

# Speaker Bios - Early Childhood Grand Rounds on Act 76

Sharron Harrington - Executive Director, VT Association for the Education of Young Children

For more than twenty-five years, Sharron has worked within the early childhood education ecosystem. In May of 2023, Sharron stepped into the role of Executive Director after serving on the VTAEYC Board for five years. Prior to joining VTAEYC, she held numerous positions at the local and state level, including a literacy mentor for family child programs, a toddler and preschool educator in a nationally accredited early childhood education program, a Resource Development and Referral Specialist supporting families seeking child care referrals and coordinating professional development for early childhood educators. Most recently, she worked as the Senior Programs Manager for Southern Vermont at Let's Grow Kids leading a team who provide coaching and technical assistance for increasing child care capacity and quality improvement, advocating for systems change, and growing the early childhood workforce. Prior to her career in early childhood education, she operated her own small business and worked in advertising. Sharron lives in Castleton with her husband and enjoys time with her adult children and grandchildren, kayaking, photography and travel.

Erin Roche - Director, First Children's Finance Vermont

Erin Roche is the Director of First Children's Finance Vermont, a national nonprofit committed to growing the supply and business sustainability of excellent child care. Erin started the FCF Vermont office in early 2023, and has led the Vermont team through this critical time of Act 76 implementation. Prior to starting up the Vermont office, Erin worked at Let's Grow Kids for six years, most recently as the Director of Operations and Evaluation, where she oversaw all day to day operations and data systems, as well as leading all program evaluation and organizational impact. Before LGK, Erin came to Vermont to complete an M.S. in Community Development and Applied Economics and then was a social science researcher at UVM's Center for Rural Studies, working with community partners like the Vermont Department of Health, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, UVM Medical Center, and Vermont Foodbank on program evaluation and research projects. Before coming to Vermont, Erin was a market researcher, business planning consultant, and marketing manager for several technology companies in the Pacific Northwest. Erin also served as a U.S. Peace Corps volunteer and spent a year traveling around the world.

Janet McLaughlin - Deputy Commissioner, Child Development Division, VT Department for Children & Families

Janet McLaughlin has served as the Deputy Commissioner for the Child Development Division at the Department for Children and Families since March 2023. In this role, she has responsibilities for Vermont's child care system in early childhood education and afterschool settings, Children's Integrated Services and Universal Prekindergarten (in partnership with Agency of Education). From 2021 to 2023, she served as the Executive Director for the Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children (VTAEYC). Prior to VTAEYC, Janet worked at the intersection of programs and policy in Vermont's early childhood education system while serving as Chief Programs Officer, interim CEO, and Chief Operating Officer at Let's Grow Kids. Prior to that, she headed the Vermont Community Foundation's Food and Farm Initiative, a collaborative effort to fight hunger in Vermont while strengthening its local food system. From 2004 to 2013, Janet oversaw the growth of Cooking Matters, a food skills education program for low-income families, while at DC-based nonprofit Share Our Strength. She has a Master's of Public Administration with a specialization in Nonprofit Management from Syracuse University and her undergraduate degree from Harvard University. Janet lives in Burlington and is an enthusiastic eater, novice ice hockey player, and mom of two energetic boys.

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Kate Steber - Research Scientist, Child and Family Wellbeing Supports, Child Trends

Kate Steber is a Research Scientist in the Child and Family Wellbeing Supports research area at Child Trends. Her expertise includes qualitative research, community-based program evaluation, technical assistance, supporting young children and their families' health and well-being, and family engagement in research and evaluation. She has over a decade of experience designing and leading qualitative evaluation and research projects, including implementation, rapid cycle, and outcome evaluations with primary and secondary data collection and analyses. In her time at Child Trends, Kate has supported numerous states - including Vermont - in evaluating programs and services for young children in their families. She has Master's degrees in Social Work and Public Health from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Sara Amadon, Ph.D. - Senior Research Scientist; Program Area Director, Early Childhood Systems Building, Child Trends

Sara Amadon is a senior research scientist in early childhood at Child Trends. Her research aims to improve the lives of children and families through applied policy research. For over 12 years, she has been conducting research on contexts (neighborhoods and schools) and policies (pre-K and child care) that support children and families. Much of her current work focuses on early childhood programs (such as home visiting and child care) in rural areas. She is currently co-Principal Investigator of a four-year study to understand the implementation and impacts of newly expanded child care subsidies in Vermont.