



Building Bright Futures Role in Vermont's Early Childhood System

Presentation to Senate Committee on Education
Dr. Morgan Crossman, Executive Director

March 13, 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.

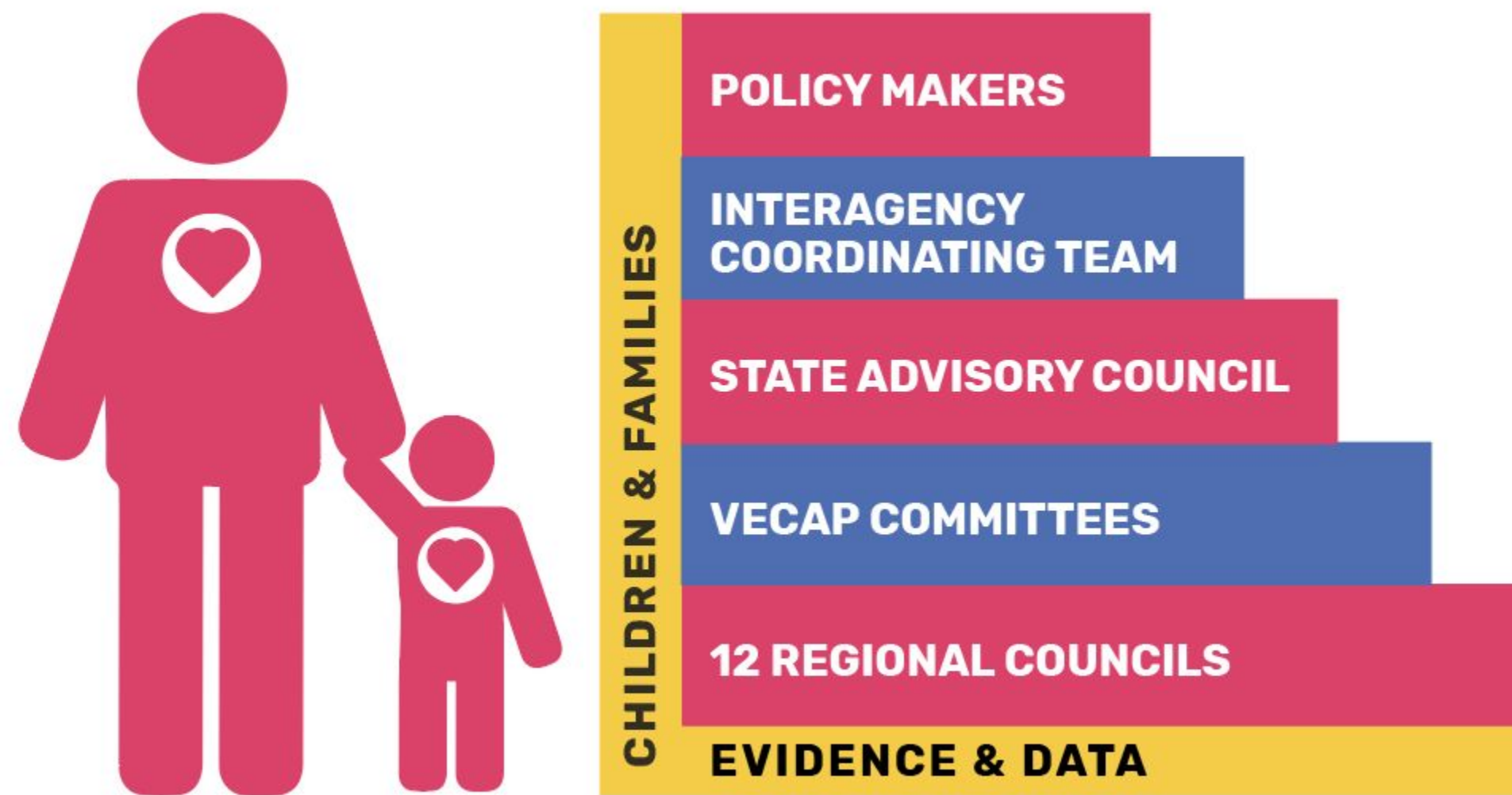


VISION

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. Rey Garofano, Vermont House of Representatives
Sen. Martine Gulick, Vermont Senate

At-Large Members

* Flor Diaz Smith; Vermont School Boards Association
* Rebecca Webb; Barre Unified Union School District
Libby Daghlion, 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,*



Data to Inform Policy

Monitoring

- Vermont's Early Childhood Data Portal
- State of Vermont's Children
- Prekindergarten Education Implementation Committee
- Data Briefs
- Act 76 Monitoring
- Vermont's Early Childhood Data and Policy Center
- Continuous identification of needs

Advisement

- Data, indicators, best practice
- Supporting vision and strategy for early childhood policy
- Elevating needs, challenges, opportunities from families & communities



Advisement: 2025 Policy Recommendations

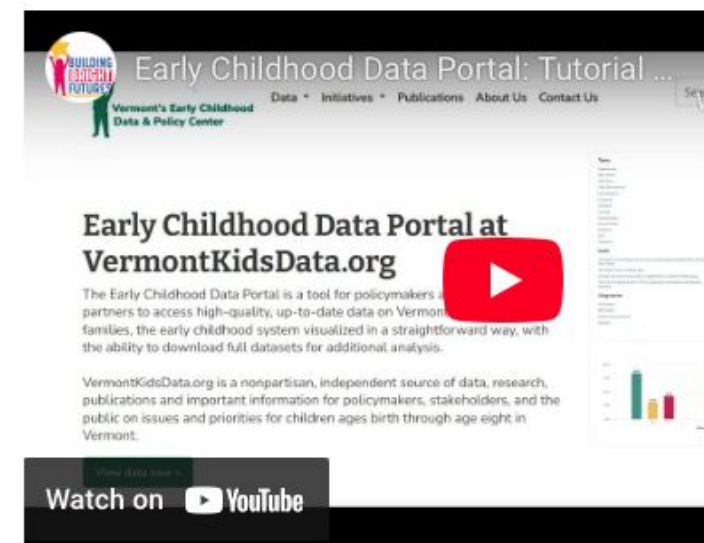
- The 2025 Policy Recommendations include priorities like:
 - Enacting best practices statewide for elevating the voices of families and community members
 - Investing to ensure families have access to safe and secure housing in the immediate term and long-term
 - Supporting families, children, staff, 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](#)



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



Elevating Family & Community Voice



Families and Communities Committee leaders reflect on their participation:

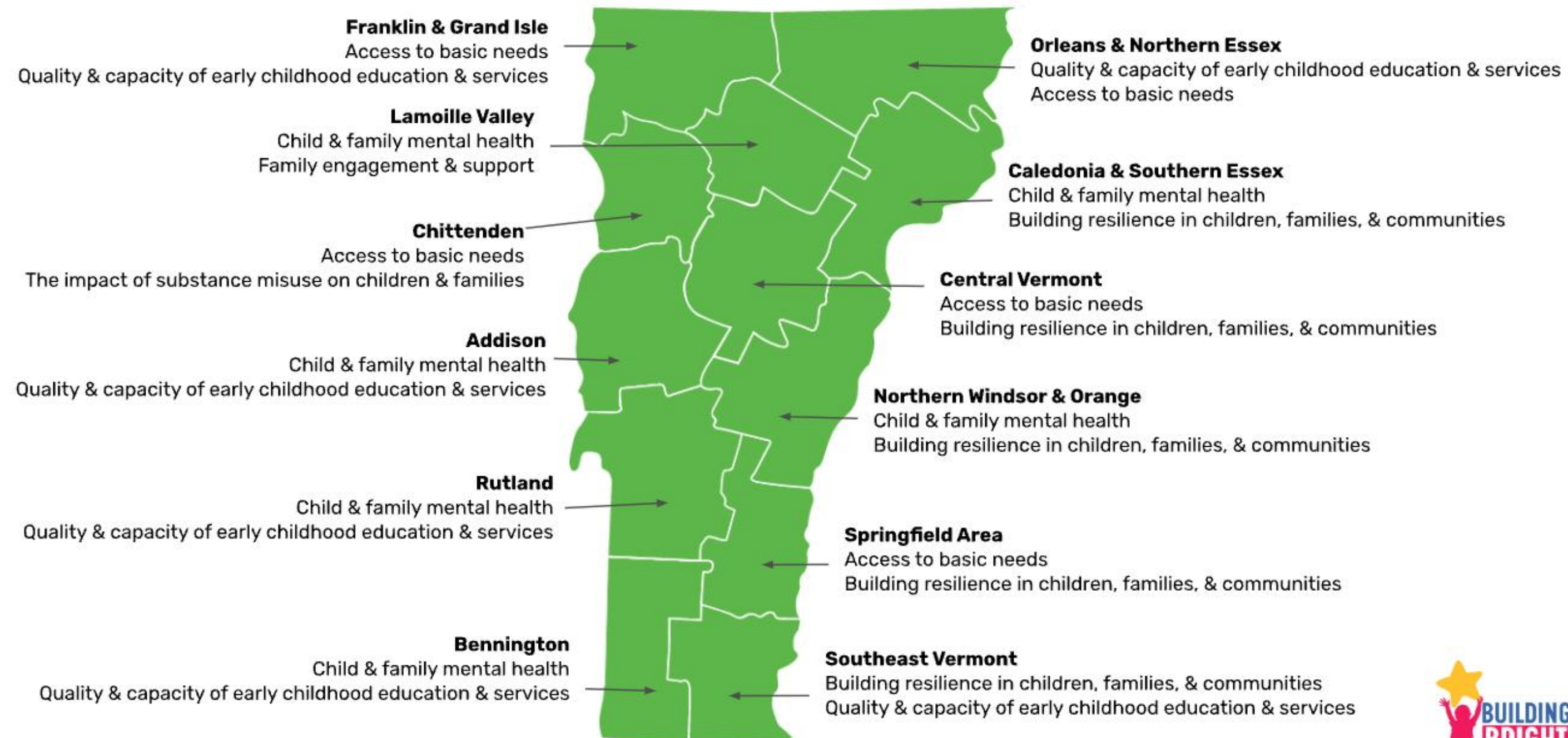
“It is a safe space to connect and advocate for my son and myself to help others and our community.” –F&CC Parent Representative

“Seeing my parent thoughts and views reflected in the wider work at BBF and across the state—my voice matters.” –F&CC Parent Representative



Elevating System Needs & Priorities

Building Bright Futures Regional Council Priorities 2024-2026



Response to Emerging Needs & Priorities

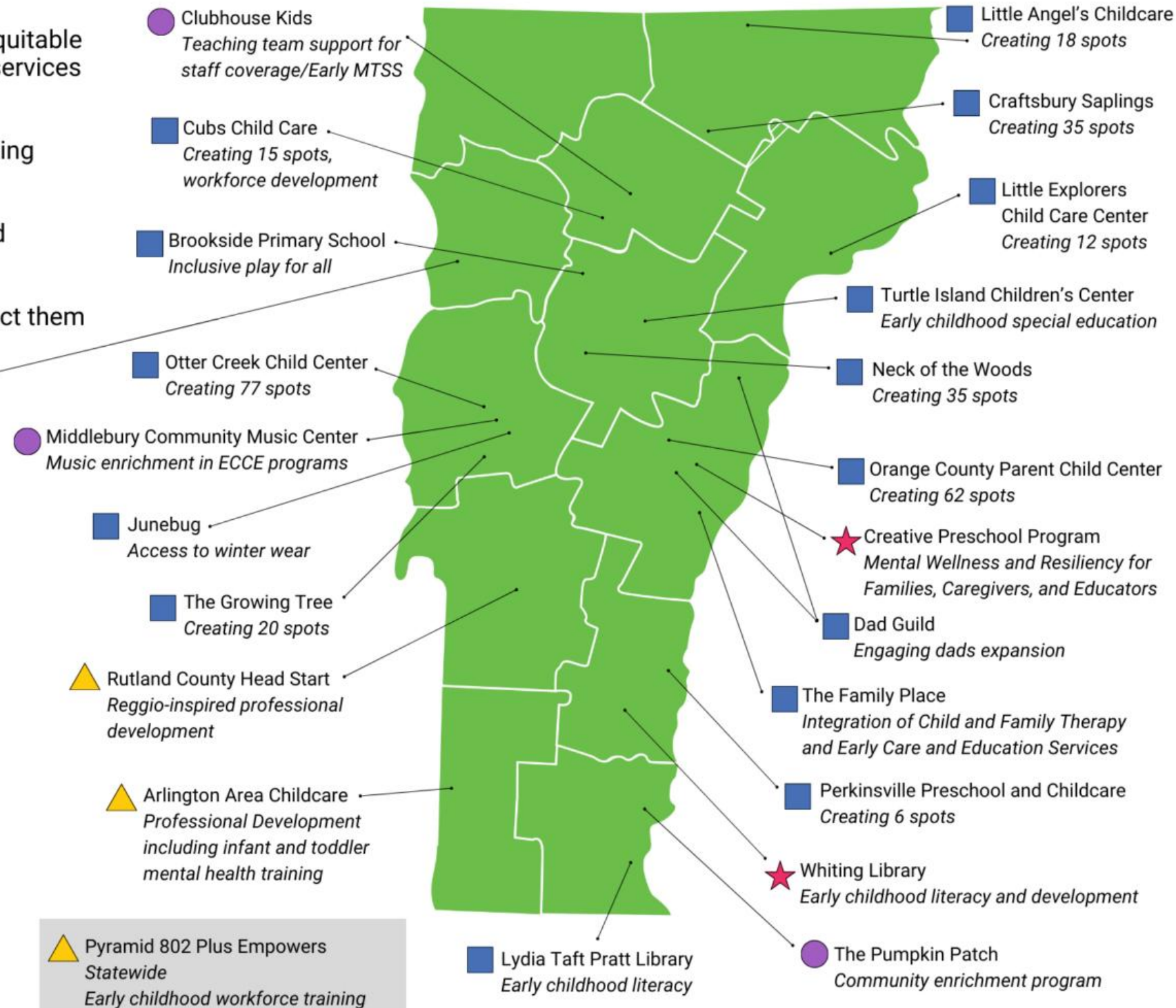
Fall 2024 VECF Grantees

Grantee Focus Areas

- Increase access/provide equitable access to early childhood services and programs
- Improve the quality of existing services and programs
- ▲ Develop the early childhood workforce
- ★ Engage families and connect them to services

Chittenden County

- Champlain Center for Play Therapy and Family Counseling
Child parent relational therapy and therapy
- ★ Greater Burlington YMCA
Expanding family engagement & teacher support
- ▲ Lund
Growing the childcare workforce: pathways for New Americans year 2
- One Arts
Nutrition support program
- ★ Steps to End Domestic Violence
Early intervention violence prevention project








State of Vermont's Children



Bright spots

- CCFAP enrollment & leading the country in prioritizing child care
- UPK enrollment and access for 3 & 4-year-olds
- Rise in 4-year-olds exceeding expectations in math and social emotional development

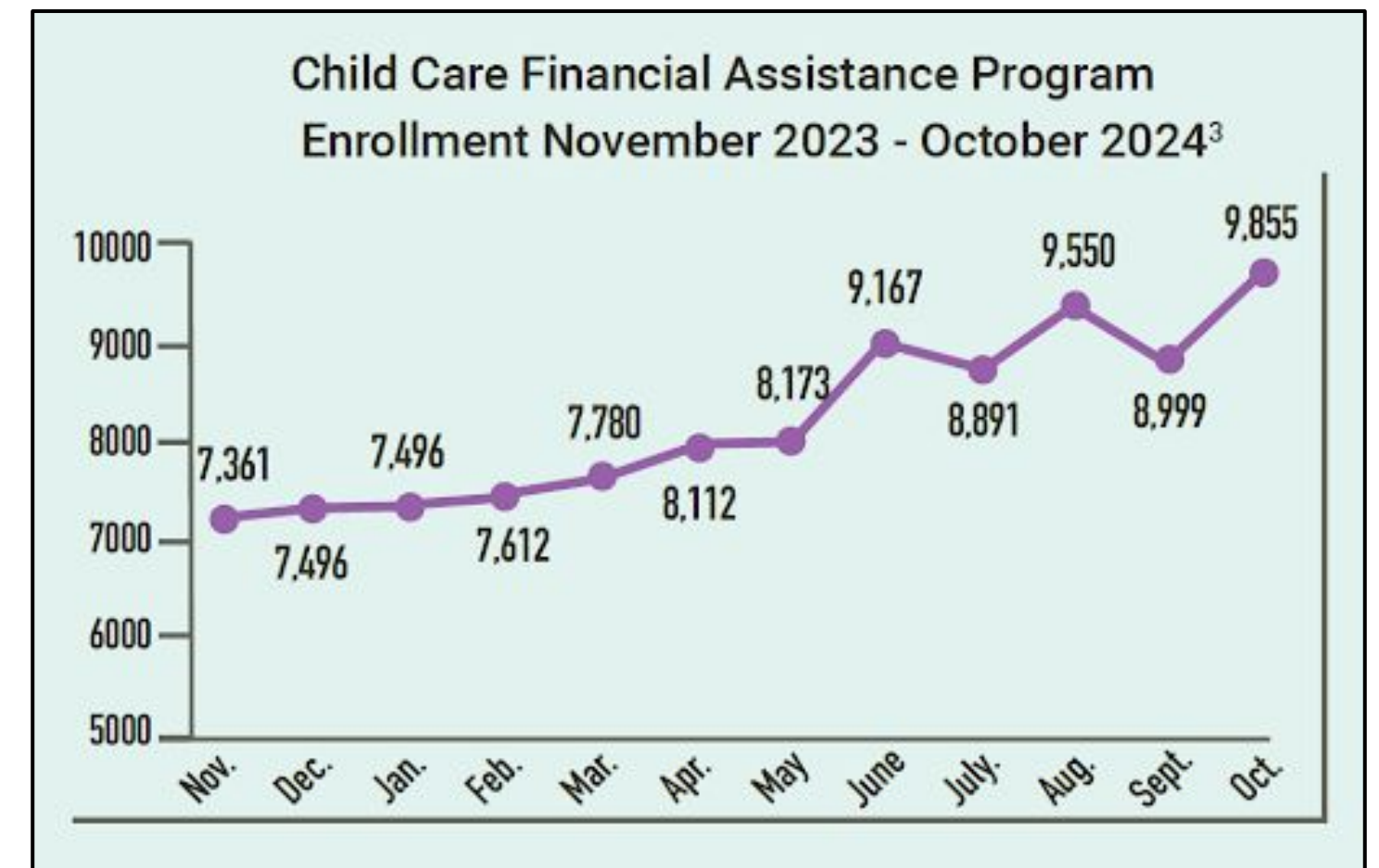
Areas to monitor & course correct

-  unhoused children
-  children with behavioral, emotional, and mental health conditions
-  perinatal mood and anxiety disorders
-  3rd grade reading proficiency, lower for historically marginalized children
-  antiquated data systems and data capacity



Act 76 Monitoring in 2024

- **CAPACITY:** Increase of 170 infant slots in 2024 & in 2024, more early care businesses opened (60) than closed (40) for the first time since at least 2018
- **AFFORDABILITY:** 550 families at 175% FPL who no longer have a copay
- **AWARENESS:** 1,500 CCFAP applications submitted online in two months
- **ENROLLMENT:** 1,256 families above 400% now enrolled in CCFAP
- **WORKFORCE:** 480 career ladder bonuses awarded October 2023 to September 2024 communities



Act 76 Monitoring: The Prekindergarten Education Implementation Committee (PEIC)



The PEIC was formed to support the potential expansion of the universal pre-K program by 2026. The committee 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

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



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.



The Prekindergarten Education Implementation Committee (PEIC) Data Gathering Efforts

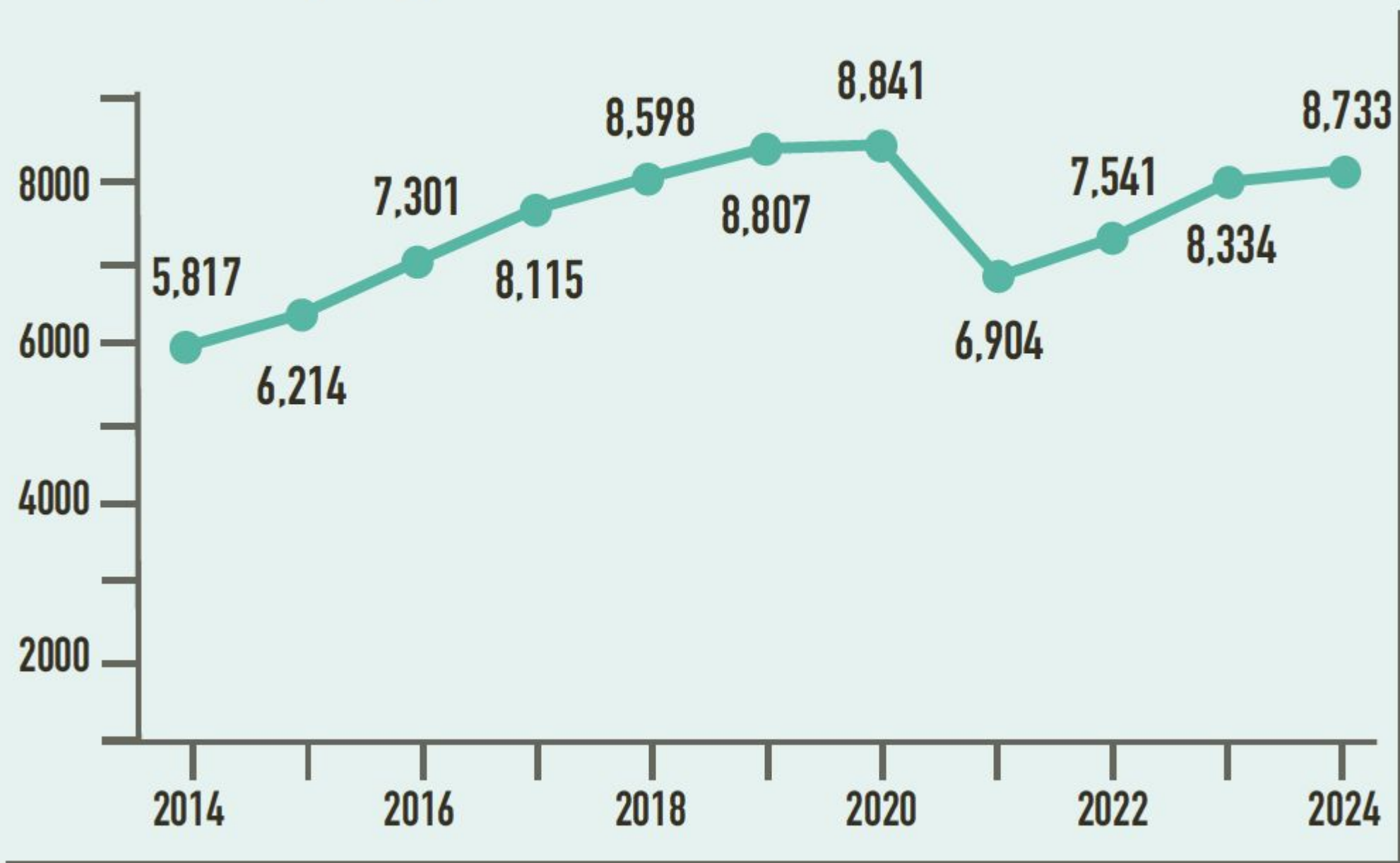


- 4 Surveys
 - public prekindergarten education teachers
 - principles
 - superintendents
 - school boards
- Thematic findings
 - Infrastructure needs
 - Workforce
 - Impact on 3-year-olds
 - Regulatory oversight
 - Financial considerations
 - Importance of mixed delivery
 - Expanding hours
 - Impacts on afterschool and out-of-school-time care
 - Special Education & transportation



What do we know about Vermont's current UPK program?

Universal Prekindergarten Education
Spring Enrollment 2014-2024⁸



- **Enrollment:** UPK enrollment has recovered to pre-pandemic levels
- **Access:** Vermont has ranked second for 3-year-olds and sixth for 4-year-olds in access to UPK
- **Capacity:** 43% of slots are available in school-based programs and 57% are available in center-based and family child care homes
- **Child Outcomes:**
 - Children attending UPK programs had higher rates of readiness for Kindergarten
 - Rise in 4-year-olds exceeding expectations in math and social emotional development
 - 2 years of pre-K is beneficial for children



Regional Equity Spotlight

Rural Access to Pre-K



- Children are not able attend the only programs that families can reasonably access and the schools where these children will attend kindergarten.
- Families from this area may resort to paying full tuition for early care and education to New Hampshire Programs in order to access pre-K.
- Not all families can afford private pay especially in this area of the state with higher poverty rates.



2025 Policy Recommendations Related to Vermont's Universal Pre-K Program

Monitor to Ensure Equitable Access for All 3- and 4-Year-Olds in Vermont's Universal Pre-K Program

- Ensure Vermont's Universal Prekindergarten Education (UPK) program continues to lead the country by maintaining universal access for 3- and 4-year-olds in a mixed-delivery system (school-based, center-based, and home-based programs) and centering the developmental needs of young children and their families. *Renewed Policy Recommendation (2022, 2023)*
- Task the Agency of Education, Child Development Division, and Building Bright Futures to create, implement, and update as necessary a monitoring and accountability protocol to better monitor Vermont's Universal Prekindergarten Education (UPK) Vermont's universal pre-K program, including robust data collection and analysis. The development of the process should include feedback from impacted communities and individuals (families, educators, Act 166 Coordinators, the Prekindergarten Education Implementation Committee, preK–12 administrators, etc.), and should be mindful of the additional capacity and skills reporting this data requires from programs. Collected data should include financial information, enrollment by student characteristics, staffing, and student outcomes.
- Secure sustained funding for personnel across all three entities to ensure high-quality data through the following activities: data management and reporting activities,; training and TA to support quality collection and reporting,; engagement in data integration meetings and visioning, data analysis, and making data publicly available.

Accountability for Vermont's Early Childhood System

- BBF's role and scope has increased in recent years to support the complex Vermont early childhood system
- Need for an additional base public investment of \$322,444.50 annually to sustain the timely direct advisement required
 - This allocation would support personnel, overhead, Regional Councils, and program expenses/contracts.



**BBF advised
the Legislature
and decision-
makers**
more than

150 times

during the 2023-24
biennium.

