



Children with Special Health Needs (CSHN) Connection July 2026

AHS - VDH CSHN

11 min read

Dear Colleagues, Community Partners, and CSHN Families,

Is there anything more beautiful than summer in Vermont? Green rolling hills, meadows of wildflowers, and forests filled with birdsong make us forget all about freezing cold January and muddy April. Of course, for parents it is also summer break and time to adjust to new schedules and new activities. Hopefully, there is also a chance for slowing down and just allowing yourself a moment of calm. *CSHN Connections* has some ideas for you to enjoy so let's get excited for summertime events!

So many things to do and see over the summer that we often forget to take in the moment and breathe. Never forget how important it is to just breathe and enjoy the moment. At CSHN, the goal is to make parents and caregivers' lives better and easier. So here are some helpful tips and information we hope you'll all enjoy to make the most of your summer. And a reminder from one of our family partners and CSHN Connections team members:

"Along the way as a special needs parent, I've heard a lot of advice, but one that really stuck with me was during my child's eye exam. The doctor

said how beautiful a child with special needs views the world. And as I sat there, I agreed with her. She said there's a lot to learn from them. Maybe the world doesn't have to be anything other than how they view it, and we should join them in their world because it is beautiful how they see it. I have since looked at things differently. Instead of worrying about my kids fitting into what the world is, I join them in theirs and it truly is beautiful. No matter the diagnosis, no matter the challenges, they somehow always see the beauty in life, and I love being a part of that. Children are truly a blessing - each made beautifully different and perfect how they are."

Wishing you all a full summer- full of wonder and moments of beauty.

CSHN Connections Team

Table of Contents

Program Spotlight: CSHN Nutrition Program
Community Partner Spotlight: Vermont Libraries
CSHN Updates:
Resources for Families
Policy Corner
Community Happenings

Program Spotlight

CSHN Program Spotlight: CSHN Nutrition Program



Program Highlight: CSHN Nutrition Services

As many as 40% of infants and children with special health care needs are at nutritional risk. Children with chronic health conditions are at high risk for nutrition related problems. Here at CSHN, our Nutrition Services is a team of Registered Dietitians who can help children and families address these challenges. We help with treatment plans and improve outcomes for growth, behavior, parent-child interaction, and cognitive development. Information and a referral form are available on the [CSHN Nutrition Services](#) website.

How do you know if a child should be referred to Nutrition Services?

Growth and nutrition	Feeding skills and behavior
•Difficulty gaining weight or growing •Overweight for height •Limited dietary variety •Reliance on supplements or formula •Tube feeding (NG, GT, TPN) •Suspected food allergies •Constipation or digestive issues •Diagnosis with specific nutrient needs	•Mealtimes longer than 30 min or shorter than 5min •Coughing, choking, or gagging while eating •Cannot safely eat by mouth •Refuses textures or food groups •Unable to transition to solids •Stress, fear, or conflict at mealtimes •Need for thickened liquids or modified textures •Positive ICFQ feeding screen

Over the past six months, the CSHN Nutrition Network has continued building a coordinated system of care for Vermont's young children with pediatric feeding disorders (PFD). Find more PFD info in CSHN Connections' [November issue](#).

Additionally, CSHN Nutrition Services has been strengthening the workforce that serves these children. By developing training opportunities for both general providers and specialist feeding therapists, we're laying groundwork for a Family Readiness and Empowerment Cohort to bring families directly into the support system. A growing national partnership with Feeding Matters positions Vermont as a potential model for how states can build interdisciplinary feeding care.

Submitted by Kelli Borgman, MS, RDN, CD and Kasey McManmon, RD, CD | CSHN Nutrition Network

CSHN also has Care Consultants to help you. Want to reach the CSHN Care Consultant for your area? Local contact info is available on our website: [CSHN Service Area](#).

Community Partner Spotlight: Vermont Libraries

Vermont Libraries - Special Needs Services



Child wearing pink sweatshirt standing in library among bookshelves.

Vermont Department of Libraries offer [The ABLE Library](#) (ABLE, stands for: Audio, braille, large print, and electronic books) is a free talking book and braille library service serving eligible Vermonters who are blind or have low

vision, and patrons with a physical or print disability that keeps them from being able to read standard print. The ABLE Library is a program of the [Vermont Department of Libraries](#) and a network library for the [National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled](#) (NLS), which is part of the Library of Congress.

The ABLE Library works with public and school libraries to make sure that students across the state have access to library services. Patrons and library staff can request accessible youth books through Interlibrary Loan on [CLOVER](#).

In addition to braille and audiobooks, ABLE offers an Accessible Youth Collection, which includes the following items:

- Large print youth titles.
- High contrast picture books and board books. These books allow readers to see shapes and objects more easily.
- WonderBooks. These books are picture and chapter books with a built-in audio component. This lets children listen to the book while following along with the text and pictures.

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Contact the ABLE library - Email: lib.ablelibrary@vermont.gov, Phone: (802) 636-0020

CSHN Updates: CSHN GIS Resource Map



Map with 5 red ball pins stuck into map.

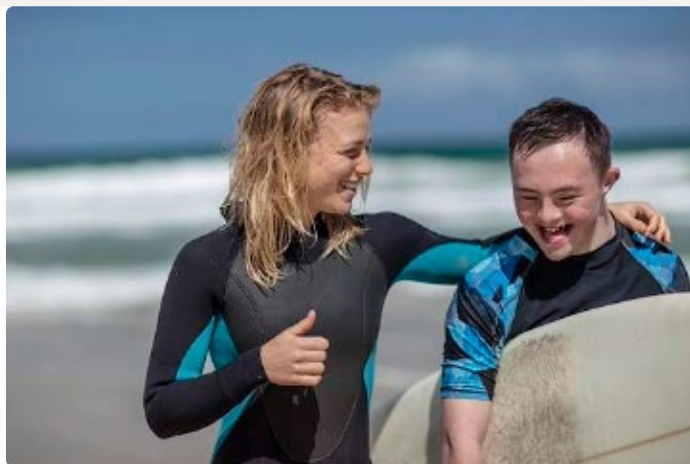
CSHN GIS Resource Map - You can submit edits or suggestions

In our last issue of CSHN Connections, we introduced Vermont Department of Health's - Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs [CSHN GIS Resource Map](#). This resource can be found on the CSHN webpage by clicking on the blue [CSHN GIS Resource Map](#) button.

But did you know, you can make suggestions or submit edits for this map? At the bottom of each page, you can suggest edits, additions or updated organization information by clicking the link "Help Improve This Tool!" found at the bottom of each page within the map. Our teams will review suggestions and make changes. We welcome your ideas! Or reach out to a member of our team at the email address found at the end of this newsletter.

We hope you find this resource helpful!

Resources for Families



Youths in swim gear, one with blonde hair, arm around shoulders of another youth with brown hair who's carrying a white surfboard.

Summer Goings On

[Adaptive Beach Access | Vermont Parks Forever](#) webpage has a listing of beach access. Wheelchairs may be reserved in advanced of calling the park office at any of these 10 Vermont beaches.

Summer gardening:

Gardening can give children with special health needs a fun, hands-on way to explore, learn, and connect with nature while building confidence, motor skills, communication, and creativity. With simple adaptations, every child can participate and enjoy the experience alongside family and caregivers. Here are a few inclusive and sensory gardening resources to get you started:

- [Inclusive Gardening](#)
- [Nature Play for All Abilities](#)
- [Everyone Grows](#)
- [Children & Nature](#)
- [Youth Sensory Gardening Manual](#)
- [Sensory Gardens](#)

Gather your family and friends to create a pollinator garden! Check your local Buy Nothing group or ask friends and neighbors if they have extra native plants or seeds to share. As your garden grows, take photos and learn about the butterflies, bees, birds, and other pollinators that visit.

- [Vermont Bird and Pollinator-Friendly Perennial Species List](#)

Happy planting!

Upper Valley Food Resource Guide



Flyer with colorful vegetables in background, blue text box, QR code.

The Upper Valley Food Resource Guide is a list of food pantries, community meals, and food distribution locations.

This list is maintained by the White River Junction Local Health Office. Guide

content review and updates will be performed every 6 months to ensure listings are current. Please share the [Upper Valley Food Resources](#) website link so people can access the most updated information.

Have feedback or ideas for this guide? Users of the guide are encouraged to submit [UV Food Resource Guide updates](#).

Please consider sharing these resources with the families you serve and others at your organizations.

Policy Corner



Medical provider wearing white lab coat writing left handed onto a pad device.

Vermont Policy Updates

GCR Final Policy 26-001 Hospice Service Rate Changes

Effective January 1, 2026, [Hospice Service Rate Changes](#) have been posted by DVHA. The link provides a pdf with detailed information.

GCR Final Policy 26-004 Physician Administered Drugs Fee Schedule Update

The accompanying PDF for [GCR 26-004](#) is detailed and contains code tables. This Final policy contains dates of service information.

GCR Final Policy 26-017 2026 DME, Prosthetics/Orthotics, and Supplies (DMEPOS) Fee Schedule Update

State Plan page was amended for Attachment 4.19-B page 17 for [GCR 26-017](#)

2026 DMEPOS updates.

GCR Final Policy 26-023 Outpatient Prospective Payment System Reimbursement Updates

Effective February 1, 2026, DVHA updated rates paid for hospital outpatient services based upon the Medicare OPPS fee schedule. [GCR 26-023 PDF](#) describes the changes in rates.

GCR Final Policy 26-033 High-Tech Nursing (HTN) Services Reimbursement Rate Alignment

This policy alignment statement is effective March 1, 2026. [HTN Reimbursement Rate Alignment](#) details the changes allowing one rate for HTN services, eliminating differential rates for nights and weekends.

GCR Final Policy 26-048 – Children’s Integrated Services Early Intervention PT, OT, SLP Evaluations

CIS has increased the rate for therapeutic evaluations for these services and eliminated a billing code. A helpful, detailed explanation of these changes is in [GCR 26-048](#).

Proposed GCR 26-051 through 26-055 – Health Benefits Eligibility and Enrollment Rules Update

We don’t often include Proposed GCR listings into our CSHN Connections but this update might be of interest to some of our readers. GCR 26-051 through 26-055 Proposed Rules amend Parts 1-3, 5 and 7 of Health Benefits Eligibility and Enrollment (HBEE) rules. This establishes eligibility and enrollment requirements for Medicaid/Dr. Dynasaur and Qualified Health Plan insurance coverage. [GCR 26-051 to 26-055](#) describes these Proposed Rules in detail and provides information about a public hearing. Public comment period is currently open through August 21, 2026. Comments can be made to: AHS.MedicaidPolicy@vermont.gov.

Proposed GCR 26-015 – Medicaid School-Based Services

Vermont Medicaid proposes expansion of coverage for school-based health services along with an adoption of a new payment model. Public comment is open now through August 17, 2026. View details in the [GCR 26-015](#) update.

Addition to DVHA website – Access for Users with Special Needs

The Department of Vermont Health Access or DVHA has a new section on their website called [Access for Users with Special Needs](#). Using Green Mountain Care phone or TTY/TDD posted on that webpage allows individuals with disabilities to report accessibility problems or request information in alternative accessible formats.

Gainwell Banner Updates

From the July 17, 2026, Gainwell Banner, there are two updates of interest for CSHN providers. First, the VT Medicaid Applied Behavior Analysis Supplement is posted on the [DVHA Manuals page](#). That guide discusses the fee for service payment methodology effective 07/01/26. Secondly, 2026 Medical Record Review information can be found on the Banner page. The extension is goes through mid-August. See the [07/26/26 Gainwell Banner](#) for details.

Want to be added to email notifications for Global Commitment waivers? (Recommendation: If don't want to flood your Inbox, perhaps choose one person in your office or team to receive the emails for everyone.)

Please email AHS.MedicaidPolicy@vermont.gov.

Community Happenings

[2026 Health Equity Summit | University of Vermont Health](#) will be September 24 thru September 25 this year. This all day summit will take place at the University of Vermont Davis Center. Contact hesummit@uvmhealth.org for more information. Registration opens July 28 on the Health Equity Summit website.

Vermont Family Network Webinar - Navigating Vermont's CSHN New Geographic Information System (GIS) Resource Map

CSHN's Regie Cooper will present how to navigate our newly launched CSHN GIS Resource Map on July 23 at 1:00pm. We featured our map in the last CSHN Connections newsletter, which you can find at our [CSHN](#) website.



Green and tan flyer from VFN advertising CSHN's GIS Map webinar.

This workshop will be online using Zoom. [Registration](#) is available via VFN's website.

Calling all educators!

Are you or someone you know an educator? The Shelburne Museum offers free Educator Morning or Educator Days for PreK-12 teachers. Any Vermont, NY, or NH educators are invited. These free sessions are designed to support teaching practice and strategies, also provides adaptive materials. Sign up and more information is available at the Shelburne Museum website or Eventbrite app.

More Vermont happenings:

Statewide:

- [Vermont Accessible Travel](#) website covers everything statewide travel accessible year-round activities, events, and venues in Vermont. Want to try an accessible tour of Vermont? Take an inclusive cooking class? Seek out places to stay or eat? This website is a wealth of information worth exploring!
- [Accessible & inclusive playgrounds](#) - Vermont inclusive playground options can differ by surfacing, route access, transfer points, adaptive swings, sensory supports, fencing, shade, and restroom access. Parks listed as accessible and inclusive include Oakledge Park (Burlington), North Hartland Dam Recreational Area (Hartland), Gardner Street Park (Springfield), Memorial Park (Newport), St. Johnsbury School (St. Johnsbury), Willow Park (Bennington), Living Memorial Park Rotary Water Playground (Brattleboro), Marion Cross School (Norwich). White

River Junction has 3 accessible playgrounds and parks: Lyman Point Park, George Ratcliff Park, and Erwin Clifford Park. Nearby Lebanon NH has an ADA certified playground just across the river from Hartford: Riverside Park.

- [Adaptive Beach Access](#) – Improving accessibility in Vermont's state parks and helping Vermonters get into the water with beach access wheelchairs. There are 10 parks across Vermont that provide beach access wheelchairs! Call the park listed on the website to reserve the chair ahead of time, free to reserve.

Addison County:

1. [Nest & Gather](#) - A space for families offering a community play space, classes, gatherings, and support through pregnancy, postpartum, and early childhood. There are some free groups/playgroups/classes (lactation support, dad guild playgroup, postpartum support group, reproductive grief & loss peer support) and some have a fee (workshops, infant massage, yoga, sensory play sessions, and more!)

Chittenden County:

- [Champlain Valley Fair](#) August 28-September 6, Essex Junction: Wheelchair rentals are adjacent to Red Gate near Expo Plaza. Preregistration pricing for rentals are available at [Scootaround](#) website or day of arrival at the entrance booth.
- [Festival of Fools](#): The most joyful weekend of the year is coming to Burlington with the return of BCA's 18th Annual Festival of Fools! From Friday, July 31, to Saturday, August 1, Burlington, VT's Church Street Marketplace and City Hall Park will be THE spot for free, all-ages fun with a fantastic lineup of stupendous street performers, exciting entertainers, and magnificent musicians coming to fill our streets with joy. July 31-August 1, Free, Burlington
- [Middlebury College Online Research Study](#) - The MacMullin Lab in the Psychology Department at Middlebury College is currently running an online research study that looks at how 4- to 7-year-old children think about their peers. Child participants will listen to fun, age-appropriate stories and answer simple questions about their thoughts. [Click Here](#) to learn more and participate.

Windsor County:

- Interested in adaptive swimming? Or becoming certified as an adaptive inclusive swim instructor? Check out the Upper Valley Aquatic Center's

[UVAC Adaptive Swim Lessons](#). Easy to find - just off the intersection of 1-89 and I-91. UVAC has certified Adaptive Swim Whisperers who teach classes. Interested in becoming an Adaptive Swim Whisperer? The same link has info about their onsite training program.

- Montshire Museum of Science, Norwich, provides free [Montshh Sensory Hour](#) times at the museum on July 18, August 15, September 19, October 17, November 21, and December 19 all at 9am. These are quieter times with less crowds, reduced sound.
- [VINS Sensory Friendly Hour](#) "Join us for Sensory Friendly Hour at the VINS Nature Center, a special morning experience designed for visitors who prefer a quieter, less crowded environment. For an hour in the morning, we minimize noise, crowds, and other sensory stimuli throughout our exhibits and trails." *(Included with regular admission)* Saturday July 18 9-10am, October 3 9-10am, Quechee

If you need help accessing or understanding information in this newsletter, contact AHS.VDHCSHN@vermont.gov.

CSHN supports children with complex, chronic health conditions and/or developmental disorders, ages birth to-21, and their families, with flexible, experienced, and proactive services. If you'd like to learn more about CSHN programming and resources, please see the [CSHN Website](#).

Do you have feedback or content for this newsletter? Please [let us know!](#)



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