



A 2020 Vision for Vermont

Vermonters have a long history of coming together to address hard issues:

how to provide the best education for all students; how to ensure that workers are fairly paid and parents are able to feed, house, and care for their families; how to support people of all abilities to realize their full potential; and how to keep our communities vital, healthy, and our environment clean and safe.

We've shown time and again that we are capable of solving big problems. But we also know there's serious work still to be done.

Our strong advocacy community is evidence of Vermonters' values of hard work, helping neighbors, and fairness—and also to our persistence. The advocates who've contributed to this guide collaborate with individual residents, community and faith leaders, and elected officials to attain **state policies that advance and defend human rights and racial, social, and economic justice, environmental protections, and true democracy.**

To create a Vermont where all people can thrive:

- Vermonters need to be able to meet their basic needs.
- Vermonters need sustainable environmental and economic policies.
- Vermont children need to know that they're safe and supported so they can learn.
- Vermonters of all backgrounds need equitable opportunities to flourish.

To achieve these principles, we need to invest in Vermont's future: in clean water and air; toxic-free schools, homes, and workplaces; affordable, clean energy; support for all families, ensuring all have access to housing, health care, child care, and healthy food; full reproductive liberty; a criminal justice system that is equitable, effective, and restorative for individuals and communities; paid family and medical leave; and state agencies and institutions that treat everyone equitably and with dignity regardless of their skin color, zip code, income, or ability.

It's time to roll up our sleeves and create a Vermont that works for everyone.

Please note: The organizations proposing policy solutions in this guide have come together to initiate a conversation about creating a better Vermont. However, contributing to this policy guide does not indicate an organization's endorsement of all recommendations presented.

All Vermonters Deserve Safe, Clean Drinking Water, and Products That Are Free of Toxic Chemicals.

Vermont must hold polluters accountable for harm caused by toxic chemical contamination and reduce Vermonters' exposure to dangerous chemicals.

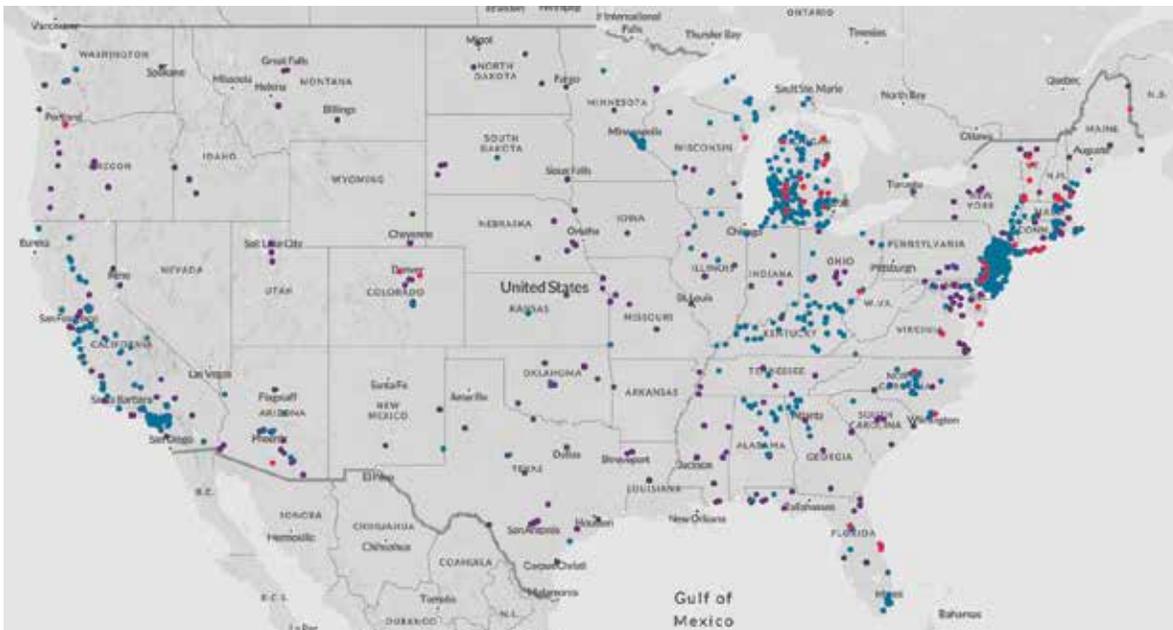
With a broken federal chemical regulatory system, states like Vermont must step up to protect our families from toxic chemicals.

By implementing protective chemical regulations, Vermont can help ensure that toxic polluters are held responsible for the harm they cause, such as covering medical monitoring expenses for victims of toxic exposure. Improved regulations can also help turn off the spigot of toxic chemicals like PFAS coming into our state in our children's products, food packaging, dental floss, firefighting foam, and carpets. PFAS

chemicals are linked to health problems like cancer, thyroid disease, and high blood pressure. When we import PFAS-containing products, Vermonters are exposed when they use the product, and after we throw them away, the chemicals can leach out of our landfills, into our waterways and contaminate our environment and drinking water. We can and must do more to ensure healthy, safe products and drinking water for all Vermonters.

You can help make Vermonters safer from dangerous toxic chemicals by talking to your legislators and neighbors about the need to act!

PFAS Contamination in the U.S.



Hundreds of Vermonters and tens of millions of Americans are being exposed to toxic PFAS chemicals in their drinking water.

- Military sites
- Drinking water
- Other known sites

Source: ewg.org

For more information on how to keep our communities healthy and free of toxic chemicals, please contact the Vermont Natural Resources Council (vnrc.org), Vermont Conservation Voters (vermontconservationvoters.org), and the Vermont Public Interest Research Group (vpirg.org).

All Vermonters Deserve Safe, Affordable Energy and a Clean, Healthy Environment.

Efficiency and electrification are win-wins for Vermont's economy and Vermonters' wallets.

The biggest contributors to Vermont's climate pollution – transportation and heating – are also two categories that have a disproportionate impact on low-income Vermonters, many of whom spend over a quarter of their income paying for energy.

Efficiency and electrification (which is both cheaper and more efficient than fossil fuel heating or transportation) will dramatically lower our emissions, boost our local economy, and, most importantly, improve countless Vermonters' lives.

It's time to stand up for Vermont's people and environment by:

- Turning Vermont's climate pollution reduction goals into legally binding requirements to ensure Vermont's leaders are accountable for pursuing these types of policies to protect the health and well-being of Vermont's people and environment.
- Expanding the scope of Efficiency Vermont and our other efficiency utilities to help Vermonters reduce energy use and switch to efficient electric heating and transportation.

- Establishing a 100% renewable electricity requirement statewide by 2030 to help ensure that our energy needs are met with affordable, clean, local, and resilient energy sources.
- Participating in a strong, equitable Transportation & Climate Initiative, and invest in programs to incentivize electric vehicle adoption, development of charging facilities, and clean transit solutions.

Dollars spent on fossil fuels



For more information on bold, equitable solutions to the climate crisis, please contact the Vermont Public Interest Research Group (vpirg.org), Vermont Natural Resources Council (vnrc.org), and Vermont Conservation Voters (vermontconservationvoters.org).

Investing in Early Childhood Strengthens All Vermont Communities and Families.

Supporting critical investments through smart state budgets.

Supporting children through smart investments in the State Budget leads to stronger families, a more equitable education system, better health outcomes, and a more vibrant economy, now and in the future.

The legislature's decisions about the State Budget are critical not just to lower income Vermonters but to the entire community, as services all Vermonters rely on are suffering because of years of chronic underfunding by the State.

Some of the state programs and policies of concern to young children and families include:

- Child Care Financial Assistance (CCFAP)
- Early Intervention and Mental Health Services (CIS)
- Housing
- Parent Child Centers (PCCs)
- Child and Family Nutrition
- Workforce Development for Early Childhood Educators

Years of Level Funding, Increasing Challenges

Many of these programs have seen no funding increase in over a decade - nothing to take into account inflation, caseload increases, or increased case complexity. As a result, "level funding" is functionally an annual funding cut.

FY20 will be the 12th year in a row that projected state spending obligations will exceed projected state revenue



Most areas of the early childhood system have high staff turnover rates, many fail to meet standards of care for delivering services, and there are waiting lists for critical services.

Investing in these programs help all Vermonters by creating stronger communities, intervening to address issues when they first arise, and helping children and families thrive.

What can I do to help?

Talk to your legislators about the importance of making investment in these programs, which help all Vermonters. Tell them that level funding means programs will be weaker, just when we need them to be strengthened.

For more information on the importance of investing in early childhood services and how to get involved, contact Vermont Early Childhood Advocacy Alliance (vecaa.org).

All Vermonters Deserve Reproductive Liberty to be Guaranteed by the State Constitution.

Support Personal Reproductive Liberty – Prop 5 – a proposed amendment to the Vermont Constitution.

The Vermont Constitution is a declaration of the rights and liberties of its citizens. Prop 5 is a proposal that would amend the Constitution of the State of Vermont to reflect the Vermont value that everyone should be afforded personal reproductive liberty. The proposed amendment reached its first milestone by passing in the 2019-2020 legislature and will also be influenced by the election of the next legislature.

The Vermont legislature elected in 2020 will decide if citizens will have the opportunity to enshrine reproductive rights in our constitution. If Prop 5 passes again, guarantees for reproductive rights in Vermont will be decided by voters on Election Day in November 2022.

Prop 5 would guarantee the right to:

- Become pregnant
- Choose or refuse sterilization
- Choose abortion
- Choose or refuse contraception

Timeline:

The constitutional amendment must pass both the Senate and House chambers in two consecutive legislatures, followed by a vote by Vermonters in the general election.

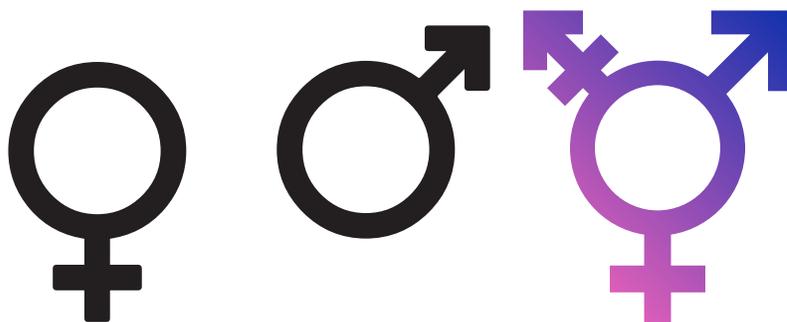
2019-2020: PASSED in the House and Senate

2021-2022: New House and Senate will vote

November 8, 2022 – Election Day –
VERMONT VOTERS DECIDE

What you can do:

Tell your friends, neighbors, and legislators that you support reproductive liberty and Prop 5!

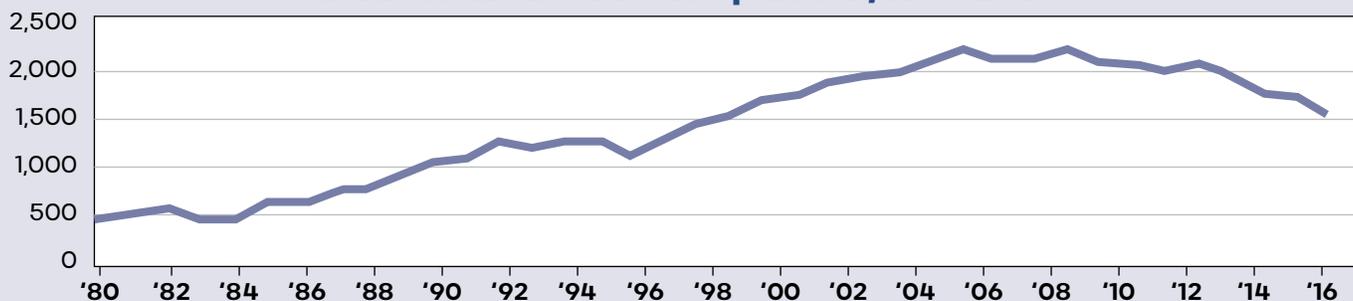


*For more information on personal reproductive liberty,
contact Planned Parenthood Vermont Action Fund (ppvtaf.org).*

Vermont Needs to Build a Smarter Criminal Justice System.

For too long, Vermont has relied on the criminal justice system as a way to respond to substance-use disorder, mental health conditions, and poverty.

Vermont Incarcerated Population, 1980-2016



We have both the opportunity and a responsibility to eliminate our overreliance on incarceration and address underlying disparities at every point in the system – from someone’s first interaction with law enforcement to the moment they return to their communities.

Did You Know?

Vermont’s criminal justice system disproportionately impacts:

People of color: The rate of Black adults is seven times higher than White adults in our prisons.

People with disabilities: The national rate of people with disabilities in the criminal justice system is two to six times higher than the general population.

People with mental health conditions: Half of people served by pretrial services have mental health needs.

Low-income people: As of September 2018, 127 people incarcerated were held in Vermont’s prisons due to lack of housing and 44% of people being held pretrial were held under conditionals that involved money bail.

Children and families: 6,000 children each year are impacted by having a parent incarcerated, the same number of children born in Vermont each year.

A smarter criminal justice system is...



Equitable



Community-Based



Humanizing



Transparent



Restorative



Invests in People

...supported by 7 in 10 Vermonters.

Vermont has committed to creating a smarter criminal justice system in the past – and it’s worked. With continued innovation, we can build on this success.

For more information, contact the ACLU of Vermont (acluvt.org), Disability Rights Vermont (disabilityrightsvt.org), Justice for All (justiceforallvt.org), and Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (vtnetwork.org).

When Our Democracy Works for Black Vermonters, It Is a Better Democracy for All Vermonters.

Prohibiting all forms of slavery and indentured servitude in the Vermont Constitution will serve as a foundation for addressing systemic racism in our state's laws and institutions.

From addressing the wealth gap to climate change, a large part of our success will depend upon how we address racial inequality in Vermont. Black people are still disproportionately excluded from systems of social protection and economic uplift while facing shorter lifespan, lower educational attainment and dramatic over criminalization and incarceration compared to their White counterparts.

- 1 in 14 Black men are incarcerated in Vermont
- 50% of Black Vermonters face rental housing discrimination
- Black State employees are three times more likely to be terminated than Whites

We must boldly move forward with an intentional dismantling of racist systems and structures while investing in the freedom and agency of Black people. This includes a constitutional amendment to prohibit slavery and the criminalization of poverty.

A Democracy that works for everyone



What you can do:

Contact your legislator and ask them to amend the constitution to clarify that slavery and indentured servitude in any form are prohibited.

For more information, contact the Vermont Racial Justice Alliance (vtracialjusticealliance.wordpress.com), Justice for All (justiceforallvt.org), ACLU Vermont (acluvt.org), Disability Rights Vermont (disabilityrightsvt.org), Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (vtnetwork.org), Rights and Democracy (radvt.org), and Planned Parenthood Vermont Action Fund (ppvtaf.org).

Working Vermonters Need a Strong Paid Family and Personal Medical Leave Policy.

Universal, inclusive paid family and personal medical leave insurance supports the health and economic security of our children, families, older adults, workers, and small businesses.

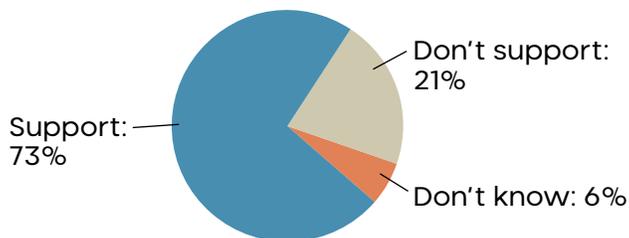
Equity-based fact:

Evidence from states with paid FMLI show that these programs improve workforce attachment and support economic independence, with the greatest effects seen among the most disadvantaged families.

One in four mothers return to work within two weeks of giving birth

Employer impact fact: MSA Survey

In a 2017 survey, Main Street Alliance asked 230 small businesses – both members and not, ***“In general, would you support efforts to establish a state-run, public paid family and medical leave insurance program that would pay for employees to take up to 12 weeks to care for a newborn, a personal illness, or an ill family member?”***



Vermont doesn't need to experiment. Successful programs across the country prove how a universal, public paid family and personal medical leave insurance program improves economic security, helps families

U.S. paid leave policies: getting stronger all the time

	% Wage Reimbursement*	Funded By	# Weeks Family Leave	# Weeks Medical Leave
OR	100%	Employee & Employer	12	12
CT	95%	Employee	12	12
MA	80%	Employee & Employer	12	20
WA	90%	Employee & Employer	12	12
DC	90%	Employer	6/8	2
NY	50% - own health 67% - caregiving	Employee & Employer	12	26
NJ	85%	Employee & Employer	12	26
CA	60-70%	Employee	8	52
RI	60%	Employee	4	30

1940's ← NOW ↑

*wage replacement when current laws fully phased-in; capped at various levels in each state

heal and bond, and evens the playing field for Vermont's small businesses to attract and retain a sustainable workforce.

For more information, contact Main Street Alliance (vermont.mainstreetalliance.org) and Voices for Vermont's Children (voicesforvtkids.org).

All Children and Youth Deserve to Live in Supported Families Free from Deprivation.

Vermont needs a strong safety net and an accountable, effective child protection system to counter the unprecedented stress and economic insecurity facing our kids and families today.

Child poverty carries a heavy human and economic toll

Research shows that kids who grow up in a state of deprivation don't do as well as their peers in affluent families, and even small increases in family income can improve outcomes. In addition, the stress of living in poverty increases the likelihood that families will come in contact with the child protection system.

While Reach Up caseloads have declined in both absolute and relative (share of families in poverty) terms, there's evidence that financial stress is contributing to the dramatic increase in child protection caseloads. A lack of good data from the Department for Children and Families means we don't know the full impact or the most effective way to turn the tide. An Office of Child Advocate would provide needed oversight, analysis, and recommendations for how to strengthen our child protection and safety net systems.

To ensure that kids and youth grow up in well-resourced families, Vermont must enact a sustained, multi-faceted policy approach that:

1. Invests in safety net programs like Reach Up, nutrition, and housing; and
2. Provides independent oversight of the child protection system to ensure that the state is meeting its obligation to center children and support families.



For more information, contact Voices for Vermont's Children (voicesforvtkids.org).

Strengthening Community Supports for People with Mental Health Conditions.

People with mental health conditions deserve to live and thrive in our communities, not in locked, segregated institutions.

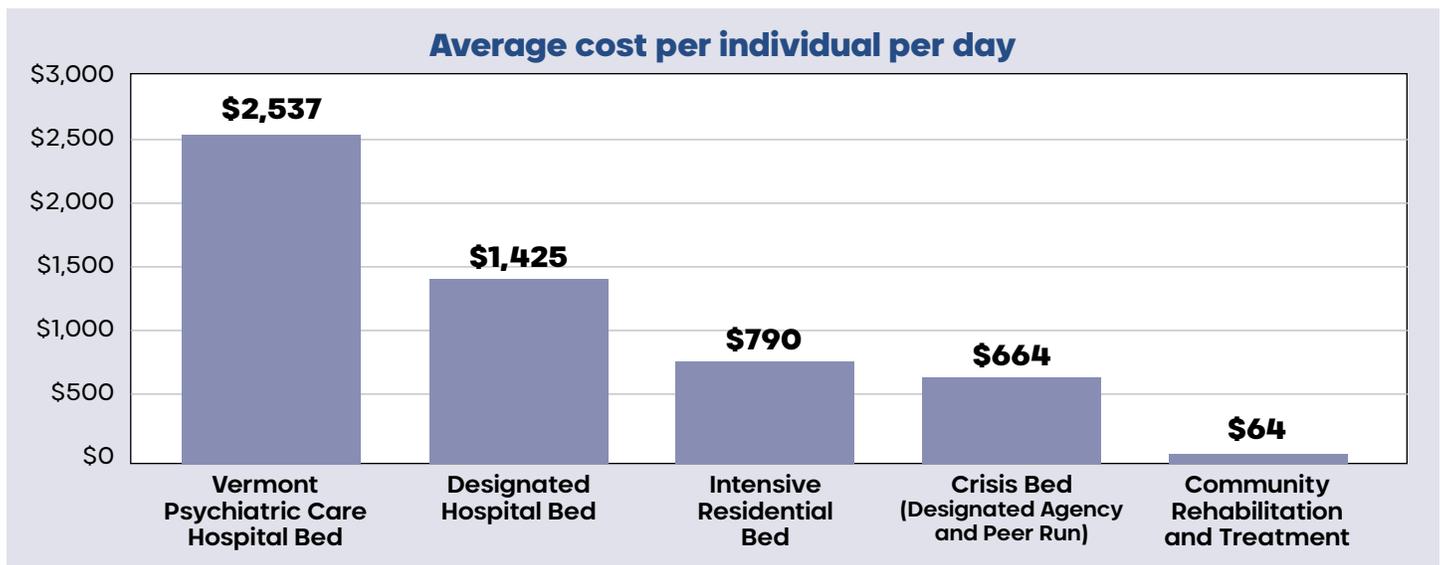
Let's focus on funding community-based mental health supports rather than expensive hospital beds!

No matter what your ethnic, racial, religious or nationality background is, no matter if you are wealthy or financially vulnerable, if you or someone you know has a mental health condition, recovery and ability to lead a productive, joyful life requires the availability of robust community-based mental health supports and services to avoid unnecessary institutionalization. Approximately 5,000

people are admitted into inpatient psychiatric facilities in Vermont per year.

What can I do to help?

Talk to your family, friends and neighbors with mental health conditions and those that support them to identify the resources they need to live the lives they choose. Then contact your local legislators and ask them to improve resources for our community mental health system to ensure that all Vermonters can access the support they deserve.



These figures are estimated from the following data sources: Vermont Care Partners 2018 "FY 2018 Outcomes and Data Report" "Narrowing the Gap in Recovery-Oriented Community Services: A presentation by Alyssum, Another Way Community Center, Pathways Vermont, and Vermont Psychiatric Survivors" October 22, 2019; Vermont Department of Mental Health FY2018 Budget Presentation Melissa Bailey, Commissioner

For more information on the benefits of community-based mental health services and how to get involved, contact Disability Rights Vermont (disabilityrightsvt.org), Vermont Care Partners (vermontcarepartners.org), and Vermont Coalition for Disability Rights (vcdcr.org).

