

Helping Vermont Families for Over 30 Years!



## News and Resources October 2019



Greetings, VFN friends and family, and happy autumn in Vermont!

September has been a busy month---our Family Support Helpline is buzzing with calls, Puppets In Education is booking many shows in schools throughout the state, and Children's Integrated Services Early Intervention is reviewing and revamping our data and documentation processes to better reflect our work with infants and toddlers and their families in Chittenden County.

In September we elected three wonderful new Board members, Mara Krause Donohue, Jennifer Hurley, and Rebecca Monty, and are excited to welcome their energy and expertise.

We will be releasing our Annual Report after the October 10th Board meeting---can't wait to share it with you!

We have some great news to share about our annual conference---in an effort to reach more families of children with disabilities and special health needs, this spring we will be "taking our show on the road," offering an exciting half-day of networking and learning in three different locations throughout Vermont (see below for more details).

As part of the Vermont Coalition for Disability Rights, we are in the process of developing our advocacy platform for the next legislative session. Please contact me if there are issues you'd like us to consider including--  
[-Pam.McCarthy@vtfn.org](mailto:Pam.McCarthy@vtfn.org) or (802) 876-5315 ext. 207.

Hope you and yours are enjoying the splendors of the fall season!

From the heart,

Pam McCarthy  
CEO/President

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### 2020 Annual Conference - Save the Dates!

**VFN's Annual Conference** will have a whole new look next year! We're excited about our new half-day format that will happen in 3 different locations around the

state. We hope to reach more people especially those who may never have had an opportunity to attend in the past.

Thanks to all of you who completed a conference survey to guide our decision in picking a presenter and topic. We are pleased to announce that Sara Forward, LICSW with the Child Welfare Training Partnership at the University of Vermont, will guide us in a program entitled "Opening Doors in a Small Town." Visit our [website](#) for Sara's bio and more information about her interactive presentation. Mark your calendars and stay tuned for more information!

Tuesday, March 31 - Newport, VT

Thursday, April 2 - South Burlington, VT

Either Saturday, March 28 or April 4 - Southern VT, location TBD

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## Vermont Special Education Advisory Council

The [Vermont Special Education Advisory Council](#) (VSEAC) seeks parents of children with disabilities and individuals with disabilities to join. The VSEAC is charged with advising the State special education staff regarding the education of eligible children with disabilities according to Federal regulations ([34 C.F.R. Â§300.169](#)) The VSEAC has streamlined the membership process. Contact [AOE.SpecialEd@vermont.gov](mailto:AOE.SpecialEd@vermont.gov) for application forms or to check if the Agency of Education (AOE) is in receipt of your application if you have already submitted one in the past. Please plan to attend the November 21 meeting from 4.30 to 7.30 pm in Montpelier as a member of the public to check out the Council and voice your interest in being a member. Upcoming meeting details are [here](#). If you have further questions, contact [Karen Price](#) or [Nancy Richards](#) at VFN or the VSEAC Chair [Troy McAllister](#).

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## Special Education Rules

October will be an eventful month as the [Vermont State Board of Education](#) begins the process to look at Rules affecting special education funding and practice throughout Vermont schools. The development of new rules and review of existing rules must happen in accordance with [Act 173](#), passed in 2018 by the Vermont Legislature, a law intended to enhance the effectiveness, availability, and equity of services provided to students who require additional support. The census-based funding advisory group, established by the Act, has been meeting monthly to advise the Vermont Agency of Education and State Board of Education on rulemaking. Read the details [here](#). VFN represents the Vermont Coalition for Disability Rights on the advisory group to help ensure the voices of families of children with disabilities are heard and that the rights of children with disabilities according to IDEA are not compromised in rulemaking.

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## Free VFN Learning Opportunities

**Facebook Live Event Wednesday, October 9 from 12:15 pm - 12:45 pm**

Dr. Jeremiah E. Dickerson, Child Psychiatrist with [UVM's Center for Children, Youth and Families](#), discusses teenage anxiety with a puppet from [VFN's Puppets in Education program](#). Mark your calendar and log onto the [VFN](#)

[Facebook page](#) on Wednesday, October 9th at 12:15 pm so you won't miss it. No pre-registration is required.

### **Advocating for Your Child Workshop Thursday, October 10 from 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM**

- Learn how to be a better advocate for your child
- Tips for getting organized using a Vermont Family Network (VFN) Care Notebook
- Meet other parents and share ideas
- Resources ~ Snacks ~ Door Prizes

Location: Northeast Kingdom Community Action, 115 Lincoln Street, St. Johnsbury

RSVP: [Bobbie Lepine](#), NEKCA /(802) 748-6040 or [Lori Gilbar](#), VFN Family Support Consultant, Lori Gilbar /(802) 766-2384  
Webinar

**Assistive Technology and Transition to Adulthood Webinar: Wednesday, October 23 from 12 - 1 pm.** Presenters: Laurie Cook, Assistive Technology Access Specialist for Northern VT and Rachel Knapp, Department on Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living Assistive Technology Program. Registration details will be available soon!

Please help us by completing a [brief survey](#) when you're done watching any of our webinars. We need this information for our funders and to make improvements in our future offerings.

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## **News from the Puppets**

### **New Puppet Mobile!**

Thanks to our great friends at Bokan Ford in St. Albans we have a spiffy new puppet mobile! If you see us on the road, you definitely can't miss us, so give us a wave! Thanks, Bokan for making this possible.

### **Developing Anxiety Program for PK-4**

A new program is in the works at Puppet Headquarters! Staff have been working with parents, kids, and professionals to write a new puppet play about Anxiety that will debut in January.

"I have 7 kids in outside counseling for anxiety. We NEED you to come back with an anxiety program." Kindergarten Teacher

In 2018-2019 all of our adult evaluations included a question about what future programming was needed. Ninety-two percent (92%) of adults surveyed wanted a program on Anxiety. We are pleased that we will be building this program with the support of the Department of Mental Health and the National Life Group Foundation and adding it to the Feelings and ADHD offerings. We look forward to getting it into communities and sharing the results with you. In a recent report to the DMH, we tallied that the Children's Mental Health program has reached 7,694 people in just two years. If you are interested in this program, contact [Karen Sharpwolf](#).

"Are you coming back next year?" 2nd Grader, Chelsea

"The puppet show was SO AMAZING!" (with hand clapping) 1st Grader, Poultney

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## 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, please contact [Jamie Rainville](#) 802-876-5315 X 243

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## SibShop Fun on October 12

Our next Sibshop will be held at Sam Mazza's Farm in Colchester from 1 - 3:30 pm on Saturday October 12th. Sibs will enjoy celebrating the fall with games and treats and will work together to navigate the corn mazes. There is a suggested \$10 donation, but we do have scholarships available. For questions, scholarships, or to RSVP, please contact Jamie Rainville by calling 802-876-5315 X243 or emailing [Jamie.Rainville@vtfn.org](mailto:Jamie.Rainville@vtfn.org). Space is limited, so RSVP soon!

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## 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 458 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.

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



**(802) 876-5315 or 1-800-800-4005**  
**info@vtn.org | www.vermontfamilynetwork.org**

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