

# VERMONT'S EARLY CHILDHOOD ACTION PLAN

MARCH 2014

A Companion  
Document to Vermont's  
Early Childhood  
Framework



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## MESSAGE FROM THE ACTION PLANNING COMMITTEE

Parents, educators, service providers, state agencies, funders, the business community and other key public and private stakeholders have to work together in new ways to *realize the promise of every Vermont child*. A commitment to the success of young children and their families is paramount and undergirds Vermont's Early Childhood Action Plan.

Initiated in March 2013, this Action Plan reflects the culmination of a year-long process that began with the development of Vermont's Early Childhood Framework. The Framework represents Vermont's commitment to ensure that the state's children grow up happy, healthy and ready for a lifetime of learning. Governor Peter Shumlin presented the Framework at his Early Childhood Summit in October 2013. The Action Plan is a companion document to the Framework; it charts a course of action to help Vermont achieve the Framework's six goals.

In the spirit of continuous quality improvement, the Action Plan is intended to be a living document—one that will be used to mark progress and highlight where mid-course corrections are needed based on new information. It is intended to complement existing strategic plans, support existing efforts affecting young children not reflected in the Action Plan and increase alignment among those efforts under the rubric of the Framework's six goals. To help make sure that happens and in keeping with Act 104<sup>1</sup>, Building Bright Futures—with a team from the Governor's Office, the Agency of Human Services and the Agency of Education—will be responsible for coordinating, monitoring and reporting on progress made on the strategies and actions in the Action Plan. However, this Action Plan belongs to all Vermonters. Everyone has a role in making the strategies in the plan a reality. It is hoped that Vermonters across the state will become part of its implementation and success over time.

The Action Planning Committee wishes to thank Governor Peter Shumlin for his vision and commitment to Vermont's young children and their families, Agency of Human Services Secretary Doug Racine for his leadership, and former and current Agency of Education Secretaries Armando Vilaseca and Rebecca Holcombe for their unflagging support for young children from birth through third grade. The Committee also extends hearty thanks to the hundreds of Vermonters who attended action planning forums and provided input online and through conference calls. The creation of the Early Childhood Framework and the accompanying Early Childhood Action Plan have been highly collaborative endeavors that demonstrate a shared responsibility to provide a good start for all Vermont's children.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

[Vermont's Early Childhood Framework](#), which was finalized in October 2013, lays out six goals to unify Vermonters in our efforts to ensure the well-being of Vermont's young children and their families. This Early Childhood Action Plan provides specific strategies to ensure the six goals of the Framework are realized. Both documents reflect a shared responsibility to provide a good start for all Vermont's children and a belief that all Vermonters benefit when our youngest citizens and their families are thriving.

The Action Plan was developed by a statewide committee that was jointly convened by the Governor's Office and Doug Racine, Secretary of the Agency of Human Services. The committee was comprised of representatives from state government, the non-profit sector, Building Bright Futures, Head Start, advocacy organizations, K-3 education, private funders and the business community. The Action Plan reflects input gathered through ten focus sessions leading up to the Governor's Early Childhood Summit (October 2013), eight action planning forums held during the winter of 2013-2014, online surveys, and multiple conference calls.

The Action Plan is a starting point. It reflects diverse perspectives and strives to create new linkages among the health, human services, early learning and development and K-3 education sectors, which together comprise Vermont's early childhood system. However, it is intended to be a living document that is regularly updated through a process managed by Building Bright Futures and refined as new voices and partnerships inform how the work envisioned in this Plan is implemented.

The Action Plan outlines twenty-seven strategies and numerous related actions that focus on the six goals in Vermont's Early Childhood Framework. With Results-Based Accountability (RBA) in mind, the Action Planning Committee translated those goals into results, or conditions of well-being. The strategies in the Action Plan listed below are designed to achieve those conditions of well-being for all Vermont's young children and their families.

### **Result #1: All children have a healthy start.**

- Support families as children's primary caregivers;
- Establish a voluntary system that connects children birth through 3rd grade (0-8) with the resources they need to support optimal growth and development, including developmental screening;
- Ensure access to prenatal care, child health services, including preventive services and dental care, and support services for adults, including mental health and substance abuse treatment;
- Promote and utilize evidence-based home visiting;
- Ensure that all children have access to adequate nutrition at home, in early learning and development programs, at school, after school and during the summer;

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- Develop community efforts in the public and private sectors to enhance children's safety.

### **Result #2: Families and communities play a leading role in children's well-being.**

- Engage with families as their child's first and most important teacher;
- Develop a statewide approach that enriches and expands family leadership at the provider, agency and community level;
- Promote family-centered employment policies that support the physical and social emotional needs of children and their families;
- Strengthen community-based decision-making with respect to resource allocation and service delivery systems.

### **Result #3: All children and families have access to high-quality opportunities that meet their needs.**

- Implement policies that enhance family stability and economic security;
- Expand access to high-quality services and programs for all families with young children by increasing quality, capacity and affordability;
- Ensure a continuum of holistic, family-centered services for young children who are experiencing, or are at risk for, developmental delays due to behavioral or physical health concerns, including children with chronic health conditions
- Strengthen the quality of early childhood services throughout the early childhood system through a focus on alignment and best practices;
- Ensure quality by adequately supporting the early childhood workforce.

### **Result #4: Vermont invests in prevention and plans for the future success of children.**

- Develop an intentional approach to guide Vermont's current and future early childhood expenditures;
- Promote sustainable business models;
- Increase the early childhood focus in health care payment reform efforts;
- Balance resources for treatment with resources for prevention at the whole-population level, with a focus on children and families;
- Increase public awareness about the importance for Vermont's future of investing in children's early years.

### **Result #5: Data and accountability drive progress in early childhood outcomes.**

- Increase the knowledge, experience and application of Results-Based Accountability (RBA) as the accountability framework for the Early Childhood Action Plan;
- Establish a data governance structure and related processes;
- Enhance data and the use of data to inform policy and practice.

**Result #6: The early childhood system is innovative and integrated across sectors in order to better serve children and families.**

- Continue to develop, strengthen and align clear structures at the statewide level to ensure coordinated leadership and shared work;
- Create a culture of collaboration at the state and local level that fosters systems-building across sectors;
- Achieve efficiency and streamline systems to create a seamless experience for families;
- Move from a competitive to a collaborative approach to resource allocation at the community level;
- Maximize resources and minimize duplication;
- Create a cross-sector, inter-disciplinary early childhood workforce.

As of April 2014, Building Bright Futures assumes a leadership role in order to coordinate the Action Plan's implementation and to monitor and measure the progress being made on the Plan. Building Bright Futures will fulfill this role in the Action Plan's implementation in close collaboration with its state partners (the Vermont Agency of Human Services, which includes the Department for Children and Families' Child Development Division/DCF and the Department of Health, the Vermont Agency of Education and the Governor's office) as well as with many diverse partners outside state government. Building Bright Futures will annually convene key stakeholders to review the Action Plan, celebrate successes, identify gaps and make mid-course corrections. Despite Building Bright Futures' key role, however, it is up to each of us to keep the Framework and this Action Plan living, dynamic documents that guide daily decision-making, planning, collaboration and service delivery. May they serve as vivid and constant reminders of the responsibility all Vermonters share for helping to *realize the promise of every Vermont child*.



"Family" by Nina North, Age 6 – Windham Child Care Association, Month of the Young Child

## INTRODUCTION

Vermont's Early Childhood Framework and Vermont's Early Childhood Action Plan work synergistically to establish overarching goals and specific strategies and actions to implement those goals. When reviewing the Action Plan, it is important to review Vermont's Early Childhood Framework and understand the methods by which progress will be made and measured over time. This section provides a brief overview of the Framework and the Action Plan. For more detail on process, methodology and the structure of the Action Plan, refer to Appendix B.

### Vermont's Early Childhood Framework

Vermont's Early Childhood Framework (The Framework), which became official at the Governor's Early Childhood Summit held in October 2013, builds on Vermont's early childhood vision statement: *To realize the promise of every Vermont child.*

The Framework includes **six goals**, which are intended to keep key public and private stakeholders headed in the same direction:

- Goal 1: A Healthy Start for All Children
- Goal 2: Families and Communities Play a Leading Role
- Goal 3: High-Quality Opportunities for All Children
- Goal 4: Invest Now for Our Future
- Goal 5: Know We're Making a Difference
- Goal 6: An Innovative and Connected System

The Framework also includes **twelve principles** that are a foundation for all six goals:

- Think about the whole child
- Consider all children
- Focus on quality
- Build on what is known to work
- Take the long view
- Hold ourselves accountable
- Involve communities and families as equal partners



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- Strengthen connections between education, human services and health
- Invest early in a child's life
- Promote families' economic security
- Emphasize prevention
- Keep collaboration at the heart of this work together

### Getting to Action

Vermont's Early Childhood Framework is the "what"—what will be done in a broad way to *realize the promise of every Vermont child*. This accompanying statewide Early Childhood Action Plan is the "how"—how the plan to move ahead together on those goals will be realized and how progress towards those goals will be measured. It is intended to be aspirational. It is also a reflection of work already underway, including major areas of work in the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant.

A statewide Action Planning Committee developed the Action Plan (*see Appendix C for a list of Committee members*). The Committee carefully considered input received on proposed strategies and actions, which were generated by work leading up to and at the Governor's Early Childhood Summit in October 2013. During December 2013 and January 2014, the Action Planning Committee held eight regional action planning forums (co-hosted by the Building Bright Futures Regional Councils), convened several meetings with statewide organizations, created and distributed three surveys and hosted three conference calls (open to the public). The Committee is grateful for all the feedback it received on the proposed strategies and actions.

This Action Plan strives to create new linkages among the people, organizations and services that make up Vermont's early childhood system. This includes the health care, human services, early learning and development, and K-3 education sectors. The early childhood system is not yet fully integrated, but that goal becomes more attainable as partnerships increase, collaboration improves and Vermonters think more broadly about how to use resources wisely.

### Overview of Results-Based Accountability

The State of Vermont has adopted Results-Based Accountability (RBA) to measure progress on many key initiatives. Since significant time and resources have already been spent on training and implementation of RBA, the Action Planning Committee used RBA to guide the thinking and the format of the Action Plan. RBA "is a disciplined way of thinking and taking action that communities can use to improve the lives of children, families and the community as a whole. RBA can also be used by agencies to improve the performance of their programs. RBA can be adapted to fit the unique needs and circumstances of different communities and programs."<sup>2</sup> The Action Planning Committee recognizes that some of the goals (listed

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in this plan as “Results”) lent themselves more easily than others to being stated as conditions of well-being. This document is an interim step to complete the translation to RBA and will continue to be refined from an RBA perspective over time.

**Here are the Action Plan's Results, which turn the original Framework goals into conditions of well-being for Vermont's young children and their families:**

EARLY CHILDHOOD FRAMEWORK GOALS	EARLY CHILDHOOD ACTION PLAN RESULTS
Goal 1: A Healthy Start for All Children	All children have a healthy start.
Goal 2: Families and Communities Play a Leading Role	Families and communities play a leading role in children's well-being.
Goal 3: High-Quality Opportunities for All Children	All children and families have access to high-quality opportunities that meet their needs.
Goal 4: Invest Now for Our Future	Vermont invests in prevention and plans for the future success of children.
Goal 5: Know We're Making a Difference	Data and accountability drive progress in early childhood outcomes.
Goal 6: An Innovative and Connected System	The early childhood system is innovative and integrated across sectors in order to better serve children and families.

### Introduction to the Early Childhood Action Plan's Structure

The Early Childhood Action Plan is a starting point, not an ending point, to improve the quality of life for Vermont's youngest children and their families. It represents intentional collaboration between state government, school districts, direct service providers, advocates, the business sector, private funders and many other partners. The Action Plan embodies an unwavering commitment to continuous review and improvement. The Plan will be updated annually to reflect new information, new voices and new partnerships. In the coming year, Building Bright Futures, the Vermont Early Childhood Alliance and other stakeholders will bring in additional voices that will help to shape implementation of this work.

### **Action Steps**

This Action Plan reflects input gathered from an estimated 1,500 Vermonters over a seven-month period (July 2013-January 2014). The Action Planning Committee carefully considered that input and used it to develop the strategies and action steps outlined in the Action Plan. Many of the

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specific ideas needed to implement the action steps listed in this document have been captured in the endnotes. The Committee assumes that the leads on the action steps and the leads' collaborating partners will use these recommendations as the starting point for developing their work plans.

### **Leads**

The Action Planning Committee envisions that lead organizations or agencies will spearhead a process to initiate, plan, manage and monitor efforts to fulfill the strategies outlined in the Action Plan. This will include:

- Convening interested partners/meetings;
- Actively involving interested partners in the work;
- Setting the scope of work and developing meeting agendas;
- Establishing a process to make decisions and finalize work products;
- Clarifying roles of those involved;
- Documenting commitments and tasks and ensuring accountability;
- Sharing information with those working on a particular action.

One or more leads from state government will be involved to ensure clear accountability for the initial stage of the Action Plan's implementation. In addition, this Plan assumes that Building Bright Futures will play an integral role in the majority of the strategies and actions listed in the Plan. As such, BBF is only listed as a lead in areas where it will play a prominent or specific role.

Being a lead does *not* mean that the leads can or should do all the work involved in implementing an action or make all the decisions. The work will only be accomplished and sustained by involving diverse partners beyond those represented on the Action Planning Committee. By Summer 2014, designated leads and Building Bright Futures will work together to identify the remaining co-leads and collaborating partners from the sectors that comprise the early childhood system (early learning and development, health, human services, and K-3 education) as well as other partners, such as families, the faith community, businesses and other community partners. Building Bright Futures and/or leads will reach out through multiple networks in search of individuals and organizations interested in being a co-lead or collaborating partner on Action Plan strategies and/or actions.

**If any individual or organization would like to work on any aspect of the Action Plan, contact the lead organization/agency or Building Bright Futures. See Appendix C for contact information. The Action Planning Committee is counting on individuals and organizations to self-identify. The Action Plan's successful implementation depends on the involvement of diverse partners at the statewide, regional and local level.**

### **Measures of Progress and Timeframes for Each Action Step**

Leads identified in this document and by Building Bright Futures during the spring and summer (2014) will work together with collaborating partners to identify measures of progress and a timeframe for each action.

### **Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grant**

This Action Plan includes the major activity areas in Vermont's federal Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Grant, which Vermont received in December 2013. These areas are noted in the Action Plan (look for *RTT-ELC*).

*See Appendix B for more information regarding the Action Plan's structure.*

### Definition of Key Terms

The pre-Summit focus sessions and action planning forums highlighted the importance of creating a common language to facilitate conversations across disciplines and sectors in Vermont's early childhood system, including families, health care providers, early childhood educators, professionals working in human services, and public schools educators and administrators. As a first step, the Action Planning Committee created a preliminary **Glossary of Terms** (see *Appendix E*). The Action Plan foresees completion and wide distribution of this Glossary.

**Integrated Family Services (IFS)** merits mention here because it is integral to many of the strategies and actions in the Action Plan. IFS is an effort within the Vermont Agency of Human Services (AHS) to design and implement a family- and child-centered system of promotion, prevention, early intervention, treatment, supports and services prenatal through age twenty-two. The integration of early learning and development, human services, health services and K-12 education is a hallmark of IFS. When a child or family is in need of more support than friends and family can offer, IFS strives to support families to promote wellness and provide services to the whole family, not just the child. Health promotion and direct services will be guided by best practices including wellness, healthy communities, early intervention, clinical service, and family support. The IFS system will monitor outcomes and integrate AHS funding across programs in order to meet these goals effectively. This effort is integrated with the Early Childhood Framework and Action Plan. To that end, each result (goal) includes indicators, strategies, action steps and measures of progress that align with IFS. While IFS may not be identified in each section throughout the Action Plan, IFS—in partnership with the Vermont Agency of Education—will help advance much of the work envisioned in this Plan.

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**Children's Integrated Services (CIS)** is a resource for pregnant or postpartum women and families with children from birth to age six. It brings parents and professionals together to identify areas where a child may need additional support. The child's team will work with his/her family to coordinate prevention, early intervention, and early childhood mental health services. CIS can also link families to other community resources, including help accessing early learning and development programs. CIS is the early childhood part of the continuum of integrated services for children and families in Integrated Family Services.

Criteria for Selecting Key Strategies

In order to keep the number of strategies manageable, each goal has a maximum of six strategies. The Committee relied on extensive public input and a Results-Based Accountability approach to develop criteria to help determine which strategies would be included in the Plan (*see Appendix B*). Every strategy had to meet most but not all of the criteria to be selected for inclusion in the Action Plan.



Winston Prouty Center for Child Development – Brattleboro, Vermont  
Photo by Sarah DiNicola

# RESULT #1

## All children have a healthy start.

**Headline Indicators**

- % of children living at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level<sup>3</sup>
- % of pregnant women receiving prenatal care<sup>4</sup>
- % of children receiving well-child visits annually<sup>5</sup>
- % of children ready for school in all 5 domains of healthy development (social and emotional development, approaches to learning, communication, cognitive development and general knowledge, and physical health and development)<sup>6</sup>

**Data Development Agenda**

- % of children receiving appropriate developmental screening according to Bright Futures<sup>7</sup>
- % of families who feel prepared and equipped to raise their children successfully
- % of families with children with special needs who feel prepared and equipped to raise their children successfully

Strategies	Action Steps	Measures of Progress	Timeframe	Lead(s)
<b>#1: Support families as children’s primary caregivers</b>	a) Advocate for paid sick days and parental leave policies so parents can be at home with newborns or a child who is newly adopted <sup>8</sup> and care for themselves and their children when sick			Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility, Vermont Paid Sick Days Coalition
	b) Educate employers and employees about flexible work arrangements allowable under Vermont law			Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility

	c) Ensure respite and flexible funding are available to families of children with special needs especially at critical/crisis times	
<b>#2: Establish a voluntary system that connects children birth through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade (0-8 years old) with the resources they need to support optimal growth and development, including developmental screening</b>	a) Expand the training of nurses to provide health care consultation to early learning and development programs in each region [RTT-ELC]	Department of Health, Child Development Division/Department for Children and Families (DCF) <sup>9</sup>
	b) Implement <i>Help Me Grow</i> <sup>10</sup> and its 4 components:	Department of Health, Child Development Division/DCF, Agency of Education, <i>Help Me Grow</i> Leadership Team
	• Child health care outreach for early detection of developmental concerns	
	• Community outreach to promote networking opportunities among families and services providers	
	• Creation of a centralized telephone access point for connecting children and their families to services and care coordination	Building Bright Futures
	• Data collection to understand gaps and barriers in the system	Agency of Human Services, Agency of Education, Building Bright Futures
<b>#3: Ensure access to prenatal care, child health services</b>	a) Promote Bright Futures Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children and	Department of Health, American Academy of Pediatrics (VT chapter)

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<b>(including preventive services and dental care) and support services for adults (including mental health and substance abuse treatment)</b>	<p>Adolescents (3rd edition) as the preventive service standard for high-quality well care in medical homes (this action also relates to Result #3)</p> <p>b) Utilize the Integrated Family Services (IFS) team to promote care coordination in medical practices for children and their parents and to connect child health priorities to health reform</p> <p>c) Explore inclusion of maternity care medical homes in the Blueprint for Health, including depression screening, domestic violence screening and substance abuse cessation</p> <p>d) Inventory mental health and substance abuse resources for parents to determine if there is a gap</p>	<p>Integrated Family Services/AHS, American Academy of Pediatrics (VT chapter)</p> <p>Department of Health, Integrated Family Services/AHS</p> <p>Agency of Human Services</p>
<b>#4: Promote and utilize evidence-based home visiting</b>	<p>a) Ensure alignment and coordination of home visiting models to ensure comprehensive availability of services while preventing duplication</p> <p>b) Initiate or expand the following evidence-based home visiting models throughout the state:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nurse family partnership</li><li>• Parents as Teachers</li><li>• Maternal Early Childhood Sustained Home Visiting (MECSH)</li></ul>	<p>Department of Health, Child Development Division/DCF, Parent Child Center Network, Home Visiting Alliance</p> <p>Home Visiting Alliance</p>

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- Early Start
- Early Head Start

c) Explore use of Medicaid funding under the framework of Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) to support home visiting service

Integrated Family Services/AHS

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**#5: Ensure that all children have access to adequate nutrition at home, in early learning and development programs, at school, after school and during the summer**

a) Increase participation in existing food and nutrition programs and expand capacity of such programs<sup>11</sup>

Child Development Division/DCF, Building Bright Futures, Hunger Free Vermont

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**#6: Develop community efforts in the public and private sectors to enhance children's safety**

a) Ensure that regional/community plans incorporate local safety planning for children (better lighting, improved transportation options, community centers/hubs) and accessible recreation options

Agency of Human Services, Building Bright Futures

b) Tie child service locations, including but not limited to early learning and development programs and other programs where children are physically present, into regional and state emergency and evacuation plans

Agency of Human Services, Building Bright Futures

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## RESULT #2

### Families and communities play a leading role in children's well-being.

**Headline Indicators**

- % of families who report participating in school decision-making processes<sup>12</sup>
- % of families utilizing opportunities for increasing social supports<sup>13</sup>
- % of families with children with special needs who report involvement and satisfaction in their child's early intervention/special education services birth-21 years<sup>14</sup>
- Rate per 1,000 children with Family Services Division/Department for Children and Families involvement (investigation, ongoing services, supervision, or custody)

**Data Development Agenda<sup>15</sup>**

- % of Board and planning commission membership bringing a family-centered perspective to decisions
- % of Boards and regional planning commissions that recruit families to participate

Strategies	Action Steps	Measures of Progress	Timeframe	Lead(s)
<b>#1: Engage with families as their child's first and most important teacher</b>	a) Develop and implement intentional, evidence-based parent education and support opportunities (including care of children with special needs)			Agency of Human Services, Parent Child Center Network
	b) Create a family guide to the Vermont Early Learning Standards [RTT-ELC]			Child Development Division/DCF, Agency of Education
	c) Embed the Strengthening Families framework in early childhood service delivery <sup>16</sup>			Agency of Human Services, Building Bright Futures

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d) Implement a statewide, early multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS)<sup>17</sup> that provides evidence-based practices, family education and resources to support social-emotional well-being (<i>also see Result #3, Strategy #4</i>)</li> <li>e) Strengthen peer support and education through family support organizations</li> </ul>	<p>Agency of Education</p> <p>Vermont Family Network, Vermont Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health</p>
<p><b>#2: Develop a statewide approach that enriches and expands family leadership at the provider, agency and community level</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Convene a statewide Family Leadership Team, comprised of at least 51% families with children birth through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, to develop a statewide family leadership plan (<i>see Appendix A for plan components</i>)</li> <li>b) Develop and implement the statewide family leadership plan</li> <li>c) Engage School Boards, local PTAs/PTOs and other school-based groups to enhance family leadership</li> </ul>	<p>Vermont Family Network, Vermont Federation of Families for Children 's Mental Health, Head Start-State Collaboration Office</p>
<p><b>#3: Promote family-centered employment policies that support the physical and social emotional needs of children and their families</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Provide businesses, schools and other employers with the tools they need to implement family-friendly workplace policies</li> <li>b) Explore new workplace standards in Vermont</li> </ul>	<p>Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility</p>

**#4: Strengthen community-based decision-making with respect to resource allocation and early childhood service delivery systems**

- a) Implement Integrated Family Services (IFS), including Children's Integrated Services (CIS), in all Agency of Human Services regions *(see Appendix A for details)*
- b) Strengthen community-based decision-making through the Building Bright Futures Regional Councils and local school districts

Agency of Human Services, Building Bright Futures

Building Bright Futures, Agency of Education

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## RESULT #3

**All children and families have access to high-quality opportunities that meet their needs.**

### ***Headline Indicators***

- % of school districts offering Pre-k<sup>18</sup>
- % of children enrolled in Pre-k programs<sup>19</sup>
- Regulated early learning and development providers by STAR Level including after-school care<sup>20</sup>
- % of families who can access early learning and development opportunities within 5 miles from residence<sup>21</sup>

### ***Data Development Agenda***<sup>22</sup>

- % of families who believe opportunities are affordable
- % of families who feel able to choose in-home or out-of-home care from 0-8 years

<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Measures of Progress</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Lead(s)</b>
<b>#1: Implement policies that enhance family stability and economic security</b> <sup>23</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Explore expansion of the current child care tax credit to all families who utilize nationally accredited or STARS-rated early learning and development programs</li> <li>b) Promote initiatives that lead to a livable wage for all families, including annual increases in the minimum wage</li> <li>c) Strengthen the Reach Up Program<sup>24</sup> based on the recommendations of the Reach Up Work Group<sup>25</sup></li> </ul>			Agency of Human Services, Building Bright Futures ( <i>co-leads for all actions in this strategy</i> )

- d) Promote initiatives that address homelessness and housing needs for children and families *(see Appendix A for details)*
- e) Promote initiatives that provide fuel assistance for families with young children *(see Appendix A for details)*
- f) Ensure that Building Bright Futures Regional Councils work with diverse partners to develop and track multi-sector measures related to families’ economic security, i.e. housing, transportation, fuel, nutrition<sup>26</sup>

**#2: Expand access to high-quality services and programs for all families with young children by increasing quality, capacity and affordability**

- a) Expand access to affordable, high-quality early learning and development programs by:
  - Expanding access to and increase rates in the Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP)
  - Establishing universal Pre-k education in all school districts through qualified public school-based programs and/or partnerships with qualified early learning and development programs and Head Start; encourage partnerships with private full-day/full-

Child Development Division/DCF, Building Bright Futures, Vermont Early Childhood Alliance

	<p>year qualified early learning and development programs</p> <p>b) Implement the Promise Communities initiative [RTT-ELC]<sup>27</sup></p> <p>c) Identify and assess potential areas for investment and/or expansion in early learning and development programs (see Appendix A for details)</p>	<p>Child Development Division/DCF</p>
<p><b>#3: Ensure a continuum of holistic, family-centered services for young children who are experiencing, or are at risk for, developmental delays due to behavioral or physical health concerns, including children with chronic health conditions</b></p>	<p>a) Support outreach related to the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) Part C to assure all eligible children are identified early and their families have access to the necessary services and supports</p> <p>b) Leverage federal funding opportunities to promote prevention and early intervention activities which support young children and families</p> <p>c) Expand the capacity of the current family support networks to do outreach to school- and community-based early childhood programs as a resource to support them in serving children with special needs</p>	<p>Child Development Division/DCF, Agency of Education</p>
<p><b>#4: Strengthen the quality of early childhood services throughout the early childhood system through a focus on</b></p>	<p>a) Use science, research data and promising practices to drive quality, including in programs that serve children with special needs (see Appendix A for details)</p>	<p>Child Development Division/DCF, Agency of Education</p>

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<b>alignment and best practices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b) Improve teaching practices in early learning and development programs</li> <li>c) Build alignment among the early childhood sectors, especially early learning and development and K-3 education including the Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS) and Common Core <i>(see related actions in Result #6)</i></li> <li>d) Implement a PreK-Grade 3 approach that aligns curriculum and practices across settings in selected high-needs school communities [RTT- ELC]</li> <li>e) Develop a monitoring system for publicly-funded Pre-kindergarten programs [RTT-ELC]</li> </ul>	<p>Child Development Division/DCF</p> <p>Child Development Division/DCF, Agency of Education</p> <p>Agency of Education</p> <p>Agency of Education</p>
<b>#5: Ensure quality by adequately supporting the early childhood workforce<sup>28</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Equip the early childhood workforce across sectors in the early childhood system with the common knowledge and skills needed to support children's optimal learning and development and family stability <i>(see Appendix A for details)</i></li> <li>b) Increase compensation of and benefits available to the early childhood workforce without creating a cost shift to families <i>(see Appendix A for details)</i></li> </ul>	<p>Professional Preparation and Development Committee/Building Bright Futures, Vermont Early Childhood Alliance</p> <p>Professional Preparation and Development Committee/Building Bright Futures</p>



## RESULT #4

### Vermont invests in prevention and plans for the future success of children.

#### **Headline Indicators**

- % of child care providers charging the Vermont Child Care Financial Assistance base rate or less<sup>29</sup>
- % of state contracts and grants funding prevention programs<sup>30</sup>
- % of State of Vermont budget appropriated to address prevention and early childhood<sup>31</sup>

#### **Data Development Agenda**

- % of businesses with family flexible policies
- % of early childhood workforce engaged in ongoing professional development

Strategies	Action Steps	Measures of Progress	Timeframe	Lead(s)
<b>#1: Develop an intentional approach to guide Vermont's current and future early childhood expenditures</b>	a) Create an early childhood finance and investment plan <i>(see Appendix A for details)</i>			Governor's Office, Agency of Human Services, Agency of Education, Building Bright Futures, Vermont Early Childhood Alliance
<b>#2: Promote sustainable business models</b>	a) Encourage shared services alliances  b) Research other approaches that could reduce costs in early learning and development programs without sacrificing quality or resulting in a cost-shift to families or programs/personnel			Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children
<b>#3: Increase the early childhood focus in health care payment</b>	a) Ensure representation of early childhood health representatives (policy and provider) in policy			Integrated Family Services/AHS, Building Bright Futures, Early Childhood Campaign

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<p><b>reform efforts</b></p>	<p>conversations related to health care reform</p> <p>b) Explore financing options for early childhood in health care reform <i>(see Appendix A for details)</i></p>	
<p><b>#4: Balance resources for treatment with resources for prevention at the whole-population level, with a focus on children and families</b></p>	<p>a) Encourage re-investment of savings in prevention while preserving access to treatment for children and families<sup>32</sup></p> <p>b) Encourage public and private investments in prevention and promotion of healthy development</p>	<p>Agency of Human Services, Building Bright Futures</p>
<p><b>#5: Increase public awareness about the importance for Vermont's of investing in children's early years<sup>33</sup></b></p>	<p>a) Launch a statewide public awareness campaign in coordination with state and local partners</p> <p>b) Develop capacity beyond traditional early childhood stakeholders to advocate on behalf of young children and their families</p> <p>c) Create an ongoing mechanism to serve as a sustainable vehicle for planning, coordinating, implementing and soliciting feedback on public engagement efforts</p>	<p>Permanent Fund, Turrell Fund, A.D. Henderson Foundation</p> <p>Early Childhood Campaign, Vermont Early Childhood Alliance, Building Bright Futures</p> <p>Building Bright Futures</p>

## RESULT #5

### Data and accountability drive progress in early childhood outcomes.

#### **Headline Indicators**

- % of state-funded early childhood programs that have and regularly report on measures indicating client improvement<sup>34</sup>
- % of early childhood system partners and providers using performance management to improve client results<sup>35</sup>
- # of visits to Building Bright Futures' Early Childhood Data Reporting System (ECDRS) website

#### **Data Development Agenda**

- % of communities who are using community-specific data to inform decisions that impact children and families

Strategies	Action Steps	Measures of Progress	Timeframe	Lead(s)
<b>#1: Increase the knowledge, experience and application of Results-Based Accountability (RBA) as the accountability framework for the Early Childhood Action Plan</b>	a) Resource Building Bright Futures to build an RBA accountability system into BBF's regional plans and provide necessary training [RTT-ELC]			Governor's Office, Building Bright Futures
	b) Encourage state agencies to consider RBA as an accountability system in their work			Governor's Office, Agency of Human Services
	c) Establish policies and procedures that enhance the use of data for continuous quality improvement across sectors (health, early learning and development, health, human services and K-3 education)			Agency of Human Services, Agency of Education, Building Bright Futures

<p><b>#2: Establish a data governance structure and related processes</b></p>	<p>a) Create state-wide Data Governance Council [RTT-ELC]</p> <p>b) Revise and update <i>The Key to Good Policy, Smart Decisions and Wise Investments: Vermont's Roadmap for an Early Childhood Data Reporting System</i> (January 2012)<sup>36</sup></p>	<p>Governor's Office, Department of Information and Innovation, Building Bright Futures</p> <p>Building Bright Futures</p>
<p><b>#3: Enhance data and the use of data to inform policy and practice</b></p>	<p>a) Pursue a data development agenda for early childhood</p> <p>b) Improve data access and collection across programs and systems while providing adequate funding and training as needed [RTT-ELC] (see Appendix A for details)</p> <p>c) Integrate and improve data analysis and data literacy across early childhood sectors: early learning and development, K-3 education, health and human services (see Appendix A for details)</p>	<p>Agency of Human Services, Agency of Education, Building Bright Futures</p> <p>Agency of Human Services, Agency of Education, Building Bright Futures</p> <p>Agency of Human Services, Agency of Education, Building Bright Futures</p>

## RESULT #6

**The early childhood system is innovative and integrated across sectors in order to better serve children and families.**

### ***Headline Indicators***

- % of communities with an innovative funding model for early childhood services<sup>37</sup>
- % of state-funded early childhood-focused programs that are accountable to shared performance measures across contracts/grants<sup>38</sup>
- Achievement Gap: Test score gaps between students eligible for free and reduced lunch and those not eligible as determined by % proficient in math, % proficient in reading, % proficient in science
- % of children reading at or above grade level in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade<sup>39</sup>
- % of children under age 8 who are in families who apply for Economic Services Division General Assistance vouchers for temporary shelter<sup>40</sup>
- % of time children (0-18) who attend Pre-K – grade 12 school<sup>41</sup>

### ***Data Development Agenda***

% of stakeholders who can demonstrate their contribution to *realizing the promise of every Vermont child*

Strategies	Action Steps	Measures of Progress	Timeframe	Lead(s)
<b>#1: Continue to develop, strengthen and align clear structures at the statewide level to ensure coordinated leadership and shared work</b>	a) Develop an agreement among the Governor's office, Agency of Education, Agency of Human Services and Building Bright Futures to create a collaborative team			Governor's Office, Agency of Education, Agency of Human Services, Building Bright Futures
	b) Utilize the Building Bright Futures State Council and Regional Councils as the coordinating bodies for cross-sector public/private discussions to identify gaps and resources,			Governor's Office, Agency of Education, Agency of Human Services, Building Bright Futures

leverage existing private/public assets and coordinate improvements to the early childhood system

- c) Provide ongoing and diverse opportunities for participation by interested individuals and organizations throughout the Building Bright Futures state and regional network to increase engagement and share accountability for building Vermont's early childhood system

Governor's Office, Agency of Education, Agency of Human Services, Building Bright Futures

**#2: Create a culture of collaboration at the state and local level that fosters systems-building across sectors**

- a) Create a clearinghouse at the state and local level within an existing structure/agreement for sharing information regarding grant opportunities across sectors (early learning and development, health, human services and K-3 education)
- b) Develop and implement a plan to guide collaboration at the state and community level (*see Appendix A for details*)
- c) Review the Early Childhood Action Plan with the K-3 community to ensure alignment and integration wherever possible
- d) Ensure that Building Bright Futures Regional Councils include diverse partners in the development of regional plans

Governor's Office, Child Development Division/DCF, Agency of Education, Building Bright Futures

Governor's Office, Child Development Division/DCF, Agency of Education, Building Bright Futures

Governor's Office, Child Development Division/DCF, Agency of Education, Building Bright Futures

Governor's Office, Child Development Division/DCF, Agency of Education, Building Bright Futures

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that respond to data and community needs<sup>42</sup>

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<b>#3: Achieve efficiency and streamline systems to create a seamless experience for families</b>	a) Standardize policies, practices and language wherever possible ( <i>see Appendix A for details</i> )	Governor's Office, Child Development Division/DCF, Agency of Education, Building Bright Futures
	b) Build connections among early childhood service providers and sectors to facilitate families' access to community resources ( <i>see Appendix A for details</i> )	Governor's Office, Child Development Division/DCF, Agency of Education, Building Bright Futures
	c) Inventory standing and ad-hoc early childhood advisory and inter-agency groups with the goal of consolidating where possible	Governor's Office, Child Development Division/DCF, Agency of Education, Building Bright Futures
	d) Increase coordination and integration among existing regional inter-agency, cross-sector teams that link service providers and families	Governor's Office, Child Development Division/DCF, Agency of Education, Building Bright Futures
	e) Improve data matching systems between the Department for Children and Families (DCF), the Department of Vermont Health Access (DVHA), and the Agency of Education (AOE) to ensure that all children who are eligible are directly certified to receive free school meals and are enrolled in all state and federal programs to which they are entitled	Governor's Office, Child Development Division/DCF, Agency of Education, Building Bright Futures

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<b>#4: Move from a competitive to a collaborative approach to resource allocation at the community level</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Remove as many barriers as possible to braiding and blending funds to support and strengthen the state's early childhood system</li><li>b) Bundle rates</li><li>c) Establish a global budget at the state level and shared outcome measures</li><li>d) Combine programmatic funding</li><li>e) Tie funding to outcomes with a shared savings model</li><li>f) Streamline how funding is used to permit greater flexibility</li><li>g) Create community outcome reporting</li><li>h) Develop a plan to identify needs and strengths in the system</li><li>i) Incentivize collaboration and shared overhead</li></ul>	Governor's Office, Integrated Family Services/AHS, Child Development Division/DCF, Agency of Education, Building Bright Futures <i>(co-leads for all actions in this strategy)</i>
<b>#5: Maximize resources and minimize duplication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Ensure that families in every community know where to go for information by clarifying roles and responsibilities among existing entities that currently serve as regional clearinghouses for child development and family services</li></ul>	Agency of Human Services, Building Bright Futures



- b) Establish a forum for developing consistent early childhood legislative priorities across agencies and advocacy groups  
Building Bright Futures, Vermont Early Childhood Alliance
- c) Develop and agree on early childhood priorities for each legislative session  
Building Bright Futures

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**#6: Create a cross-sector, inter-disciplinary early childhood workforce**

- a) Create a standing, cross-sector, inter-disciplinary Workforce Committee to identify a permanent home for developing and implementing an early childhood cross-sector, inter-disciplinary workforce plan<sup>43</sup>  
Professional Preparation and Development Committee/Building Bright Futures, Agency of Education, Child Development Division/DCF
  - b) Conduct a workforce study [RTT-ELC]<sup>44</sup>  
Child Development Division/DCF
  - c) Develop and implement a cross-sector, inter-disciplinary workforce plan *(see Appendix A for details)*  
Professional Preparation and Development Committee/Building Bright Futures, Agency of Education, Child Development Division/DCF
  - d) Work with institutions of higher education to increase professionals' access to professional development *(see Appendix A for details)*  
Professional Preparation and Development Committee/Building Bright Futures, Agency of Education, Child Development Division/DCF
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## NEXT STEPS

What an achievement to have created a statewide Early Childhood Framework and a companion Early Childhood Action Plan! Both documents represent significant public input, thoughtful consideration of competing priorities and careful selection of key strategies to guide this work. It is the Action Planning Committee's hope that everyone who reads this Action Plan and wants to be a part of it in some way will see a potential role for themselves. While overall coordination of the work envisioned in the Action Plan will take place at the statewide level, the actual work entailed in most actions will take place at a regional or community level.

As noted earlier, Building Bright Futures will work closely with partners in the public and private sectors to keep us all on track and monitor progress. This will require a feedback loop with the lead organizations/agencies regarding actions taken and how Vermonters are using the Framework and Action Plan. Building Bright Futures will convene stakeholders each year to review the Action Plan, celebrate successes, identify gaps and make mid-course corrections.

Despite Building Bright Future's key role, individual and organizational ownership of the Framework and this Action Plan will ensure these dynamic documents will guide daily decision-making, planning, collaboration and service delivery. May they serve as vivid and constant reminders of the responsibility that is collectively shared for helping *to realize the promise of every Vermont child*.

***For more information about***

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## APPENDIX A

### Details Regarding Specific Action Steps

RESULT	STRATEGY	ACTION	ACTIVITIES
<p>#2: Families and communities play a leading role in children’s well-being.</p>	<p>#2: Develop a statewide approach that enriches and expands family leadership at the provider, agency and community level</p>	<p>A</p>	<p>Input received during the development of Vermont’s Early Childhood Framework and this Action Plan highlighted the importance of including the following elements in a new agreed-upon family leadership approach for Vermont:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family leadership standards* to inform practice throughout the early childhood system and with all families including but not limited to advocacy;</li> <li>• An inventory of existing community-based opportunities for family-directed decision-making and leadership training;</li> <li>• Evidence-based family leadership training for professionals and families based on chosen approach;</li> <li>• Ways to build families’ evaluation of the quality of services into program evaluation;</li> <li>• Ways to strengthen Building Bright Futures Regional Councils to become more family-driven and serve as vehicles for family leadership;</li> <li>• Outreach to families regarding multiple pathways to become involved in local decision-making, including but not limited to Building Bright Futures Regional Councils;</li> <li>• Identification of existing family leadership in each region;</li> <li>• Clear implementation steps and timeline; and</li> <li>• A fundraising plan to ensure sustainable funding.</li> </ul> <p>*These standards should recognize families as equal partners in decision-making regarding the design, implementation and evaluation of systems</p>

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RESULT	STRATEGY	ACTION	ACTIVITIES
			changes and programs. For the purposes of this document, “equal” means that families are full participants and their perspective and input are valued the same as professionals.
#2: Families and communities play a leading role in children’s well-being.	#4: Strengthen community-based decision-making with respect to resource allocation and early childhood service delivery systems	A	Implementation of Integrated Family Services (FS) includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completing an inventory of funding in each region and determining what can be combined;</li> <li>• Determining fiscal model for payment structure including flexibility;</li> <li>• Establishing guidelines for fiscal health of organizations;</li> <li>• Establishing outcomes expected based on funding;</li> <li>• Establishing shared savings and reinvestment strategies; and</li> <li>• Creating master grants for identified community providers.</li> </ul>
#3: All children and families have access to high-quality opportunities that meet their needs.	#1: Implement policies that enhance family stability and economic security	D	Promote initiatives that address homelessness and housing needs for children and families ( <i>see Appendix A for details</i> ) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce homelessness by increasing the Emergency Solutions Grant Program in the SFY15 budget;</li> <li>• Expand the Family Supportive Housing program statewide;</li> <li>• Further enhance Community Housing Grants in SFY15 budget;</li> <li>• Support new and expanded low to moderate-income housing initiatives designed to include families with young children;</li> <li>• Double the current investment for the Vermont Rental Subsidy Program in SFY15;</li> <li>• Review and revise existing state policies and practices that create barriers to housing stability for families with children, including families with an incarcerated or recently incarcerated family member, military families and families of a parent in recovery.</li> </ul>
#3: All children and families have access to high-quality	#1: Implement policies that	E	Promote initiatives that provide fuel assistance for families with young children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore an increase in the state subsidy for LIHEAP Fuel Assistance to</li> </ul>

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RESULT	STRATEGY	ACTION	ACTIVITIES
opportunities that meet their needs.	enhance family stability and economic security		meet an average of at least 33% of annual household need; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand access to emergency heating services through Crisis Fuel Assistance so that people are eligible for emergency assistance even if they did not receive the Seasonal Fuel benefit.</li> </ul>
#3: All children and families have access to high-quality opportunities that meet their needs.	#2: Expand access to high-quality services and programs for all families with young children by increasing quality, capacity and affordability	C	Participants in the pre-Summit focus sessions and the action planning forums identified as priorities the following policy recommendations, which should be considered in conjunction with the Vermont Early Childhood Alliance's priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand capacity to assure access to Head Start and Early Head Start programs for families above 100% of the Federal Poverty Level to create inclusive settings;</li> <li>• Expand opportunities for learning outside of the school day, including summer, for children birth through third grade including but not limited to 21<sup>st</sup> Century After-School grants;</li> <li>• Expand the Strengthening Families Grant Program, with a focus on continuity of care and affordable access to comprehensive services for families and children with high needs, and include family child care homes in partnership with Vermont Birth to Three; and</li> <li>• Expand funding to support multi-generational, community-based activities and events.</li> </ul>
#3: All children and families have access to high-quality opportunities that meet their needs.	#4: Strengthen the quality of early childhood services throughout the early childhood system through a focus on alignment and best practices	A	Activities related to this action include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalizing or formalizing definitions of quality based on evidence and research in the areas of:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Early learning and development;</li> <li>○ Home visiting (see Result #1);</li> <li>○ Developmental screenings (see Result #1);</li> <li>○ Learning opportunities and skill building for parents (see Result #2);</li> <li>○ Prenatal care (see Result #1).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Establishing common measures and shared outcomes for all home visiting programs based on standards developed by the Home Visiting</li> </ul>

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RESULT	STRATEGY	ACTION	ACTIVITIES
			<p>Alliance (also see Result #1);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determining changes required at the state and/or program level to reflect these agreements;</li> <li>• Finalizing and disseminating the revised Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS) to reflect a birth through Grade 3 continuum [RTT-ELC]; and</li> <li>• Strengthening Vermont's Step Ahead Recognition System (STARS) by:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Conducting a third-party evaluation of the STARS program [RTT-ELC];</li> <li>○ Improving the Environmental Ratings Scales (ERS) validity/monitoring [RTT-ELC];</li> <li>○ Implementing annual rewards to early childhood educators through the STARS program [RTT-ELC];</li> <li>○ Sustaining annual rewards beyond RTT-ELC funding.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>#3: All children and families have access to high-quality opportunities that meet their needs.</p>	<p>#4: Strengthen the quality of early childhood services throughout the early childhood system through a focus on alignment and best practice</p>	<p>C</p>	<p>Activities related to this action include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide statewide training in the Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS) [RTT-ELC];</li> <li>• Implement new child care licensing regulations;</li> <li>• Expand and coordinate the use of Teaching Strategies GOLD and other assessment tools (birth-3<sup>rd</sup> grade) so educators use child data to individualize and inform their practices [RTT-ELC]; and</li> <li>• Implement the Classroom Scoring System (birth through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade) to provide data on quality of adult/child and child/child interactions and use the data to improve practices [RTT-ELC].</li> </ul>
<p>#3: All children and families have access to high-quality opportunities that meet their needs.</p>	<p>#5: Ensure quality by adequately supporting the early childhood workforce</p>	<p>A</p>	<p>This action includes the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement a statewide, early multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) to provide evidence-based practices, family education and resources to support social-emotional well-being (also see Result #2) [RTT-ELC];</li> <li>• Build required common knowledge and skills into each discipline's core</li> </ul>

RESULT	STRATEGY	ACTION	ACTIVITIES
			<p>competencies and continuing education (CE) requirements;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand the Apprenticeship Program [RTT-ELC];</li> <li>• Promote Mentoring, Advising, Teaching, Coaching, Consulting, Helping (M.A.T.C.H) and other relationship-based professional development opportunities [RTT-ELC];</li> <li>• Implement T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) [RTT-ELC];</li> <li>• Increase access among professionals in the early learning and development and K-3 education sectors to higher degrees and early childhood licensure [RTT-ELC];</li> <li>• Incrementally increase the number of child care licensors until the state reaches the best practice standard;</li> <li>• Build increased cultural and linguistic competency into workforce development by:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Vet various approaches and research-based training curricula (e.g. Bridges Out of Poverty and Strengthening Families) to be offered statewide by multiple agencies/organizations;</li> <li>○ Agree on shared guiding principles/approaches around building increased cultural and linguistic competency into workforce development;</li> <li>○ Use the National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) in Health and Health Care to guide practice;</li> <li>○ Identify training curricula that align with those shared guiding principles/values;</li> <li>○ Design a cross-sector approach to delivering that training state-wide and to cross-sector groups</li> <li>○ Ensure adequate resources for interpreters;</li> <li>○ Build family leadership in diverse communities (culture, ethnicity, language, socio-economic, age, disability, rural,</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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RESULT	STRATEGY	ACTION	ACTIVITIES
			urban, etc. (see also Result #2).
#3: All children and families have access to high-quality opportunities that meet their needs.	#5: Ensure quality by adequately supporting the early childhood workforce	B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish baseline comparative wage information by identifying compensation levels within the various sectors of the early childhood workforce; and</li> <li>Identify new approaches to increasing compensation and benefits for early childhood workforce, including W.A.G.E.S. and School Readiness Tax Credits.</li> </ul>
#4: Vermont invests in prevention and plans for the future success of children.	#1: Develop an intentional approach to guide Vermont's current and future early childhood expenditures	A	<p>This finance and investment plan must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include an inventory and analysis of how Vermont funds services for young children and their families;</li> <li>Utilize existing resources and newly-acquired funds;</li> <li>Emphasize quality assurance;</li> <li>Ensure compliance with entitlement programs' requirements (Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment, Individuals with Disabilities Act Part B and C, etc.);</li> <li>Enable flexible use of resources;</li> <li>Promote sustainability;</li> <li>Includes no-cost and low-cost approaches;</li> <li>Ensure equal access to services regardless of geography; and</li> <li>Ensure equitable distribution of resources among regions by creating and obtaining approval by the Agency of Human Services Secretary and relevant Commissioners for a funding allocation methodology that takes into account poverty level, number of children in region, number of children in poverty, regional size and other relevant region-specific factors.</li> </ul>
#4: Vermont invests in prevention and plans for the future success of children.	#3: Increase the early childhood focus in health care payment reform	B	<p>This action includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pursuit of legislation requiring that some of the Accountable Care Organizations' (ACO) shared savings has to be invested in early childhood health and developmental promotion, prevention and early</li> </ul>



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RESULT	STRATEGY	ACTION	ACTIVITIES
	efforts		intervention services; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore use of Medicaid funding under the framework of EPSDT to support services offered to young children and their families in Children's Integrated Services (CIS).</li> </ul>
#5: Data and accountability drive progress in early childhood outcomes.	#3: Enhance data and its use to inform policy and practice	C	The action involves the following activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build the capacity of the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) at the Agency of Education to improve and incorporate early childhood data, i.e. Part B 619, publicly funded Pre-k, Head Start, Teaching Strategies Gold, Pre-k data, and the Kindergarten Readiness Survey (RTT-ELC);</li> <li>• Connect and simplify various reporting systems for public funding (state and federal funds);</li> <li>• Develop and train service providers to use and implement the Children's Integrated Services (CIS) data and case management system [RTT-ELC], with a goal of interoperability with the State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS);</li> <li>• Expand the capacity of the Early Childhood Data Reporting System (ECDRS).</li> </ul>
#5: Data and accountability drive progress in early childhood outcomes.	#3: Enhance data and its use to inform policy and practice	C	This action includes the following activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote data use for the purpose of improving program effectiveness;</li> <li>• "Connect the dots" (paint a comprehensive picture of child and family well-being) by strengthening the links between data related to early learning and development, K-3 education, health, human services, family support and economic security;</li> <li>• Develop better indicators;</li> <li>• Develop better methods for using data to evaluate effectiveness, including statistical modeling;</li> <li>• Develop better contextual information so stakeholders can better understand what inferences are supported by data; and</li> <li>• Connect data to Vermont's public awareness campaign (educate the public about the scope of early childhood resources and how children</li> </ul>

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RESULT	STRATEGY	ACTION	ACTIVITIES
			are doing).
#6: The early childhood system is innovative and integrated across sectors in order to better serve children and families.	#1: Continue to develop, strengthen and align clear structures at the statewide level to ensure coordinated leadership and shared work	A	This agreement will clearly identify opportunities to reduce overlap, ensure regular communication and clarify decision-making authority among the four entities.
#6: The early childhood system is innovative and integrated across sectors in order to better serve children and families.	#2: Create a culture of collaboration at the state and local level that fosters systems-building across sectors	B	<p>The collaboration plan should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include a process that allows for relationship-building and joint planning, with parent stipends for participation in planning, meetings and evaluation;</li> <li>• Build a strong foundation for collaborative relationships by providing training at the state and local level on collaboration (e.g. build it into professional development);</li> <li>• Build on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The adapted Touchpoints principles and assumptions used by the Summit Planning Committee and the Action Planning Committee to guide collaboration during the development of Vermont's Early Childhood Framework and this Action Plan (see <i>Appendix F</i>);</li> <li>○ Act 264, passed in 1988, which "...requires that human services and public education work together, involve parents and coordinate services for better outcomes for children and families. While Act 264 was enacted on behalf of children and adolescents experiencing a severe emotional disturbance and their families, the 2005 Interagency Agreement between the</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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RESULT	STRATEGY	ACTION	ACTIVITIES
			<p>Vermont Department of Education (DOE) and the Vermont Agency of Human Services (AHS) expands the target population beyond those eligible under Act 264 to include children and adolescents with disabilities who are eligible for both special education and disability-related services, including service coordination, provided by the Vermont Agency of Human Services” (excerpted from the DOE/AHS Interagency Agreement, Users Guide: April, 2006).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A research study, supported by the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation (OPRE) within the U.S. Administration for Children and Families, regarding the strength and impact of collaboration among early learning and development partners at the state and local levels and the impact of collaboration on the quality of early learning and development services to children and families. This research grant was awarded to The Education Development Center (EDC) of Newton, MA, in which Vermont and Maryland are identified as participating state partners.</li> </ul>
<p>#6: The early childhood system is innovative and integrated across sectors in order to better serve children and families.</p>	<p>#3: Achieve efficiency and streamline to create a seamless system for families</p>	<p>A</p>	<p>This action involves the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build a common language across sectors by completing, distributing and regularly updating the Glossary of Terms (<i>see Appendix E</i>);</li> <li>• Standardize (preferable) or align state regulations, standards and reporting requirements;</li> <li>• Create a common application for all child development and family support services;</li> <li>• Unify and simplify administrative and program oversight activities through Integrated Family Services (Agency of Human Services); and</li> <li>• Analyze the array of diverse grants and contracts across the Agency of Human Services to create a shared proposal for a more streamlined and</li> </ul>

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RESULT	STRATEGY	ACTION	ACTIVITIES
			consistent approach to more robustly and consistently supporting their core functions across Vermont catchment areas.
#6: The early childhood system is innovative and integrated across sectors in order to better serve children and families.	#3: Achieve efficiency and streamline to create a seamless system for families	B	This action includes (but is not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening the Parent Child Center Network;</li> <li>• Creating seamless transitions from early childhood to K-12 system; and</li> <li>• Increasing the number of full-service schools as space allows and in partnership with community partners.</li> </ul>
#6: The early childhood system is innovative and integrated across sectors in order to better serve children and families.	#6: Create a cross-sector, inter-disciplinary early childhood workforce	C	Elements of the plan should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core, targeted and intensive training elements;</li> <li>• Trainers;</li> <li>• Funding sources;</li> <li>• Supervision models; and</li> <li>• A robust family orientation in workforce development.</li> </ul>
#6: The early childhood system is innovative and integrated across sectors in order to better serve children and families.	#6: Create a cross-sector, inter-disciplinary early childhood workforce	D	This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring course sequencing and consistency across institutions regarding credits accepted [RTT-ELC];</li> <li>• Implementing effective policies, practices, and protocols to enhance alignment in curriculum offerings among all higher education institutions in the state;</li> <li>• Providing rationale and rewards for cross-sector articulation agreements;</li> <li>• Encouraging all higher education institutions to revisit, reconsider, and if necessary recalibrate their outreach efforts to serve and support the professional development needs, especially as they align with attainment of Associate's degrees and Bachelor's degrees, of early childhood educators currently in the field; and</li> <li>• Updating the current Peer Review Process (alternate pathway to teacher licensure) and provide more financial support for individuals using that option.</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX B

### Process, Methodology and Structure

#### **Results-Based Accountability**

With Results-Based Accountability (RBA) in mind, the Action Plan is organized around:

- **Results:** A condition of well-being for children, adults, families or communities or a subset of the whole population (children in Vermont birth through age 8 and their families). Since the results in this Action Plan are intentionally cross-sector (early learning and development, K-3 education, health and human services), many strategies fit under more than one result. Sometimes referred to as *outcomes*.
- **Indicators (for each result):** Ways of measuring progress in relation to desired results (outcomes). Trend lines (patterns over time) for each indicator use historical data points as far back as possible to show where we have been. That most current point on the trend line tells us where we are now. We can forecast (through data analytics) to gauge where we think we will be if we do nothing to make change. We can select a target on the trend line to identify where we hope to be in the next year and the years following. Changes in the indicators demonstrate the effectiveness of the strategies. Changes in the indicators help to demonstrate the effectiveness of the strategies.
- **Strategies:** A coherent collection of actions that have a reasonable chance of improving results. Strategies are often implemented as programs, initiatives, systems and services that have a reasonable chance of improving results and are measured by leverage, feasibility, specificity, and values. Many strategies in this Action Plan are listed under a particular result but address other results as well—one indication of an integrated, statewide early childhood system.
- **Action Steps:** The steps necessary to achieve the selected strategies successfully, taken by individual partners and/or collaborative groups.
- **Measures of progress:** Accomplishments that show progress on an action.
- **Time frames for each action:** The time frame refers to the anticipated period within which implementation will occur. Some actions can be achieved immediately, while others will occur over time.
- **Lead:** The organization, agency, committee or group that is accountable for progress on the action steps.

### **Action Plan Leads**

- Whenever the Vermont Agency of Human Services (AHS) is identified as the lead, a reference to AHS could include Integrated Family Services (IFS), a department within AHS, or a combination of departments within AHS.
- Being a lead does *not* mean that the leads could or should do all the work involved in implementing an action. The work will only be accomplished and accomplishments sustained by involving diverse partners beyond those represented on the Action Planning Committee.
- In some cases, the Action Planning Committee was able to identify a lead outside of state government because that organization heads up work already underway related to a particular action. By Summer 2014, designated leads and Building Bright Futures will work together to identify the remaining co-leads and collaborating partners from the sectors that comprise the early childhood system (early learning and development, health, human services, and K-3 education) as well as other partners, such families, the faith community, businesses and other community partners. Building Bright Futures and the leads will reach out through multiple networks to request the names of individuals and organizations interested in being a co-lead or collaborating partner on Action Plan strategies and/or actions.
- A collaborative team, which includes representation from the Governor's Office, the Vermont Agency of Education, the Vermont Agency of Human Services, and Building Bright Futures, is listed as the lead for several strategies. This team is an outgrowth of the pre-Summit focus sessions that led up to the Governor's Early Childhood Summit in 2013. Session participants repeatedly highlighted the pressing need for a clear structure at the statewide level to ensure coordinated leadership and shared work among state agencies. While not a decision-making body, this team will serve as a coordination hub and catalyst for collaboration at the state and community level.

### **Criteria for Selecting Key Strategies**

Below are the criteria used to determine which strategies to include in the Action Plan.

- **Effectiveness**
  - The strategy has a proven track record. If not, innovative initiatives can be linked to measurable outcomes.
  - The strategy's effectiveness can be measured by existing data. If not, there is capacity to generate the necessary data.

- **Breadth**
  - The strategy puts systems in place that are cross-sector (health, child development, human services and K-3 education) and enhance integration.
  - The strategy is holistic in its view of children, families and the early childhood system (health, human services, early learning and development and K-3 education).
  
- **Reach**
  - The strategy is feasible.
  - The resources are available to effectively accomplish the strategy.
  - The strategy can be sustained over time. If not, that is acceptable.
  - The strategy touches the whole population and/or an intentionally targeted sub-population.
  - The strategy involves a solution that addresses the root causes of the conditions that undermine optimal child development and family stability.
  
- **Efficiency:** The strategy builds in some way on work already underway without duplicating services or programs.
- **Leverage:** The proposed strategy will make a difference as measured by critical indicators.
- **Specificity:** The strategy is specific enough to be implemented.

## APPENDIX C

### Contact Information for Listed Organizations and Agencies

**American Academy of Pediatrics (Vermont chapter):** Stephanie Winters, Executive Director, 802-223-7898, [swinters@vtmd.org](mailto:swinters@vtmd.org)

#### **Building Bright Futures**

*State Council:* Julie Coffey, Executive Director, 802-876-5010, [jcoffey@buildingbrightfutures.org](mailto:jcoffey@buildingbrightfutures.org)

#### *Building Bright Futures Regional Councils*

Bennington Region: Robin Stromgren, 802-447-2887, [rstromgren@buildingbrightfutures.org](mailto:rstromgren@buildingbrightfutures.org)

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Chittenden County: Julianne Nickerson, 802-860-1110, [juliannebbfdsc@gmail.com](mailto:juliannebbfdsc@gmail.com)

Franklin/Grand Isle Region: Loli Berard, 802-370-0838, [fgibbfdirectservice@gmail.com](mailto:fgibbfdirectservice@gmail.com)

Hartford Region: Kelly Wallace, 802-649-3268, [kellyw@the-family-place.org](mailto:kellyw@the-family-place.org)

Lamoille Valley: Anne Farley, 802-888-0539, [bbf@lamoillefamilycenter.org](mailto:bbf@lamoillefamilycenter.org)

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Rutland Region: Jan Krantz, 802-775-9711, [jan.krantz@rcpcc.org](mailto:jan.krantz@rcpcc.org)

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*Professional Preparation and Development Committee:* Jan Walker, Director Quality Enhancement, Workforce and Systems Development, Child Development Division, 802-769-6426, [jan.walker@state.vt.us](mailto:jan.walker@state.vt.us)

**Early Childhood Campaign:** Robyn Freedner-Maguire, Campaign Manager, 802-310-6683, [robyn.campaign.vt@gmail.com](mailto:robyn.campaign.vt@gmail.com)

**Head Start-State Collaboration Office:** Ben Allen, Director, 802-769-6139, [Ben.Allen@state.vt.us](mailto:Ben.Allen@state.vt.us)

**Home Visiting Alliance:** Mary Barrosse Schwartz, Executive Director, Vermont Business Roundtable (VBR) Research and Education



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Foundation, 802-362-7235, Mary@vbrfoundation.org

**Hunger Free Vermont:** Jenna Whitson, Child Nutrition Advocate, 802-865-0255, jwhitson@hungerfreevt.org

**Governor's Office:** Alyson Richards, Director of Special Projects and Inter-Governmental Relations, Office of Governor Peter Shumlin, 371-9750, Alyson.Richards@state.vt.us

**Paid Sick Days Coalition:** Carlen Finn, Executive Director, Voices for Vermont's Children, 802-229-6377, carlenf@voicesforvtkids.org

**Parent Child Center Network:** Kim Coe, Director of Residential and Community Treatment, Lund Center, 802-864-7467, kimc@lundvt.org

**Vermont Agency of Education**

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Manuela Fonseca, Early Education Coordinator, 802-479-1418, Manuela.fonseca@state.vt.us

**Vermont Agency of Human Services**

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*Integrated Family Services:* Melissa Bailey, Director, 802-871-3259, Melissa.bailey@state.vt.us

*Department for Children and Families*

- *Child Development Division:* Reeva Murphy, Deputy Commissioner, 802-769-6420, [reeva.murphy@state.vt.us](mailto:reeva.murphy@state.vt.us)
- *Department of Health:* Breena Holmes, Director, Maternal and Child Health Division, 802-863-7347, breena.holmes@state.vt.us

**Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children:** Melissa Riegel-Garrett, Executive Director, 802-244-6282, child33@myfairpoint.net

**Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility:** Andrea Cohen, Executive Director, 802-862-8347, andreac@vbsr.org

**Vermont Early Childhood Alliance:** Lindsay DesLauriers, Interim Director, 802-229-6377, lindsay.vtalliance@gmail.com

**Vermont Family Network:** Pam McCarthy, Executive Director, 876-5315 ext. 207, pam.mccarthy@vtfn.org

**Vermont Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health:** Kathy Holsopple, Executive Director, 802-876-7021, kholsopple@vffcmh.org

## APPENDIX D

### Action Planning Partners

Governor Peter Shumlin wishes to thank the following partners for their commitment to developing Vermont's Early Childhood Action Plan. Their sustained support will be critical to *realizing the promise of every Vermont child* and creating the comprehensive early childhood system envisioned in Vermont's Early Childhood Framework and the Early Childhood Action Plan.

#### Action Planning Committee

**Melissa Bailey**, Director, Integrated Family Services, Vermont Agency of Human Services

**Charlie Biss**, Director, Children, Adolescent and Family Unit, Vermont Department of Mental Health

**Kim Coe**, Director of Residential and Community Treatment Programs, Lund Family Center

**Julie Coffey**, Executive Director, Building Bright Futures State Advisory Council

**Andrea Cohen**, Executive Director, Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility

**Sheila Duranleau**, Associate Director, Central Vermont Community Action Head Start

**Karin Edwards**, Director, Pre-k through Middle School Integrated Support for Learning, Vermont Agency of Education

**Carlen Finn**, Executive Director, Voices for Vermont's Children

**Manuela Fonseca**, Early Education Coordinator, Vermont Agency of Education

**Kim Friedman**, Action Plan Developer, West River Consulting

**Eddie Gale**, Program Director, A.D. Henderson Foundation

**Cynthia Greene**, Health and Early Childhood Systems Coordinator, Child Development Division/DCF

**Breana Holmes**, Director, Maternal and Child Health Division, Vermont Department of Health

**Kathy Holsopple**, Executive Director, Vermont Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health

**Monica Caserta Hutt**, Director of Policy and Planning, Vermont Agency of Human Services

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**Kim Keiser**, Vermont Project Director, Turrell Fund

**Diana Langston**, Director, Essential Early Education, Burlington School District

**Pam McCarthy**, Executive Director, Vermont Family Network

**Debra McLaughlin**, Regional Coordinator, Building Bright Futures of Southeastern Vermont

**Reeva Murphy**, Deputy Commissioner, Child Development Division/DCF, Department for Children and Families

**Becky Raymond**, Regional Coordinator, Building Bright Futures of Central Vermont

**Alyson Richards**, Director of Special Projects and Inter-Governmental Relations, Office of Governor Peter J. Shumlin

**Kate Rogers**, Essential Early Education Consultant, Vermont Agency of Education

**Mary Barrosse Schwartz**, Executive Director, Vermont Business Roundtable (VBR) Research and Education Foundation

**Action Planning Family Advisory Committee**

**Sarah Alberghini Winters**, Berlin (Washington)

**Elizabeth Burt**, Moretown (Washington)

**Angie Gentley**, Northfield, VT (Washington)

**David Hoyer**, Brattleboro (Windham)

**Alicia Maddox**, White River Junction (Windsor)

**Jessica Poirier**, St Albans (Franklin)

**Woden Teachout**, Middlesex (Washington)

**Shelly Waterman**, Burlington (Chittenden)

**Amie Whitcomb**, Starksboro (Addison)

**Additional State Partners**

**Karen Garbarino**, Operations Director, Child Development Division/DCF, Vermont Department for Children and Families

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**Rebecca Holcombe**, Secretary, Vermont Agency of Education

**Laurie Hurlburt**, Executive Office Manager, Secretary's Office, Vermont Agency of Human Services

**Doug Racine**, Secretary, Vermont Agency of Human Services

**Dru Roessle**, Manager of Policy and Strategic Implementation, Vermont Agency of Human Services

**Armando Vilaseca**, former Secretary, Vermont Agency of Education

**Dave Yacovone**, Commissioner, Vermont Department for Children and Families

**Race To the Top-Early Learning Challenge Drafting Team (members not listed under Action Planning Committee)**

**Ben Allen**, Vermont Head Start Collaboration Director, Vermont Department for Children and Families

**Mark Sustic**, Consultant, Vermont Community Preschool Collaborative and Vermont Community Foundation

**Jan Walker**, Director, Statewide Systems and Community Collaboration, Vermont Department for Children and Families

**Building Bright Futures Regional Councils**

Bennington Building Bright Futures Regional Council

Rutland Building Bright Futures Regional Council

Addison Building Bright Futures Regional Council

Central Vermont Building Bright Futures Regional Council

Lamoille Valley Building Bright Futures Regional Council

Chittenden County Building Bright Futures Regional Council

Franklin Grand Isle Regional Building Bright Futures Council

Newport Regional Building Bright Futures Council

St. Johnsbury Regional Building Bright Futures Council

Hartford Regional Building Bright Futures Council

Springfield Regional Building Bright Futures Council

Building Bright Futures of Southeastern Vermont Regional Council

**Additional Private Sector Partners**

**Barbara Gebhard**, Technical Assistance Consultant, Zero To Three

**Sangree Froelicher**, Technical Assistance Consultant, Zero To Three

**Foundations**

Special thanks to the **Permanent Fund for Vermont's Children** and the **Turrell Fund** for their indispensable funding of this effort and to the **A.D. Henderson Foundation** for its in-kind contributions.

## APPENDIX E

### Glossary

**Achievement gap:** As used in the education field, this generally refers to the differences in grades and/or test scores between white students and students of color, students from high-income and from low-income families, and students in good health and students with disabilities. See also, Preparation gap.

**Alignment:** Alignment of early learning means that families, providers and teachers work together to ensure that each learning opportunity builds on children's prior learning and experiences, and that new skills and concepts children learn will prepare them for what they will learn next.

**All children:** As used in this Action Plan, "all children" means each and every child, no matter the child's family income or circumstances, race, ethnicity, culture, creed, disability or other circumstances, and regardless of developmental level.

**All, some, few:** These terms show who benefits from a program, service or activity. In this Action Plan, *all* means the general public or a whole population group, such as all 4-year-old children. *Some* means individuals or a group of the population who needs some extra help or who is doing exceptionally well. Examples are low-income, first-time mothers and fathers (need extra services) and early learning professionals who have gained extra education (doing exceptionally well). *Few* means children or families who are at high risk for poor outcomes. Examples are children and families who face barriers because of their ethnicity, race or income level, and children with disabilities.

**Assessment:** A systematic procedure for getting information about a child or a program, and using it to make judgments about characteristics of that child/program. The information can be obtained from observation, interviews, portfolios, projects, tests and/or other sources. For example, a kindergarten readiness assessment could use the observations of early learning professionals, school staff and families about a child, together with a tool to measure what the child knows or can do, to determine how well prepared the child is for kindergarten learning.

**Benchmarks:** Clear, specific descriptions of knowledge or skills that a child should have by a particular stage of development, age or grade level. The knowledge or skills can be determined through observations or documentation of the child's behavior or by samples of the child's work. Benchmarks often are used in connection with a broadly stated content standard, that is, what a child should know and/or be able to do in the content area at a particular level.

**Best practice:** The most efficient (requires the least amount of effort) and most effective (gives the best results) way of accomplishing a task, based on repeatable procedures that have proven themselves over time for large numbers of people. Generally, best practices are what experts or a large number of professionals in a field agree works best, even if the results are not yet proven by scientific research.

**Caregivers:** As used in this Action Plan, the family members, friends and neighbors (FFN) who care for children on a regular or occasional basis (not families and not licensed care providers).

**Child/Children:** For this Action Plan, “children” refers to all children prenatal through third grade, regardless of developmental level, unless a different age range is given.

**Community:** “A group of people bound by common geographical area or common interest”<sup>45</sup>

**Coordination, Cooperation and Collaboration:** Moving along a continuum from coordination to cooperation to collaboration takes time, practice and commitment. “Collaboration is the most intense level of working together. It is a structure and a process for creating change.”<sup>46</sup>

- **Coordination:** “Two or more agencies operate autonomously, yet work together to avoid duplication by sharing information and activities. This is almost a neutral point – I will agree not to compete with you. Organizational missions and goals are not taken into account – the basis for coordination is usually between individuals, but may be mandated by a 3rd party. No joint planning is required; interaction and information is on an as needed basis.”
- **Cooperation:** “By sharing information and activities, some service integration between two or more entities occurs, but agencies do not lose autonomy. When we are cooperating, we see our common interests and values. Individual relationships are supported by the organizations they represent. Missions and goals of the individual organizations are reviewed for compatibility. Some project-specific planning is required.”
- **Collaboration:** “A mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more entities to achieve common goals that could not be achieved by working alone. When we truly collaborate, we no longer protect our own possessions or turf, but come together to create something different and larger than either or our former parts. Common, new mission and goals are created. More comprehensive planning is required; many levels of communication are created, since clear information is a keystone of success. Control and risk are shared and mutual. In our collaborative moods, our language changes. We become linked together to accomplish a new thing neither of us thought about before we came together and listened to each other. Power is shared, resources are pooled.”

**Community Agencies and Organizations:** An inclusive term for community-based settings/programs that provide services to children and families birth to 8 years. The services may take place in the family’s home, a school or early learning and development setting, at the agency, or in other locations that best meet the needs of the child/family.

**Developmental delay:** The identification a child who: (1) is identified by a multidisciplinary team, in one or more of the following areas: cognitive development, physical development, language/communication, social-emotional development, or adaptive behavior/skills development; or (2) has been diagnosed with a physical or medical condition that has a high probability of resulting in a substantial delay in function in one or more of these areas.

**Disaggregated:** Split apart. Data about children and students are often combined into a single score or percentage. This is helpful for understanding the big picture but does not show if there are differences for particular groups of children, such as children of color, low-income children, children with disabilities, etc.

**Domain:** A broad category or dimension of children's learning and development. These domains are often listed as: physical health, social/emotional, approaches to learning, cognitive (general knowledge), and language/communication/literacy.

**Early learning and Development:** A comprehensive term to include regulated child care centers, family child care programs, and afterschool programs serving children 0-8; public and private preschool programs; Head Start; and program-based services for children with disabilities (public school Essential Early Education for children ages 3-6 and the 0-3 CIS Early Intervention Program).

**Early Childhood Special Education:** See I.D.E.A. Part B (Section 619)

**Early childhood** (Vermont-specific): Birth through third grade with a strong emphasis on good health care for pregnant women and young families

**Early childhood system:** "An early childhood system involves more than discrete and separate services, programs, or structures located in a defined geographic area. In contrast, it provides a coordinated network of comprehensive services and supports that meet the overall health and developmental needs of young children in the context of their culture. An early childhood system also recognizes that to optimize child outcomes, families of young children must be supported through access to adequate housing, jobs, parenting support and education, health care, and adult mental health services."<sup>47</sup>

**Early childhood workforce:** Professionals across sectors (early learning and development, health, human services and K-3 education) who work with young children and their families

**Early intervention:** Programs or services designed to meet the developmental needs of infants or toddlers (birth to age 3 years) and their families. See also the definition for Part C IDEA.

**Early learning professionals:** Any adult who works in a paid capacity to care for and/or teach children (0-8) and their families. This includes, but is not limited to: licensed child care providers and directors in centers or family home child care; preschool teachers and directors; staff and directors of licensed school-age programs (usually for children and youth ages 5 to 12 years old); school staff—including Pre-k, kindergarten through third grade teachers and teachers' aides, special education teachers, family support workers, literacy coaches and administrators (e.g., principals and vice principals)—plus early intervention workers, speech and language pathologists, home visitors, librarians, nutrition and health services staff, teacher coaches and mentors, trainers, and consultants.



**Early learning system:** The various policies, programs and services for young children and for the adults who care for and teach them. When these elements are each working well *and* align with the other elements, children will have the best opportunity for optimal development.

**Early Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS):** A professional development initiative, led by the Vermont Agency of Education. Early MTSS is an evidence-based framework that focuses on building the necessary systems at the state, regional, local and program level to ensure that evidence-based practices for promoting social emotional, early literacy and numeracy competence of young children birth to six are being implemented to fidelity. It is the basis for all technical assistance and professional development provided by the Agency of Education to schools. However, it is designed to include all early childhood educators and providers, not just school personnel. Early MTSS also has family education and home-visiting components. Early MTSS aligns with K-12 MTSS to provide a full continuum of comprehensive and systemic supports for all children birth through age twenty-two.

**Equitable:** Distribution of resources based on a transparent and rational formula that reflects common principles and community needs as identified in a regional plan

**Evaluation (of children):** Process aimed at identifying and refining the specific nature of a particular client problem and related complex or confounding factors. Together, this information forms the foundation for specific recommendations and, if appropriate, leads to a plan to provide individualized intervention(s). An evaluation consists of gathering key information, exploring problem areas, formulating diagnosis(es), identifying disabilities and strengths, and assessing the client's readiness for change. In best practice, the child's individualized plan is integrated across organizations that provide services for the child/family.

**Evaluation (of programs):** Assessment of program effectiveness and performance based on a set of guidelines or criteria.

**Evidence-based:** Practices or programs that have been tested and shown to be effective using scientific research. The classic scientific method tests a hypothesis by selecting the subjects for like characteristics, then dividing them in two groups: one that receives the treatment or program being tested and one that does not (the "control" group), then comparing the results for each of the groups. For example, the High/Scope Perry Preschool study identified a sample of 123 low-income children who were at high risk of school failure, then randomly assigned half to receive the high-quality preschool and half that did not participate in preschool. This research is expensive, however, and difficult to accomplish for many kinds of programs involving people. As an alternative, rigorous evaluations can be used to compare the results of different programs to identify what is effective.

**Family leadership:** Families have a primary decision making role in the care of their own children. They also have an important and active role in developing policies and procedures governing services for all children in their community and state. This includes setting goals; designing, implementing and evaluating programs; monitoring outcomes; and partnering in funding decisions. In addition, families have accurate, understandable and complete information necessary to set goals and to make informed decisions. They have equal opportunities to provide direction for decisions that impact funding for services, treatments, and supports.

**Families:** As used in this Action Plan, children's immediate and extended families, however they define themselves. This term can also include family members who are caregivers (family, friend and neighbor [FFN] caregivers or kinship caregivers).

**Family child care (or family home child care):** A caregiver who is licensed to serve a small group of children in the caregiver's home.

**Family, Friend and Neighbor (FFN) caregivers:** Family members, friends and neighbors who care for children on a regular or occasional basis, but are not the child's parent or guardian. They are not licensed, but might or might not receive compensation from the families. In this Action Plan, FFN providers are included in the term "caregivers."

**Health:** "A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (source: World Health Organization)

**Home visiting:** Home visiting is a way of delivering an array of services in the home. The type of home visiting referred to in this Action Plan involves serving children, families and caregivers during the window of time from pregnancy through age five, with a series of visits made on a regular basis, such as weekly. These home visits are geared toward improving maternal and child outcomes, which, in turn, contribute to multiple benefits to the child during his or her lifetime.

**I.D.E.A. Part B:** The part of the federal Individual with Disabilities Education (IDEA) Act that authorizes grants to the states for early intervention services for infants and toddlers, ages 3 through 21 years, within each state's criteria for eligibility. In Vermont, this is part of Children's Integrated Services.

**I.D.E.A. Part C:** The part of the federal Individual with Disabilities Education (IDEA) Act that authorizes grants to the states for early intervention services for infants and toddlers, ages birth to 3 years, within each state's criteria for eligibility. In Vermont, this is part of Children's Integrated Services.

**Indicator:** For early learning, a number or set of numbers that help to describe the well-being and development of young children and/or the presence of services, systems and supports that promote young children's optimal learning and development. The Washington Early Learning Indicators will serve as "vital signs" of the well-being of children. Collectively, the indicators can help describe conditions for children, families, communities and early learning systems in Washington.

**Integration:** The management and delivery of early learning and development and health and human services to children and families so that they receive a seamless continuum of promotion, prevention and education services as well as therapies and supports according to their needs over time and within the various levels of the system. Coordination of these services with the K-12 education system is an important aspect of an integrated system.

**Kinship caregivers:** Grandparents and other family members who are raising children in lieu of the parents. In this Action Plan, kinship caregivers are included in the term “parents.”

**Medicaid:** A federal health insurance program that provides payment for medical expenses for those who meet income limits.

**Medical home:** A comprehensive approach to providing health care in a high-quality and cost-effective manner through a partnership between families and health care providers. Children receive the care they need from a pediatrician and other health care professionals. Children are able to access all the medical and non-medical services needed to help them achieve their maximum potential. At a comprehensive medical home, children receive both preventive care (such as immunizations) and care for acute and chronic illnesses; care or referrals for oral and behavioral/mental health needs; and physicians help families connect with needed community based services, including early learning and development programs.

**Outcomes:** In this Action Plan, the plan outcomes describe what we want to be different or better in the future.

**PreK-3:** Refers to preschool (or prekindergarten) through third grade. P-3 programs are an effort to align learning from birth or early childhood through third grade to provide a seamless fabric of learning for the child and to connect the early learning providers, teachers and families in supporting that learning.

**P-20 longitudinal data system:** A longitudinal data system collects information on the same students and teachers over time. The P-20 data system will link student, educator and financial information to track desired student outcomes and the costs of the programs. The system will be housed at the state Office of Financial Management. Development of a longitudinal student data system was recommended by Washington Learns as a way of tracking progress toward long-term educational goals and providing accountability.

**Parents:** As used in this Action Plan, includes birth mothers and fathers, adoptive and foster mothers and fathers, kinship caregivers (grandparents and other family members raising children), guardians, and other adults acting as parents. **Preparation gap:** When children enter kindergarten, the differences that are seen between the children that have had supportive and high-quality early learning experiences and those who have not. These differences can be in social-emotional development as well as in knowledge and skills. Because children who start school behind their peers tend to have a hard time catching up, the preparation gap often continues throughout school and shows up in poor grades and test scores. This continued gap is often referred to as the achievement gap.

**Performance Management:** The process by which individuals and organizations/programs/systems routinely monitor data and performance measures to make informed decisions about how to move forward

**Providers:** As used in this Action Plan, includes early learning professionals and health care professionals, depending on the context.

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**School-age workforce:** As used in this Action Plan, includes all staff working in licensed school-age programs serving children and youth ages 5 to 12 years old.

**School staff:** As used in this Action Plan, includes all school personnel serving children in Pre-K, kindergarten, and first through third grades, such as teachers, teachers' aides, family support workers, literacy coaches, librarians, nutrition and health services staff, and school administrators.

**Screening:** Use of brief and objective standardized tools and to identify children at risk of developmental delay and the need for referral for evaluation. It is a formal process that occurs at defined intervals and points of entry into services and any time a child is identified at risk through surveillance. Screening may occur at a primary care practice, mental health or other early childhood or provider settings. Interpretation of screening should take into consideration other child and family contextual factors in the determination of whether one or more referrals are needed.

**Social-emotional learning:** Knowledge and skills in the awareness and management of emotions, setting and achieving personal and academic goals, interpersonal skills, establishing and maintaining positive relationships, and demonstrating decision-making and responsible behavior.

**Strategies:** The Action Plan strategies describe specific ideas for achieving the plan's outcomes.

**Success:** What is considered success differs in different cultures and from person to person. As used in this Action Plan, success refers to achieving learning goals, getting passing grades in school, meeting the desired outcomes of programs, and living up to one's potential.

**Surveillance:** The ongoing, longitudinal, cumulative process of recognizing children who may be at risk of developmental delays. Surveillance may occur in primary care practices, early learning and development settings or other environments applying population-based strategies for early detection of risk or problems.

**System:** A group of independent elements that interact and that together form a unified whole. See "Child care system."

**Vision:** The vision for this Action Plan shows what we want for children and what our work together will look like.

### *SOURCES CONSULTED:*

*Washington Early Learning Plan (September 2010) and Vermont's L.A.U.N.C.H. grant*

## APPENDIX F

### Adapted Touchpoints™ Principles to Guide Systems-Building Work

#### Adapted Touchpoints™ Principles to Guide Collaboration

- Recognize what you bring to the interaction
- Look for opportunities to support mastery and build creativity in your colleagues, community partners and individual community members with whom you work
- Use a shared focus on strengthening family and community systems in service of early development as a common lens
- Value disorganization as a critical opportunity to promote change and growth
- Value and understand the relationship between you and your colleague(s)
- Be willing to discuss matters that go beyond your traditional role
- Keep children as the focus of your work
- Value passion wherever you find it

#### Assumptions about Colleagues and Community Partners

- Your colleague is as much an expert as you are.
- Everyone you work with has strengths.
- Everyone you work with wants to help children thrive.
- Providers and practitioners have ambivalent feelings about change.
- Parents play a critical role in contributing toward and participating in systems building.
- Systems-building is a process built on trial and error.

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## APPENDIX G

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Act 104 established Building Bright Futures in state statute. For more information, go to <http://buildingbrightfutures.org/about/statewide/act-104/>.

<sup>2</sup> Results Leadership Group, *Results-Based Accountability: For Communities and Programs that want to get From Talk to Action*, [www.resultsleadership.org](http://www.resultsleadership.org).

<sup>3</sup> Data sources for this indicator will be the Vermont Agency of Human Services and the Annie Casey Foundation.

<sup>4</sup> The data source for this indicator will be the Vermont Agency of Human Services.

<sup>5</sup> The data source for this indicator will be the Vermont Agency of Human Services.

<sup>6</sup> The data source for this indicator will be the Vermont Agency of Education.

<sup>7</sup> Bright Futures Bright (not to be confused with Building Bright Futures) "...is a national health promotion and disease prevention initiative that addresses children's health needs in the context of family and community" (source: <http://brightfutures.aap.org/>).

<sup>8</sup> Consideration of this action should also include long-term family and medical leave.

<sup>9</sup> The Department of Health and the Department for Children and Families both sit in the Vermont Agency of Human Services. The Child Development Division sits in the Department for Children and Families.

<sup>10</sup> *Help Me Grow* is a resource connection for families, a community referral source, a platform for sharing data about programs and children, a set of standards for early detection of developmental concerns, and a training platform for service providers who work with children. *Help Me Grow* got its start in Connecticut and has now been implemented in states across the country. For more information, go to <http://www.helpmegrownational.org/>.

<sup>11</sup> Building Bright Futures will work with Hunger Free Vermont, the Vermont Agency of Human Services, the Vermont Agency of Education and other interested partners to flesh out specific recommendations pertaining to this action.

<sup>12</sup> The data source for this indicator will be the Vermont Agency of Education.

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<sup>13</sup> The data source for this indicator will be the Strengthening Families framework used by the Vermont Agency of Human Services.

<sup>14</sup> The data sources for this indicator will be Children's Integrated Services and Essential Early Education, Special Education.

<sup>15</sup> The Action Planning Committee recognizes the importance of evaluating whether this Plan uses the right indicators to measure progress as it relates to increasing families' economic security. Building Bright Futures' Data and Evaluation Committee will continue to refine this aspect of the Plan.

<sup>16</sup> Developed by the Center for Study of Social Policy, the Strengthening Families approach is based on five protective factors: parental resilience, social connections, concrete support in times of need, knowledge of parenting and child development, and social and emotional competence of children. This approach can be incorporated into existing programs/services as well as new initiatives as a cost-effective way of increasing family stability, supporting healthy child development and reducing child abuse and neglect. While this action is listed under this particular strategy, it touches on other results, strategies and actions in this Action Plan. For more information about the Strengthening Families approach, go to <http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengthening-families/the-basics/protective-factors>.

<sup>17</sup> The goal of Early Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is to implement and sustain a professional development system to enhance the knowledge, skills and evidence-based practices of early childhood practitioners. Early MTSS focuses on social and emotional, early literacy and early numeracy competence and confidence of young children birth to 6. It aligns with K-12 MTSS to provide a full continuum of comprehensive and systemic supports for all children birth through age twenty-two.

<sup>18</sup> The data source for this indicator will be the Vermont Agency of Education.

<sup>19</sup> The data source for this indicator will be the Vermont Agency of Education.

<sup>20</sup> The data source for this indicator will be the Vermont Agency of Human Services.

<sup>21</sup> The data source for this indicator will be the Vermont Agency of Human Services.

<sup>22</sup> The Action Planning Committee acknowledges that there is still more work to be done to refine the indicators used to paint an accurate and comprehensive picture of families' economic security.

<sup>23</sup> These policy recommendations are an outgrowth of the input received during the development of Vermont's Early Childhood Framework and this Early Childhood Action Plan. They need to be considered in conjunction with the policy priorities of the Vermont Early Childhood Alliance and other policy advocacy groups.

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<sup>24</sup> Reach Up is a publicly-funded program that "...helps families with children by providing cash assistance for basic needs and services that support work and self-sufficiency" (source: [http://dcf.vermont.gov/esd/reach\\_up](http://dcf.vermont.gov/esd/reach_up)).

<sup>25</sup> This action should include consideration of additional outreach and enrollment in programs that contribute to family economic stability.

<sup>26</sup> This action ties directly to the strategy in Result #5 related to Building Bright Futures' regional plans.

<sup>27</sup> The Promise Communities initiative focuses on predominantly rural supervisory unions where data indicates young children and their families may be struggling. The initiative will use the Building Bright Futures structure to bring communities together to map community strengths and challenges and to plan how to support stability and success for every child and family. Grant funds will be used to help communities "seed" efforts to fill identified gaps.

<sup>28</sup> This strategy is closed tied to a related strategy in Result #6.

<sup>29</sup> The data source for this indicator will be the Vermont Agency of Human Services.

<sup>30</sup> The data sources for this indicator will be the Vermont Agency of Human Services and the Vermont Agency of Education.

<sup>31</sup> The data sources for this indicator will be the Vermont Agency of Human Services and the Vermont Agency of Education.

<sup>32</sup> This action pertains to the Accountable Care Organization and Integrated Family Services models.

<sup>33</sup> While this strategy is listed here, it applies to all the results and many of the strategies in the Action Plan.

<sup>34</sup> The data sources for this indicator will be the Vermont Agency of Human Services and the Vermont Agency of Education.

<sup>35</sup> The data sources for this indicator will be the Vermont Agency of Human Services, the Vermont Agency of Education and Building Bright Futures.

<sup>36</sup> This document proposes a road map for a comprehensive, longitudinal data system to track results and drive continued improvement.

<sup>37</sup> The data sources for this indicator will be the Vermont Agency of Human Services and the Vermont Agency of Education.

<sup>38</sup> The data sources for this indicator will be the Vermont Agency of Human Services and the Vermont Agency of Education.

<sup>39</sup> The data source for this indicator will be the Vermont Agency of Education.

<sup>40</sup> The data source for this indicator will be the Vermont Agency of Human Services.



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<sup>41</sup> The data source for this indicator will be the Vermont Agency of Education.

<sup>42</sup> These teams should reflect the diversity of perspectives represented at the Governor's Summit, including but not limited to the faith community, law enforcement and business leaders.

<sup>43</sup> Cross-sector" refers to early learning and development, health, human services, and K-3 education. Many action planning forum participants recommended selecting an institution of higher education to be the home for this work.

<sup>44</sup> To the extent that resources allow, this study would ideally include a crosswalk of cross-sector competencies in order to identify commonalities regarding skills and knowledge and how they fit into Vermont's Early Childhood Framework.

<sup>45</sup> Deb Marois, *Making The Path: A Guidebook to Collaboration for School Readiness*, UCLA Center for Healthier Children, Families and Communities in partnership with Center for Collaborative Planning, Public Health Institute, October 2002, p. vi.

<sup>46</sup> Illinois Early Childhood Collaboration, *What Is Early Care and Education Collaboration?*, p. 1. <http://ilearlychildhoodcollab.org/>

<sup>47</sup> Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development. < <http://gucchd.georgetown.edu/67639.html>>, 25 March 2014.

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