



News and Updates

January 2019



Greetings, VFN Family and Friends!

Happy New Year! I hope your holiday season was warm and wonderful. We are excited for 2019, and all that the new year is sure to bring. We are gearing up for our annual conference on Wednesday, April 3rd at the Doubletree by Hilton in Burlington, which is looking amazing! In addition to great workshops and networking, we have two truly exciting headliners: "Hope Dealer" keynote Hasan Davis and "Intelligent Lives" filmmaker Dan Habib. We can't wait to share this day with you! For more information, visit our [website](#) or contact [Claire Giroux-Williams](#).

From the heart,
Pam McCarthy

CEO/President

Save the Date!
VFN's Annual Conference
Wednesday, April 3, 2019
Double Tree by Hilton, Burlington

[More
Information](#)

Special Education Funding during Legislative Session 2019

The 2019 Vermont legislative session will be starting shortly after the New Year and special education funding will be high on the agenda of the House and Senate Education committees. The Education committees are scheduled to hear from the [census-funding based advisory group](#) created as part of Act 173 by mid-January. [Act 173](#) creates a completely new funding structure for Vermont schools and is designed to serve all students who struggle, whether or not they have been diagnosed with a disability. Schools will be expected to deliver education through a [multi-tiered system of supports \(MTSS\)](#) model. The Vermont Family Network is called upon each session to represent family voice when there are bills affecting children with special health needs/disabilities. We will post opportunities through our Facebook page and [website](#) for families to testify on issues that are important to them and may help inform policy.

What is CMV?

Congenital Cytomegalovirus, or CMV, is the most common viral infection, and the leading non-genetic cause of hearing loss, that infants are born with in the United States. Every pregnant woman is at risk of acquiring CMV and only 9% of women know about it. CMV is common, serious, and preventable. In the U.S., 1 in 200 children are born with congenital CMV each year. There are simple and effective [prevention measures](#) you and your loved ones can take to mitigate the risk of CMV transmission during pregnancy. If you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant, talk with your doctor about CMV. For more information, you can visit the [National CMV Foundation](#), the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) or read one [mother's story](#) about her daughter with CMV.

New Transition to Adulthood Regional Guides

The Vermont Family Network's [Transition Toolkit for Youth with Disabilities](#) now lists educational, employment, recreational, mental health and developmental services resources by counties. We have completed twelve regional resource guides for families and professionals and are working on completing the Windsor county guide. Check them out and if you know of some great local resources that we've missed or have any input to share, please contact Martha Frank.

[Contact Martha](#)

Free VFN Webinars

Filing an Administrative Complaint for Your Child with a

Disability: Wednesday, January 16 from 12 - 1 pm. [Register Now](#). When parents believe that Early Intervention (serving infants and toddlers) or a school district has failed to follow the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or the Vermont Special Education Rules, they may file a written complaint at the responsible State Agency. This webinar explains the mechanics of filing an administrative complaint, when it is appropriate to do so and expected outcomes for your child. Presenter: Rachel Seelig, Staff Attorney, Vermont Legal Aid

Helpful Approaches to Navigating Sensory Sensitivities in the Community: Wednesday, February 13 from 12 - 1 pm. [Register Now](#). There are many considerations and approaches that can be helpful when introducing or re-introducing a child to a setting that is out of routine (e.g., medical appointments, hospitalizations, haircuts, etc.) These approaches can be especially helpful for children with sensory sensitivities. Child Life Specialists from the UVM Children's Hospital are trained to set up the environment, provide developmentally-appropriate education and support to children and families with a wide array of cognitive, emotional and physical needs in order to help process experiences in a way that is meaningful. We invite you to explore our toolbox of knowledge and encourage you to help us continue to fill it with the strategies that have been successful in your own journey. Please email your strategies and approaches to the presenters: Presenters from the UVM Children's Hospital: Jennifer Eddy, CCLS (Certified Child Life Specialist) - Comfort Zone (Outpatient Pediatric Sedation Center) Jennifer.C.Eddy@uvmhealth.org and Jennifer Dawson, CCLS - Baird 5 and PICU (Inpatient) Jennifer.Dawson@uvmhealth.org

Universal Pre-K and Early Childhood Special Education

Under Vermont's [universal pre-kindergarten law](#), children between the ages of three and five and not yet in kindergarten, are eligible to receive ten free hours per week of prekindergarten education at publically-funded and prequalified pre-K programs in schools or community-based programs. Under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), pre-K aged eligible children with disabilities are entitled to [special education](#) provided at no cost to families at a suitable location, including private childcare, public pre-K classrooms, Head Start or the home. These two Acts are independent of each other. If you have questions or concerns about how these two Acts interrelate regarding your pre-K aged child with a disability, please call our VFN helpline at 1-800-800-4005 and ask to speak to a family consultant.

News from the Puppets!

The puppets have been on the road throughout Vermont and upstate New York this past month with a huge variety of programs: Body Image, Bullying Prevention, Physical & Sexual Abuse Awareness, Children's Mental Health, Dental Care, Healthy Snacking, Learning Differences, Cultural Diversity and Drug & Alcohol Prevention. They supported siblings at the VFN Sibshop and performed at a VFN fundraising breakfast. Since this

school year began in September, VFN's Puppets have reached more than 2,500 people!

Could your children benefit from a program about Feelings or ADHD? The Vermont Department of Mental Health is heavily discounting these programs for schools in Vermont and we have three slots left for this school year. Contact Karen.sharpwolf@vtfn.org today to schedule a program!

What kids are saying to the puppets:

"I have ADHD. I take 6 pills a day. Sometimes I get really frustrated." 4th grader

"Hugs make me feel better." Kindergartener

"I feel sad when I am not asked to play games." 2nd grader

"That was a high quality program!" 3rd Grader

[Contact Karen](#)

Join Sibshop Fun January 13

Sibshop on ice! We will be celebrating the winter months by going to a local ice rink for some free skating and sibchat. Skates will be rented or sibs are welcome to bring their own. All skill levels are welcome! This Sibshop is on a Sunday from 2:00 pm - 4:30 pm Location: [Essex Ice Skating Facility](#). For questions, scholarships, or to RSVP, please contact Jamie Rainville at Jamie.Rainville@vtfn.org or call 802-876-5315 X 243. Space is limited so RSVP soon!

[Contact Jamie](#)

Meet the Family!

Join us for a 1-hour "Meet the Family" tour and overview of the work that Vermont Family Network does! For information on when tours will be held, contact Claire Giroux-Williams at claire.giroux-williams@vtfn.org. You will be amazed!

Join VFN's Closed Facebook Page

[VFN's closed Facebook page](#) is for parents, family members, and people in a parenting role. The current membership is 350 and growing. This group shares ideas, asks questions, and offers support. You may also want to [join our Listserv](#) which is a closed email sharing list.

Did you know we have 85+ webinars on [YouTube](#)?



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