

United Children's Services Board of Directors

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Read and see more

On our website and YouTube playlist, you can find videos and expanded information on many of our 2021–22 activities.

Annual Report



YouTube



Spring Bash returns

After two years of the pandemic preventing us from holding our big end-of-year celebration in person, we were thrilled to bring back the event for 2022, as Bennington's new Spring Center saw 236 people at its first-ever Spring Bash. Everyone was overjoyed to be able to come together and celebrate all the hard work done by staff, families—and, of course, the children—over the past year.

This year's theme was based on *I Went Walking* by Sue Williams. Each classroom created an activity station relating to a page in the book. We had everything from a “cow” milking station to a “yellow dog” station, thanks to our community partners at Guiding Eyes for the Blind, who brought their very own yellow Labrador to engage kids and adults alike.

Other community partners (Alliance for Community Transformation (ACT), UVM Extension Master Gardeners, WIC, Vermont Arts Exchange, and many more) were on site with fun activities for everyone, and provided information on their resources.

At the end of the day's festivities, classrooms gathered as teachers distributed certificates of completion to their students and raffled off student-made prizes to families in attendance.

Sharing resources to support kinship caregivers

Family connection provides one of the most important influences in the development and identity of children. Recent years have seen increasing numbers of children who are being cared for by relatives (“kin”) on a full-time basis. Whether the arrangement is temporary or permanent, it is important for kinship caregivers to know that support is available.

Working together, United Counseling Service, Easterseals Vermont, and Southwestern Vermont Health Care have created a Kin Care group designed to build the strength of the extended family and provide supports for kinship caregivers. Participants in the group range from cousins to grandparents, all stepping up to care for their young kin. The group provides an opportunity to gather with others to share experiences, challenges and problems.

“The past six years have been a rollercoaster of emotions and challenges,” says Dawn, a caregiver and group participant. “Friends and family don't always understand. Having a place to vent and feel like I am being heard makes a world of difference.”

Bennington County Head Start and Early Head Start

provide essential services for children from birth to age 5. We partner with parents, teachers, and community members to create meaningful, measurable change.

OUR MISSION: To prepare children and their families for school through collaborative approaches to high-quality education, health, and social services.

OUR VISION: All children and families will be successful lifelong learners.

OUR VALUES:

- Respect
- Integrity
- Positive Outlook
- Responsibility
- Equality
- Accessibility



Head Start® is a registered trademark of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)



School Readiness

As in previous years, all enrolled children were assessed at the Fall Baseline, Winter Midpoint, and Spring Final Progress checkpoints. Our teachers' curricula focused heavily on lessons and experiences in Social and Emotional Development, Language and Literacy, and Approaches to Learning, as part of the School Readiness goals, and it is no surprise that these are the areas where children made the greatest growth this year. We continue to work with individualized plans for children and families well above the 10 percent required by the Office of Head Start: 24 percent of enrolled preschoolers had an active Individualized Education Plan (IEP), and 60 percent of enrolled infants and toddlers had an active Individualized Family Support Plan/Vermont One Plan for 2021–22. 53 children will transition to the public schools for kindergarten this fall. Final progress in June 2022 showed:



Percentage of children meeting or exceeding age-level expectation:

Social and Emotional Development 88% of infants and toddlers • 88% of three-year-olds (increased 28% from fall) • 79% of four-year-olds (increased 55% from fall)

Language Development 75% of infants and toddlers • 85% of three-year-olds (increased 37% from fall) • 87% of four-year-olds (increased 27% from fall)

Literacy Development 85% of infants and toddlers • 66% of three-year-olds (increased 24% from fall) • 78% of four-year-olds (increased 29% from fall)

Mathematics 74% of infants and toddlers • 79% of three-year-olds (increased 32% from fall) • 66% of four-year-olds (increased 29% from fall)

Approaches to Learning 95% of infants and toddlers • 86% of three-year-olds (increased 28% from fall) • 87% of four-year-olds (increased 42% from fall)

Physical Development 89% of infants and toddlers • 95% of three-year-olds (increased 20% from fall) • 85% of four-year-olds (increased 24% from fall)

Scientific Reasoning 100% of preschoolers emerging or meets program expectation

The auditor's report on compliance for the major federal award programs for United Children's Services of Bennington County, Inc. expresses an unqualified opinion on all major federal programs.

COVID impacts the youngest

Taking an early lead in supporting children and families through the pandemic can have lasting effects. Bennington County Head Start and Early Head Start staff worked tirelessly to mitigate the negative impact the pandemic would have on some of the community's most vulnerable members, offering creative solutions to support children's emotional and social development during a time of isolation. "We maintained our connection with children and families," said Betsy Rathbun-Gunn, Director of Early Childhood Services.



"Whether through phone calls, emails, or food and activity packages dropped on doorsteps, we let our families know we were there for them."

In the 2021–22 school year,
Bennington County Head Start and Early Head Start programs served:

EARLY HEAD START:

66 children enrolled / 63 families served

HEAD START:

108 children enrolled / 117 families served
146 average monthly enrollment

% **Eligible Served:** 180 (children enrolled)/338 (number of unique children qualifying for 100% child care subsidy in Bennington County, per Sunrise Family Resource Center) = **53%**

97% of enrolled children received **medical exams**
54% of enrolled children received **dental exams***

* *COVID and the loss of three dentists in Bennington this year have had a significant impact on access to dental care.*



United Children's Services Head Start Program Fiscal 2021–22

REVENUE

US Department of Health & Human Services	\$ 3,257,1762
State/Local Contracts	\$ 1,596,322
Miscellaneous	\$ 168,495
Total Revenue	\$ 5,021,993

EXPENSES

Salaries	\$ 2,648,553
Fringe	\$ 676,698
Other Personnel Costs	\$ 394,741
Operating Expenses	\$ 712,940
Travel & Transportation	\$ 107,661
Building Expenses	\$ 468,113
Miscellaneous Expenses	\$ 13,287
Total Expenses	\$ 5,021,993