

The following is the proposed language for the “Child Care” section, which has been drafted as part the TRORC Regional Plan update process. The current “Child Care” section (see the non-underlined text in this document) is located in the Economic Development chapter. The language that makes the connection between child care and economic development (the Regional Plan’s current child care section) should remain in the Economic Development chapter. However, the more-specific language below may more logically be located in the Utilities, Facilities and Technology chapter, along with the “Health Care Services” section. A review of other Regional Plans has shown that the “Child Care” section has been placed in the Utilities and Facilities chapter or in the Economic Development chapter, though placing the section in the Utilities and Facilities chapter has a tendency to read more logically, due to the “human interest” nature of other sections of the Utilities and Facilities chapter.

Child Care Services (*new section*)

The availability of safe and affordable child care is an important factor in the appeal and sustainability of our region. Child care fulfills many roles within the region. For example, the child care industry contributes to the regional economy as a business and employer in its own right. It also functions as a service industry that provides crucial support to employers and employees. Equally important, child care serves as a critical component in the raising of a child or children from working families. Good quality child care helps prepare children for schooling or may even supplement a child’s school curriculum, and it provides them with opportunities for socialization. Many children also rely on child care services for meals and it is important that child care providers provide children with wholesome, nutritious food options. In addition, a supply of child care services and facilities allow parents in the regional economy to work and be productive employees. Lastly, child care enables women to pursue their career goals and participate in the workforce.

There are long term benefits of good child care as well. Research conducted by a regional economic analyst demonstrated that investment in early child development programs brings a real (adjusted for inflation) public return of 12% and a real total return, public and private, of 16%ⁱ.

Child care providers are closely tied to successful and more efficient transportation systems. For example, child care providers located near or in connection with an employer help to reduce commuting costs and time spent in the car. In some cases, this may even reduce a family’s need to own multiple vehicles. However, to help achieve reduced commute times and a reduced dependency on motor vehicles, it is important for employers to have some flexibility as to when their employees are allowed to begin and leave work each day.

Thresholds of Child Care Services

Vermont statute provides guidance on the operation of child care providers in the state. A state-issued license is required to operate a child care facility, and in order to operate a family child care home, the home must be registered with the Department of Child and Families.ⁱⁱ There are also exemptions to obtaining a license or registering with the state, including: a person who provides care for at most two families, not including their own family; a hospital or other establishment holding a license issued by the

Department of Health; a religious organization operating to provide care and supervision to children during or in connection with religious services or church-sponsored activities; and after-school programs meeting a specific set of criteria.ⁱⁱⁱ All employees of licensed child care facilities are required to receive orientation of the prevention, identification and mandatory reporting of child abuse.

Child care services that are defined by the State of Vermont include: (1) registered homes (which provide care within a home setting for up to six children under the age of six and four school-aged children); (2) licensed early childhood programs (which are licensed for up to 12 children within a home and also include child care outside of a home (part- and full-day programs, preschools, etc.)); and (3) public pre-school programs and after-school programs.^{iv} Child care may also be provided by family members, or a non-family member running a private, unregistered child care facility out of their home.

The State of Vermont categorizes children receiving child care into four categories. They include: infants (under 24 months); toddlers (24 months to 35 months); preschool age children (36 months to 59 months); and school age children (5 to 13 years for typical developing children, and 5 to 19 years for children with special needs).^v Most child care providers are specific about the age of the child they will care for.

Child Care Services in the Region

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, approximately 56,000 people live in the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee region. The number of children aged 0-14 is a relatively small percentage of the region's population, just over 16%, or 9,015 individuals. In the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee region, there are approximately 117 licensed child care providers and homes registered with the State of Vermont.^{vi} There are approximately 650 licensed child care providers in Vermont.^{vii}

Hartford has the highest number of both licensed providers and registered homes in our region. Otherwise, child care providers are, for the most part, reasonably spread across the region. Five towns are without any type of licensed or registered child care including, Bridgewater, Granville, Hancock, Pittsfield and Plymouth. It is important to note that the number of private, in-home child care providers in our region is unknown, but is likely that this type of provider makes up a significant portion of the child care providers. Regardless, it is critical for the quantity and quality of child care providers in the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee region to meet the needs and expectations of parents and guardians living and/or working in the region.

In addition to bringing children to stand-alone child care providers, some parents have the option to bring their child to work with them and leave them in the care of an on-site child care provider. There are a few larger employers in the broader region that offer child care for their employees. These employers have sliding fee scales, but costs still remain high. Such employers include Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center and Dartmouth College. The Gifford Medical Center in Randolph has a child care center that provides child care to Gifford Medical Center employees and the public. There are also some employers in the area who offer child care to their employees, who pay a reduced rate, but also have slots open to the public. These employers include Kendal at Hanover, and the US Army Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory under contract with Cradle & Crayon, Inc. Large

employers located within the TRORC region, such as Vermont Castings, GW Plastics, King Arthur Flour, Global Resource Options, Inc., Britton Lumber Company, Inc., and North Hartland Tool Corp., do not currently provide on-site child care services.

The table below is a breakdown of licensed child care providers and registered homes, recognized by the State of Vermont, located in the towns in our region. The population and percentage of children aged 0-14 years in each town are also reported for reference.

| Town | Population (2010) | % of Children Aged 0-14 Years | Licensed Provider | Registered Home |
|--------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Barnard | 947 | 16 | 1 | 0 |
| Bethel | 2,030 | 17.8 | 2 | 4 |
| Bradford | 2,797 | 20.1 | 3 | 3 |
| Braintree | 1,246 | 15.3 | 0 | 2 |
| Bridgewater | 936 | 13.1 | 0 | 0 |
| Brookfield | 1,292 | 17.4 | 0 | 2 |
| Chelsea | 1,238 | 16.4 | 2 | 1 |
| Corinth | 1,367 | 16.4 | 1 | 0 |
| Fairlee | 977 | 14.5 | 2 | 2 |
| Granville | 298 | 13.4 | 0 | 0 |
| Hancock | 323 | 14.6 | 0 | 0 |
| Hartford | 9,952 | 17 | 15 | 16 |
| Hartland | 3,393 | 16 | 3 | 0 |
| Newbury | 2,216 | 16.6 | 4 | 0 |
| Norwich | 3,414 | 19.8 | 7 | 0 |
| Pittsfield | 546 | 16 | 0 | 0 |
| Plymouth | 619 | 12.9 | 0 | 0 |
| Pomfret | 904 | 16.6 | 0 | 2 |
| Randolph | 4,778 | 15.3 | 6 | 5 |
| Rochester | 1,139 | 12.9 | 2 | 0 |
| Royalton | 2,773 | 14 | 3 | 2 |
| Sharon | 1,502 | 16.4 | 2 | 0 |
| Stockbridge | 736 | 17.4 | 2 | 2 |
| Strafford | 1,098 | 18.1 | 2 | 1 |
| Thetford | 2,588 | 16.5 | 5 | 2 |
| Topsham | 1,173 | 17.7 | 0 | 1 |
| Tunbridge | 1,284 | 15.2 | 2 | 0 |
| Vershire | 730 | 17.6 | 0 | 1 |
| W. Fairlee | 652 | 18.3 | 2 | 1 |
| Woodstock | 3,048 | 13.9 | 4 | 0 |
| | | | | |
| Total | 55,996 | 16.1 | 70 | 47 |

Source: American Fact Finder, 2010 and Vermont Department for Children and Families, Child Care Division. Bright Futures Child Care Information System. Accessed December 2013.

Other Forms of Child Care

After-school programs and summer camps provide child care options for parents with children old enough to attend public or private school full-time. Both help to keep children engaged in enriching activities while also allowing parents to feel comfortable that their child or children is/are safe if working past school hours, or during summer vacation. There are approximately 20,000 children in after-school programs in Vermont.^{viii} However, the number of children attending after-school programs in the TRORC is unknown. There are a number of national, state and local organizations running after-school programs in our area including ExCel Afterschool, STYLE, CLASP, the Boys and Girls Club, One Planet and the YMCA. These after-school programs serve a number of towns in our region including Bethel, Bradford, Hartford, Newbury, Randolph, Rochester, Royalton, Sharon, Stockbridge and Tunbridge.

There are a many varieties of summer camps that parents may choose to send their children to, from adventure camps, nature camps, summer camp at the local recreational center, art or music camp. Depending on the program, children may only attend camp during the day for a specific number of days, or they may remain at the camp for an extended period of time. Vermont Adventure Camps in Thetford, the camps of the Aloha Foundation in Fairlee and Killoleet Camp in Hancock are examples of established summer camps in the region. In addition, the Boys and Girls Club runs a summer camp in Randolph and the Randolph recreation department holds its own summer camp. The Green Mountain Suzuki Institute, in Rochester, holds a week-long “camp” for string, flute and piano students approved by the Suzuki Association of the Americas (SAA). Hartford’s Parks and Recreation Department hosts a wide variety of spring and summer camps. Finally, Lebanon, New Hampshire’s Recreation and Parks Department hosts a number of summer camps as well.

Ranking Child Care Services

Going beyond state-recognized programs, the State of Vermont has created a ranking system, STARS (STep Ahead Recognition System), to help parents and guardians find quality child care and to improve the quality of regulated health care programs in the state. There are approximately 70 child care programs in the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee region that participate in/are recognized by the STARS program. Specifically, there are 35 STAR programs in towns located in Orange County, and 33 STAR programs in towns located in Windsor County. Programs receiving 4 or 5 stars are considered “high quality.” There are a number of such programs scattered across our region, especially in the White River Junction area.

There are also other organizations which rank/grade child care providers, such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The NAEYC has accredited 62 child care programs in Vermont. Six of these programs lie within the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee region, most notably within the Towns of Norwich and Randolph, and in White River Junction.

Child Care Training Opportunities

There are a number of child care courses and trainings being offered around at state throughout the year. These learning opportunities are sponsored by a variety of organizations involved in child care. Most of the trainings in our region are lead in Hartford, but other reasonably close locations include Rutland, Barre, Berlin, Middlebury and Montpelier. By sending employees to trainings, child care employers may help improve or maintain the quality of care being offered at their facility.

There are also a few vocational schools in the region that have training programs to teach interested high school students to care for infants and preschool-aged children. One vocational school to offer such a program is the River Bend Career and Technical Center in Bradford in their “Education and Human Development” curriculum. The Randolph Technical Career Center and the Hartford Area Career & Technology Center both have similar programs in their “Human Services/Teacher Preparation” curriculum and “Human Services” curriculum, respectively.

Barriers to Child Care Services

Cost, Affordability and Family Structure

According to the 2013 Head Start and Early Head Start Needs Assessment, some of the barriers associated with child care in Vermont include an inadequate amount of infant/toddler care available, and the inability of financial assistance for child care to support high quality services (despite the financial help from some child care providers).^{ix} In the TRORC region and broader Upper Valley area, searching for child care is often difficult for parents. Availability of child care providers, especially for infant and school-age children, is limited.

Over the past decade, the cost of child care in Vermont has risen substantially. From 2003 to 2012 the market rates for a preschool age child in licensed child care center increased from \$140 per week to \$200 per week (43.9%).^x During the same years, the market rates for a preschool age child in registered home care increased from \$106.25 to \$150 (41.2%).^{xi} This equates to approximately \$10,400 and \$7,800 per year for licensed center care and registered home care for one preschool aged child, respectively. It is more expensive to place an infant or toddler in either a licensed center or registered home than a preschool aged child. Parents or guardians wishing to place their infant in a higher quality licensed center or registered home should expect to pay \$225 to \$160 or more, respectively.^{xii}

To help families pay for child care, the State of Vermont provides financial assistance, or a child care subsidy, from the Vermont Child Care Financial Assistance program. The subsidy granted for each child is dependent on their age, the type of child care provider and the number of hours the child will attend care. Families that choose to enroll their child in a care program recognized by the Vermont’s STARS program may receive additional subsidy monies, depending on the child care program’s ranking. A family must first be deemed eligible to receive financial assistance, which includes meeting income guidelines. While Vermont’s child care financial assistance program enables more families to take advantage of child care, some low- to moderate- income families may have difficulties paying the co-payment for their child’s care.

In some cases, child care programs try to help families who are enrolled in the State's financial assistance program to afford care. Many programs that do charge or usually charge parents the co-payment offer additional financial support and work with families to determine payments that are affordable.^{xiii} Some programs do not charge families a co-payment at all, which ultimately affects the bottom-line of the business. As a final point, child care workers in Vermont make an average annual income of \$23,120 (compared to the U.S. average of \$21,320), which is not necessarily a livable wage.

According to 2000 Census data, families living in poverty with children comprise 5.4% of the population in the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee region. Given the high costs of child care, it can be difficult for these and other low- to moderate income families to afford placing their child or children in child care. As a potential consequence of this situation, a family member may decide to provide care to the child or children instead of working and supplementing the family income.

Of approximately 24,000 households in the TRORC region, 1,750 of them are classified as "single-head-of-household" with children 18 years old or younger. It is very important for single parents to find child care so that they are able to work and provide for their family. The parent may have another family member or trusted adult care for their child or children while at work, or they may seek out a child care provider. Depending on the parent's income, certain types of child care may be difficult or impossible to afford, even with Vermont's Child Care Financial Assistance program. The struggle for some single parents to find and/or afford child care may be constant, leading to stress and even poor attendance and performance at work.

Parents working second or third shift may have an even more difficult time finding child care to meet their needs. This is especially true of single parents working second or third shift. Currently, there are no "center-based programs," that is licensed child care facilities, that offer second or third shift care in our area. However, there are a few family child care providers in the area that would consider providing second and third shift care, one in White River Junction and one in North Thetford. A number of years ago, a White River Junction-based child care center opened and intended to offer extended hours until midnight. However, they found that there was little or no interest in such care and dropped the option altogether.

As previously mentioned, most child care providers are specific about the age of the child they will care for, so, barring other obstacles, finding second or third shift care for a child of a specific age may difficult or impossible. It is likely that most single parents working second or third in the area would leave their child or children in the care of another family member or a trusted adult.

Goals

1. ~~Strive to~~ Ensure that an adequate supply of safe and affordable child care services and facilities are available.
2. To create a regional network of well trained, educated, child care providers and facilities that fulfill the needs of families and employers.
3. To incorporate child care issues into the planning process by:
 - a. Encouraging that any major employers (employing more than 35 employees) locating to the TRORC region provide child care services on-site.
 - b. Working collaboratively with child care providers and towns to help them locate into convenient areas.

Policies

1. Support initiatives to develop child care facilities where a need has been proven and the location conforms with this Regional Plan.

Recommendations for Action

1. Work with member towns to address identified needs for child care facilities or services by:
 - a. Identifying publicly owned buildings throughout the region and;
 - b. Evaluating and prioritizing their suitability to serve as child care facilities after considering Vermont regulations.
2. Towns should review their zoning regulations (if adopted) to determine the ability of the regulations to allow child care providers to be located in the town.
3. Develop business “how-to” guide for providers to navigate local permitting.
4. Conduct a child care needs assessment.
5. Work with Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center to build a community directory of services and options for day care, child care, after school programs, break programs, and summer programs and camps.

ⁱ Rob Grunewald. Early Childhood Development: Economic Development with a High Public Return. fedgazette. Published March 2003 issue. <http://www.minneapolisfed.org/publications_papers/studies/earlychild/abc-part2.pdf>

ⁱⁱ 33 V.S.A. § 3502

ⁱⁱⁱ 33 V.S.A. § 3502 (b)(1)-(5)

^{iv} 2011 Vermont Early Childhood and Afterschool Professional Development Survey. Conducted by the Vermont Department for Children and Families, Child Development Division. Reported June 2012. Page 6. <http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/pdf/cdd/CDD%202011%20Professional%20Development%20Survey_web.pdf>

^v 2012 Vermont Child Care Market Rate Survey. Vermont Department for Children and Families, Child Development Division. Page 4. <<http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/pdf/cdd/care/Market%20Rate%20Survey%20Report%202012.pdf>>

^{vi} Vermont Bright Futures Child Care Information Center, accessed 2 December 2013.

^{vii} Vermont Child Care Regulation Review, Workgroup Data Report, July 27, 2012.

<<http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/pdf/cdd/proposed/RegReview/Vermont%20licensed%20program%20data%20for%20reg%20review%207%2027%202012.pdf>>

^{viii} Afterschool Alliance. Afterschool Programs in Vermont.

http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/states_docs/pdfs/2013/Vermont_Fact_Sheet.pdf

^{ix} Vermont Head Start- State Collaboration Office. Vermont Department for Children and Families, Child Development Division. 19 September 2013. Page 101-102.

<http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/pdf/cdd/2012_Vermont_HS_EHS_Needs_Assessment_Report%20for%20web.pdf>

^x *Id.* Page 3.

^{xi} *Id.*

^{xii} *Id.*

^{xiii} Vermont Child Care Financial Assistance Co-Payment Survey. Vermont Department for Children and Families, Child Development Division. March 2011. Page 4. <<http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/pdf/cdd/care/fap/Co-payment%20Survey.pdf>>