

Helping Vermont Families for Over 30 Years!



## News and Resources

April 2019



Greetings, VFN friends and family!

Spring is definitely in the air, and sugaring is in full swing. For those of you who attended our April 3rd Annual Conference, thank you for being part of our big day, and celebrating our 10th year as VFN! With Stories of Hope and Resilience as our theme, I was reminded again of Vermont Family Network's heart and soul, and the power of individual and family stories. Every day, each and every one of our staff encounters a new moment with a child or family or community partner that holds the seeds of a compelling story. Sometimes it is unique, but often, it is part of a familiar and larger thread that weaves so many of us together as a community connecting around disability and special health needs. Each of us has a part to play in building inclusive communities that build on the strengths of differences. And stories are an amazing part of that building process. Please share yours! If you'd like to document your story about living with a disability or special health need in Vermont, please contact us at 1-800-800-4005 or e-mail [info@vfn.org](mailto:info@vfn.org).

From the heart,

Pam McCarthy  
CEO/President

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### VFN Annual Conference Evaluation

If you attended our Annual Conference on Wednesday, April 3rd and did not get a chance to complete the full Conference evaluation, there is still time. We need evaluations to share with our funders and to improve our conference for next year. If you turned in your evaluation at the conference but have some other thoughts about the day, please contact [Claire.Giroux-Williams@vfn.org](mailto:Claire.Giroux-Williams@vfn.org) or (802) 876-5315 / 1-800-800-4005 x201

[Complete Evaluation](#)

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## Family Forum April 17 on Case Management

Does your child/family member receive Home and Community Based Services through the Vermont Agency of Human Services? This might be through Choices for Care, Developmental Disabilities Program, or the Traumatic Brain Injury Program. Please consider joining us for an upcoming family forum on ensuring that case management is provided in a way that is conflict of interest free. The State of Vermont wants to know how they should arrange services to avoid potential conflicts of interest and they are looking for input from families. To participate in person, [register here](#). To participate on the phone using Zoom, [register here](#). If you have any questions or need help registering, contact Janice Sabett at (802) 876-5315 / 1-800-800-4005 x218

[Contact Janice](#)

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## Rutland County Transition Fair April 10

We will be one of many vendors at the Rutland County Core Transition Team sponsored Transition Fair. All high school students with disabilities and parent/caregivers are welcome! The event is scheduled from 9 am until noon April 10th at Castleton University. The College Fair is scheduled at the same time so students and their families can visit both events. RSVPs are appreciated. For more information and to RSVP, please contact Nancy Columb at [ncolumb@vabir.org](mailto:ncolumb@vabir.org).

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## Bullying and Harassment

Our Family Consultants get many calls from parents concerned about their child being bullied at school. What are the protections for children with disabilities who are the targets of bullying? Under certain circumstances, the child may be a target of harassment and this could trigger a different process. Vermont has laws that protect students from [bullying and harassment](#). School districts have a responsibility to protect children and provide a safe school climate. Your school district must not only have a [policy](#) on the Prevention of Harassment, Hazing and Bullying of Students, but also designate [two or more people](#) at each school campus to receive complaints.

Call our Family Support Consultants at 1-800-800-4005 if you have questions about school bullying or harassment.

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## Students with Disabilities and Graduation

Did you know ...

A student with a disability on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) can

remain in school until their 22nd birthday if there is still a need for special education services (especially as they relate to transition to post-secondary life)? Every year, some students are graduated too early and are unprepared for life after high school. The Vermont Agency of Education, with feedback from various partners including the Vermont Family Network, has developed a [Graduation Readiness Tool](#) to help IEP teams determine if a student is ready to graduate. Talk to your team about this tool when graduation is discussed.

Did you know...

A student, as a result of their disability who needs to remain enrolled in school after the graduation ceremony in order to complete their high school education can still [participate](#) in the school's graduation ceremony with their same-aged peers? These topics and more are covered in our [Transition to Adulthood Toolkit](#).

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## Free VFN Webinars

Home Supports for Adults in Vermont Home and Community-Based Developmental Disability Services: Wednesday, April 24 from 9:30 am - 10:30 am. Presented by Amy Roth, Assistant Director, DAIL/DDSD. [Info and registration](#)

Helpful Approaches to Navigating Sensory Sensitivities in the Community: Wednesday, June 5 from 12:00 noon - 1:00 pm. Presenters from the UVM Children's Hospital: Jennifer Eddy, Certified Child Life Specialist - Comfort Zone (Outpatient Pediatric Sedation Center) and Jennifer Dawson, Certified Child Life Specialist - Baird 5 and PICU (Inpatient) [Info and registration](#)

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## News from the Puppets!

A big thank you to the National Life Group Foundation for sponsoring a day of Bullying Prevention programs at Thatcher Brook Elementary School in Waterbury! Thanks to this sponsorship, our Puppets in Education (PiE) program was able to reach the K-4 students with important messages about bullying. The students bravely shared their stories and gave the puppets suggestions about what to do when someone is unkind, and how to be an "Upstander" if you see it happening to someone else. They learned some new tips and tools to deal with bullying situations.

### From the students:

"I love the puppets! They're like our friends." 1st grader

"Everyone deserves to have friends." 2nd grader

"We all need friends because without it you can't have happiness." 1st grader

### From the teachers:

"You did a great job keeping students engaged and interacting with them."  
Grade 2 Behavior Interventionist

"Your program really promoted discussions among the students and helped them think about a topic that could change their mindsets about making friends -- how they make friends, as well as inclusivity and thinking about others within their community. You provided strategies for students to use if they are not feeling good about themselves and are being bullied." Grade 1 Paraeducator

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## 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 385 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.

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



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

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