

# Executive Summary



## How Are Vermont's Young Children & Families?

Welcome to the fourth edition of *How Are Vermont's Young Children and Families?*, prepared by Building Bright Futures. The December 2016 report brings together data and analysis from multiple sources to provide an overview of successes and challenges impacting Vermont's young children, their families, and their communities.

Additionally, this year's report features a new section on recommendations from Vermont's Blue Ribbon Commission on Financing High Quality, Affordable Child Care. Building Bright Futures was a member of the Commission and the last section of this year's edition provides an overview of the Commission's recommendations related to Vermont's early care and learning system.

## Chapter highlights

### Family and Social Relationships

This chapter discusses the importance of positive, nurturing interactions and relationships for young children's development.

#### Key highlights include:

- Information on how adverse experiences in early childhood can impact development. This information continues to be discussed in the following chapters.
- The importance of whole family support programs that address the needs of parents and children.

### Health & Development

This chapter focuses on successes Vermont has achieved in child and family health and current challenges facing young children and families.

#### Key highlights include:

- Vermont tied Massachusetts in having the lowest percent of uninsured children in the country.
- The percent of children under age 3 receiving full series of vaccines recommended by the Centers for Disease Control reached a record high of 76% in 2015.

- Vermont children and families continue to be impacted by substance use disorders, particularly opiate use.
- In 2014, only 25% of Vermont children in the CHAMP (Children's Health Advances Measured in Practice) network received all three recommended developmental screenings by age 3.

### Safety

This chapter focuses on issues related to child abuse and neglect and ways to build and support safe communities for children.

#### Key highlights include:

- Information on increases in the rate of children under age 9, and particularly under age 3, who are in the protective custody of the Vermont Department for Children and Families.
- Programs that serve families are important in reducing child abuse and neglect, including evidence-based home-visiting programs.

### Early Care and Learning

This chapter reviews issues impacting Vermont's early care and learning system.

#### Key highlights include:

- Vermont faces a child care challenge. Only 47% of infants and toddlers likely to need child care have access to regulated programs.

- About 7,300 age-eligible children attended publicly-funded pre-K programs during the 2015–2016 school year. This number is expected to increase in 2016–2017 with the full implementation of Act 166.
- Vermont adopted the new Ready for Kindergarten! Survey (R4K!S) for the 2015–2016 school year, consisting of 34 new and revised questions across five domains.

## Family Economic Well-being

This chapter shares information on whether families have adequate, sustainable financial resources to meet their basic needs.

### Key highlights include:

- The percent of families living in poverty in the US and in Vermont has decreased since 2013.
- The average time that children under age 18 stay in publicly-funded homeless shelters in Vermont has increased to a record high of 39 days.
- This coincides with the cost of housing, as a share of family income, representing more than 30% of household income for 34.7% of families who own their own home and 50.5% of families who rent.
- Even with financial assistance, families in Vermont spend up to 37.8% of their income on child care.

## Regional Council Profiles

This report provides information on a dashboard comprised of five indicators for each of the 12 Building Bright Futures Regional Councils, building from datasets discussed earlier in the report.

### The five regional indicators evaluated include:

- Population of children under age 9.
- The percent of regulated child care and early learning programs participating in the state's voluntary quality recognition and improvement system, known as STARS.
- Immunization rates for Vermont children between the ages of 19 months and 35 months
- The rate of children under age 9 in protective custody.
- The percent of children ready for kindergarten according to the new 2015–2016 Ready for kindergarten! Survey (R4K!S) in the primary supervisory unions or school districts in each region.

Regional profiles also feature an overview of the region and the current priorities of the region's Building Bright Futures Council.

## Additional Resources

Much of the information highlighted in this year's report is also available through Vermont Insights, a program of Building Bright Futures, at [www.vermontinsights.org](http://www.vermontinsights.org). Through Vermont Insights, users can continue to explore the evolving data behind these issues and learn about other topics related to young children, families, and communities in our state.