



To empower and support all Vermont families of children with special needs.

VFN EMPOWERS AND SUPPORTS FAMILIES

Our pediatrician recommended that our 18 month old twins be evaluated for speech services and connected our family with Vermont Family Network (VFN). The twins were not saying as many words as they should be for their age. I believe that Max and Miles greatly benefited from their interactions with VFN. They talk nonstop and have an impressive vocabulary for two year olds.



Max and Miles Gilbert, 18 months

About 6 months ago we learned Miles has epilepsy. VFN helped us as we accepted his diagnosis and figured out how to handle it. We were provided with emotional and logistical support - connecting me with resources and helping me directly.

When I think of how VFN has helped our family, it has been on many levels and with every member, much more than the speech therapy I expected.

-Meghan Gilbert, proud parent

Dear Friends, Colleagues, and Supporters,

This year's Annual Report is full of our employees' terrific efforts to empower and support families of children with special needs throughout the state in the year ending June 30, 2017. We are excited to share some highlights of our Family Support and Children's Integrated Services Early Intervention (CIS-EI) teams' work.

From July 1, 2016, to June 30, 2017, Vermont Family Network has:

- Empowered 1,508 families through our statewide Family Support, providing information, referral, and assistance, totaling 4,386 contacts, a 30% increase over FY16.
- Supported 325 professionals statewide who served families of children with special needs.
- Served 544 families in Chittenden County with supportive CIS-EI home visits and developmental education.
- Served 68 New American families in Chittenden County resulting in a \$15,000 Innovations and Collaborations grant from the Vermont Community Foundation to continue this work.

VFN continues to build strong partnerships around the state to support all families of children with special needs and the professionals who serve them. These partnerships allow us to increase our ability to reach families where they are and to ensure that their voices are represented when important decisions related to disability, special education, and healthcare reform are being considered.

Our 16 Board members, more than half of whom are parents of children with special needs, strongly support the advancement of our mission and are working diligently to help us expand our unrestricted funding so that we might increase our ability to provide impactful, family-identified support, information, and training throughout the state.

We appreciate your support and invite you to participate in VFN's outreach, special events, Board of Directors, legislative advocacy, and more. Together, we will continue to make a difference as Vermont's nexus of support for families of children with special needs.

From the heart,



Pam McCarthy,
President/CEO



Ellen Zeman,
Board Chair

Pam McCarthy and Ellen Zeman



Vermont Family Network employees



CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL

Pam McCarthy
President/CEO

Holly Brooks
Vice President of Operations

Rachel Boyers
*Director of Children's Integrated Services
- Early Intervention*

Lisa Maynes
Director of Family Support- Health

Karen Price
Director of Family Support- Education

Dianne Levasseur
Finance Manager

Sarah Vogelsang-Card
Puppets in Education Program Manager

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Vice Chair

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Valerie Richardson

Mariah Riggs

Charlotte Safran

Olivia Smith-Hammond

Beth Wilson



**“I am SO grateful for ALL the support I received from VFN! As always, VFN goes above and beyond to help parents! I cannot thank them enough!”
-PARENT**

FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM

VFN’s Family Support Program is founded on the work of its highly experienced and dedicated staff who are all parents who have “walked the walk.” Some employees have been committed to this work for 10 or more years and continue on a daily basis to support families who are navigating the health and special education systems. Families often need assistance to understand complex laws and their parental rights, and how to collaborate with a wide variety of professionals who are part of their child’s team. Our staff is skilled and ready to support Vermont families in this process.

Grant funding has allowed us to offer families respite, conference, and training experiences, and we collaborate directly with Children with Special Health Needs at the Department of Health to provide resources for medically necessary services and products that are not otherwise covered by insurance. Through partnership with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), we produced and maintained a comprehensive Transition to Adulthood Toolkit on our website and we work directly with DVR Transition Counselors to help facilitate the transition to adulthood for youth with disabilities.

Family Support is vital to Vermont Family Network’s mission. We listen to families and offer resources, support, and growth opportunities; and disseminate information through workshops, webinars, and printed materials. Families of children with special needs turn to VFN multiple times throughout their children’s lives for assistance. Our goal is always to empower families with knowledge and experiences they need to move forward with confidence. As experienced parents of children with special needs, our staff is uniquely qualified to achieve this goal.

Top reasons families contact Family Support

- 1 Individualized Education Program (IEP)**
- 2 Parent/Professional Communication**
- 3 Parents’ Rights**
- 4 Funding**
- 5 Behavior**



"We are so grateful for the help from VFN with the camp fee! My 12 year old will be attending his 2nd year of social skills day camp at Camp Maple Leaf."
-PARENT

"I think all aspects of the program have been extremely helpful for my son. All of the people he's worked with have been amazing and I can't imagine what we would do or would have done without them." -PARENT



SibShop fun!

"I never realized how much a parent could actually do for their children in the school district! I received so much info from VFN that I became very confident in my ability to go into any school meeting and feel like I was being heard!" -PARENT

CHILDREN'S INTEGRATED SERVICES — EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAM (CIS-EI)

VFN's Chittenden County CIS-EI is part of Vermont's statewide system of coordinated services for pregnant women and young children. CIS-EI serves children ages 0-3 years with developmental delays or health conditions which may lead to developmental delays by providing coordinated services in natural environments, such as homes and early care and education programs where children without disabilities also participate. Our employees coach parents and caregivers on ways to integrate play-based developmental interventions that are interesting and fun into the daily routines of their children.

In the past year, VFN's CIS-EI program supported the transitions of 150 children to the schools' Early Childhood Special Education programs. Despite our successes, we had a challenging year with several position vacancies, straining our ability to serve newly eligible children. Our vacancies now filled, we are rebuilding our service capacity, however, we remain concerned about the rising numbers of referrals to our program which continues to be level funded. We will continue to advocate for increases to funding for all CIS services across the state, including specialized autism services.

This past year our Children's Integrated Services staff received professional development in many areas including Caregiver Affect Management, Best Practices in Autism, Building Blocks for Literacy, Social Skills Steps for Toddlers, and Culturally Responsive Behavioral Supports. Many went to the annual CIS Institute at Lake Morey where they attended various workshop strands related to family engagement.

Two of our employees, Kelly Morrison, Developmental Educator Supervisor, and Michelle Perry, Developmental Educator, were selected to participate in the Snelling Center for Government's Early Childhood Leadership Program. They will complete the six month program in October and join other ECLI graduates as advocates and leaders in the field of early childhood. This year, Rachel Boyers, Director of CIS-EI, was recognized along with her CIS intake and referral team colleagues with the KidSafe Outstanding Collaboration Award.

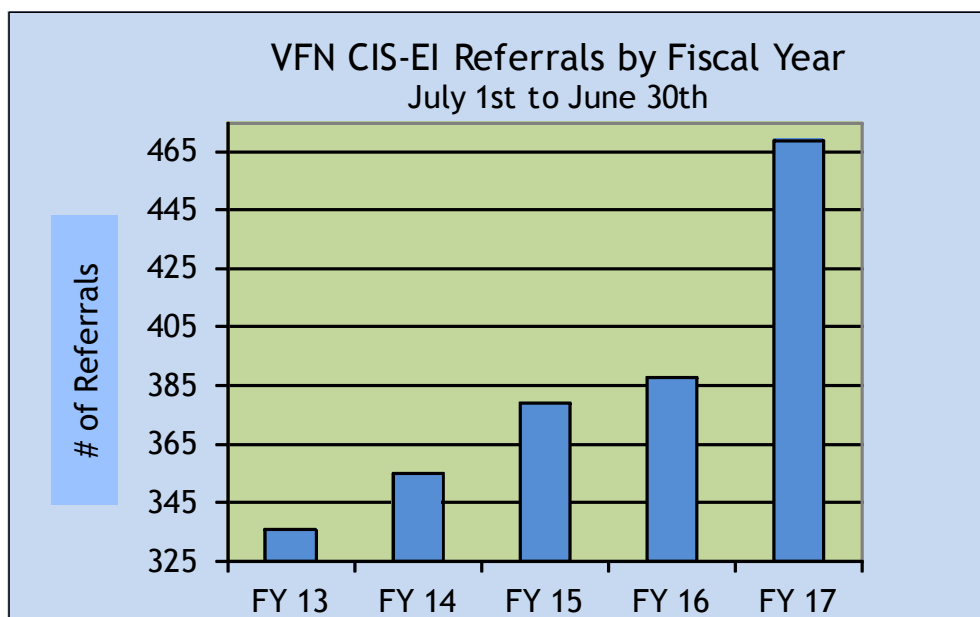


A proud graduate of
VFN's Early Intervention program

In FY 17, CIS-EI:

- ⇒ Served 544 children/families, a 15% increase from FY16
- ⇒ Received 469 referrals, a 40% increase from FY13 and a 20% increase from FY16

“I was hesitant about CIS services at first, but it was the best decision I could have made for my son. He has learned so much and grown so much because of CIS support. I'm very grateful for their services.” -PARENT



“Our experience with CIS-EI has been wonderful. We have worked with a Developmental Educator (DE) who has been especially great. The DE has been very communicative with us and built a very positive relationship with our daughter, providing us with so many tools and advice to keep our daughter’s development moving in the right direction.” -PARENT



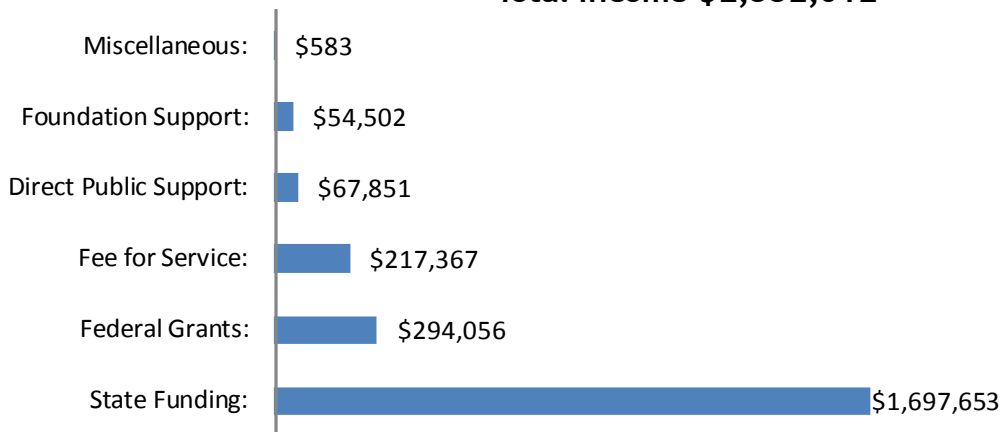
LISTENING TO THOSE WE SERVE

Funding is one of the top reasons families contact VFN. We distributed \$87,771 to families for critical expenses associated with their lives as parents of children with extraordinary needs.

Medically necessary, not covered by insurance	\$ 38,968
Respite	\$ 15,200
Therapy and equipment	\$ 7,880
VFN annual conference scholarship	\$ 7,725
Summer camp opportunities	\$ 6,580
Leadership activity stipends	\$ 5,766
Crisis funding	\$ 5,652



FY17 Revenues Total Income \$2,332,012

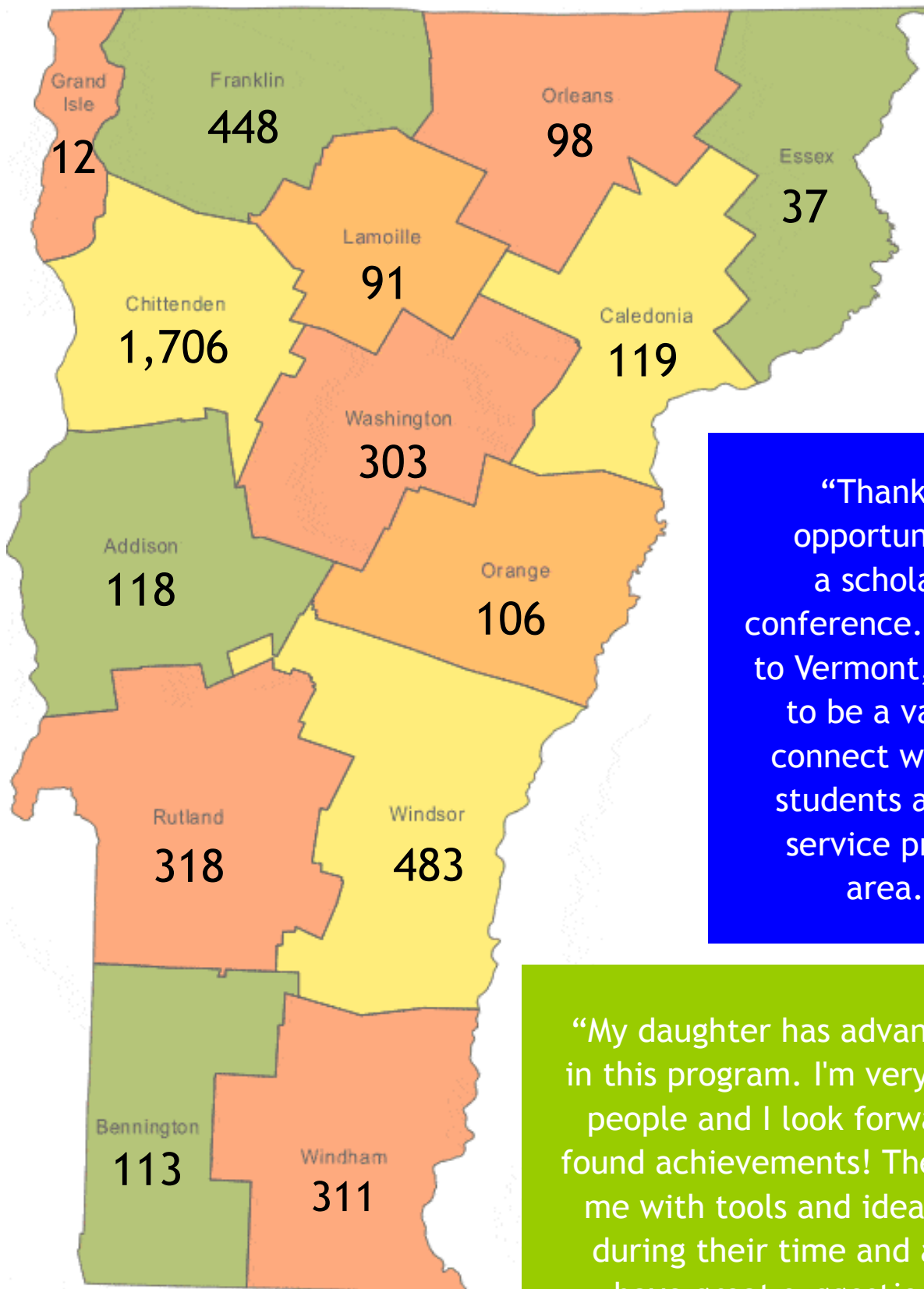


FY17 Expenses Total Expenses: \$2,252,660



TOTAL FAMILY CONTACTS: 4,386

JULY 1, 2016 TO JUNE 30, 2017



Out-of-state:
123

“Thank you for the opportunity to receive a scholarship to the conference. As someone new to Vermont, I found the day to be a valuable way to connect with parents and students as well as other service providers in the area.” -PARENT

“My daughter has advanced since being in this program. I'm very happy with the people and I look forward to her new found achievements! They have supplied me with tools and ideas that help her during their time and at home. They have great suggestions.” -PARENT

JOSEPH'S JOURNEY

At age 75, Paul Lascelles was just settling into retirement and enjoying wood working, certainly not expecting to be thrust back into the role of parenting a teenager. This is exactly what happened in 2014 when he lost his daughter, Michelle, unexpectedly. Paul immediately filed for guardianship of Michelle's one son, Joseph, who was 19 and diagnosed with autism.



Joseph and Paul Lascelles

Rather quickly Paul noticed that Joseph's span of knowledge seemed to be much lower than he expected. Paul was aware that as a young child Joseph had been enrolled in the homeschooling program through Vermont's Agency of Education, but what he would soon come to learn was that this instruction ceased in 2007, ending all formal instruction past the third grade level. Paul was himself angry and confused. Why had no one noticed his grandson was not enrolled in any educational program? How was this not uncovered when he went through the court system for guardianship? Did no medical professional in the past 9 years inquire about Joseph's education? Joseph was receiving support services from various agencies within the community, why had his education been ignored? At the same time, Paul saw that Joseph was much brighter than folks seemed to be acknowledging and this made him want to seek answers.

The Howard Center referred Joseph to Adult Basic Learning, the state's free education system. Quickly, Paul learned that what Joseph needed was special education services, services not offered through Adult Basic Learning. Next Paul decided to send Joseph to the Stern Center for Language and Learning for evaluation and instruction. Here, Paul was referred to Vermont Family Network's Family Support Program.

Upon meeting with Martha Frank, a Family Support Consultant with Vermont Family Network, Paul learned that, at 21 years old, Joseph was still eligible for a public education through his district's high school, Champlain Valley Union. Together, Paul and Martha approached the Director of Special Education at the school and were pleased to find everyone at the high school willing to do whatever necessary to get Joseph enrolled with the services he needed to be successful. Last January, 2017, Joseph became a full-time student at CVU and continued into the summer with services. While everything seemed on track for Joseph, he was quickly approaching his 22nd birthday when, by law, he would age-out of the special education services. He needed to remain a student.

Joseph's Journey (Continued)

Going back to the drawing board, Paul, with the support of VFN, was able to navigate the complicated laws and advocate for Joseph within the school system. Through the support of Martha and the Disability Law Project of Vermont Legal Aid, Paul learned about the protections under Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act allowing Joseph to remain enrolled at CVU with the necessary services until graduation. Because of Paul's persistence and continued advocacy, Joseph will earn his high school diploma and his future looks very bright.

Joseph is learning by leaps and bounds and the professionals who work with Joseph believe anything he wants to do with his future is possible, including college should he choose to pursue that route.

As with many parents of children with special needs, Paul finds himself and Joseph in the center of many moving parts, daily juggling school, the Stern Center to further advance Joseph's skills, and spending time with personal care assistants. Paul credits VFN for empowering him to be the best advocate for his grandson that he could be. As Joseph continues to work on his education, Paul is using his knowledge and advocacy skills to help plan for Joseph's future. Through all of this, Paul has found the time and inspiration to work on an intricately inlaid wooden table for his grandson, passing down not only the support and education that Joseph will need, but a treasured family heirloom.



In the Driver's Seat graduates, June 2017

“Thanks again- for ALL you do- it really, really makes a difference for parents and children. You're a port in the storm for parents when they are overwhelmed- a gift to the community.” -PROFESSIONAL response to a VFN Parent Training

**40 workshops and 16 webinars
supporting and empowering VT families**

100,269 views on VFN's website: VermontFamilyNetwork.org

**\$87,771 given directly to families to help
meet critical needs**

544 children served by the CIS-EI program (ages 0-3)

**32,968 views of VFN Webinars on our Youtube
channel youtube.com/vtfamilynetwork**

918 medical students trained by 62 Parent Volunteers/
Family Faculty

**325 professionals assisted with information
and training by the Family Support program**

47 siblings of children with special needs attended 8 Sibshops

1210 likes on facebook.com/VermontFamilyNetwork

327 followers on twitter.com/VTFN



600 Blair Park Road, Suite 240, Williston, VT 05495

Email: info@vtfn.org

1-(800) 800-4005 or (802) 876-5315

VermontFamilyNetwork.org