<sup>3</sup>



- 170 more infant slots in 2024
- ~550 families at 175% FPL no longer have a copay
- 1,256 families above 400% now enrolled in CCFAP
- 1,500 online CCFAP applications submitted since launch (as of November 14, 2024)

# Takeaways from 2024 Monitoring of Act 76



- 2024 was a significant year for implementing the historic investments and policy changes of Act 76.
- Early data and sentiment from families and the early childhood field suggests that the law is beginning to have the types of impacts that were intended;
  - More families in Vermont are receiving assistance paying for child care
  - Programs are receiving higher rates to care for children
  - More child care programs are opening than at this time last year
  - Families are applying for child care via the new online application in droves.
- The Child Development Division administered a volume of program changes previously unimaginable and did so with very few reported challenges and delays.

