

VERMONT EARLY CHILDHOOD STRATEGIC PLAN 2030

Working Draft 5.19.25

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

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

A system that truly serves children and families is one where power is shared, resources are abundant, and decisions are made with data that reflects lived experiences. We will build a cohesive, equitable, and sustainable system that puts children and families at the center, where their voices guide the decisions that shape their lives and futures.

5.A. SHIFT POWER TO FAMILIES AND UTILIZE THEIR EXPERTISE IN SYSTEM DESIGN AND DECISIONS.

Families are the experts of their own lives. We must shift power to them by creating structures that center their experiences and leadership, ensuring that they are decision-makers in shaping the systems that impact their children.

➤ **5.A.1. Build mechanisms into the governance and administration of early childhood services and programs (public and private) that center families and caregivers as systems leaders and decision-makers.**

Strategies:

- Increase opportunities for parent and caregiver representatives to be decision-makers in Vermont's early childhood system by creating a variety of modalities for them to be engaged and listened to. The findings of this engagement should be treated as critical, qualitative data.
- Enact a formal protocol for naming membership when creating new legislatively mandated bodies that must include individuals with relevant lived experience, based on a given bill's impacted communities. This protocol should become a required part of standard operating procedure for the legislature.

➤ **5.A.2. Promote a culture of family voice and expertise that empowers family leaders to be experts in their own experiences, assists them in running for elected positions, and prepares system leaders to value and support their participation.**

Strategies:

- Implement consistent State of Vermont policies for compensating families with lived experience who serve on state-convened entities within the early childhood system
- Create compensated opportunities for training, professional development, and peer learning for family leaders.
- Create more spaces—forums, community meetings, and informal gatherings—where families can directly share needs and ideas with system leaders.
- Provide ongoing training and professional development for systems leaders to implement best practices for engaging with family leaders, including trauma-responsive training.
- Identify and address barriers to caregivers serving in elected positions.
- Create and invest in pathways and development for caregivers to run for elected positions.

➤ **5.A.3. Support and resource family and community-led and designed solutions.**

Strategies:

- Support the capacity for families to create programs, initiatives, and family-led solutions relevant to their respective communities (e.g. cooperative child care and afterschool programming).
- Invest in cross-sector collaboration, especially between families and interagency teams focused on early childhood and mental health.

5.B. SUPPORT FAMILIES' SEAMLESS TRANSITION ACROSS SERVICES, RESOURCES, SUPPORTS & EDUCATION.

Navigating the early childhood system should not be a barrier to access. We must create a coordinated system that makes it easy for families to find the services they need, while supporting them through transitions with personalized, culturally responsive support.

➤ 5.B.1. Ensure that families can find and access the services they need.

Strategies:

- Develop universal early outreach mechanisms that will provide all new parents, prenatally or at birth, and adoptive or foster families, with systematic opportunities to discuss their concerns and learn about the parent and child support resources available in their communities.
- Invest in a centralized, coordinated intake and referral system to ensure families have equitable access to needed services and messaging is aligned.
- Navigation services should be culturally and linguistically aligned with the populations they are serving. Ensure all family communications, surveys, events, and parent education materials are accessible and translated.

➤ 5.B.2. Promote a team-based approach to supporting each and every child and family.

Strategies:

- Make the system of support and services easier to navigate by standardizing policies and practices (e.g. standard UPK enrollment forms, shared eligibility).
- Support families' transitions across services or when families experience a lapse in care. Support "warm hand-offs," meaning more personal and direct connections with referrals, to increase comfort, build trust, reduce barriers, and facilitate access and enrollment.
- Provide quality service coordination to support families accessing who are navigating a variety of complex needs (e.g. special health care needs, mental health conditions, substance use disorder.).

5.C. USE DATA TO INFORM DECISIONS AND DRIVE ACTION.

Data must be used to reflect the realities families face and drive systemic change. We need a data-driven approach that informs decisions, ensures accountability, and guides equitable resource allocation.

➤ 5.C.1. Support collective understanding of young children's experiences with service provision, child and family outcomes, and the system of services across sectors.

Strategies:

- Examine the current state of the system and child outcomes.

- Identify Vermont's key questions, priorities, and gaps in data across early childhood sectors.
- Establish a vision and framework for monitoring this data collaboratively across public and community partners.

➤ **5.C.2. Establish comprehensive data systems and infrastructure.**

Strategies:

- Increase capacity of key public and community-based partners to prioritize data collection, management, analysis, sharing, partnership, and dissemination.
- Build and strengthen technological infrastructure and data systems to be responsive and adaptable.
- Strengthen existing data collection mechanisms, data sharing, and feedback loops from the local to state level.
- Implement guidelines to support data equity, including guidelines for data collection and disaggregation, and norms and training for research on populations furthest from justice.
- Implement a robust monitoring and evaluation system with child, family, and system level measures and outcomes to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of programs and their impact on children and families.
- Establish data governance practices and protocols to ethically share data and use data.
- Prioritize data linking and data integration that supports cross-sector and longitudinal monitoring while not perpetuating harmful or discriminatory data practices.

➤ **5.C.3. Advance the visibility and accessibility of child development and early childhood systems research.**

Strategies:

- Centralize data systems and make early childhood research meaningful, publicly available, and accessible.
- Ensure data is communicated in clear, simple ways (e.g. reducing jargon, writing at reading level of intended audience)
- Commit to annual quality improvement by consistently reporting progress on indicators.

➤ **5.C.4. Translate data into policy and programmatic decisions that will improve equitable access to, and quality of services for the youngest and most vulnerable children, their families, and the early childhood system.**

Strategies:

- Use centralized data alongside qualitative data and best practice to best allocate limited resources and meet the needs of children and families through data-driven decision-making

- Teach people to use data effectively. Provide decision-makers and employees training and skill development opportunities to build data literacy to ensure they have the necessary knowledge and skills to interpret and utilize data effectively.
- Embrace a culture of continuous improvement and adaptation. Regularly review and refine the data-driven decision-making framework based on feedback, organizational needs, emerging data technologies, and industry best practices.

5.D. BUILD INTEGRATION AT THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVELS TO FOSTER A COMPREHENSIVE AND COORDINATED EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM.

Collaboration across sectors and agencies is essential to creating a seamless, integrated system. We must break down silos and work together to build a cohesive system that truly serves families and children.

➤ 5.D.1. Strengthen and align leadership vision at the state level to coordinate agency programs and practices.

Strategies:

- Promote information sharing and coordinated vision to align efforts, reduce barriers and duplication, and build opportunities for integration.
- Strengthen interagency relationships, collaboration across organizations, and service coordination.
- Establish shared priority narratives that create a common language within the early childhood system (e.g. strengthen MOUs, governance agreements, and communication to the EC field).
- Develop common language, terms and definitions across sectors so the system is understandable for partners and families
- Commitment to transparency, collaboration, and holding children and families at the center of our decision-making.

5.E. INVEST IN THE EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM TO ENSURE SUSTAINABLE RESOURCES AND INFRASTRUCTURE.

Sustainable investment in early childhood systems is essential for long-term success. We must prioritize resources that ensure a robust, well-supported infrastructure that can meet the evolving needs of children and families.

➤ 5.E.1. Identify additional methods to measure the need for targeted investments and the return on investment resulting from early childhood services and supports.

Strategies:

- Identify and name systemic inequities and their impact.
- Review all aspects of system-wide infrastructure (buildings, transportation, housing, etc.)

- Short or long-term investment in housing, transportation, education, and other materials for the long-term benefit of children, families, and/or the early childhood system. Includes references to budget or funding needs.

➤ **5.E.2. Review/analyze, validate, and support proposals for public early childhood investments**

Strategies:

- TBD

➤ **5.E.3. Identify potential sources of revenue for the early childhood system.**

Strategies:

- Identify opportunities to leverage investments in early childhood from non-traditional sources such as federal agencies, housing, businesses, taxes/public investment.
- Encourage public and private investments to promote prevention, healthy development, access to services to support children and families, and early childhood systems.