

The State of Vermont's Children

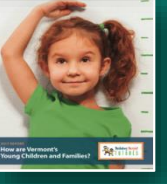
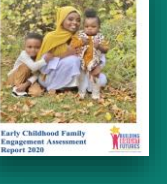
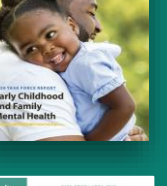
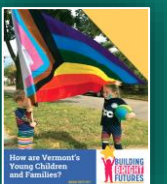
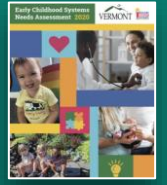
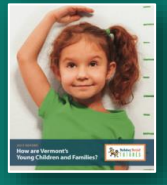
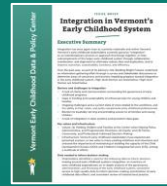
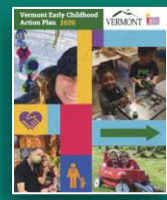
2024 Year in Review

★ Celebrating 12 Years of Data to Inform ★
Early Childhood Policy & Decision-making

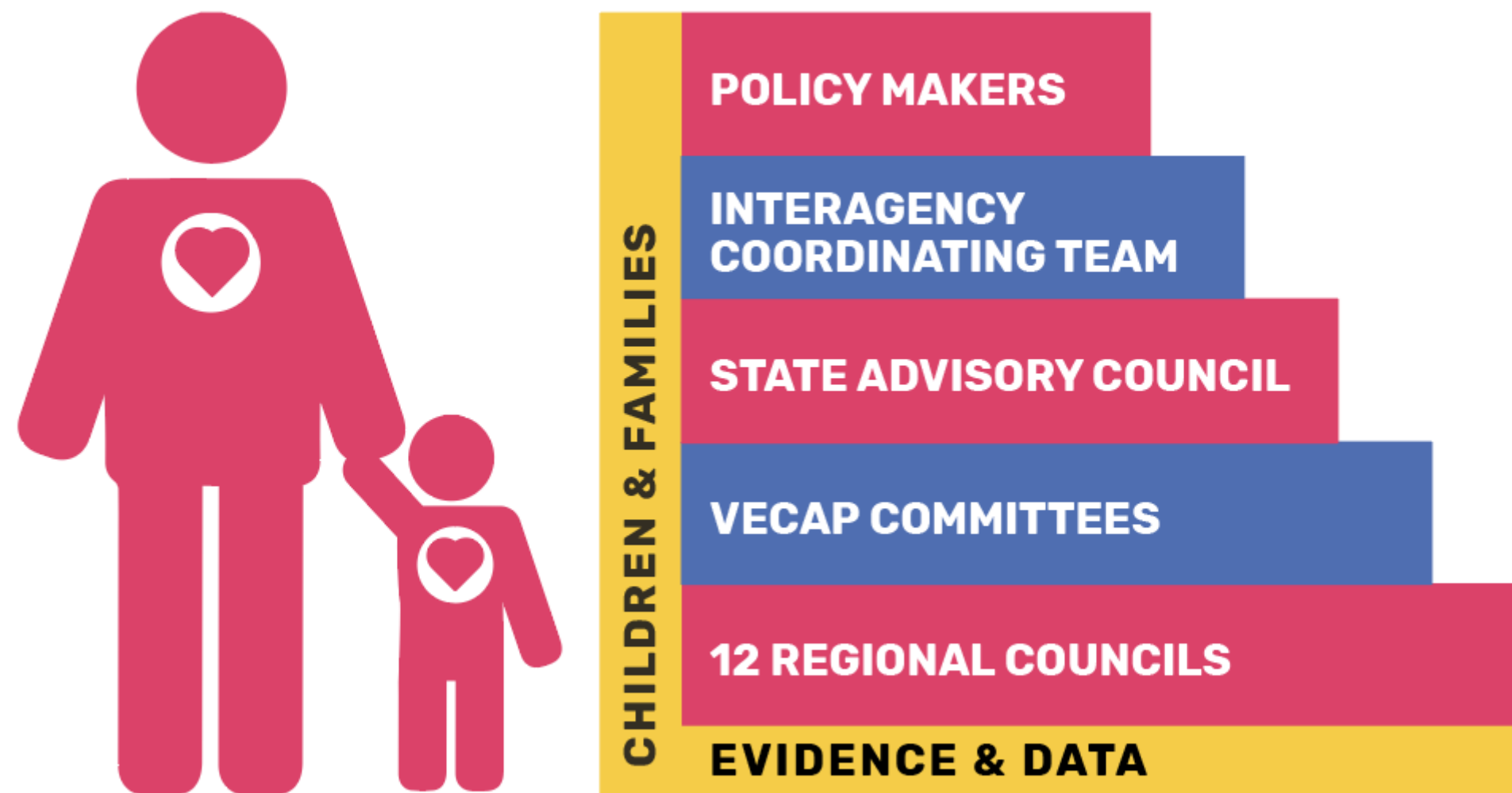
Presented by Building Bright Futures and
Vermont's Early Childhood Data & Policy Center

Monday, January 13, 2025

THE STATE OF
VERMONT'S CHILDREN
2024 YEAR IN REVIEW



Building Bright Futures Early Childhood Infrastructure and 500+ Person Network



The Building Bright Futures State Advisory Council Network is charged by Title 33, Chapter 46 monitor Vermont's early childhood system and to serve as an accountability mechanism.





Data-driven Decision-making and Accountability

- BBF serves as a broker of high-quality up-to-date data and a trusted advisor.
- The State of Vermont's Children is Vermont's most objective, comprehensive, data-driven assessment of children and families.
- We are responsible for strengthening and transforming the way Vermont thinks about, and uses early childhood data.



Agenda



Overview of key topics from BBF's Data Team

- Basic Needs
- Health and Mental Health
- Early Childhood and Elementary Education
- Vermont's Child Welfare System

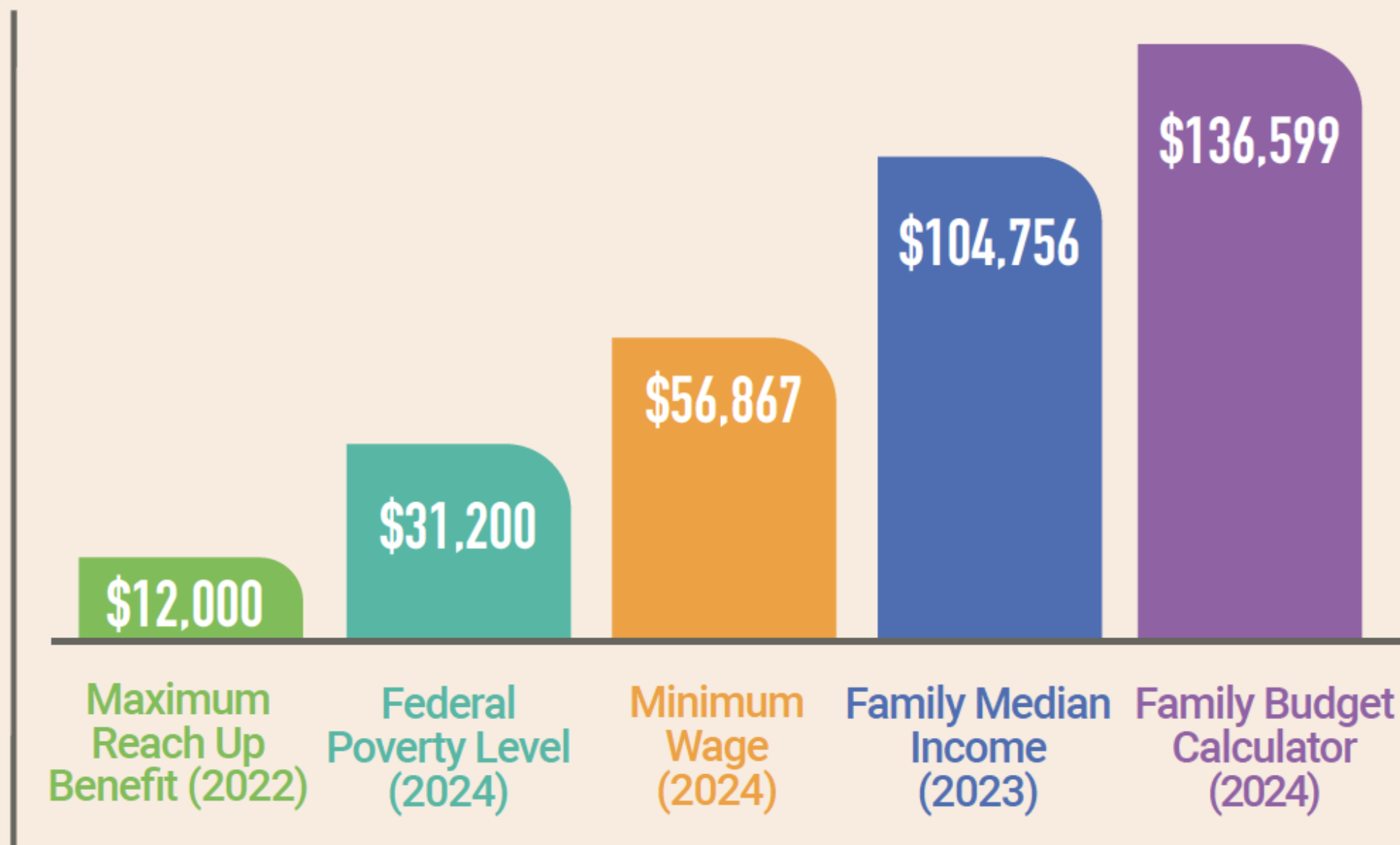
Child Welfare Panel Discussion

- Lindsay Barron, Director of Policy and Planning, State of Vermont's Department for Children and Families (DCF), Family Services Division (FSD)
- Lauren Higbee, Deputy Advocate of Vermont's Office of the Child, Youth and Family Advocate (OCYFA)
- Mercedes King, Youth Leader from the Youth Development Program

1:00 - 1:15 Questions & Discussion

Cost of Living

Vermont Wage Benchmarks for a Family of Four with
Two Working Adults and Two Children ^{8, 5, 9, 10, 7}

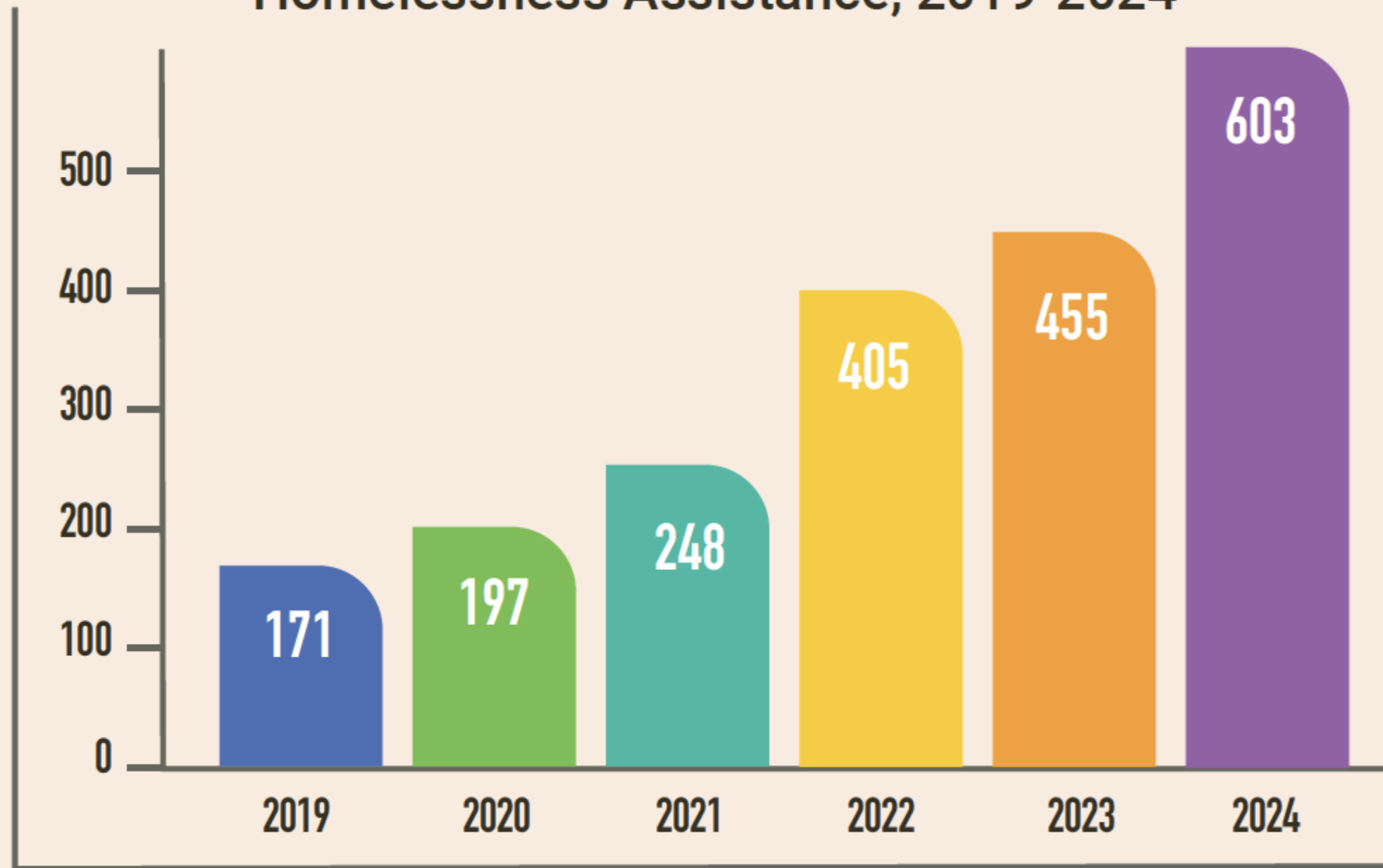


- Income needed to meet basic needs ranges from **\$103,919** in Essex County to **\$136,599** in Chittenden County
- Basic Needs Budget does not include funds for savings, emergency expenses, or expenses like meals in restaurants



Housing and Homelessness

Students Under 9 Eligible for McKinney-Vento Homelessness Assistance, 2019-2024²³

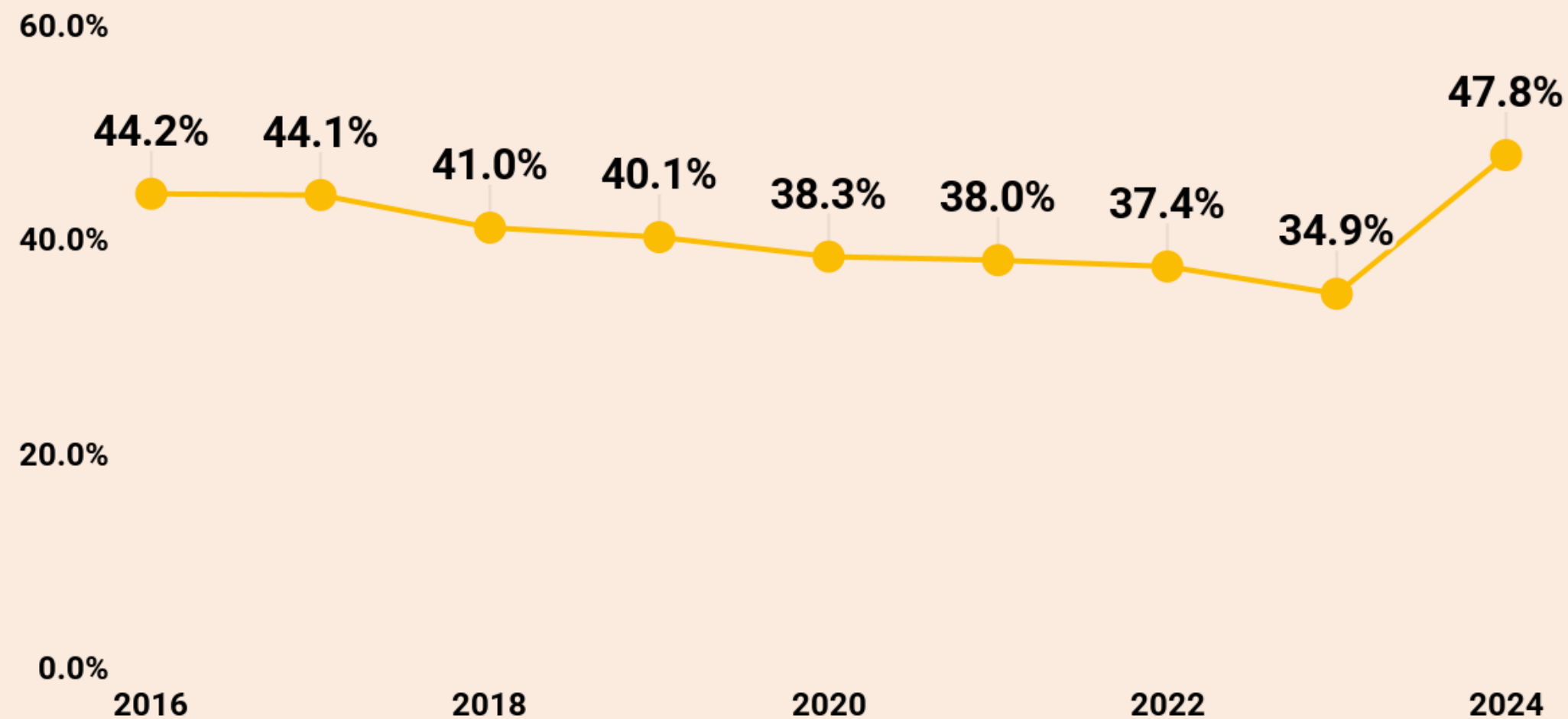


- Increase of Vermont homeless children under 9 enrolled in school from **171 in 2019 to 603 in 2024**
- The number of people in households with children under 18 tripled from pre-pandemic levels, from **372 in January 2020 to 1,125 in January 2025**



Food Security and Nutrition

Children Eligible for Free and Reduced Meals School Years 2016-2024

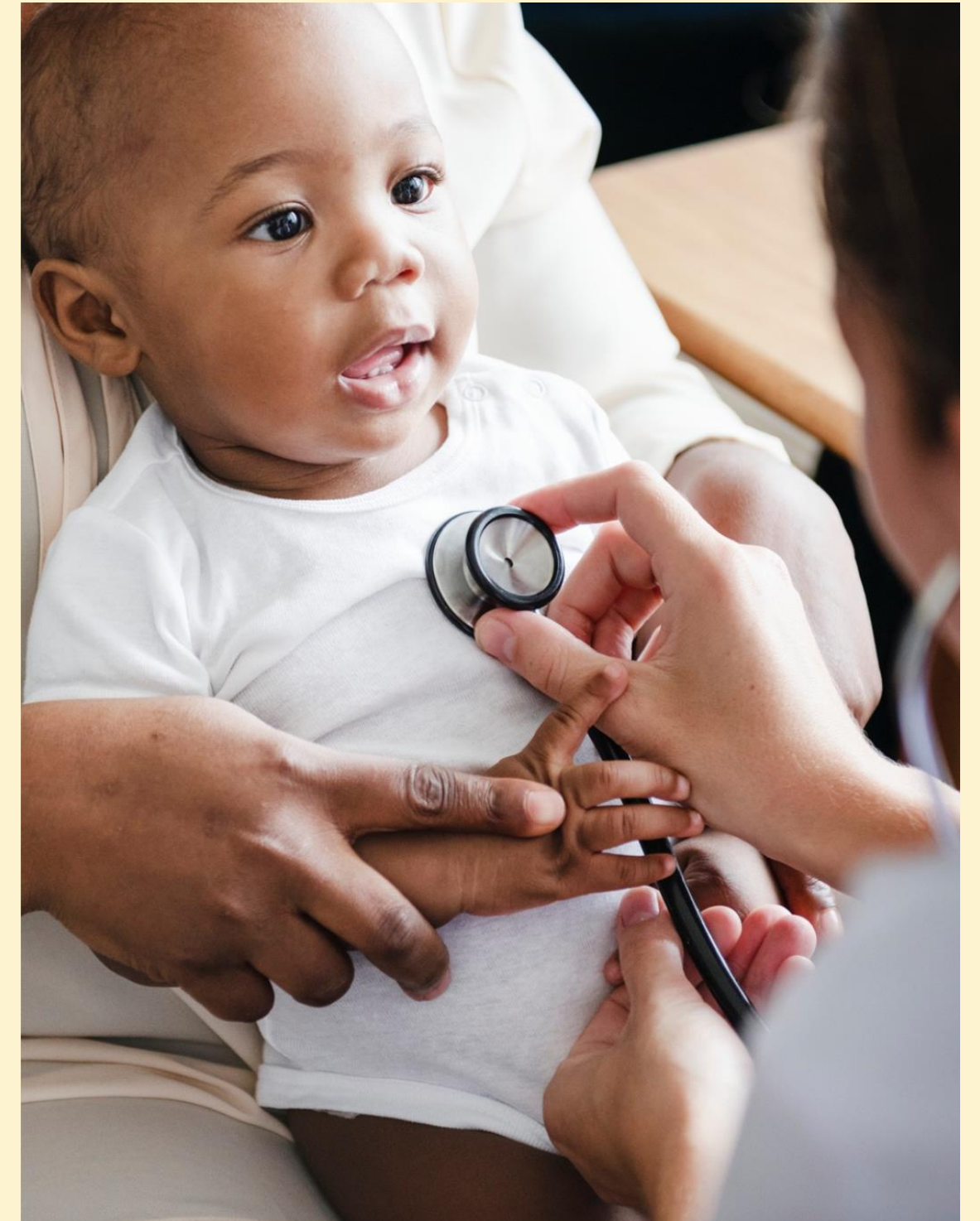


- **In the 2023-2024 school year, 47.8% of children were eligible for FRL, a 31% increase from the previous year**
- **In 2023 the federal threshold for Community Eligibility provision decreased, increasing area-eligible schools from 89 to 240**
- **Summer EBT received 4 million dollars in federal funds**



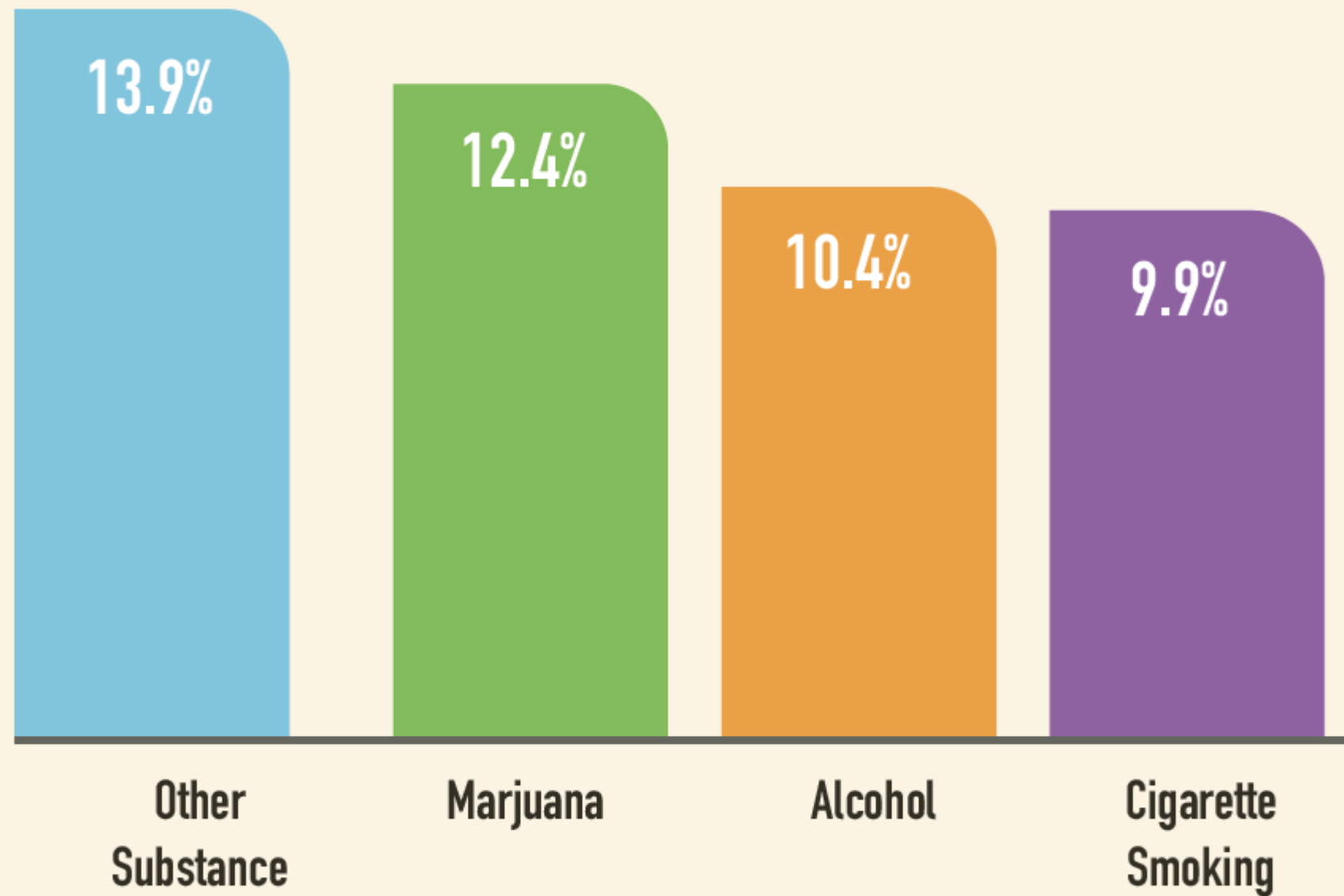
Medicaid

- Annual reviews of eligibility were paused during the COVID-19 pandemic and restarted in 2023
- 13% reduction in enrollment between March 2023 and September 2024
- ~3,000 fewer children and youth enrolled in September 2024 than September 2019
- IHIP enrollment has been steadily increasing since July 2022, 340 individuals covered in September 2024
- Beginning in 2023 Vermont opted to expand postpartum Medicaid coverage for qualified Vermonters from 60 days to 12 months



Perinatal Health and Substance Use

Substance Use During Pregnancy (2022 Births)³



- **For children born in 2022, one or more substances was used during 1 in 10 pregnancies**



Perinatal Mental Health



The graphic features a collage of photos showing diverse families and individuals in various stages of pregnancy and parenthood. A central white hexagon contains the text "support DELIVERED". Below this, a section titled "Mental Health Resources for Expecting + New Parents" provides information on the challenges of pregnancy and parenting, and directs readers to SupportDeliveredVT.com for resources. To the right, a cluster of colored hexagons lists common symptoms: "AS MANY AS 1 in 4 women struggle WITH ANXIETY & DEPRESSION DURING & AFTER PREGNANCY.", "HAVING SCARY OR unwanted thoughts?", "feeling irritable, ANGRY, OR GUILTY?", "FEELING OVERWHELMED OR unable to cope?", "EXHAUSTED BUT can't sleep?", and "Loss of interest or pleasure?". The bottom left corner includes the Vermont Department of Health logo and a note about the STAMPP program.

**support
DELIVERED**

**Mental Health Resources for
Expecting + New Parents**

Expecting and caring for a baby is an exciting, life-changing time. **It can also be really challenging.**

Symptoms of depression and/or anxiety in pregnancy or as a new parent are common and treatable. Lots of dads, partners, other caregivers experience it too. **You're not alone. There are professionals and programs to help.**

If you or a loved one are feeling anxious, depressed, or stressed, speak with your healthcare provider and visit SupportDeliveredVT.com to access Vermont-based resources.

**AS MANY AS
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**Loss of
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pleasure?**

**VERMONT
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**

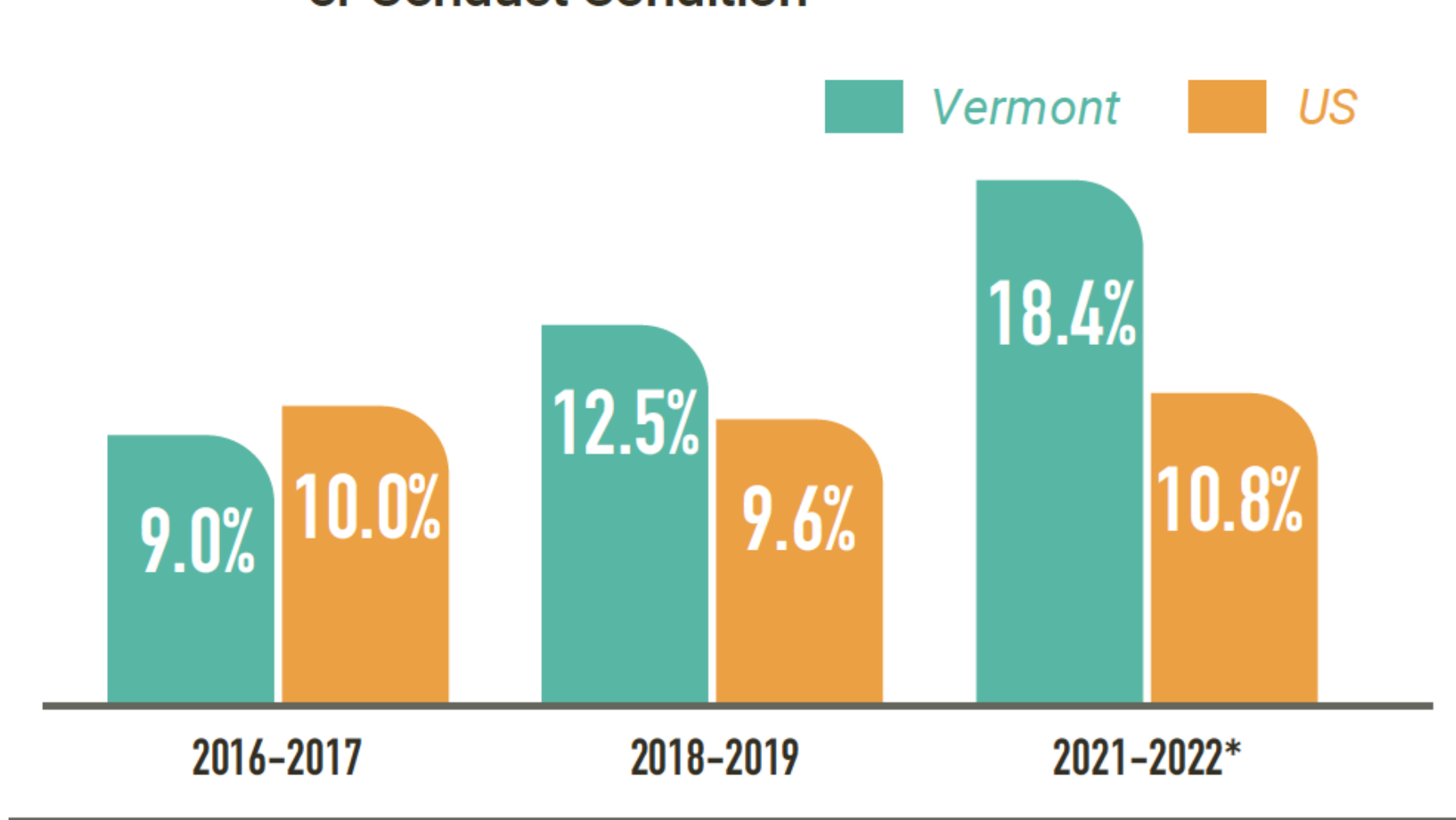
The Vermont Department of Health and the Vermont Department of Mental Health are collaborating on the Screening, Treatment, & Access for Mothers & Perinatal Partners (STAMPP), a 5-year cooperative agreement funded by HRSA to help expand perinatal mental health services in Vermont.

- **Between 2016-2022 Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorders (PMADs) has affected 1 in 4 pregnant and postpartum people**
- **Screening and access to resources include the Vermont Consultation and Psychiatry Access Program, the Support Delivered campaign and increased doula services**



Mental Health for Children and Families

Children with ADHD, Anxiety, Depression, Tourette Syndrome and/or a Behavior or Conduct Condition⁷



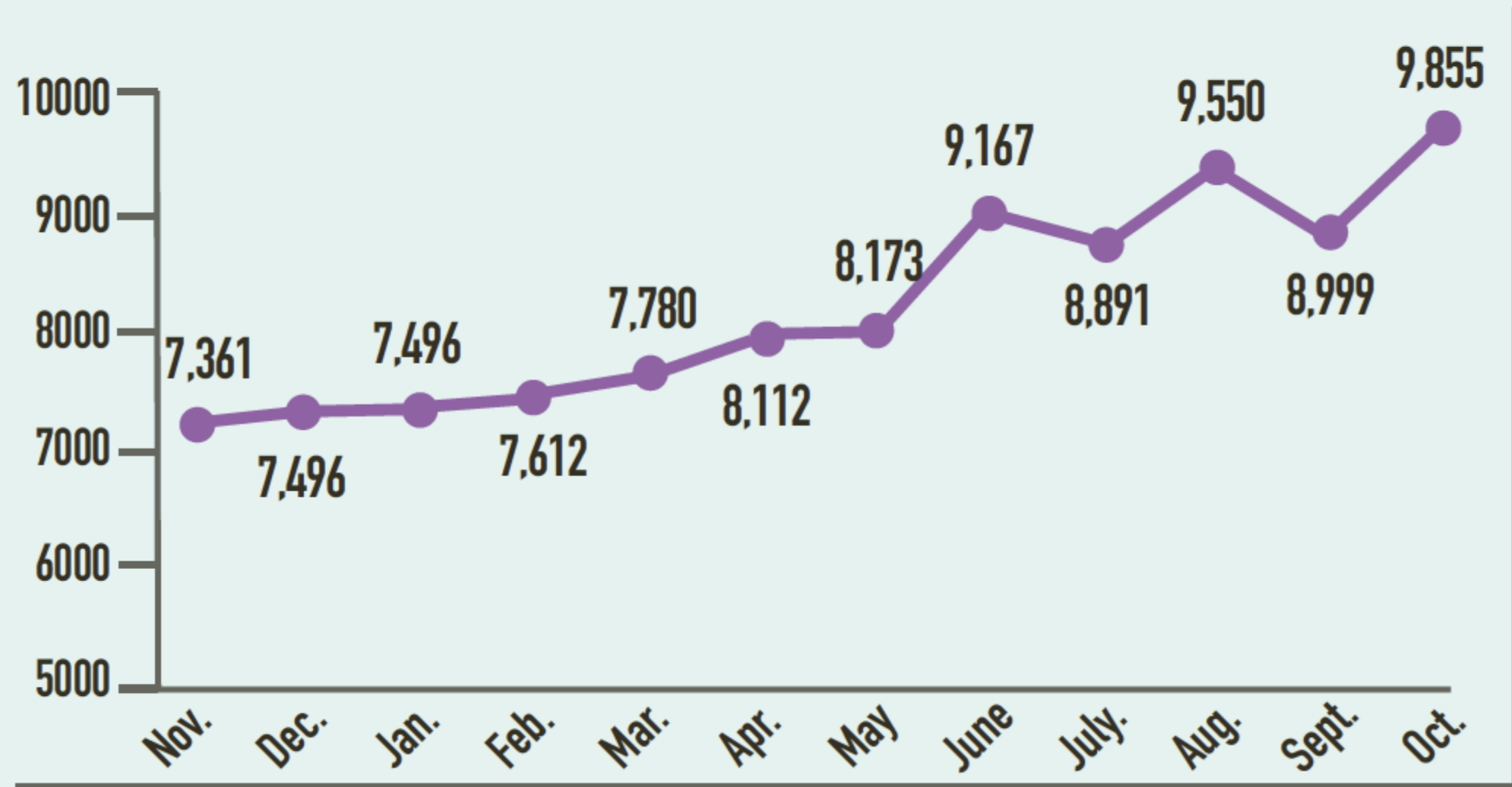
- Statistically significant increase in the proportion of Vermont children age 3 to 8 with a diagnosis listed in chart between 2016-2017 to 2021-2022 from **9% to 18.4%**
- In 2024, the average turnover rate for mental health program staff at DAs and SSAs was **23%**, the average vacancy rate for mental health and substance use programs was **15.3%**



Early Childhood and Elementary Education

Act 76 and CACFP

Child Care Financial Assistance Program
Enrollment November 2023 - October 2024³



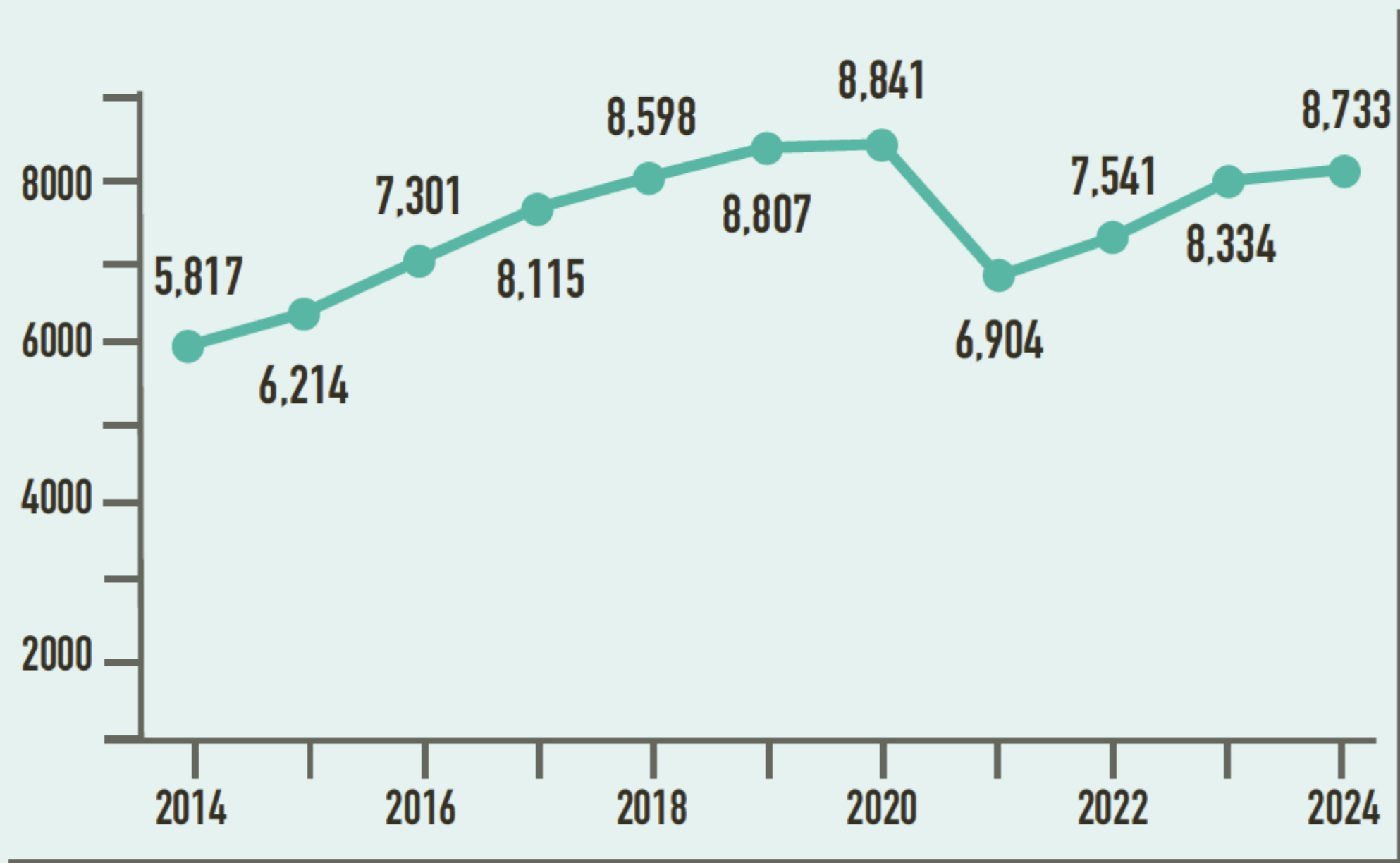
- Access to and enrollment in CCFAP expanded significantly in 2024
- More information about Act 76 implementation can be found on the Child Development Division's website and in BBF's 2025 Act 76 Monitoring Report.



Early Childhood and Elementary Education

UPK

Universal Prekindergarten Education
Spring Enrollment 2014-2024⁸



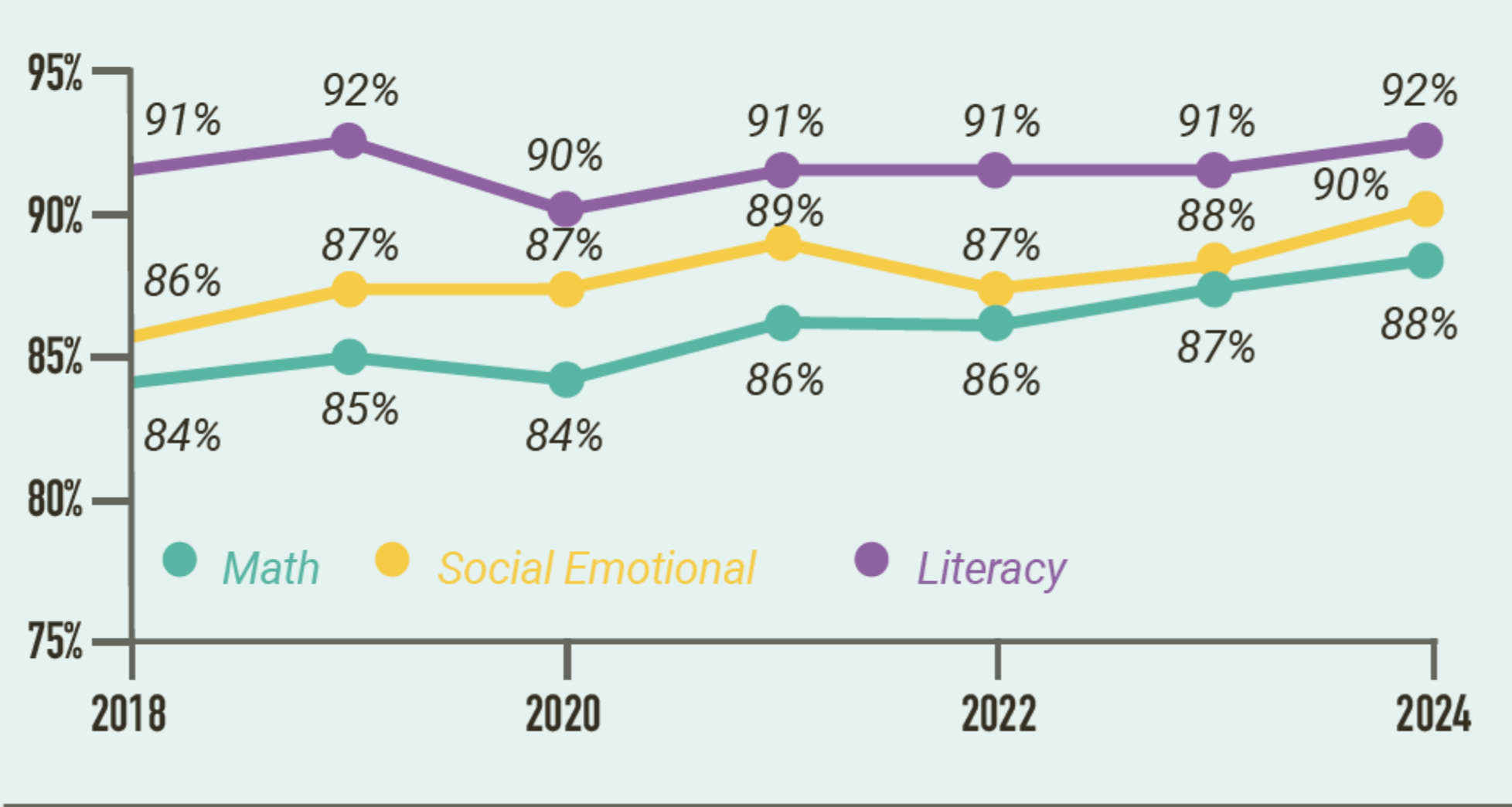
- **UPK enrollment has recovered to pre-pandemic levels, with 8,733 students enrolled during the 2023-2024 school year.**
- **Vermont has ranked second in the country for 3-year-old access to UPK from 2017-2023.**
- **There are currently no imminent changes to the UPK mixed delivery system for both 3 and 4-year olds.**



Early Childhood and Elementary Education

School Readiness

4-Year-Olds Meeting/Exceeding Expectations for Social, Emotional, Literacy & Math Assessments¹⁵



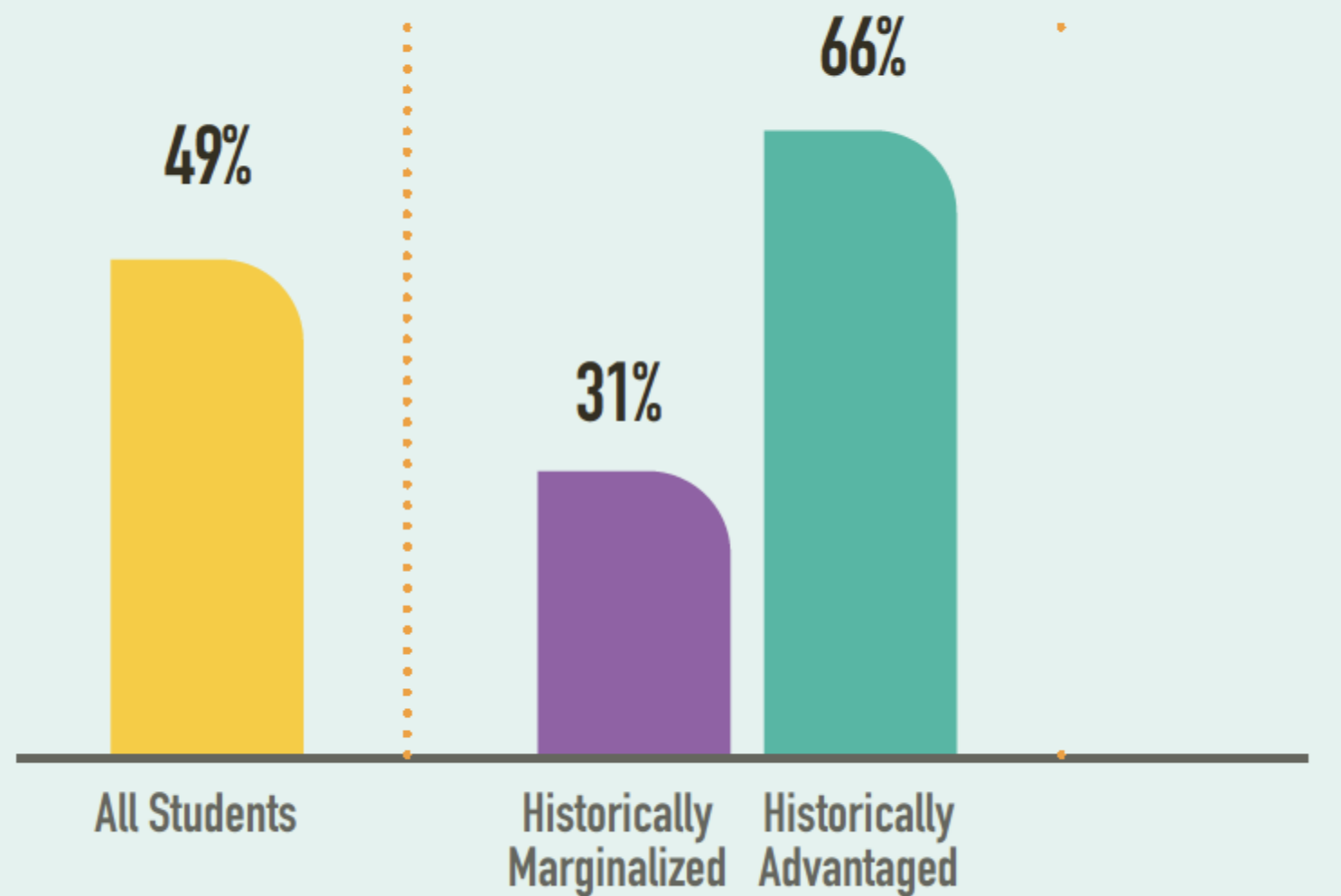
- Between 2018 and 2024 there has been a positive trend for 4-year olds meeting or exceeding expectations for math and social emotional development
- Vermont students age 3-5 have the highest rate of school readiness in the country, with 75.3% of children “on track”



Early Childhood and Elementary Education

Third Grade Reading Assessments

Third Graders Proficient or Above in Reading by Characteristics Spring 2023¹⁸



- For 'historically marginalized' students, **31%** are proficient or above in reading, compared to **66%** for 'historically advantaged' students
- The percentage of students proficient or above in third grade reading from a low of **26%** in Rutland City SD to a high of **71%** in the Montpelier Roxbury SD



Spotlight: Vermont's Child Welfare System

Sparking Conversation

DATA SPOTLIGHT: VERMONT'S CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM



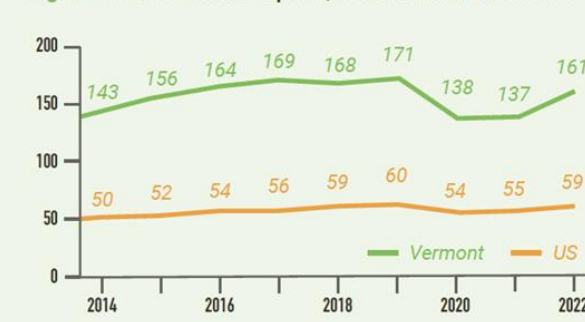
Vermont's child welfare system, housed in the Department for Children and Families - Family Services Division (DCF-FSD), is in crisis. This is reinforced by the 2024 federal Child and Family Services Case Review (CFSR). The CFSR process found that only one of 36 outcomes and factors was rated as a strength, with the remaining 35 rated as areas needing improvement.¹ Vermont has made progress through establishing the Office of the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate; allocating some funding to a new data system; carrying out diligent recruitment and retention efforts for foster families, and providing workforce supports and investments. However, it is clear that prompt and comprehensive action is needed for the safety and well-being of Vermont's children, families, and Family Services Workers (FSWs).

This data spotlight aims to spark conversation about our state's child welfare system. This is not a comprehensive review of the system but instead touches on several key factors, including high rates of reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect, a lack of adequate foster homes, an inadequate data system, and high workforce vacancy and turnover rates. Through legislation and investment, Vermont has the opportunity to make changes that could have a significant impact on vulnerable children and families.

Mandated Reporting

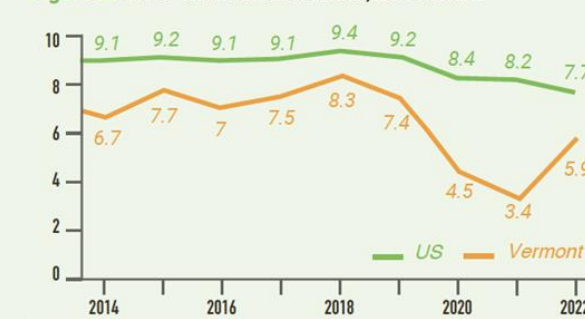
Vermont statute mandates that an individual working with children and families "who reasonably suspects abuse or neglect of a child" must report the case to the child abuse and neglect hotline.² The list of individuals—from health care providers, to school district employees or contractors, to child care workers, to members of the clergy—is similar to other states' lists, and the criteria are also similar; however, Vermont's rate of calls to the child protection hotline has been the highest in the country for at least the past decade. As can be seen in Figures 1 and 2, Vermont's rate of intakes has been between 2.5 and 3 times higher than the national average, while the actual rate of child victimization consistently falls below the national average.³

Figure 1: Rate of Intakes per 1,000 children 2013-2022³



All states are required to have mandated reporter laws in order to receive federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) funds, as established in 1974, but implementation and approaches vary across states.⁴ The intent of the laws, and of Vermont's updates in 2015, is to protect children from abuse and neglect; however, there is no evidence that these laws are protecting children. In fact, there is evidence that the laws are deterring families in need of support from seeking resources to address their challenges, because of a culture of surveillance.⁵

Figure 2: Child Victimization Rates, 2013-2022³



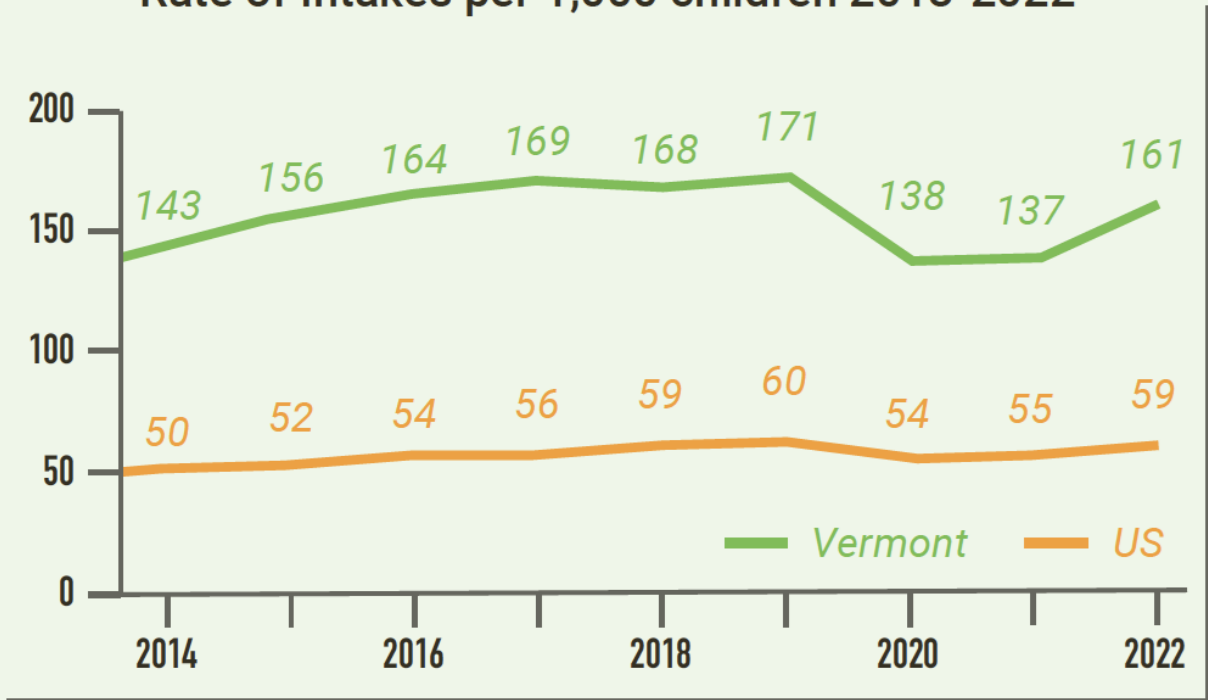
- Not a comprehensive overview of the child welfare system
- Focused on children under 9
- Only one of 36 outcomes and factors was rated as a strength, with the remaining 35 rated as areas needing improvement



Spotlight: Vermont's Child Welfare System

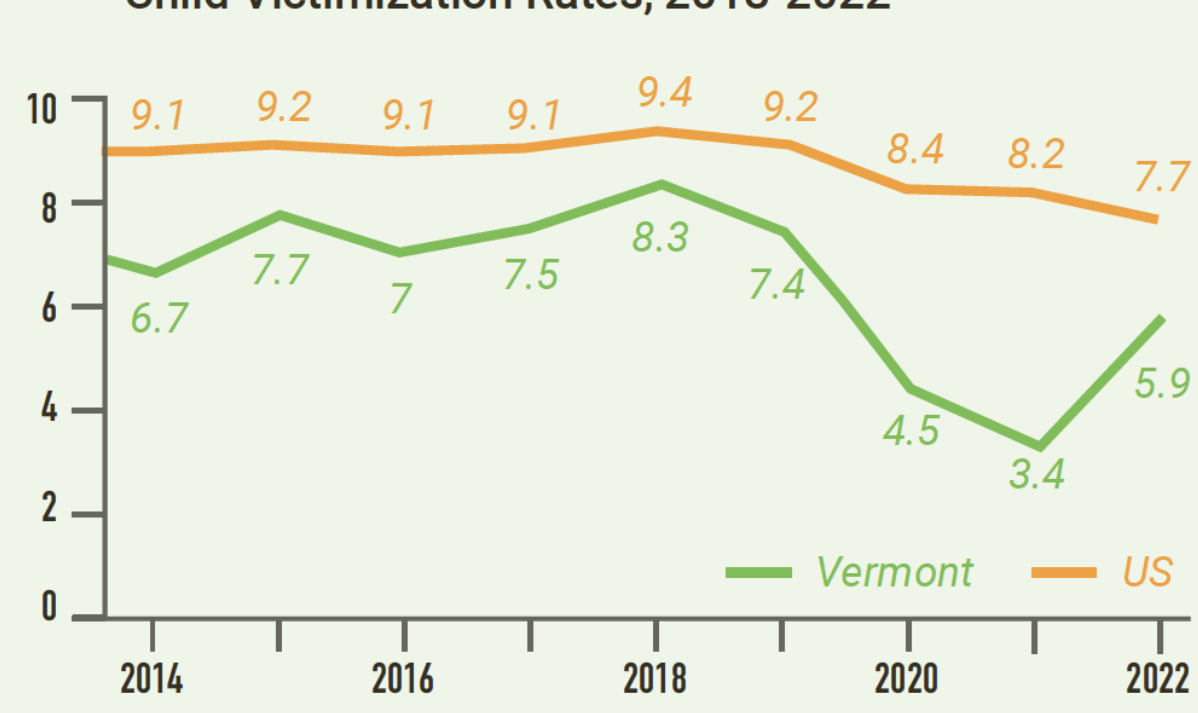
Mandated Reporting

Rate of Intakes per 1,000 children 2013-2022³



- Vermont's rate of intakes has been between 2.5 and 3 times higher than the national average
- The actual rate of child victimization consistently falls below the national average.

Child Victimization Rates, 2013-2022³



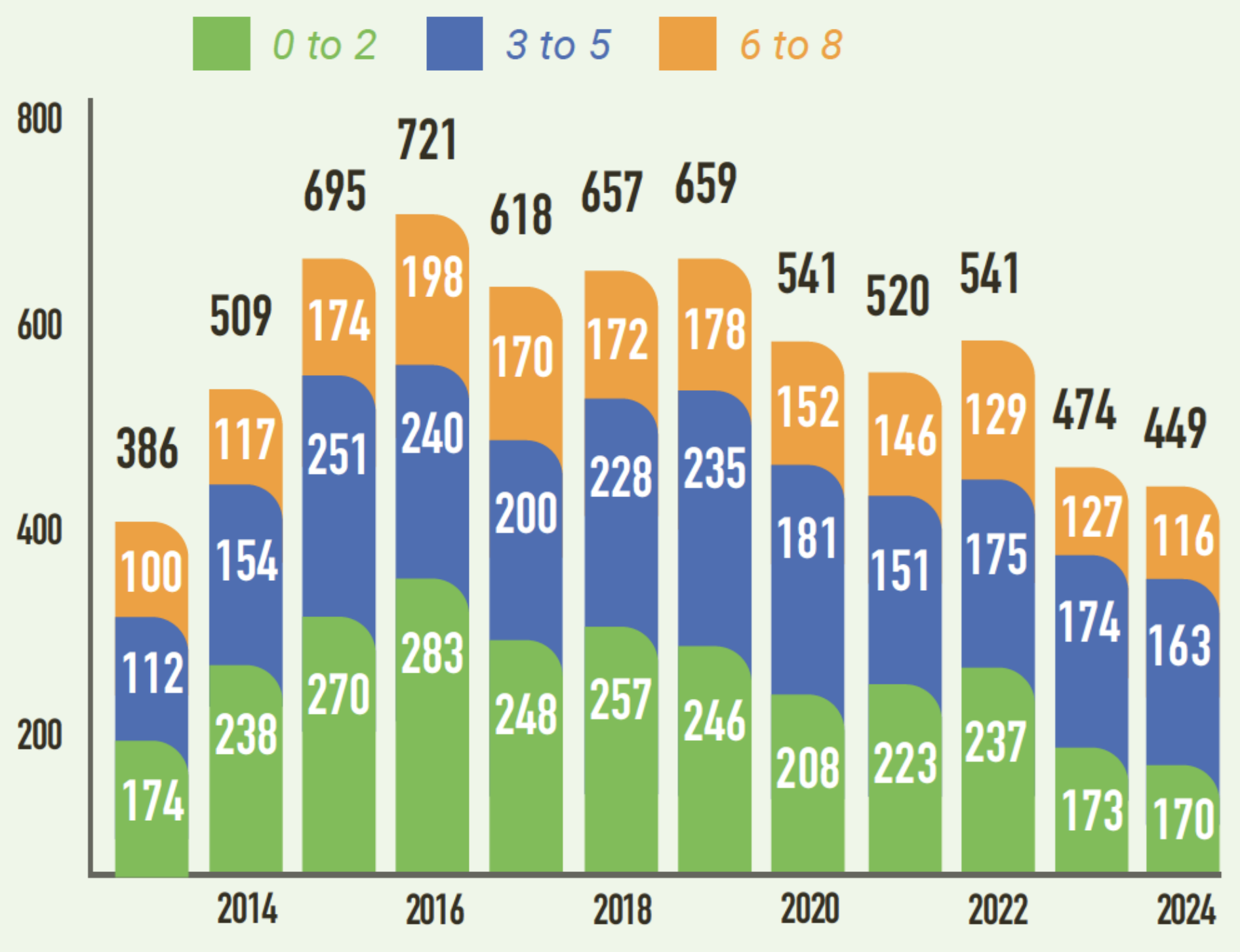
- New training to shift from "Mandated Reporters" to "Mandated Supporters"
- Child Protection Hotline - 800-649-5285



Spotlight: Vermont's Child Welfare System

Children in Custody

Children Under 9 in DCF Protective Custody by Age⁸



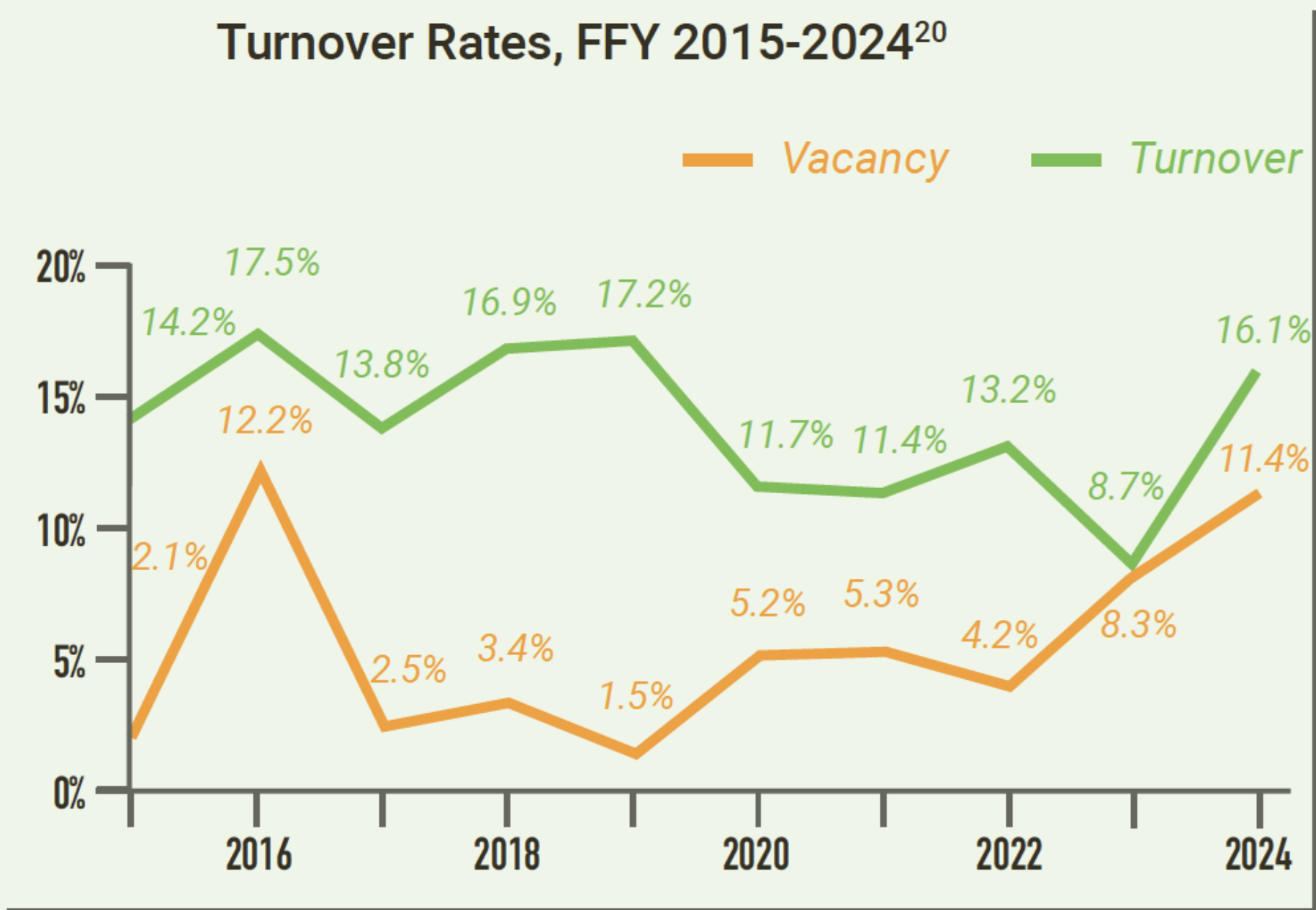
- **Black children and youth accounted for 2.1% of the population under 19 but entered state custody at a rate of 2.8%.**
- **Black or African American children have the highest rate of placement instability (moves/1,000 days).**



Spotlight: Vermont's Child Welfare System

Workforce

Family Services Worker Vacancy and
Turnover Rates, FFY 2015-2024²⁰



- **11.4% vacancy rate and 16.1% turnover rate for Family Services Workers in 2024**
- **Creation of two new positions and long-term intensive technical assistance**



Spotlight: Vermont's Child Welfare System

An Antiquated Data System

```
PERFORM: Query Next Previous View Add Update Remove Table Screen Current Master Detail Output Exit
Searches the active database table.          ** 1: family table**

Primary Caretaker (last,first mi title)      family #: 
DOB                                           Sex Race Hisp Emp Lang
Address Maiden:                             SSN: Mstat
Ph:                                           Res: USC: Tribal Mem:
ANFC? Other Fin Asst?
Email:

Other Caretaker Adults in Household: Rel to Prim
Last First MI Title DOB Sex Race Hisp Emp Lang
Maiden: SSN: Mstat USC: Tribal Mem:
Ph: Email:

CHILD INFO #: Disab Condt I: IFSP? Birth Place:

Name DOB Sex Race Hisp Relation
prim. lang: SSN: USC: ICWA Inq: Tribal Mem:
Prior Adopt/Guard: Prior Adopt/Guard Date: Age Adopted
Prior A/G Intercountry? Currently Pregnant? Ever bore/fathered child?

Father loc Mother loc
DOB: SSN Tribal Mem: DOB: SSN Tribal mem:
```

- Data system from 1983
- \$40 - \$50 million estimate for a new Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS)
- \$15.6 has been allocated (including a 50% federal match)



Spotlight: Vermont's Child Welfare System

Policy Recommendations of the Vermont Early Childhood State Advisory Council Network

Support those Navigating the Child Welfare System by Investing in System Improvements

- **Secure sufficient state funding to fully implement the Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS). Renewed Policy Recommendation (2024)**
- **Utilize the Family Services Division's federal case review report and program improvement plan to make data-informed programming and financing decisions to improve the systems serving young children in Vermont's foster care system.**



Expert Panelists

- **Mercedes King, Youth Leader from the Youth Development Program**
- **Lauren Higbee, Deputy Advocate at the Office of the Child, Youth and Family (OCYFA)**
- **Lindsay Barron, Policy Manager at the Department for Child and Families - Family Services Division (DCF-FSD)**



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www.buildingbrightfutures.org

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