

Helping Vermont Families for Over 30 Years!



News and Resources

September 2019



Greetings, VFN friends and family!

Happy back-to-school, and all the delights of autumn in Vermont! It's been a very busy summer, with lots of calls to our Helpline, the introduction of new Children's Integrated Services Early Intervention (CIS-EI) staff, and planning for a new Anxiety curriculum for Puppets in Education, thanks to new grant funding. We have begun planning for our next annual conference, and are excited to be moving forward with recruitment for our [Vermont Leadership Series](#), which will begin in November. We are working with the state Child Development Division to reinforce our CIS-EI capacity through their payment reform efforts, and are continuing our CIS resource advocacy work with the Vermont Early Childhood Advocacy Alliance. We are also part of efforts to ensure that proposed Vermont Special Education rule changes will benefit students with disabilities and their families throughout Vermont.

We will be completing our FY19 Annual Report in the next few weeks, and look forward to sharing the year's highlights with you soon! Happy September!

From the heart,

Pam McCarthy
CEO/President

Save the Date!

Work is underway for planning VFN's 2020 Annual Conference, scheduled for Thursday, April 2, 2020 in South Burlington.

Vermont Leadership Series Needs You

The [Vermont Leadership Series](#) trains Vermonters with disabilities, and their family members, to be advocates for positive social change. Nearly 100 Vermonters have participated so far. Graduates get involved! For example, several Leadership graduates have joined boards, committees, or advisory work groups on a variety of important topics. Leadership participants also get a chance to connect with their classmates. One recent grad commented, "The support I get from this group has enhanced my life tremendously, and allowed me to be more available to and effective for my family."

The Leadership Series, which begins November 9, consists of three weekends (Saturday & Sunday with an overnight at a hotel). For all the details, please read the [Cover Page](#), which includes the dates and locations, the [Information Packet](#), and the [Application](#). (The application is fillable if you save it to your desktop and open with Adobe.) Application deadline has been extended to **September 30th**.

While the real cost per person for lodging meals, speakers, and materials is much higher, we ask that each participant contribute what they can, up to \$100. However, no one will be turned away. If you have questions or need help completing the application, please contact [Joanne Wechsler](#) at 1-800-800-4005 x217. We look forward to hearing from you!

Help Us Choose Workshop Topics for VFN's 2020 Conference

Work is underway for planning VFN's 2020 annual conference in April 2020. We want workshops that appeal to parents and professionals who plan to attend. Please take [our survey](#) of potential workshop topics that we have brainstormed and check the 5 that you like best. Thanks for your help!

Using Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) to Attend IEP Meetings

A new [opinion letter](#) (August 2019) from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) suggests that many parents of students with disabilities are entitled to take time away from work to attend their child's individualized education program (IEP) meetings.

The DOL was responding to an inquiry from a parent whose employer had granted [Family Medical Leave Act](#) for her two children's medical appointments but denied a request that attending IEP meetings be treated in the same way. The guidance is only binding in this particular situation but suggests that the DOL might be sympathetic to a broader understanding of the FMLA. This is not a tool that fits all family circumstances, but it's a very good approach to keep in mind.

Leadership Opportunity for Youth

The Youth Advocacy Council (YAC) is comprised of youth and young adults with differing abilities, ages 14 to 26, who are interested in participating in leadership training and opportunities to improve how Vermont prepares students with disabilities for life after high school. Members connect with students, advocate for youth resources, and lead while providing community service. The YAC organized the first annual Youth Summit in May 2019. This was a conference for youth and run by youth for the purpose of promoting self-advocacy amongst youth with disabilities.

There are openings for new Council members and applications are available. To apply, please fill out this [survey](#)

Seeking Recent High School Graduates with Disabilities to Participate in Panel

Recent high school graduates with disabilities are invited to participate on a panel to talk about their experiences transitioning from school to adult life. The panel will be part of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Interagency Core Team's Collaboration Event at the Killington Grand on Tuesday, October 15th. The conference theme is "Empowering Youth and Families in Transitions to Adulthood." Stipends are available for participants. For more information, please contact [Martha Frank](#).

Free VFN Webinars

We save all of our 90+ webinars on [our website](#) and [YouTube channel](#). When you watch a webinar, please take a few minutes to fill out an [evaluation form](#), which helps us with our grant reports and to make improvements. If you would like a Certificate of Completion after watching a webinar, send an email to Info@vfn.org and tell us the name/date of the webinar(s) that you watched. We are sincerely grateful to all of the subject-matter experts who have generously donated their time to present webinars!

Family Faculty

Everyone has a story to tell. As parents of children with special health needs, you likely have a wealth of experiences. If you would like an opportunity to share your family story with undergraduate and graduate students in education, medical and health science courses through UVM, please consider joining our Family Faculty program. When parents lend their voices to the process of education, they are ensuring other families will have positive experiences in the future. Students learn about family-centered care directly from the families. Parents and students have both reported positive experiences. A parent shared "It was a terrific experience for us. I truly appreciated his willingness to listen and share. He seemed to truly relate to us and our experiences." A 3rd year medical student reflected on the home visit by sharing "My experience with the home visit was memorable, insightful, and in my opinion necessary for any aspiring physician."

For more information or questions Contact [Jamie Rainville](#) 802-876-5315 X 243

SibShop Fun on September 14

Our next Sibshop will be held at the Get Air Trampoline Park in Williston from 1-3pm on Saturday September 14th. Sibs will enjoy jumping around on the trampolines, sibchat, and a pizza snack. There is a suggested \$10 donation but

we do have scholarships available if needed. For questions, scholarships, or to RSVP, please contact [Jamie Rainville](#) or call 802-876-5315 X 243. Space is limited, so RSVP soon!

Join Our Closed Facebook Page

Our [closed Facebook page](#) (Vermont Families of Children with Special Health Care Needs) is for parents, family members, and people in a parenting role. The current membership is 430 and growing. This group shares ideas, asks questions, and offers support. You may also want to join our [Listserv](#) which is an email sharing list.

Did you know we have 90+ webinars on [YouTube](#)?



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