



News and Updates

Nov/Dec 2018



Greetings, VFN Family and Friends!

I can't believe it is nearly Thanksgiving already! I want to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude for the remarkable people with whom I work at VFN, the state and community partners, and most of all, the families we serve. Every day, we learn from families. Everyone here takes those amazing lessons and uses them to improve what we do as a family-to-family support organization, and reinforce why we do it. It has been a very [busy year](#) for us, and we are all looking forward to the holiday season. 2018's end will be bringing a big transition for us, one that is bittersweet --- After 22 years, our wonderful Vice President of Operations, Holly Brooks, will be leaving us for the next chapter of her life's story. Sarah Wallace-Brodeur is ably stepping into the new Director of Operations role, and we are all excited for her! Holly has asked that we not make a big deal of her retirement, preferring instead to have an Open House and a low-key celebration. This will be December 14th. Please contact me at pam.mccarthy@vfn.org for more information if you would like to wish Holly well. In this time of gratitude and giving, words cannot express my deep appreciation for the eight years Holly and I have had together, leading VFN forward. She will be greatly missed, and is leaving her "baby" in very good hands!

Wishing you a joy-filled holiday season!

From the heart,
Pam McCarthy

CEO/President

Save the Date!

VFN's Annual Conference

Wednesday, April 3, 2019

Double Tree by Hilton, Burlington

Why does VFN Send Surveys to Families?

Families who have contacted VFN family support consultants might receive surveys about your experience with us. We may ask you if we were helpful. We may ask if the information we shared was useful to your family. We may ask your opinion on a specific service. Why do we send you these surveys? Firstly, we use families' input to help improve our services. Secondly, we are required by our funders to conduct surveys and report the results. VFN receives funding from entities such as the federal and state governments as well as private and philanthropic entities. Funders need to see the impact of their dollars. Do their dollars make a difference? By responding to our surveys, you answer that question. We know families receive many surveys through email. We would greatly appreciate your filling out the next VFN survey you may see from us!

Is Dual Enrollment Appropriate for My Child on an IEP?

Dual enrollment, under [Act 77](#), allows all Vermont juniors and seniors enrolled in public high school access to two college credit bearing classes while receiving high school and college credit. The IEP (Individualized Education Program) team (of which the parent and youth are members) decides if dual enrollment is an appropriate learning opportunity. A student must apply and be accepted into the program to receive a voucher for the approved course. Students can receive accommodations to attend college classes and are protected by [Section 504](#), but not IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). If you have any questions about your high schooler and dual enrollment, please call our family support consultants at the Vermont Family Network. Our [Transition Toolkit for Youth with Disabilities](#) contains information that can help you and your youth transition smoothly from school to adult life.

New Vermont Special Education Funding Law

Vermont educators are in the early stages of implementing [Act 173](#) which changes how schools fund special education. This transition will happen over several years. Schools will have more flexibility in serving not only children on IEPs but also all children who have academic, behavioral and emotional challenges. An [advisory group](#) which includes parent and disability voices has been formed to provide input to the State Board of Education, the Agency of

Education and the General Assembly. This change in funding law does not minimize or change any entitlements for children with disabilities under [IDEA](#) (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act).

Picking a Day of the Week for VFN's 2020 Conference

VFN's annual conference will be on Wednesday, April 3, 2019, at the DoubleTree by Hilton (formerly the Sheraton) in Burlington. We want to schedule our 2020 conference and need your help to decide what day of the week would work best. Past conferences were held on weekdays, however families have asked us to consider a Saturday instead. Please help us decide which day works best by completing this [short survey](#).

News from the Puppets!

A big thank you to Ross (Hometown) Chevrolet for a great day of Bully Prevention, Healthy Bodies and Cultural Diversity at Fort Ann Central School in October. We reached 206 children and 25 adults thanks to the partnership. The programs had a powerful impact and the students asked important questions. Anna and Brenda have been especially busy this fall with the Vermont Department of Mental Health's grant for Children's Mental Health programs. We still have a few slots left of the thirteen that were funded for heavily discounted Children's Mental Health programs. Contact Karen.sharpwolf@vtfn.org today to schedule a program!

From the Students:

"I feel sad when people are mean to me." 2nd Grader, Burlington

"I feel mad when other kids don't let me play with them." 2nd Grader, Burlington

"Orange makes me feel happy because it is like the leaves falling."
Kindergartener, Central VT

"I have been told to kill myself on the bus." 5th Grader, NY

"Maybe someone bullied because they don't have a friend."
Kindergartener, NY

"You should be friends with someone different as you should be kind."
3rd Grader, NY

From the Teachers/ Administrators:

"I was surprised one of the students volunteered in the workshop, as he has unique challenges and is new to the school. He was glowing during the role play." Grade 5 Teacher, New York

"During the workshop a student who is trying out a different gender identity and is using a different name felt comfortable to participate and use this new name. You created a safe space for this student. Thank you." Principal, Fort Ann Central School

Free VFN Webinars

Creating a Vision for Adulthood: Thursday, November 29, from 12 - 1 pm. [Register now](#). If you are a parent of a young child, the transition to adulthood can seem like a distant bridge to cross. Arriving at that bridge can inspire anxiety, concern, and trepidation. Those feelings can be minimized with early preparation and a plan for your child's transition. Lisa DeNatale and her son Harrison Boutcher will share how they, together with their family and team, designed Harrison's transition by focusing on the present while never losing sight of the bridge.

Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation: Serving Youth with Disabilities: Wednesday, December 19 from 12:00 - 1 pm. [Register Now](#). The Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) provides free services to high school youth with disabilities working in collaboration with school and community partners. Families of youth and young adults will learn how VR can assist students both during high school and in the years after graduation as they transition into adulthood. Join this webinar to learn about eligibility requirements, services offered, how to get started, what to expect, and where to get more information. Transition counseling services can include: job exploration counseling; work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school, after school or community-based opportunities; counseling on opportunities for enrollment in post-secondary educational programs at institutions of higher education; workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living; and instruction in self-advocacy, including peer mentoring. The presenter will also share some case studies of students who received VR services to help them achieve their hopes and dreams. Presenter: Tara Howe, VocRehab Transition Program Director

[Check back](#) for more information about this upcoming webinar:
Administrative Complaint Process within the IEP/Special Education Process
: Wednesday, January 16, 2019 from 12 - 1 pm: . 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 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: 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

Join Sibshop Fun December 8

Our next Sibshop for brothers and sisters (age 6+) of children with special needs will be on Saturday, December 8 from 1 to 3:30 pm at the Howard Center at 60 Knight Lane in Williston. Paint and Soda returns for another year! Our Sibshop artist, Sarah, will guide the sibs step-by-step in creating their own masterpieces. Sibs will be able to take their creations home. For questions, scholarships, or to RSVP, please contact Jamie Rainville at Jamie.Rainville@vtn.org or call 802-876-5315 X 243. Space is limited so RSVP soon!

[Contact Jamie](#)

VFN Publications & Workshops: Knowledge is Power!

Did you know that we have [69 Fact Sheets and other publications](#) to help families and the professionals who serve them? We also offer in-person [workshops and consultation services](#) facilitated by our Family Support Consultants who have more than ten years of experience at VFN and "lived experience" parenting a child with special needs. We're here to help so give us a call at 1-800-800-4005 and ask to speak to a Family Support Consultant.

[Contact Janice](#)

Hospital Happenings

Pediatric Updates: Thank you to Sue Victory for providing this update from University of Vermont Children's Hospital: "We would like to introduce Dr. Jennifer Todd, our new pediatric endocrinologist. Dr. Todd comes to us from Boston Children's Hospital, where she trained in pediatric endocrinology and researched the genetics of diabetes and diabetes-related complications. She will be joining our multidisciplinary Endocrinology and Diabetes team to provide care for children with type 1 and 2 diabetes and other endocrinopathies including disorders of growth, puberty, thyroid, and bone health."

Events: **The Children's Workshop** is a group for children (ages 6-12) who have a parent or caregiver with cancer. Children connect with peers in similar family situations. A mix of therapeutic and diversion activities including art, play, and discussion aim to provide creative ways for children to develop coping skills and self-expression. Contact Ali Waltien MA, CCLS at 847-4069 for questions, location information or to sign-up.

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@vfn.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 311 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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