

## QUALITY MATTERS

### A Campaign to Improve the Quality of Early Care and Education in Vermont

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#### Campaign Overview

Vermont's **future prosperity** depends on our ability to provide our youngest children with what they need to thrive today and become the adults who will strengthen our communities and economy. Research shows strong links between the quality of early care and education and healthy child development. However, several barriers limit providers' ability to invest in professional education, and low wages coupled with few benefits contribute to high turnover among early childhood educators. This, in turn, undermines children's healthy development, given how the importance of consistent relationships with the important adults in young children's lives.

In September 2010, the Kids Are Priority One Coalition's lead organizations launched a multi-year campaign focused on **improving the quality of early care and education** in family child care homes, early care and education centers, and private and school-based preschool programs by:

- Raising public awareness about the importance of choosing and providing quality early care and education;
- Building the political will needed to advance public policies that support increased access to affordable, high-quality early care and education services;
- Supporting early childhood educators and programs in their pursuit of higher quality.

#### Overall Policy Goals

To provide quality and stability in early care and education, we must recruit and retain a skilled workforce and support programs to meet quality standards. To accomplish this, we recommend:

- **Providing the resources and incentives** necessary for early childhood professionals and programs to improve the quality of early care and education;

- **Implementing the public policies** needed to assure early care and education programs and early childhood educators meet minimum quality and education standards.

For more details, go to <http://www.kidsarepriorityone.org/vt-early-care-and-education-quality-campaign.html>.

## **2012 Policy Recommendations**

- **Invest in 2 additional Child Care Licensing Field Specialists (licensors)** within the Child Development Division (estimated cost: \$116,660). With 1,675 regulated early care and education (child care) programs and 7 licensors, each licensor is responsible for 239 programs. This ratio of programs to licensors falls far below the caseload of 50 programs per licensor recommended by the National Association for Regulatory Administration (NARA).
- **Amend the Next Generation Initiative of Workforce Development legislation** (Act 46, 2007) to:
  - Allow for inclusion of the early education/after-school care workforce as a priority area;
  - Allocate 10% of available funds annually for professional development for the early education/after-school care workforce;
  - Waive the requirement for the early childhood/afterschool workforce that training programs supported by workforce development funds lead to jobs paying at least 200% of the current minimum wage or at least 150% if benefits are included.
- **Increase the capacity of Vermont's higher education system** to train, educate and support the early care and education workforce by aligning course content to optimize transferability of credits (work currently underway via the Higher Education Early Education Task Force).

## **Quality Matters Campaign Leadership**

The Kids Are Priority One Coalition's lead organizations are working closely with the Coalition's newly-formed Policy Committee to further refine the Coalition's policy recommendations. The Coalition's Organizing Committee will continue to help develop and implement local and statewide advocacy strategies.

**For more information:** Contact Kim Friedman, Kids Are Priority One Campaign Director, at (802) 348-9879 or [kfriedman@svcable.net](mailto:kfriedman@svcable.net).

*Kids Are Priority One is Vermont's statewide early childhood coalition that mobilizes organizations, businesses and individuals to ensure a good start for all children.*