

VERMONT EARLY CHILDHOOD STRATEGIC PLAN 2030

Working Draft 5.19.25

Goal 2: All Children are Raised in Safe & Healthy Environments

Goal 1: All Children and Families Have Their Basic Needs Met

Goal 2: All Children are Raised in Safe & Healthy Environments

Goal 3: Children and Families Have Access to High Quality Opportunities That Promote Child Development and Well-Being

Goal 4: Invest in the Early Childhood Workforce to Help Kids Thrive

Goal 5: Our System Centers Children and Families and is Coordinated, Well-Resourced, Data-Driven

[\[Learn more about the Strategic Plan update and read about the other draft goals on the Building Bright Futures website\]](#)

Goal 2: All Children are Raised in Safe, Healthy, and Healing Environments

Every child deserves to grow up in an environment that nurtures their health, safety, and potential. We must create spaces where justice, belonging, and collective power form the foundation of all children's lives. It is time to transform our systems to ensure all families have the resources and support to thrive in communities built on care, connection, and equity.

2.A. ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO COMPREHENSIVE PHYSICAL HEALTH CARE FROM PREGNANCY THROUGH EARLY CHILDHOOD

Health is a right, not a privilege. Every child and family deserves equitable access to the care they need from birth onward. We must ensure that healthcare systems are accessible, culturally responsive, and integrated to address the full spectrum of physical, mental, and social well-being.

➤ 2.A.1. Ensure prenatal to age eight healthcare is comprehensive, accessible, high quality, and culturally and linguistically responsive.

Strategies:

- Expand screening for perinatal mental health, food, and housing security screening efforts in medical and early care and education settings.

- Ensure that screenings lead to immediate, trauma-informed, and culturally respectful connections to community resources.
- Facilitate connections through Help Me Grow (HMG), Children's Integrated Services, Parent Child Centers, and mental health agencies to community resources.

➤ **2.A.2. Treat Chronic Disease Prevention as a Racial and Economic Justice Strategy Across the Lifespan.**

Strategies:

- Increase the integration of physical, mental, and oral health for young children through coordinated care systems that eliminate silos.
- Promote Vermont's oral health guidelines across all early childhood sectors and with families.
- Embed a culture of movement and vitality by promoting 60 minutes of daily physical activity across all early childhood sectors and with families.
- Promote the importance of regular well-child visits, developmental screening and vaccinations across all early childhood sectors and with families.

➤ **2.A.3. Invest in flexible service delivery models.**

Strategies:

- Invest in flexible service delivery models that meet children and families in their natural environments (e.g. school, home, community, parent child center, designated agency).

2.B ENSURE EVERY FAMILY HAS ACCESS TO CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE, TRAUMA-INFORMED MENTAL HEALTH CARE

Mental health care must be a fundamental right for all families. We need a system that recognizes the unique experiences of each family, providing culturally responsive and trauma-informed care that promotes healing and well-being.

➤ **2.B.1. Increase equitable access to maternal, prenatal, and perinatal physical and mental health services.**

Strategies:

- Strengthen and use evidence-based home visiting to ensure each and every child and family who need it have access.
- Expand access to an array of home visiting services for families who have young children or are expecting a baby through birth or adoption.
- Increase access to doula services.

➤ **2.B.2. Build the capacity of parents and caregivers to promote children's health and wellbeing.**

Strategies:

- Support parent and caregiver partnership in collaborations among pediatric medical homes, community agencies, and organizations in order to improve care delivery and outcomes.
- Identify opportunities to integrate two-generational strategies.
- Provide adults involved in the lives of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with the knowledge and training to promote social and emotional development.
- Expand opportunities to foster secure attachment between children and their parents through home visiting, peer groups, and training.
- Ensure families are involved in identifying the care their child needs.

2.C GUARANTEE EQUITABLE, NON-STIGMATIZING ACCESS TO SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER TREATMENT AND RECOVERY SUPPORT

Substance use disorder is a health issue, not a moral failing. All families must have access to compassionate, non-stigmatizing treatment and recovery support that empowers them to heal and thrive.

➤ **2.C.1. Ensure all families have access to mental health services and substance use disorder treatment.**

Strategies:

- Improve access to and affordability of mental health services for Vermonters.
- Improve access to specialized services like mental health crisis and stabilization support, substance abuse treatment disorder, and suicide prevention services in local communities.
- Expand access to substance use treatment and recovery support for parents, caregivers, and family members.

2.D. BUILD A CULTURE OF CONNECTION, INCLUSION, AND COLLECTIVE WELLBEING TO REDUCE SOCIAL ISOLATION.

Social isolation is a major barrier to family well-being. We need to foster environments where families feel they belong, are supported, and can build resilience against systemic oppression. Connection is a powerful tool for healing and collective power.

➤ **2.D.1. Invest in belonging and resilience as protective forces against oppression and isolation.**

Strategies:

- Fund free and low-cost opportunities for families to build meaningful connections through playgroups, affinity groups, public libraries, parks, and playgrounds.

- Name and measure belonging and social connection as key outcomes across health, education, and social services.

➤ **2.D.2. Support community hubs that meet basic needs and promote social connection.**

Strategies:

- Support Parent Child Centers, playgroups, food shelves, community centers, recreation programs, libraries.

➤ **2.D.3. Make Vermont a place where every family feels safe and welcome.**

- Create and enforce policies that ensure Vermont communities are safe and welcoming for people of all backgrounds, races, ethnicities, family structures, sexual orientations, disability statuses, socio-economic statuses, immigration statuses, and religious or spiritual affiliations.
- Ensure that all Vermont families have equitable access to supports, services, and community resources and are free from discrimination, surveillance, and harassment.
- Address and prevent violence, abuse, and neglect within households by investing in trauma-informed, survivor-centered interventions and ensuring families have access to safe, stable housing and culturally responsive crisis support.

2.E. CULTIVATE SAFE AND VIBRANT COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.

Safe, vibrant communities are the foundation for healthy families. We need to build infrastructure that supports children's development, provides for their basic needs, and ensures families can thrive in an environment free from harm and neglect.

➤ **2.E.1. Document and invest in the unique climate change mitigation strategies.**

Strategies:

- Budget for current and future forecasted costs related to climate change and climate disasters for families, communities, and the early childhood system, prioritizing those already facing environmental and social injustice.
- Elevate and fund best practices related to climate change prevention, intervention, mitigation, and healing in the face of climate related harm on behalf of children and families.

➤ **2.E.2. Build and equitably distribute infrastructure that nurtures safety, joy, and collective health.**

Strategies:

- Build vibrant, safe, and family-friendly community infrastructure (e.g. cross walks, sidewalks, playgrounds, parks) especially in historically disadvantaged communities.
- Build accessible, reliable, responsive, and trauma-informed health and safety infrastructure like health clinics, fire stations, and community centered policing alternatives.
- Increase investment in the physical infrastructure (sewer, water, stormwater, mixed-use development, housing, sidewalks, bike lanes, EV charging, broadband, energy supply) needed to support compact, connected, walkable development. (VT Climate Action Plan, Cross-Cutting Pathways, Strategy 1)

➤ **2.E.3. Document and help communicate community emergency preparedness plans (e.g. Climate Change Resilience).**

Strategies:

- Include community emergency preparedness as a topic at Regional Councils and in statewide conversations.
- Equitably expand access to programs that provide options to rural homeowners, landlords, municipalities, school districts, universities, and hospitals for weatherization, electrification, and utility upgrades. (VT Climate Action Plan Pathway 3, Strategy 2).

➤ **2.E.4. Increase capacity for climate resilience planning and implementation, and address inequities of under-resourced communities. (Vermont Climate Action Plan Pathway, Strategies 1,2)**

Strategies:

- Provide meaningful resources and decision-making power to under-resourced communities and communities of color in climate planning processes.
- Recognize and fund BIPOC- and Indigenous-led environmental justice initiatives as central to Vermont's resilience and sustainability future.