

Please support the Parent Child Center Network's request for \$500,000 from the Tobacco Settlement Fund to support activities and strategies to reduce tobacco use among pregnant persons and prevent exposure among young children living in households with smokers.



The Vermont Parent Child Center Network (VPCCN) requests \$500,000 from the Tobacco Settlement fund to be distributed to the 15 Parent Child Centers (PCC's) through the Integrated Grant to serve families with young children prenatal to age 8 throughout the State to implement a range of smoking and vaping cessation, health education and prevention activities to:

- ✓ Reduce the number of pregnant and parenting adults who use tobacco products,
- ✓ Prevent parents and other household members from future smoking and vaping, and
- ✓ Protect children from the detrimental effects of secondhand smoke in the home, and in places where they learn and play.



Vermont's 15 Parent Child Centers (PCCs) build ongoing partnerships and trusting relationships with families by providing their 8 Core Services to support parents and give children the best possible start. **With this additional funding, PCCs can integrate tobacco and vaping prevention services, health education, and referrals to evidence-based cessation programs into their 8 Core Services.**

The Dangers of Tobacco Use in Vermont

While there has been some progress in recent years, cigarette use continues to be a major health hazard for adults, pregnant persons, teens and young children. While overall rates are declining in all 50 states, Vermont remains among the highest in the nation. 13.1% of all live births in Vermont were affected by cigarette use (PQC-VT Perinatal Public Health Summary Report 2017-2021, December 2023).

Smoking before or during pregnancy can cause serious health problems for both pregnant person and baby. Secondhand smoke exposure is harmful during pregnancy and after. Negative health consequences include lower birthweight, preterm delivery, higher risk for SIDS, higher risk for ear infections, lung infections and decreased lung function. *Many parents are under the false belief that vaping is a safe alternative, however, research shows that the by-products of e-cigarettes contain chemicals that are detrimental to young children.*



Tobacco use is more prevalent in adults without college degrees, not living with a partner or spouse, having lower annual household incomes, covered by Medicaid or uninsured (compared to those with private insurance) or disabled—demographic groups served by Vermont's PCCs.

Success in quitting and remaining smoke free is more likely among people who have social support and encouragement. Parents who learn about and adopt healthy living habits also experience better outcomes. PCCs offer a range of programs for parents to learn about nutrition, enjoy outdoor activities with their children, meet other parents and build social connections—all activities that can reduce tobacco use and support behavioral changes.

Vermont's Parent Child Centers: Strategies for Reaching Families

Smoking cessation, prevention and education activities will be embedded in the *Eight Core Services* (described below) offered by all 15 Centers. Last year PCCs served over 18,000 children and 17,000 parents. With cigarette smoking rates among Vermont adults at over 13% and vaping at 6%, PCCs can potentially reach 3400 parents and protect 3200 children from the dangers of smoking.

8 Core Services of Parent Child Centers	Tobacco Settlement Fund Strategies
<p>Home Visiting <i>Visits to the home by trained family workers to support and strengthen families' health, wellbeing, parenting skills, social connections, and ability to address stressors.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ PCC Family Support Workers develop trusting relationships and provide referrals to cessation programs, education around secondhand smoke, and resources for coping without tobacco. ✓ Parents will learn strategies to reduce exposure such as not smoking inside or in the car. ✓ Training will be provided to Home Visitors.
<p>Early Childhood Services <i>Developmentally appropriate, inclusive childcare on-site or in collaboration with other providers.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ All families will be screened for smoking and other substance use. ✓ Smoking cessation resources and referrals and prevention education can be offered through training and counseling.
<p>Parent Education <i>Supportive, practical and empowering information to assist families in understanding and coping with a range of parenting issues.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ PCC parent educators will be trained to offer and will offer to families information on health effects; referrals to cessation programs, how to keep homes smoke-free, and protect their kids. ✓ Parents will learn about stress reduction and coping strategies that provide alternatives to tobacco and other substance use. ✓ Parents who face mental health challenges will continue to be provided with referrals. ✓ Playgroups and parent-child activities will enable parents to learn healthy living habits, and the connection will be made that these activities are alternatives to tobacco use. ✓ Car seat education programs will incorporate education on the dangers of smoking in vehicles. ✓ Parents who are smokers or live with smokers will be educated on safe distances and how to create smoke-free spaces – including how to talk with family and other household members and visitors about their goals. ✓ Parents will learn how to talk to children in an age-appropriate way about the dangers of smoking.
<p>Parent Support Groups <i>Opportunities for families with common experiences to gain peer support and develop social connections.</i></p>	
<p>Playgroups <i>Opportunities for parents and children to come together on a regular basis for social connections, healthy activities, peer support and resource sharing.</i></p>	
<p>Concrete Supports <i>Immediate needs are addressed to support families with food, necessities, and other material needs to overcome short-term challenges.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Financial support and incentives such as gift cards can be provided to parents to enroll in and complete cessation efforts including replacement or cleaning of smoke damaged household items, detailing cars, and replacing child car seats to remove smoke odors.
<p>Information and Referral <i>PCCs make referrals to resources, government benefits and services for families.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ PCC's will provide information and make referrals to smoking cessation programs.
<p>Community Development <i>PCCs are organizers and contributors to community events and lead educational and outreach activities. Local PCCs and the State Network collaborate with other Vermont child-family organizations.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The Network and individual PCCs will work with State and local nonprofit and government partners to reach parents, including WIC (Women, Infants and Children) clinics, Vermont Blueprint for Health, Learning Together programs for teen parents, and others. ✓ PCC's will engage their Parent Advisory Councils in developing outreach strategies.



www.vtparentchildcenternetwork.org

Ellen Amstutz, Director
ellen@vpccn.org / 917-733-1178