

Greetings to our VFN Family and Friends.

The recent floods in Vermont have highlighted the strength and resilience of its people when they come together. The flooding on July 10th has affected families, businesses, and individuals throughout the state. Vermont Family Network remains committed to its mission of empowering families, even in the face of this devastating event. At Vermont Family Network, we want families to be aware that they can rely on us for support and information about resources during this difficult time. We understand that the effects of this flood will not be resolved quickly, and individuals, families, children, and youth who have special health needs or disabilities and are vulnerable to harmful and unsafe conditions may need extra help. We are here to support. For my Executive Director report this month, I'd like to take a moment to reflect on the week of July 10th and what I experienced in my community which may resonate with our readers.

I was in Waterbury Village when the flooding began. There was a lot of angst in Waterbury since many neighbors had experienced the flood levels of Irene, and that Monday, people began checking in on each other and keeping vigilant. We woke up on Tuesday to find a large portion of the village underwater. I am on higher ground, but the brook ¼ mile away had flooded up the street, meandering through homes and yards so that I could almost claim I had waterfront property. The water was not as high as Irene, but it was still and would not recede. Irene had about 12 hours of rainfall compared to the July 10th flooding, which saw 48 hours of rainfall. Walking through the community that morning was devastating...friends using kayaks to get through the streets to rescue what they could from basements and first floors. People were stunned...but just for a while.

My Waterbury community sprang into action. Everyday citizens rose as leaders and began to take care of each other. Volunteers emerged from everywhere and the town in a quick, coordinated effort leapt into action with every neighbor and business coming forth to help and support each other. It was truly a magical moment of Vermont Strong and gave me the joy that some people experience (okay - ME!) when they watch a Hallmark movie; where a small town faces adversity together and leans in on each other during recovery. Everything from stocking food pantries to creating makeshift childcare centers to bucket brigades, and massive shoveling of sludge - the town rallied and smiled through the devastation. We had our health and our lives. We felt the support of the entire state. I was proud to be part of a caring, connected, community. I saw a town that modeled the tenets of Vermont Family Network - a strong start, lifting family voices, and advancing inclusion of all people.

And we were not hit the hardest. The top five towns hit hardest: Ludlow, Barre, Montpelier, Londonderry, Andover are all communities with families VFN serves. Our hearts are with them as they recover, and we have reached out to them to let them know we are here. We know others are rallying proudly and widely. At VFN, our thoughts are with everyone impacted directly or indirectly. We expect this may lead to challenges with the start of the school year and we will be here to help navigate the education, mental health, and healthcare systems. But we have also been deeply touched and encouraged by neighbors helping neighbors, and we remain Vermont Strong. As a small, rural state we face many challenges by our geographical and economical divides, and when communities come together in support of a cause or towards a unified front, people are raised up and the impossible becomes possible. Whether it is a flood, or an IEP/CSP meeting, or a school climate seeking systemic change, the Green Mountain State is strong and anything is possible.

Here is a list of current flood resources:

- [Vermont.gov Flood Resources](#) : this is the general resource page that is being updated for all Vermonters and includes information on who to contact, how to get financial assistance, and some clean up guidance. It is also available in many languages.
- [Vermont ASL Flooding 2023 video](#): Laura Siegel, Director of Deaf, Hard-of-Hearing, and DeafBlind Services at DAIL, flood recovery information in ASL and with closed captions.
- [FEMA Accessible YouTube](#): FEMA has a playlist of videos that are in ASL to help folks navigate the various processes.
- [Disaster Recovery Centers Open in Rutland and Washington Counties \(FEMA.gov\)](#): The centers are accessible to people with disabilities and access and functional needs and are equipped with assistive technology equipment. Survivors who need a reasonable accommodation or sign language interpreter may call 833-285-7448 (press 2 for Spanish).
- [Rainbow Bridge Community Center \(rainbowbridgevt.org\)](#): This center in Barre is helping to coordinate flood resources for the Barre community. From their website: "We want to be very clear with the world: The RBCC, Rainbow Response, and the Rainbow Relief Fund are here for the most vulnerable people in our community. This means we prioritize the poor, elders, youth, people with disabilities, and people that have other risk factors in America such as being BIPOC or queer. We do not prioritize landlords or businesses, as resources for them are abundant and readily accessible. In this world, where there is people, there is need. Where there is need, there is community unrealized."

Green Mountain Self Advocates put together a PDF with images and plain language explaining What a Water Boil Notice means. The state has a current [list](#)

[of Boil Water notices \(anrweb.vt.gov\)](http://anrweb.vt.gov), but this would also apply to folks wells that were flooded.

- [What-Does-It-Means-When-Your-Town-Says-Boil-Your-Water.pdf \(gmsavt.org\)](http://gmsavt.org)

From the heart,

Jacqui