

Division of Family and Child Health

Statement of Progress and Extension | 2023–2025

Introduction

While the Division of Family and Child Health (FCH) dedicates the next year to developing a new strategic plan, we are offering this statement of progress and extension to provide an update on efforts that have been active since January 2019 or earlier.

The work of FCH was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic response when Vermont's governor and state leadership needed all Vermont Department of Health (VDH) resources to be focused on pandemic control. Staff from the department were redirected to work in the Health Operations Center (HOC) for more than two years starting in March 2020. During the pandemic, essential activities such as grant and program management for FCH were maintained by a small group of staff that were not deployed to the HOC.

This document provides a status update and identifies the performance measures that have been extended until 2025, and those that have been retired or paused.

Two notable changes have occurred since the 2019–2023 strategic plan was written:

1. The division name was changed from Maternal and Child Health to Family and Child Health because programs and services are for all Vermonters, and we want people to see themselves included in our work.
2. All our work is being done with a health equity focus, and we are incorporating family engagement into programmatic work.

Timeline

In 2025 FCH will publish a new strategic plan. The new plan will use data collected from two sources:

- an upcoming FCH Needs Assessment to inform the priority areas, performance measures, and strategies that are selected
- data about internal workplace culture and operations are being collected directly from FCH staff.



Our vision: *Strong, healthy families power our world.*

Our mission: *We invest in people, relationships, and policies to build a healthier Vermont for future generations.*

The FCH division works across the life course to encourage optimal health and positive outcomes for all Vermonters. We support programs that provide direct services to pregnant people, children and families and build healthy communities. We provide leadership and guidance to professionals who work with children and families in a variety of settings including health care, early care and learning, schools, and human service organizations. We respond to the needs of Vermont families by helping them connect to resources, improving access to quality health care and services, and ensuring that policies and systems are developed to allow all Vermont residents to achieve optimal health. Collaboration with local and national partners encourages a collective impact resulting in long-term positive outcomes.

Our guiding principles:

- We believe in a **strength-based approach** that promotes protective factors and recognizes that families have many strengths and the capacity to learn, grow and change.
- We believe in a **two-generation framework** that creates opportunities for, and addresses the needs of, both children and the adults in their lives.
- We believe there is a **fundamental need to partner** with state agencies, health care providers, human service organizations, and families to succeed at our vision.
- We believe in **health equity** and incorporate it into all aspects of our work to reach the people and communities most in need of our support.
- We believe that **family and community engagement** is fundamental to the success of our programs.

Women's & Maternal Health

Priority area: Ensure optimal health prior to pregnancy

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

GOAL: ▲ = Increase ▼ = Decrease

Tobacco use during pregnancy

▼ **KEY STRATEGY**

Work with local Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) offices and home visiting programs to ensure all clients have access to smoking cessation resources

PROGRESS SUMMARY

- WIC families are screened for use of tobacco products and provided referrals to support cessation.
- Local office WIC staff have full understanding of tobacco cessation resources available in their community and offer support as needed to pregnant individuals.
- The [Strong Families Vermont Nurse Home Visiting](#) program screens all families for nicotine dependence using the FAGERSTROM tool. Any positive screens are referred to [802Quits](#) for cessation assistance. In June 2023 nurse home visitors were trained by staff from the [802Quits](#) program.

KEY STRATEGY

Conduct and evaluate a pilot program in a community-based obstetrical practice to improve rates of smoking cessation in pregnancy

PROGRESS SUMMARY

Conducted a project in Rutland to increase cessation activity among pregnant individuals through a collaboration among WIC, Rutland Regional Medical Center, the Women's Clinic and VDH/FCH and Office of Local Health (OLH). Twenty Vermonters participated despite COVID disruption to in-clinic counseling.

Advise against alcohol use during pregnancy

▲ **KEY STRATEGY**

Conduct a formative evaluation to determine beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors related to the risk of substance use in pregnancy

PROGRESS SUMMARY

A formative evaluation completed at the end of 2019 was used to inform the [One More Conversation](#) resource for health care providers. This resource encourages providers to talk about substance use with each patient at all prenatal and postpartum visits, and includes tips for these conversations, patient fact sheets, and other patient education materials. It has been distributed to provider offices around the state, and an outcome evaluation that includes provider interviews and surveys is in progress.

Perinatal & Infant Health

Priority area: Promote optimal infant health and development

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

GOAL: ▲ = Increase ▼ = Decrease

Breastfeeding exclusively through 6 months

▲ **KEY STRATEGY**

Develop a strategic plan with partner and family input, to support all Vermont families in meeting their breastfeeding goals

PROGRESS SUMMARY

The [Breastfeeding Strategic Plan](#) was developed in 2019 with input from partners and staff. Implementation of the plan was impacted by COVID-19. Current FCH, WIC and local FCH Coordinator workplans include state and community action steps across seven strategies.

KEY STRATEGY

Reduce disparities in breastfeeding through peer and professional support

PROGRESS SUMMARY

In 2022–23 the WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counseling program re-positioned staff to ensure services for up to 30% of prenatal and breastfeeding individuals across all district offices. WIC’s “Breastfeeding Essentials” training curriculum is being offered to community partners.

Child Health

Priority area: Achieve a comprehensive and integrated system of state and community services for children

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

GOAL: ▲ = Increase ▼ = Decrease

Young children receiving a developmental screening

▲ **KEY STRATEGY**

Train health, education, and human service providers in developmental monitoring, screening, and use of *Help Me Grow's* [Ages & Stages Questionnaire](#) (ASQ) Online system, which will be integrated with the Universal Developmental Screening Registry (UDSR), to improve communication and coordination among providers and reduce screening duplication

PROGRESS SUMMARY

Use of *Help Me Grow's* ASQ Online developmental screening system has grown to include 65 programs/practices and over 17,500 screens entered. Between 2020–2021, *Help Me Grow* trained 423 health, education, and human service providers to screen and refer for needed services. Please see our 2020–2021 *Help Me Grow* [Impact Report](#) to learn more.

KEY STRATEGY

Promote use of the Universal Developmental Screening Registry (UDSR) as an essential tool for monitoring the development of all young children across settings to improve early identification, timely follow up and referral for further assessment or needed services

PROGRESS SUMMARY

Completion of the data bridge to connect the ASQ Online screening data to the UDSR was interrupted by the pandemic but is scheduled to resume fall 2023. Promotion of the UDSR to providers and educators to align early identification efforts and reduce screening duplication will resume after this data bridge is completed.

Child Health, cont'd

Priority area: Support programs to reduce the risk of chronic disease across the lifespan

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

GOAL: ▲ = Increase ▼ = Decrease

Children ages 6–11 who are physically active at least 60 minutes per day

▲ **KEY STRATEGY**

Promote the [3-4-50](#) chronic disease prevention initiative to schools and early care and learning settings to include physical activity during the school day; and to parents and communities beyond the school day, for at least 60 minutes daily

PROGRESS SUMMARY

The 3-4-50 work with schools slowed significantly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While the sign-up sheets are still available, the Division of Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (HPDP) plans to revamp them and hopes to make changes by 2024.

KEY STRATEGY

Promote American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) policies on the importance of recess and play for child development

PROGRESS SUMMARY: RETIRED

Children ages 1–17 who had a preventive dental visit in the past year

▲ **KEY STRATEGY**

Promote Vermont's new oral health guidelines to dentists, pediatricians, family medicine providers, parents, and caregivers

PROGRESS SUMMARY

We are working with the VT AAP Oral Health Champion to promote oral health guidelines to medical and dental providers in the state, and with OLH chronic disease designees to promote medical/dental integration in the communities they serve; and preparing for the activation of the Current Procedural Technology (CPT) code for silver diamine fluoride, which will allow medical practice teams to offer this treatment to patients of all ages to prevent and treat dental decay in the medical practice setting.

KEY STRATEGY

Implement a statewide school-based dental health program, building on our success with school-linked program

PROGRESS SUMMARY

Expand the [802 Smiles Network](#) of school dental programs in Vermont by reaching out to schools that have 50% or more of children who are eligible for the Free and Reduced-Price Meal Program to encourage them to participate in the program. We have created an [802 Smiles Network Sustainability Report](#).

Child Health, cont'd

Priority area: Promote *Strengthening Families* protective factors and resiliency among Vermont's families

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

GOAL: ▲ = Increase ▼ = Decrease

Children ages 6 months–5 years who are flourishing

▲ KEY STRATEGY

Pursue leadership support and investment in [Developmental Understanding and Legal Collaboration for Everyone](#) (DULCE), a model that embeds a family support specialist into a pediatric medical home to meet families at well-child checks, help them navigate resources and create optimal conditions for healthy development

PROGRESS SUMMARY

There are currently six DULCE sites in Vermont. A legislative proposal, supported by the Governor, was approved in July 2023 to sustain existing DULCE sites, using Medicaid funding under the Blueprint for Health funding expansion. Additionally, a new federal Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) award will allow us to expand to three more DULCE sites. After demonstrating results, we hope to implement additional sites and sustain all programs with expanded and sustainable funding.

KEY STRATEGY

Promote *Help Me Grow Vermont* as a centralized access point to assist families and professionals in connecting children to resources, community-based programs and services that support healthy development

PROGRESS SUMMARY

See our 2020–2021 *Help Me Grow [Impact Report](#)* for progress updates. The newly revised [HelpMeGrowVT.org](#) website aligns several FCH communications campaigns including [Support Delivered](#), *One More Conversation*, and *Strong Families Vermont Nurse Home Visiting* with *Help Me Grow* as the call to action.

Children with Special Health Care Needs

Priority area: Achieve a comprehensive, coordinated, and integrated system of state and community services for children

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

GOAL: ▲ = Increase ▼ = Decrease

Adolescents with/without special health care needs, ages 12–17, who received services necessary to transition to adult health care

▲ **KEY STRATEGY**

Partner with OneCare Vermont to align care coordination services for children and youth with special health needs, including transition

PROGRESS SUMMARY: RETIRED

KEY STRATEGY

Partner with the statewide network of HireAbility Vermont transition counselors to ensure that youth with special health needs have access to the full range of transition supports

PROGRESS SUMMARY

[Children with Special Health Needs](#) (CSHN) provided funds to support the statewide “CORE Team” event put on by HireAbility Vermont. CSHN convened a training focused on best-practice transition guidelines conducted by partners at UVMHC and trainees were Vermont Family Network family support staff. Plan to extend and supplement this work including support for transition-focused trainings provided by multiple partners (sub-grantees and contracted).

School Age & Adolescent Health

Priority area: Youth choose healthy behaviors and thrive

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

GOAL: ▲ = Increase ▼ = Decrease

Adolescents ages 12–17 who had a preventive medical visit in the past year

▲ **KEY STRATEGY**

Pilot test an evidence-based curriculum to teach high school students about their rights and responsibilities in the health care setting

PROGRESS SUMMARY: Pilot has been paused until 2024.

KEY STRATEGY

Endorse the [Bright Futures Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children and Adolescents](#) recommendation that all adolescents have an annual well-care visit

PROGRESS SUMMARY

FCH promotes this recommendation with school/school nurse partners. Aspects of this work are also addressed through a grant relationship with the Vermont Child Health Improvement Program (VCHIP) that works with our primary care partners.

Adolescents who feel they matter to people

▲ **KEY STRATEGY**

Build opportunities for meaningful youth engagement through the creation and support of youth councils across the state, in partnership in their community with Vermont Afterschool (VTA).

PROGRESS SUMMARY

Vermont Afterschool is working with four sites through the Vermont Youth Project in Fair Haven, Rutland City, Swanton, and Richford/Enosburg. The youth councils in these communities work with adults and conduct outreach to encourage support for youth-led community projects. VTA will be working with these communities to develop sustainability plans and move toward adding new sites in other areas of Vermont. FCH, in partnership with Vermont Afterschool, supports the Vermont State Youth Council, established through [Act 109](#), signed into law in May 2022.

KEY STRATEGY

Support ongoing participation in the [Getting to Y Youth Risk Behavior Survey \(YRBS\) Student Analysis Project](#)

PROGRESS SUMMARY

FCH and the Division of Substance Use programs (DSU) fund a grant to the [UP for Learning](#) program to support implementation of the *Getting to Y* program with Vermont schools. School liaisons promote the program.

School Age & Adolescent Health, cont'd

Priority area: Children live in safe and supportive communities

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

GOAL: ▲ = Increase ▼ = Decrease

High school students who made a plan to attempt suicide in the past 12 months



KEY STRATEGY

Increase capacity of mental health providers to screen youth and young adults for suicide

PROGRESS SUMMARY

FCH staff collaborates with the Division of Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Injury Prevention (DEPRIP) and the Department of Mental Health (DMH) through the Garrett Lee Smith Youth Suicide Prevention Grant from SAMSHA to increase the capacity of youth-serving providers to screen, refer, and treat youth struggling with suicidality. Activities include training mental health providers in the Zero Suicide framework, youth-serving providers in Youth Mental Health First Aid and expanding the [UMatter](#) program for schools. FCH supports the Child Psychiatry Access Program and the Vermont Center for Children, Youth, and Families to improve and expand mental health care provided to youth.

KEY STRATEGY

Conduct analysis of available data to better understand sub-populations of Vermont youth at risk for suicide and depression to better inform future programming

PROGRESS SUMMARY

The Division of Health Statistics and Informatics (HSI) is in the process of creating a Suicide Data Linkage Project that analyzes all suicide deaths in Vermont and the demographics and circumstances surrounding those deaths. FCH will use that data to identify subpopulations of youth that are disproportionately affected by suicide and make recommendations for preventative interventions.

In addition to this project, the Child Fatality Review Team continues to review all youth suicide deaths in Vermont to make recommendations, primarily focusing on social determinants of health. Suicidality among LGBTQ youth will be a new Healthy Vermonters 2030 indicator. FCH programs rely heavily on YRBS data to inform our work related to youth suicide prevention.

Crosscutting

Priority area: Promote an approach to our work that is integrated, strength-based, and mission-driven

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

GOAL: ▲ = Increase ▼ = Decrease

FHC programs that partner with family members, youth, and/or community members

▲ **KEY STRATEGY**

FCH communications campaigns and outreach strategies employ authentic youth, family, and consumer partnerships

PROGRESS SUMMARY

We have recently hired the first Family Engagement Coordinator, a full-time position with a focus solely on family, partner, and community engagement. We will be significantly expanding our capacity for partner-centered work and projects.

FCH employees who feel their supervisor gives them the opportunity to do their best work

▲ **KEY STRATEGY**

Promote an Individual Development Plan (IDP) for all FCH division staff

PROGRESS SUMMARY

FCH promotes IDPs with all division staff, although much of this was put on hold during activation in the COVID-19 Health Operations Center. Supervisors include training and development plans as part of annual performance evaluations.

KEY STRATEGY

Convene a workgroup to assess and improve employee engagement across the division

PROGRESS SUMMARY

This work continues to be integral to supporting employee engagement and sense of connection to each other and our work and programs. Workgroup meets monthly and supports the planning of a variety of activities across the year.