

VERMONT EARLY CHILDHOOD STRATEGIC PLAN 2030

Working Draft 5.19.25

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

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 4: Build a Thriving, Respected, and Sustainable Early Childhood Workforce

The early childhood workforce is foundational to the thriving of our children and communities. We must invest in this workforce by ensuring dignity, fair compensation, and pathways for professional growth, while building a system that values and sustains the essential work being done. A thriving, well-supported workforce ensures that every child, no matter their background, has access to high-quality, nurturing care.

4.A. ENSURE THE EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE IS ABLE TO THRIVE.

A thriving early childhood workforce is essential to supporting the development and well-being of all children. We must ensure that educators and professionals in the field are well-trained, well-compensated, and supported in their growth and development. By investing in the workforce, we invest in the future of our children.

➤ 4.A.1. Guarantee access to education, training, and professional development

Strategies:

- Expand funding for early childhood higher education opportunities in Vermont are well-funded to make pursuing a career in early childhood in the state affordable and attractive.
- Ensure that early childhood workforce participants have numerous opportunities for continuous professional development and learning through their career.
- Invest in Higher Education Strategies (informed by Heather Duhamel's recent work for ECE, needing to gather these from other sectors)
- Provide Professional Development and Coaching Strategies, including programs strategy specific to children w/challenging behaviors and SEL needs

➤ **4.A.2. Ensure that the early childhood workforce is well compensated, and economically secure.**

Strategies:

- Develop compensation strategies that allow for all professionals to meet their basic needs, including those in entry level roles.
- Explore funding mechanisms to create a statewide wage supplement program.
- Develop benefits packages, including expanded healthcare, to attract and retain employees, particularly those considering a career in early childhood
- Promote strategies to increase early childhood workforce compensation and benefits without shifting costs to families.
- Fund, develop and implement a workforce data collection, evaluation, and report dissemination plan bi-annually to understand workforce trends, needs, compensation and benefits.

➤ **4.A.4. Stabilize and sustain the early childhood workforce through policies and structures that promote recruitment, retention, professional advancement, and economic security.**

Strategies:

- Invest in recruiting, developing, and retaining a diverse workforce that is reflective of the demographic diversity of Vermont's 0-8 population.
- Ensure that opportunities are well coordinated and entry points are clear and accessible for prospective and current early childhood professionals.
- Cultivate leaders in the early childhood workforce, including those working at the systems level, to hold a shared culture of transparency, collaboration, and centering families.
- Establish an infrastructure that recruits, retains, and advances early childhood and afterschool professionals as an essential workforce.
- Increase opportunities to support career advancement for the early childhood workforce (e.g. scholarships and student loan repayment program).
- Explore strategies to address burnout and trauma (e.g. sabbaticals) in sectors w/significant burnout and trauma.

- Advance the ability of Vermont's secondary and technical schools to support coursework and credentials in early care and exploration of pathways toward educator licensure.
- Promote and expand the use of stackable, portable credentials and degrees obtained through training and credit-based options.
- Implement statewide recruitment and marketing campaigns for early childhood careers.
- Oversee and evaluate the provision of high quality, research-informed professional development.
- Support effective peer professional networks (e.g. director's groups, Early Childhood Networks) to share best practices and leverage resources.
- Increase access to professional development opportunities for all educators (birth-grade 3), particularly evidenced-based early language and literacy, social and emotional competence and confidence, and mathematics.
- Invest in the workforce that delivers early intervention services (e.g. early interventionists, special educators, speech and language pathologist, physical therapists, autism specialists)

4.B. INVEST IN PROGRAMS, SERVICES, OR RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE THE EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM

To build a more equitable, high-quality early childhood system, we must dismantle systems of oppression and strengthen services that meet the needs of all children and families. We need policies that center justice, equity, and access for underserved communities, while maintaining high standards of care across the system.

➤ 4.B.1. Set expectations for services and organizations to promote equity and justice and dismantle systems of oppression (placeholder)

Strategies:

- TBD
- Include call for more inclusive curriculum (from Network Engagement Report)?

➤ 4.B.2. Maintain clear, evidence-based measurement of quality at the child, staff, and program levels to promote a stronger, high-quality early childhood system overall.

Strategies:

- Continue to refine and use Step Ahead Rating System (STARS) as Vermont's QRIS system.
- Head Start Program Performance Standards
- VCHIP

➤ **4.B.3. Sustain and expand child care capacity by providing business technical assistance to child care business owners through First Children's Finance**

Strategies:

- Need other examples that are broader than child care