

Helping Vermont Families for Over 30 Years!



News and Resources March 2020



Greetings, VFN family and friends!

It's March, and we want to start with an expression of gratitude for all the restaurants that participated in our annual Dine to Donate/Restaurant Raffle in February, as well as all the folks who dined out/bought raffle tickets! We truly appreciate your support in this FUNdraiser!

We are busy readying for Early Childhood Day at the Legislature on March 11th, and Disability Awareness Day on the 12th. These annual opportunities to shine a light on what is most important to the individuals and families we serve and the educators and providers who serve them are unparalleled. If you are interested in participating, please check out the details for [Early Childhood Day](#) and [Disability Awareness Day](#). Your voice can make a real difference for people with disabilities/special health needs and their families, across the lifespan.

Our "new and improved" annual [Conference](#) will debut 3/21 in southern Vermont---we are very excited to be able to bring *The Power of Play for ALL Ages!* with Sara Forward to 4 different locations in Vermont in March and April. We hope to see you at one of the ½ day sessions. Parents are only \$10 (full scholarships available) and professionals are \$25. Register [here](#).

We continue to seek family stories for our outreach and advocacy efforts---if you are interested, please contact [Katie Keidel](#) at (802) 876-5315 x215.

From the heart,

Pam McCarthy
CEO/President

What do Civil Rights have to do with School Lunches?

Did you know that Vermont is required to administer child nutrition programs in accordance with all non-discrimination laws, regulations, instructions, policies, and guidance? This includes annual training on civil rights in child nutrition programs.

So what does this mean if your child has a disability? Here is one example from the [Accommodating Children with Disabilities in School Meal Programs manual](#), one of many resources on the Vermont Agency of Education's [website](#).

Question: A child with autism is very sensitive to food textures, and will only eat foods with a smooth texture. Is the child's condition considered a disability, and if so, must the school food service make a modification for the child?

Answer: Yes. According to the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act), any physical or mental impairment impacting the "major life activity" of eating is considered a disability. Some children with autism have sensory sensitivities and prefer food of a certain texture or color. They may require the same foods every day and need to maintain a regular routine. If a child's autism impacts their ability to consume Program meals, the SFA (School Food Authorities) must provide a reasonable modification.

If you have any questions or need more information, please contact [Jamie Curley](#), Child Nutrition Coordinator at the Vermont Agency of Education, at (802) 828-2010.

Free Educational Opportunities

You can listen "live" or after the webinar is recorded and saved on our [website](#) and [YouTube channel](#). We also record our Facebook Live events and save those on our [website](#). Check the [calendar](#) on our website for new events.

Facebook Live Videos

[Coordinated Services Plan Process \(Act 264\)](#) recorded February 13 with Vickie Crocker, Family Support Consultant at VFN

Transition Assessments for Students in High School [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#) recorded February 12 with Jayson Capobianco, an Employment Specialist at Spaulding High School in Barre

Self-Advocacy for People with Disabilities recorded January 15 with Randy Lizotte or Northwest Counseling & Support Services. Randy is also President of the Board of Directors for [Green Mountain Self-Advocates](#)

Upcoming Events

[VFN Annual Conference](#) - 3/21 - Brownsville; 4/2 - South Burlington; 4/4 - Burlington; 4/7 - Newport

Webinar - How can [Vermont ABLE](#) help Achieve a Better Life Experience for People with Disabilities - **Monday, March 16** from 12 noon - 1 pm. Presenter: Kirsten Murphy, Executive Director, Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council. [Register here](#)

Facebook Live - Interview with Kirsten Murphy, Executive Director, Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council, **Monday, March 16** at 1:30 pm

Webinar - Suspension & Expulsion in Universal Prek: A Guide for Families **Wednesday, March 18** from 12 noon - 1 pm. Presenter: Katie McCarthy, M.Ed, ECSE /IDEA Part B 619 Coordinator, Early Education Team, Vermont Agency of Education. [Register here](#)

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 - Register Today!

[VFN's Annual Conference](#) will have a whole new look! We're excited about our new half-day format that will happen in 4 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 *The Power of Play for ALL Ages!* [Listen to an interview](#) with Sara as she describes what participants can expect at this interactive, fun-filled workshop.

Visit our [website](#) for Sara's bio and more information about her presentation. Only **\$10 for parents** (scholarships available) and **\$25 for professionals**. A light meal will be provided.

Here are the 4 dates and times:

Saturday, [March 21](#) from 10 am - 2 pm at the [Holiday Inn Mount Ascutney](#) in Brownsville. [Register here](#)

Thursday, [April 2](#) from 8:30 am - 1 pm at the [Delta Hotel](#) (formerly Trader Duke's) in South Burlington. [Register here](#)

Saturday, [April 4](#) from 9 am - 12 noon at the Old North End Community Center Event Hall (20 Allen St.) in Burlington. A big thank you to the [JSM Family Room](#) for co-hosting this event! The focus audience will be parents from New American communities; however, as with all of our other conference dates, everyone is welcome to participate! [Register here](#)

Tuesday, [April 7](#) from 4 pm - 8 pm at the [East Side Restaurant](#) in Newport. [Register here](#).

Summer Services: The Extended School Year

Is a summer program necessary to help your child reach their educational goals? Is a summer program necessary for your child to keep from regressing in the skill areas they have already achieved? If the answers to these

questions are "yes" and your Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 team has not yet talked about the need for Extended School Year (ESY) services in the summer, you may want to schedule a meeting to talk about just that! It's never too early to start planning. Read the [VFN Fact Sheet on ESY Services](#) and call our helpline at (802) 876-5315 if you have questions.

2nd Annual Youth Summit - Save the Date!

The Youth Advocacy Council's motto is "Educate, Elevate, Empower" and they will be planning a full-day of events May 28th at the Vermont Technical College in Randolph, VT. Workshops will cover these topics: employment/careers, housing, special education and transportation. The keynote speaker will be [Hasan Davis](#) and lunch will be provided! The Youth Summit is free for all young people with disabilities. Registration information will be available soon.

We are seeking proposals for speakers for this event on topics such as transportation, special education, careers/employment and housing. If interested, please fill out a [request for proposal](#). For more information, contact [Nichole Jolly](#) at Vocational Rehabilitation or [Martha Frank](#) at VFN.

Vermont Health Information Exchange Moves to "Opt-Out" starting March 1

The Vermont Health Information Exchange lets doctors, nurses, hospitals and pharmacies securely read, share and add to your medical record across Vermont. It puts your providers on the same page. Beginning March 1, they are switching their consent policy from "opt-in" to "opt-out." This means that you automatically are agreeing to have your medical records shared unless you take steps to "opt-out." For more information on this important change, visit the [Vermont Health Information Exchange website](#).

What are Transition Core Teams?

There are 14 local transition core teams that cover all of Vermont. These teams are run by Vocational Rehabilitation transition counselors and should include members from the school, adult agencies and the community who are involved with the transition of students with disabilities from school to adult life. These teams can also include parents! The VFN website has [dedicated pages](#) detailing membership, purpose, meeting minutes and more!

Summer Camps and Recreation

Summer camps and other recreational programs can provide a variety of experiences for children with disabilities. Check out our updated [Summer](#)

News from the Puppets

We would like to give a big heartfelt thank you to the 80 dancers/performers, our sponsors (The Law Offices of Fred V. Peet, Main Street Landing, City Market and American Flatbread Burlington), volunteers and 145 attendees at our final Dance Showcase on February 15th. It was another successful, sold out show. The money raised will go towards our essential programs that support children and families statewide. Thank you for a wonderful 10 years of the Dance Showcase. It certainly was a decade of beauty, grace and strength.

The Puppet Team has been near and far this past month - St. Albans, Essex, Barre, South Burlington, Shelburne, and New York. Many schools have hosted the Anxiety Pilot program, and we are gathering useful and insightful feedback from students, teachers, and counselors. We have far surpassed reaching 5,000 individuals this year, with many shows lined up in the next three months.

This week we focused on our Friend 2 Friend program and had a powerful time at Orchard School. This is what we heard:

From the Students

"That was a blast!" Student

"I have autism too!" Student

"You came here today, I think, to teach us about friendship." Student

From the Adults

"This was excellent. Perfect for our students." Teacher

"That was amazing!" Teacher

"Thank you! Loved that a number of the students participating connected with either having autism or other 'differences' themselves. Great empathy building exercise. Safety was created to be accepting of differences." School Counselor

SibShop Fun Saturday, March 14

Our next Sibshop will be on **Saturday, March 14 from 1 - 3:30 pm**. Sibs will have fun climbing and repelling at MetroRock Climbing Center in Essex Junction. All experience levels are welcome! Safety, of course, is #1. Sibs should come in comfortable clothes and bring their own sneakers. Parents will need to sign a MetroRocks [release form](#).

For questions, scholarships, or to RSVP, please contact Molly Lawney by calling 802-876-5315 x216 or emailing Molly.Lawney@vtfn.org. Space is limited so RSVP soon!

We're Here to Help!

Our Family Support Consultants are here to help you. You can reach us by calling (802) 876-5315 or toll-free at 1-800-800-4005. Another way to contact us is to send an email to info@vtfn.org. Include your name, phone number, and a few words about your question or concern, and best times to reach you during our office hours (Monday-Friday, 9 am - 4:30 pm) so we can have the right person on our staff return your call. We do our very best to return calls within one business day.

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 510 and growing. This group shares ideas, asks questions, and offers support.

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



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

This project is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under grant number H84MC21657. This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by, HRSA, HHS, or the U.S. Government.