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Strong Families. Strong Futures.



Dear VFN family and friends,

We continue to serve families virtually throughout the state, and are constantly amazed by the resilience and creativity of families as we all try to navigate the “new normal” of Covid-19 and the state’s slow reopening. We hope that you and your loved ones are well as summer begins, and wish you a happy Father’s Day this Sunday.



I need to share some difficult news. After more than 30 years, Vermont Family Network will no longer be providing Children’s Integrated Services Early Intervention (CIS-EI) services and supports to infants and toddlers and their families in Chittenden County, effective September 1st, 2020. We [notified families](#) we serve this week and are doing everything we can to ensure that they will have a smooth transition to their new CIS-EI provider. Our hearts are heavy as we navigate this significant change with our families, and in our organization.

VFN's Early Intervention program has been a unique and well-regarded part of VFN's family-to-family support, information and connection for a very long time. Our Family Resource Coordinators (FRCs), skilled and caring individuals with personal experience navigating the system of care for their own children with special health needs/disabilities, have been a gold standard of parent-to-parent service coordination. Our Developmental Educators, whose expertise is early childhood special education, have been successfully paired with the FRCs as "dynamic duos" serving families in close partnership with other CIS providers throughout Chittenden County. We cannot thank them enough for all they have done---and continue to do---to provide excellent CIS-EI services in Chittenden County.

So, why the big change? Over the last year or so, Vermont's Agency of Human Services has been going through the process of payment reform which includes the funding for Children's Integrated Services (CIS) throughout Vermont. Through this process, we were informed that Chittenden County would receive a decrease in funding. To ensure that all CIS services could continue with the funding cuts, the Chittenden County CIS contractor, the Howard Center, put all the CIS subcontracts (for Early Intervention, Specialized Child Care, and Strong Families Vermont Nursing and Family Support Home Visiting) out to bid. VFN submitted a proposal for the Early Intervention subcontract, one that VFN has held since the days of the Family, Infant, and Toddler Project. We have been informed by the Howard Center that we were not the successful bidder and that the new CIS Early Intervention subcontract will be awarded to our sister CIS provider in Franklin & Grand Isle counties, Northwestern Counseling and Support Services (NCSS). As of September 1st, 2020, NCSS will begin providing the Early Intervention services for the Chittenden region, collaborating with the other CIS subcontractors in Chittenden County. NCSS will build on the successful CIS EI services they already provide in the communities of northwestern Vermont. VFN's dedicated CIS-EI providers will work closely with NCSS and the Howard Center in the coming few months to provide a smooth transition for all children and families.

As we prepare for this change, we are more committed than ever to our mission as a statewide organization that empowers and supports all Vermont families of children with disabilities and special health needs. As Vermont's federally designated Family-to-Family Health Information Center and Parent Training and Information Center, as well as the state's national affiliate of Family Voices and Parent to Parent, and the home of New England's one-of-a-kind Puppets in Education program, we are here for families across the span of their children's growth and development. We continue to provide statewide support, information, and connection for families, and to promote strong family/professional/community partnerships for *all* children. It goes without saying, VFN remains a significant resource to our transitioning CIS-EI families in Chittenden, should they wish to utilize any of our other supports and services, now, or in the future.

Onward!

From the heart,

Pam McCarthy, M.Ed.
CEO/President

Living in the Time of Covid



Thanks to Adam Wechsler for sharing what life is like for him during the pandemic. Our own Joanne Wechsler is Adam's proud mom. A shout out to the entire Wechsler family for persevering during these challenging times and advocating for better lives for people with disabilities.

Enjoy this [interview with Adam](#) and Claire Giroux-Williams, VFN Development and Communications Manager. Would you like to [share your story](#)?

Your Voice Matters! 2 Short Surveys

Teleservices

Many services including medical, mental health, and education are now delivered using technology. What is working well for your child and family? What are your challenges and barriers? What could we do to help? Please take a few minutes to complete this [short Teleservices survey](#) so we can use the results to set priorities and guide our work.



Special Education

The [Vermont Special Education Rules](#) are currently open for comment! This is a rare opportunity for you to share valuable feedback regarding your experience with your child's Individualized Education Program (IEP). We are gathering information regarding proposed changes in this [short survey](#). Your feedback will be aggregated and shared with the [State Board of Education](#) and could influence the final changes to the Rules. If you are interested in submitting more detailed written comments to the State Board of Education, please contact Family Support at (802) 876-5313 or info@vtfn.org. The survey will be open until October 30.

Racial Justice and Equity

At VFN, we are committed to doing our part—as individuals, and as a family support and advocacy organization—to change the story of inequity and injustice that is the lived experience of too many families of color, including here in Vermont. We are listening. We are learning how to be better, so we can do better in our efforts to lift *all* family voices for positive change and

help to create more inclusive communities throughout our state. Learn more by reading our [statement on Racial Justice and Equity](#). As the Vermont chapter of [Family Voices](#), we also support their [Statement of Solidarity and Commitment to Action](#).

Contact Us. We Will Listen!

Helping Vermont Families thrive for more than 30 years



New video! Dr. Dickerson, Vickie Crocker and puppet Natalie talk about anxiety in children ages 6-12

[Learn More](#)



New! Puppets in Education resources on many different topics

[Learn More](#)



New VFN Publication! Anxiety Disorders in Children

[Learn More](#)

Recent Events to Watch & Share



Vermont Youth Summit



[Keynote Presentation](#) - [Hasan Davis](#) shared his journey through the education, justice, and social service systems that often fail to provide support for success.

"Very inspirational and wonderful suggestions for how to self advocate!"
"Personal stories, reflection and connection to wider societal issues."
"How to accept my self worth and not label myself because of my past."

[Workshop for youth and young adults](#) - For young people experiencing disabilities it can be difficult to own their experience, feel empowered, navigate challenges, and find personal success. Hasan led youth through exercises sharing his success strategies beyond challenges one is faced when trying to write their own story.

"To have a plan...my plan...shift from what the world expects to what I expect. That even in the face of adversity, you can succeed and overcome."
"I liked the poem that he had me do and his rules that he calls Hasan's rules."
"I learned some things about myself and the importance of having relationships."

Special Education Town Hall

In this [Town Hall](#), Jacqui Kelleher, State Director of Special Education with the Vermont Agency of Education, and her team members reviewed compensatory education services, extended school year services, and answered other special education questions. Learn more about Jacqui and Special Education in this [Facebook Live interview](#).



Vermont ABLE Accounts

In this [webinar](#), Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council Executive Director Kirsten Murphy explained how VT-ABLE (Achieving a Better Life Experience) works and how it can play a part in supporting greater independence and a more financially secure future for someone with a disability.

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