



News and Resources

November - December 2019



Greetings, VFN friends and family!

As 2019 draws to a close, I am reflecting with gratitude on all of the marvelous work our staff, Board, Family Faculty, partners, donors and all have accomplished, throughout Vermont, and beyond. Through challenging times, we stand together for families of children with disabilities and special health needs, their families, and their communities. We have released our [FY 2019 Annual Report](#), and hope you will be as excited by the shared photographs and memories as we are! Feedback welcome!

We will bid a very fond farewell to one of our most caring and knowledgeable Family Support staff on December 17th, as Jan Hancock retires after 18 years of providing information, referral, and connections, and heads off to new adventures. She leaves big shoes to fill, and we continue to recruit for her [position](#), should you wish to join our wonderful team! We are also seeking a Developmental Educator in Children's Integrated Services Early Intervention (CIS-EI), as well as a part-time puppeteer in Puppets in Education---[check it out!](#)

We are hoping that you and yours will have a very warm and wondrous holiday season, beginning with Thanksgiving, and ending with New Year's Eve! We wish you every happiness, abundant health, and all the joys that are part of this time of the year. Know how much we appreciate your interest in our work, and all you do to spread the word about our unique and valuable supports and services.

Looking forward to 2020, and hearing your thoughts about what you'd like to hear from VFN in the new year!

From the heart,

Pam McCarthy
CEO/President

New VFN Resources

We have many [resources](#) on our website including our own [publications](#) and many [webinars](#) recorded by subject-matter experts who generously donate their time to share their knowledge. Here is a quick list of our newest additions:

[Family Guide to Transition Services in Vermont](#)

[Guide for Families with Children Traveling to Out-of-State Placements](#)

[Going to Work and College: Information for Youth who receive Supplemental Security Income \(SSI\)](#)

[Supplemental Security Income: What you should know when your child turns 18](#)

[Webinar: Assistive Technology and Employment of Youth with Disabilities](#)

[Facebook Live: Anxiety in Teens with Dr. Jeremiah Dickerson, child psychiatrist](#)

[Webinar Tour of VFN's Transition to Adulthood Toolkit for Youth with Disabilities](#)

Proficiency-Based Grading and Graduation Requirements

[Act 77](#), passed in 2013, provides all Vermont students flexible pathways for high school completion including a proficiency-based system of grading that is not based on the traditional A, B, C, D, F system. The Vermont Agency of Education has provided an [overview of proficiency-based grading and transcripts](#). Please call our Family Support Consultants at Vermont Family Network if you have questions about the transition process for your youth with a disability. Our [Transition Toolkit for Youth with Disabilities](#) includes our newest publication - [Family Guide to Transition Services in Vermont](#) as well as a wealth of information that can help you and your youth transition smoothly from school to adult life.

Why does VFN Send Surveys to Families?

Families who have contacted VFN Family Support Consultants might receive surveys about your experience with us. We may ask you if we were helpful. We may ask if the information we shared was useful to your family. We may ask your opinion on a specific service. Why do we send you these surveys? Firstly, we use families' input to help improve our services. Secondly, we are required by our funders to conduct surveys and report the results. VFN receives funding from entities such as the federal and state governments as well as private and philanthropic entities. Funders need to see the impact of their dollars. Do their dollars make a difference? By responding to our surveys, you answer that question. We know families receive many surveys through email. We would greatly appreciate your filling out the next VFN survey you may see from us!

You can listen "live" or after the webinar is recorded and saved on our [website](#) and [YouTube channel](#).

Special Needs Planning for Your Peace of Mind - Wednesday, November 20 from 12 noon - 1 pm. Presenter: Claudia I. Pringles, Vermont attorney whose practice includes Special Needs Planning and Estate Planning.

[Click here for information and to register.](#)

Restraint and Seclusion in Vermont Schools - Friday, November 22 from 10:30 am - 12 noon. Presenter: Tracy Harris, Coordinator for Behavioral Supports, Student Support Services Division, Vermont Agency of Education. Information and registration coming soon. [Click here for information and to register.](#)

Mediation in the Special Education Process - Wednesday, December 11 from 12 noon - 1 pm. Presenter: Matt Keister, Vermont attorney with the Law Office of Claudia I. Pringles. Information and registration coming soon.

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

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!

Saturday, March 28 from 10 am - 2 pm in a location to be determined in Springfield, VT

Tuesday, March 31 from 4 pm - 8 pm at the Eastside Restaurant in Newport, VT

Thursday, April 2 from 8:30 am - 1 pm at the Delta Hotel (formerly Trader Duke's) in South Burlington, VT

Alternatives to Guardianship for Education Decisions

When a student turns 18, they get to make their own school decisions. There are many [alternatives to guardianship](#). Alternatives when it comes to school decisions include:

[Supported Decision-Making](#): This is an alternative to guardianship and can also be used in conjunction with guardianship. The student selects people to help them make and communicate choices. The student gets help to understand

information, but they make the decision.

Release of Information: The student signs a form that says who to invite to school meetings and who can get information and records from the school.

Education Power of Attorney: A student uses this document to give someone the power to make school decisions for them. It also describes how the student will help make those decisions. You don't need to go to court to create an Education Power of Attorney but it does need to be notarized.

Please call and talk with one of our Family Support Consultants if you have any questions or would like additional information.

News from the Puppets

The puppets have a very full school year ahead, and have started the year with a variety of programs in a wide range of places. Highlights include:

A day of shows, thanks to the Gibney Family Foundation, at Randolph Elementary supporting a student who is blind and his peers with a program about friendship

Children's Mental Health programs at Windsor School to support K-6 students on mental health and bullying prevention thanks to the Vermont Department of Mental Health

A new partnership with 100 Women Who Care Franklin County, providing funds for shows at Enosburg Elementary about friendship and bullying prevention

Tobacco Prevention programs at Eden Central School

Our first show of the year in upstate NY at the Sara Marie School thanks to DePaula Chevrolet

From the Students

"When people don't play with me, it makes me sad."

"How did you get blind?"

"Can you start the show again?"

"It is important to be friends with people who are different from you so you won't be alone."

From the Adults

"Loved the student participation! They were so engaged." Grade 2 Teacher

"It was wonderful for the students to have time to play/ practice friendship making skills with the puppets." Grade K Teacher

"Very powerful video. Role playing was great." Grade 4 Teacher

"I love this and I am happy you did this Bullying workshop - it's huge as a para and a mom with kids in this school. I know it will help my own child! I really enjoyed

SibShop Fun - November 9 & December 7

Our next Sibshop will be on **Saturday, November 9 from 1 - 3:30 pm**. Do you think you have what it takes to take on Sibshop's Impossible Obstacle Course of Impossible Obstacles?! Our resident obstacle artist Molly begs to differ! Bring your A-game as we test the sibs ability to approach and tackle the literal and figurative obstacles in our lives. Theme is flexibility. The location is 60 Knight Lane in Williston.

On **Saturday, December 7 from 1 - 3:30 pm**, Paint and Soda returns for another year! Our Sibshop Artist in residency Sarah will guide the sibs step-by-step in creating their own masterpieces. Sibs will be able to take their creations home. The location is 60 Knight Lane in Williston.

For questions, scholarships, or to RSVP, please contact Jamie Rainville by calling 802-876-5315 X243 or emailing Jamie.Rainville@vtn.org. 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 473 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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