

# Examining Perspectives of Children’s Integrated Services (CIS) from Families Served by CIS Early Intervention

## Executive Summary

**Overview:** As defined in the Child Care and Development Fund Plan for Vermont, Children’s Integrated Services (CIS) is Vermont’s “unique model for integrating early childhood health, mental health, evidence-based home visiting, family support, early intervention, and specialized child care services for pregnant and post-partum women and children birth to age 6.<sup>1</sup> The model is designed to improve child and family outcomes by providing family-centric holistic services, effective service coordination, flexible funding to address gaps in services, prevention, early intervention, health promotion, and accountability.”<sup>1</sup> The prevention-focused program is designed to wrap around the whole family including support for parents or caregivers to understand and advocate for the needs of their children, provide a point person to support care coordination, and access to high-quality child development, mental health, and prevention services.

To contribute to Vermont’s understanding and prioritization of the experience of families receiving these services, Building Bright Futures (BBF) supported the Child Development Division’s Children’s Integrated Services (CIS) State Team in an analysis of qualitative data to examine the perceptions and experiences of families who have received early intervention services as part of CIS. Of note, this is not a complete evaluation of CIS.

**Data and Analysis:** Qualitative data on families’ experience with CIS were provided by the Vermont Children’s Integrated Services State Team within the Department for Children and Families: Child Development Division within the Vermont Agency of Human Services. The survey, completed from November 2020–June 2021, captured 373 total responses with 232 responses to the primary question asking families about their experience with CIS. The Framework Approach for qualitative data analysis was used to develop and refine themes.

**Findings:** The majority of respondents reported a positive and helpful experience with CIS and indicated that the program supported their child’s developmental progress and their own competence and confidence. Care coordination and the CIS workforce specifically, interpersonal interactions and relationships, effective and knowledgeable staff, and communication, were the most critical components of the CIS program for respondents. Respondents also reported challenges and barriers pertaining to their experience with CIS which included the COVID-19 pandemic, care coordination, and staffing.

---

<sup>1</sup> In addition, children up to age 13 and early childhood education programs are eligible for services through specialized child care

## Limitations

1. The data collection method does not capture the full population receiving CIS services, only families of children who received early intervention services
2. The data provided for this analysis was limited to one question
3. The survey had a 61% response rate which introduces self-selection bias
4. Data sharing agreements were restrictive
5. The interchangeable use of “CIS” and “Early Intervention” made it unclear if respondents understood the separate services
6. COVID-19 required significant shifts in the delivery of services, which makes it challenging to generalize families’ experiences

## Program, Policy, and Data Considerations

Four program and policy considerations regarding Children’s Integrated Services (CIS) have resulted from the findings related to important service components and the impact on families, as well as the data limitations.

- 1. Invest in the CIS workforce** - Vermont should invest in, and prioritize the CIS workforce as individuals working with young and vulnerable children and families.
- 2. Value coordination** - Vermont should fund the critical elements of coordination beyond case management to best serve the whole child and family.
- 3. Conduct a full evaluation of CIS** - A full evaluation of the CIS program is needed to determine challenges to service provision and which factors are most critical in delivering these services successfully.
- 4. Evolve the CIS data system and infrastructure** - A CIS data system is needed, including the personnel capacity and expertise to execute high quality data collection, management, reporting, and utilization.

The data, limitations, and considerations in this brief are not published or reported elsewhere and therefore have not been fully utilized in informing decision-making and implementation on this critical topic at the time of publication.

Thank you to the Child Development Division’s Children’s Integrated Services State Team and families for providing the data to inform this data brief.

*The findings of this brief do not necessarily indicate the views of the State of Vermont.*



**Vermont’s Early Childhood  
Data & Policy Center**

[Vermontkidsdata.org](https://Vermontkidsdata.org)

Vermont’s Early Childhood Data and Policy Center is a hub of the most high-quality, up-to-date data and information on the status of children and families across sectors. It is a critical tool for answering policy questions by centralizing data from Vermont’s complex early childhood system including a data dashboard; a robust collection of Vermont-specific and National publications, policy briefs, and webinars; and a page dedicated to early childhood policy in Vermont. [Vermontkidsdata.org](https://Vermontkidsdata.org)

Building Bright Futures (BBF) is Vermont’s early childhood public-private partnership, charged under Vermont Title 33 § Chapter 46 and the Federal Head Start Act (Public Law 110-134) as Vermont’s Early Childhood State Advisory Council (SAC), the mechanism used to advise the Governor and Legislature on the well-being of children in the prenatal period through age 8 and their families. BBF maintains the vision and strategic plan for Vermont’s early childhood system. BBF’s Network infrastructure includes 12 Regional Councils, seven VECAP Committees, and the State Advisory Council. [Buildingbrightfutures.org](https://Buildingbrightfutures.org)



© Vermont Early Childhood Data and Policy Center 2022