

Springfield District

Building Bright Futures Springfield Regional Council

Summary of Regional Plan

Building Bright Futures (BBF) seeks to assure that all of Vermont's children are healthy and successful by improving the quality, affordability, and accessibility of early health, care, and education services to all Vermont families with children under the age of six. The BBF Springfield Regional Council is one of twelve regional councils throughout the state which provides infrastructure to Vermont's early childhood system. The 2008-09 BBF Regional Plan is the result of a multi-year planning process reflective of the work of the Regional BBF Council, community leaders, and representative stakeholder groups of providers and families.

The Springfield District is comprised of sixteen towns in southern Windsor and northern Windham counties. These communities are small and rural in character, ranging in population from 258 to 8,968, in the towns of Baltimore and Springfield, respectively. This area contains 5% of Vermont's population.

Quick Facts about Young Children and their Families

- Children under the age of six represent an estimated 5% of the population. The Springfield District has approximately 560 births per year.
- Economic stability helps parents care and provide for their children. Families with young children are more likely to live in poverty than other families. Compared to 13% statewide, 11% of children ages 0 - 5 in the Springfield District were in families living below poverty (i.e., in households earning less than the Federal Poverty Level).
- Young parents are less likely to have the resources and skills to nurture their children. Of the state's 188 new families at risk (single parents younger than 20 years with less than 12 years of education), 5% (9) lived in the Springfield District in 2004.
- Most parents of young children are in the labor force, indicating a need for quality early care and education. Yet only 10% of our child care programs have either national accreditation or 4/5 STARS in 2008.
- Vermont measures school readiness with a survey in which kindergarten teachers are asked to report on children's competencies in five domains. In 2008, 28% of children in our region were ready for kindergarten in all five domains, the same as the state average.
- The proportion of children (ages 2-4) enrolled in WIC (the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children) who were overweight was 30% for the state and 26% for the Springfield District in 2007.
- In 2006, Vermont's rate for substantiated cases of abuse and neglect among children under five was 84.5 per 10,000. In the Springfield District, the rate was 174.5.

Building Bright Futures Indicators and Strategies

The BBF planning approach uses a Results Based Accountability framework (Friedman), identifying outcomes, indicators, and key strategies and action steps for “turning the curve” toward improved early childhood health, development, and school readiness. Focusing on results-based accountability means: (1) understanding what outcomes/results our region hopes to achieve, (2) selecting indicators to monitor trends, and (3) engaging community stakeholders in efforts to “turn the curve” with proven strategies when the trend is not moving in the right direction.

The following outcomes and indicators were selected by the BBF Springfield Regional Council. Selected key strategies and action steps from our 2008-09 regional plan—as developed by our Council and an array of community partners—are highlighted below.

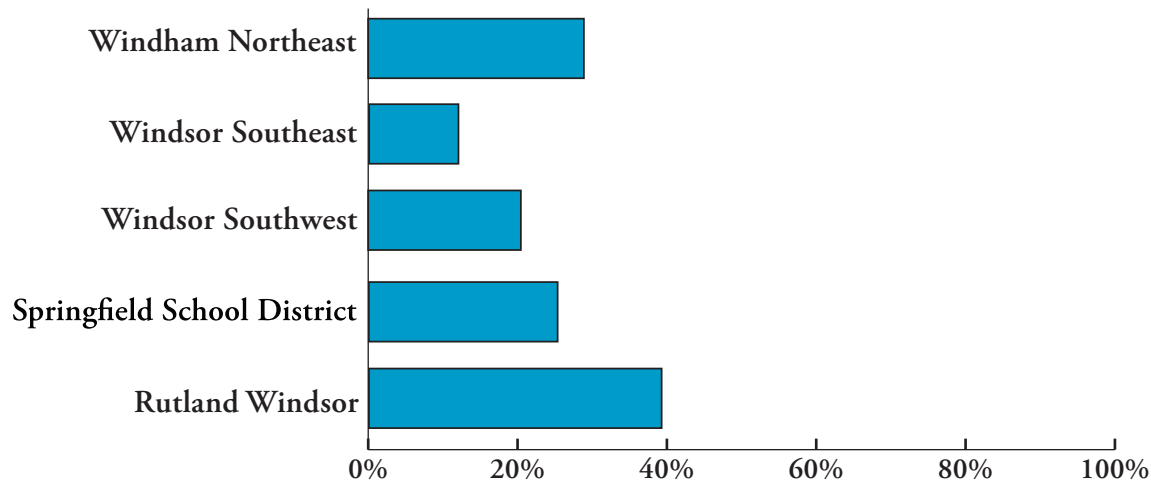
Outcome: Children are ready for school (and schools are ready for children)

Indicator: Percent of children ready in all five domains of kindergarten readiness.

Key Strategies and Action Steps:

1. Increase early screening diagnosis, and interventions/treatment for developmental delays and risks.
 - Engage with pediatricians, family physicians through at least one Council meeting per year.
 - Offer a summit to discuss early diagnosis, communication between entities, and other related issues.
 - Disseminate Bright Futures information and provide professional training in developmental screening.
 2. Increase opportunities for children 0-6 to develop and demonstrate social and emotional competence.
 - Explore funding and resources to bring playgroups to communities where they do not currently exist.
 - Support and assist with distribution of CSEFEL social/emotional competence children’s book list.
 - Provide training and resources related to Foundations of Early Learning.
 - Expand our capacity to offer early childhood education and mental health consultation to early care and education programs.
 - Provide second step violence prevention training to early childhood professionals and early care providers throughout the region.
 3. Increase the number of children who have nutritious diets and develop healthy lifelong eating habits.
 - Develop a one page sheet to inform families of available food programs.
 - Assist early care and education providers in establishing gardens with their children.
 - Survey interest and knowledge of child care providers to enroll in Child and Adult Care Food program.
 - Offer the Head Start “I Am Moving, I Am Learning” to other early care and education providers.
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Percent of Children Ready for Kindergarten in All Five Domains of Development, By Supervisory Union, Springfield AHS District, 2007-08



4. Increase access to quality pre-Kindergarten education.

- Assist with and support the development of an informational sheet about kindergarten readiness.
- Explore interest of 3+STARS accredited early care and education programs as mentors to programs seeking STARS accreditation.
- Serve on study committees as a resource and to support expansion of public pre-K services in Springfield Region.

Outcome: Children live in stable, supported families

Indicator: Rate of substantiated child abuse and neglect for children under age five.

Key Strategies and Action Steps:

1. Increase professional competency and skills related to child abuse and neglect.

- Increase professional training related to child abuse and neglect.
- Work with regional AHS leadership team to develop a think tank/task force to study what works research and service utilization patterns for families who have not been adequately served by traditional services.

2. Improve parent skills and family support.

- Develop a plan to deliver parent training, support and services to prenatal and new parents through a partnership between CIS and prenatal providers.
- Explore resources to support and sustain Parents As Teachers home visiting services to families with young children who do not meet eligibility for current home visiting services.

3. Increase supports and services to help families meet basic needs.

- Partner with Connecticut River Transit to study unmet need for transportation of young families to services that help families meet basic needs.

- Review report from Vermont Poverty Council; develop next steps.
 - Work with Springfield Regional Housing Coalition as they build capacity to provide housing to young families and their children.
 - Develop list of fuel and food resources for distribution through service providers.
4. Increase provider knowledge about new Family Services intake and screening process.
- Provide information and training for service providers regarding differential response rules.
 - Assist in identification of services to meet the needs of screened out families.
 - Provide information and training to early care and education providers.

Indicator: The number of new families at risk – teen pregnancy.

Key Strategies and Action Steps:

1. Increase supports to teens to prevent pregnancies.
 - Promote the use of and provide resources to the “Learning Together” teen parent panel to inform school communities, parents, students, and counselors.
 - Explore mentoring options with Teen Pregnancy Task Force of Bennington.
 - Provide resources to teen parents that will encourage delaying a repeat pregnancy.
2. Increase opportunities for children to build self-esteem through school and community involvement.
 - Partner throughout the region to identify community strengths and needs for building assets.
 - Work with River Valley Technical Center to explore community opportunities for at-risk youth.
 - Identify current partnerships to enhance career building strategies for school-aged children.
3. Increase supports to teen parents to improve parenting skills, and complete education and job training.
 - Identify barriers to participation in Learning Together program through focus groups.
 - Identify a pilot district to examine current supports to teen parents who remain in school.

For more information, visit www.buildingbrightfutures.org



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