

Recommendations



Recommendations of the BBF State Advisory Council

The State Advisory Council (SAC) is the Governor-appointed early childhood advisory body that works to set priorities and direction for statewide initiatives on behalf of Vermont's young children. In 2019, the SAC worked to drive collective action in Vermont around two key areas: addressing early childhood and family mental health, and building capacity for Vermont's early care and learning system.

Supporting the Early Care and Education Workforce

Why It Matters

As brain science developed to teach us about how much growth and learning happens before age 5, the child care profession has changed to encompass a wider range of skills and responsibilities befitting that important time in a child's life. The expectations for child care professionals has grown to include knowledge of child development, education, and psychology.

According to a survey of Vermont parents of young children published as the Early Care and Learning Household Study, 67% of parents of children birth to age 2 are using some form of child care, and 79% of families with children ages 3 to 5. The need for a robust early care system with educated, well-compensated providers is driven by the needs of families.

Opportunity for Vermont to Turn the Curve

In early 2018, the Child Development Division (CDD), inspired by the BBF SAC's commitment to address capacity in the early learning system, convened a Capacity Coalition that identified key strategies to begin to develop workforce capacity. Since that time,

BBF's Early Learning and Development Committee has been coordinating action and monitoring progress on these strategies.

In 2018, BBF published the *Building Vermont's Future from the Child Up Think Tank Report*, including six key recommendations on how Vermont can improve our child care system so that professionals can get adequate education, be compensated appropriately for their work, and create long-term stability and viability for the industry. In addition, a Child Care Demand Study was released, exposing an even greater need for child care in Vermont, underlining the importance of growing capacity.

Also last year, the Vermont Legislature passed some investments in the child care system, including \$600,000 in one-time money for workforce incentives, including a scholarship program. The SAC recommends the following actions to continue to move the needle for Vermont's early care and education system.

RECOMMENDATION 1: Support education costs and compensation for the early childhood education workforce, including scholarships, loan repayment, and wage supplementation.

The BBF Early Learning and Development committee has identified three opportunities for state-level policy to support the early childhood education workforce:

- A.** Funding to maintain and expand scholarship programs for early educators
- B.** Establishment of a loan repayment program for early educators
- C.** Establishment of a wage supplement program as we work toward adequate compensation for early educators

Scholarships support early childhood educators who need and/or desire to increase their qualifications. For those who have already accrued related educational expenses, paying back their student loans is a barrier to employment in the field with wages at their current levels. A wage supplement program will allow those who desire to work in the field to do so. Even before a long-term solution is in place, Vermont needs to invest in this essential workforce.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Continue investment in redesigning the state’s Child Care Financial Assistance Program.

There is a need for continued progress and investment in the state’s planned 5-year redesign of the Child Care Financial Assistance Program. In order to reach the state’s Early Childhood Action Plan result that “all children have access to high-quality early learning opportunities that meet their needs,” Vermont must continue to make progress in Year 2 of its 5-year plan, including:

- A.** Increasing the CCFAP rate paid to child care providers so those reimbursement rates are closer to the true cost of high-quality care
- B.** Investing in the costs of higher education for the early childhood education workforce
- C.** Fully supporting the needed investment in the technology system required to implement the redesigned CCFAP structure and provide an accessible platform for families, educators, and administrators

