

Bennington District

BBF – Bennington Early Childhood 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 – Bennington Early Childhood 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.

Historically, Bennington County is divided into the Northshire and the Southshire, clustered around the towns of Manchester and Bennington, respectively. Some areas of the County are highly rural in character.

Quick Facts about Young Children and their Families

- Children under the age of six represented 5% of the population in 2006. Bennington County has about 380 births per year.
- Economic stability helps parents care and provide for their children. Families with young children are more likely live in poverty than other families. Compared to 13% statewide, 18% of children ages 0 - 5 in Bennington County 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), 10% (18) lived in the Bennington District in 2004.
- Most parents of young children are in the labor force, indicating a need for quality early care and education. Yet only 15% 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, 23% of children in our region were ready for kindergarten in all five domains, compared to the state average of 28%.
- 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 31% for Bennington County 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 Bennington District, the rate was 124.0.

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 – Bennington Early Childhood 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)

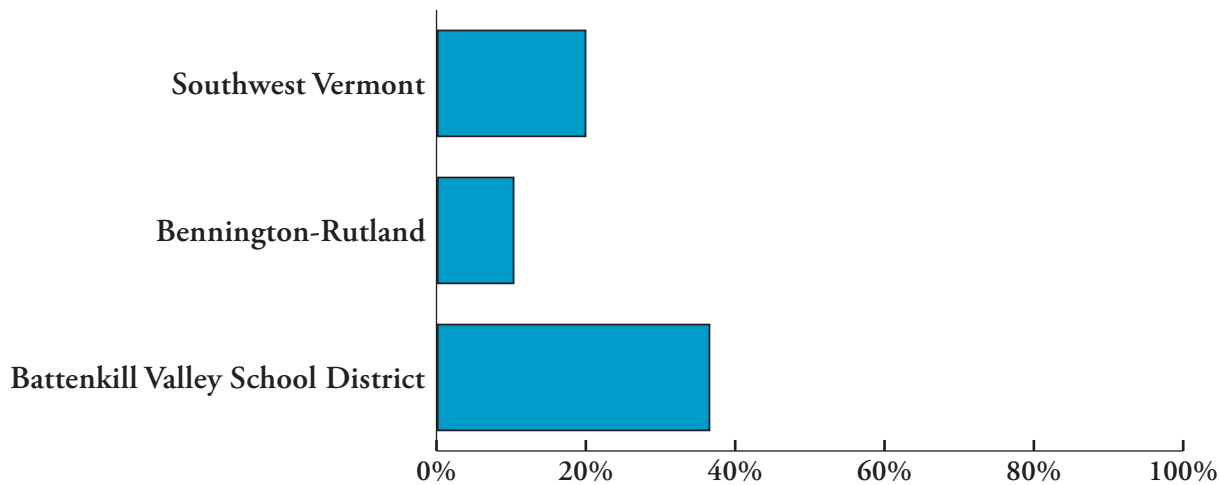
Indicator: Percent of children ready in all five domains of kindergarten readiness.

Key Strategies and Action Steps:

1. Assure that early childhood providers have and use Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS).
 - Develop and implement VELS trainings.
 - Integrate VELS into parent conference visits with early care and education providers.
2. Improve knowledge among early care and education providers regarding the interdependent nature of professional competencies endorsed by the Child Development Division and Department of Education.
 - Support local trainings in Creative Curriculum for both child care centers and homes.
 - Develop and provide workshops that support the use of Creative Curriculum.
 - Provide trainings in the continuum infant toddler, pre-school, assessment through administration.
3. Increase community knowledge and resources to support more successful transition to kindergarten.
 - Use parent meetings at the preschool and Kindergarten level to facilitate a smooth transition for families.
 - Offer parents information one-one and in parent groups about how to support their child’s transition.
 - Promote provider follow-up with individual families once children are enrolled in Kindergarten.



**Percent of Children Ready for Kindergarten in All Five Domains of Development,
By Supervisory Union, Bennington AHS District, 2007-08**



Indicator: Percent of regulated early childhood programs that are nationally accredited or have 4/5 STARS.

Key Strategies and Action Steps:

1. Increase the number of early care and education sites that achieve a quality standard.
 - Maximize training and professional development.
 - Provide support to early care and education providers (e.g., mentoring, technical assistance).
 - Hold a “related partners” meeting to explain NAEYC/ STARS/licensing standards.
2. Increase community awareness of the importance/value of high quality early childhood care and education.
 - Use media (e.g. recognition of STARS and accreditation recipients through press releases).
 - Make presentations to Rotaries, Chambers of Commerce and other civic organizations.
 - Encourage business partnerships.

Outcome: Pregnant women and young children thrive

Indicator: The percent of women screened for maternal depression.

Key Strategies and Action Steps:

1. Increase the proportion of women of childbearing age screened for risk factors associated with depression.
 - Maternal and Child Health Coalition will provide oversight to assure women are screened for depression.
 - Identify a group to take on the work of the MOMs initiative.
 - Identify and supply educational materials for women through local providers.



2. Increase access to services among families who have or are at risk of maternal depression.
 - Engage professional partners to work together to identify, refer, and do outreach to families at risk.
 - Engage CIS core team in work to reduce maternal depression and include related services in family plan.
 - Increase access to family support child care for children of mothers diagnosed with depression.
3. Conduct a campaign to increase knowledge of perinatal depression resources.
 - a. Offer workshops and consultations that include: signs, risk factors, and impact of maternal depression.
 - b. Identify community partners who need to learn about maternal depression and its effect on the children.
 - c. Offer two educational opportunities for providers, including training on use of objective screening tools.

Outcome: Children live in stable, supported families

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

Key Strategies and Action Steps:

1. Increase understanding of teen attitudes toward sexuality and teen parenthood.
 - Develop a questionnaire about sexuality and single parenting that is linked to the Youth Risk Behavior Survey.
 - Administer the questionnaire targeting teens who are under 17 and out of school.
 - Present survey results to community leaders and school board.
2. Increase provider knowledge, attitudes and behaviors regarding the needs of teen parents.
 - Implement standards of practice among key providers regarding service delivery to teen parents.
 - Conduct workshops to educate providers about the unique needs of teen parents.
 - Collect and disseminate resource information in the community and providers.
3. Increase opportunities for teen parent mentoring.
 - Identify effective models for mentoring teen parents.
 - Sponsor community workshop about mentoring and recruit mentors.
 - Engage individuals currently working with teen parents to expand their approach to include mentoring.

For more information, visit www.buildingbrightfutures.org



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