

Child Care in Three Years

The next step in the movement for high-quality, affordable child care for all Vermont families starts now! With our champions and partners, Let's Grow Kids launches its final three-year campaign to ensure Vermont's kids, families, and businesses have child care by 2024.

THE PROBLEM

Child care is essential for Vermont families, but 3 out of 5 of Vermont's youngest children do not have access to the care they need. The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated already pressing challenges, making it even harder for families to find affordable high-quality child care. This is making it more difficult for early childhood education programs that cannot find and retain qualified educators. Without a high-quality and affordable child care system, Vermont cannot fully recover and grow its workforce, support young families, or set its youngest residents up for future success in school, relationships, work, and life.

THE SOLUTION

Making sure children from all backgrounds have access to high-quality child care is an important step in ensuring that every child has an equal opportunity to succeed in school and life. Affordable child care enables families to find new employment, return to existing jobs, and remain productive at work. When early childhood educators are adequately compensated, children are more likely to be taught by skilled educators who stay and grow in their chosen career. Together, we can create a child care system that is accessible, affordable, high-quality, and accountable.

ACCESS

Right now: Currently, 3 out of 5 of Vermont's youngest children don't have access to the child care they need. Families often apply to be placed on waitlists as soon as they find out they are expecting a child due to limited child care space, and the fact that it can take years to get a child placed.

Goal: To provide Vermont families with the ability to access quality child care that meets their needs, when they need it.

AFFORDABILITY

Right now: Some Vermont families spend more than 30% of their income on child care even with financial assistance. In many cases, this exceeds the cost of housing or other major budget items like student loan debt.

Goal: To enable Vermont families to have to spend no more than 10% of their income on child care.

QUALITY

Right now: In Vermont, there is an early childhood educator workforce crisis. Historically low wages, few benefits, and increased health risks due to the pandemic are all taking their toll on these educators. Programs struggle to find and retain qualified staff, which is the single most important indicator of quality in child care.

Goal: To provide the means for all children to be taught by qualified early childhood educators who are fairly compensated, have access to benefits, and have pathways to enter and advance in the field.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Right now: Vermont's child care system is not easy to understand and lacks the ability – for parents, providers, or budget writers - to effectively gather, analyze, and report on data necessary to make informed and timely decisions. This is a significant barrier to an effective and efficient early childhood education system that meets the needs of children and families.

Goal: Establishing a well-coordinated child care system in the state of Vermont with transparent decision-making that includes stakeholders most affected. This system will be supported by a modern IT system that allows Vermont to strategically allocate resources, leading to the equitable outcomes we want for our kids and families.

THE PLAN

Let's Grow Kids is launching a three-year legislative campaign that starts with two of the most pressing needs of the child care system: family affordability and an early childhood education workforce that is skilled and stable.

In 2021: Our campaign will advance legislation that establishes State of Vermont goals for affordability, access, and quality. It will also lay the foundation of our future child care system by:

- Restructuring the Child Care Financial Assistance Program to cap family co-payments at affordable rates and establish fair compensation for early childhood educators;
- Formally convening experts and stakeholders to develop plans for raising new revenue as well as system coordination and accountability;
- Fully funding an updated IT system critical to effective and efficient administration; and
- Increasing strategic investments in early childhood education workforce development and child care capacity.

In 2022: Our campaign will support the stakeholder processes, complete legislative work, and organize in communities in the 2022 election.

In 2023: Our campaign focus will be passing a revenue bill and fully implementing affordability, access, quality, and accountability measures.

YOU CAN HELP

Investing in Vermont's child care system will:

- Ensure every Vermont child has equitable access to the developmental support they need to be ready for school and prepared for life's challenges;
- Make Vermont more affordable for working families;
- Support the re-opening and recovery of Vermont's economy;
- Create thousands of new sustainable jobs for Vermont early childhood educators;
- Make Vermont the most desirable state for families with young children to live and work; and
- Deliver long-term savings in key areas like special education, health care, and corrections.

Learn More:

Save the date for a child care briefing for legislators on
Friday, January 15th at noon!

For more information, contact:

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