

Rutland County Head Start



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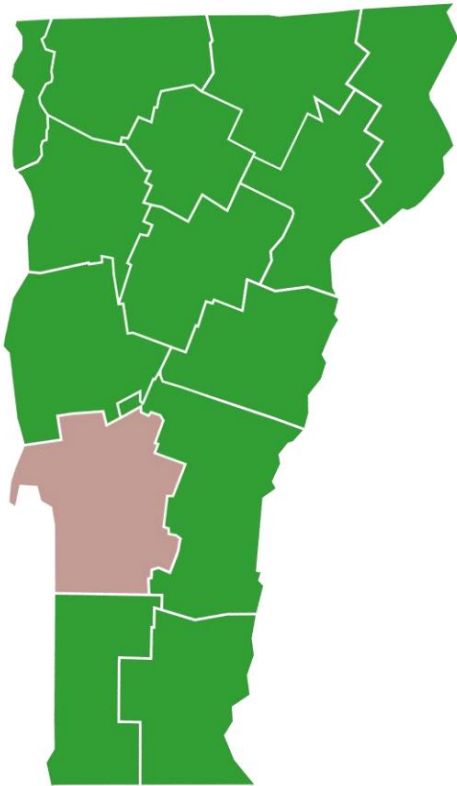


believe



shine

2023-2024 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT



Community Care Network
Rutland Community Programs
thriving community, empowered lives



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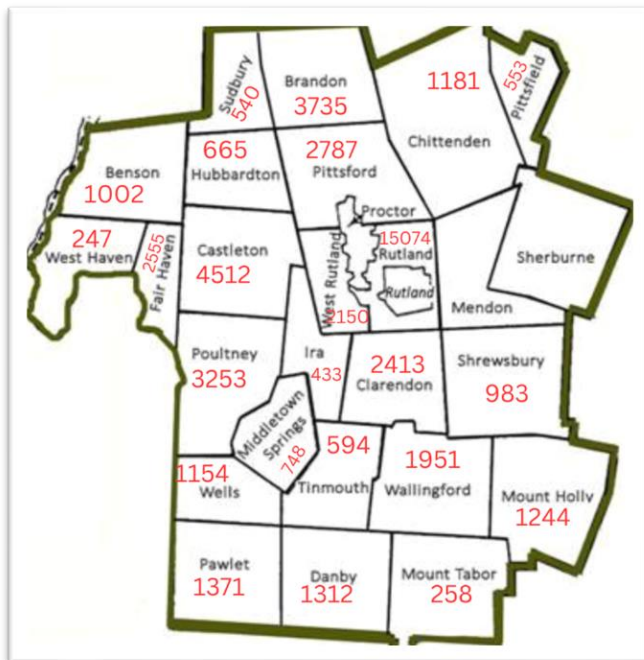
Executive Summary

Rutland County Region

The Rutland County Head Start (RCHS) service area is Rutland County, Vermont. The 2020 census reported Rutland County's population at 60,591, making it the second largest county in Vermont. Rutland County is in western Vermont, with Windsor County to the east, Addison County to the north, and Bennington County to the south, with Lake Champlain and New York to its west. Rutland County comprises 28 towns ranging in population from under 300 to 16,000.

Rutland City is the region's urban center with 15,851 residents. Rutland City is the third largest municipality in Vermont. Rutland has six sub-regional centers of economic activity and a series of smaller rural villages surrounded by agricultural and forest land.

Figure 1: Map of Rutland County, Vermont.



Demographic Snapshot¹

The majority of families in Rutland County and Rutland City are white: 96.5% and 94.7% respectively. The rate of poverty in Rutland City is higher than Rutland County. At 10.5% at the county level and 12.2% in Rutland City, compared to the national poverty rate of 11.6% (2021)²

RCCHS Economic Snapshot³⁴

Rutland's labor force was the third largest in Vermont with 3,446. However, jobs have been declining in the region. Since 2010 the labor force has decreased by 9.4%.

The most recent data from census.gov reports 703 total employer firms (2017). The median income in Rutland City is \$51,886 (2021) and the per capita income (2021) was \$33,425 in the last 12 months. (*NOTE: Per capita is income distributed across every man, woman, and child.*)

The four largest revenue sectors (*plus mining) in Rutland City:

- Health Care and Social Assistance 473,776
- Retail Sales 441,1991
- Accommodation and Food Service Sales 69,027
- Transportation and Warehouse 11,902
- *Rutland maintains a Mining industry (with .9 percentage points higher than the state's share)

Trends from the Community Needs Data

- **Changes in Family Stability Factors Since COVID-19 Pandemic.** The community needs in Rutland County have changed in many ways since the 2020 RCCHS Community Needs Assessment. The COVID-19 pandemic spanned the years since then. The effects on housing, mental health, and other stability factors are evident in the most recent data and research.
- **Availability and Implications of Vermont Pre-K, Preschool, Early Care for 3–5-year-olds.** Since RCCHS last community needs assessment, the availability of

¹ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/rutlandcityvermont/PST045221>

² Federal Poverty Safety Net: <https://federalsafetynet.com/poverty-statistics/#unemployment>

³ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/rutlandcityvermont/HSG010221#HSG010221>

⁴ Bowes Community Assessment, 2022

pre-k programs through Act 166 continues to add to free alternative Pre-K programming for preschoolers. School District Pre-K also provides higher salaried teaching jobs for early childhood teachers potentially exacerbating the Workforce Crisis in Early Childhood Education. Universal Pre-K offers a choice for Head Start eligible families. At the same time, Vermont's universal pre-k school programs do not offer the same level of wrap-around, resiliency building, child-readiness promoting support. Head Start offers Health/ Nutrition and Family Partnership along with high quality early childhood education. Fifty years of research provides evidence that these "key ingredients" to families experiencing poverty and other adverse experiences, offer a "Head Start" for children that results in school success and positive outcomes into adulthood. Nonetheless, Universal Pre-K through Act 166 is an advantage to children above the poverty line and without the specialized needs of Head Start Children.

- ***Urgent Need for Center-Based, High Quality Care for Infants and Toddlers.*** According to Let's Grow Kids *Stalled At the Start Report 2022*, families within Rutland County lack access to high quality, center-based care for infants and toddlers. 83% of infants and 76% of toddlers in Rutland County likely to need care do not have access to high quality programs. Rutland County needs an additional 436 infant slots and 91 toddler slots to meet demand.
- ***Increase in Homeless Youth over Past Decade.*** Rutland County has seen an alarming increase in homelessness amongst children (1,098 in 2015 to 1,312 in 2022). Head Start programming is vital to families experiencing homelessness. Further, homelessness in households with children increased by 36% compared to households with adults only (5%). This data underscores the vulnerability of families with children and the need for services to stabilize and support early development and school readiness. Vermont ranks the 2nd highest in the United States in rate of people experiencing homelessness per capita (51 out of every 10,000 people). In most counties in Vermont, the number of people experiencing homelessness increased between 2022 and 2023, with the greatest rate of increase in Rutland County.
- ***Children in Foster Care are priorities for Head Start Enrollment and are automatically eligible.*** In Rutland County 52 children were removed from their home and placed into foster care. Of these children, 35 percent (n=18) were removed for neglect and 44 percent (n=23) were removed due to caretaker drug or alcohol abuse. This data informs the number of children likely to need services and the type of family support/ resources needed in the community.

Community Assessment Team and Acknowledgments

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Section 1: Introduction

Program Overview

Rutland County Head Start (RCHS) is a program of Community Care Network, which comprises Rutland Mental Health Services and Rutland Community Programs; Rutland Community Programs is the Head Start grantee.

RCHS provides comprehensive child development services to 69 low-income preschool children, infants, toddlers and their families. The Head Start program provides center-based programming and operates six hours per day, five days per week, September through June to 45 preschool children ages 3-5. The Early Head Start program provides center-based programming and operates six hours per day, five days per week, full year to 24 infants and toddlers ages 0-3. Program operations are centered in Rutland City.

Meadow Street Center: The main facility, located on Meadow Street in Rutland City, currently houses 2 Head Start classrooms and 2 Early Head Start classrooms and provides services to 46 children. The Meadow Street Center has a 5-STARS quality rating from the Vermont Child Development Division.

Children's Discovery Center For Early Learning: Located on Juneberry Lane in Rutland City, currently houses 1 Head Start preschool classroom and 1 Early Head Start classroom and provides services for 23 children. Children's Discovery Center and has a 5-STARS quality rating from the Vermont Child Development Division.

Purpose

The purpose of the Community Assessment is to meet Head Start Performance Standard 1302.11(b)- *Community Wide Strategic Planning and Needs Assessment (Community Assessment)*. The information from this assessment is used to set long and short-term program objectives, determine services most needed, and provide governing bodies with relevant information about the service area.

Methodology

The information presented in this Community Assessment was acquired and analyzed according to the most recent and relevant data available. The sources of data can be found in the footnotes in each section.

Special Note on Post-COVID-19 Data and Needs

The 2023 Rutland County Head Start Community Assessment reflects demographic, social, and social determinant data post-COVID. This phenomena contextualizes the changing needs of children and families served by RCHS. Kids Count Databook (2022) reported a 25.5% increase in the percentage of U.S. children with depression and anxiety. The data for Vermont is even more striking with a 40.1% increase. At RCHS, the behavioral and mental health needs of children are startling and taxing for our teachers and education staff. Our family service program reports increased family needs. The National Survey of Health reports an “extraordinary toll” of the pandemic on children’s mental health. Nationally, the number of children (ages 3-17) struggling with anxiety or depression rose from 5.8 million to 7.3 million. Finally, a recent study found that the COVID-19 pandemic profoundly disrupted schooling nationwide, raising serious concerns about the impact on children’s learning.^{5 6}

⁵Vermont Agency of Education, Statewide Report on Kindergarten Readiness, Ready For Kindergarten! Survey 2020-2021

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brown-center-chalkboard/2021/02/22/understanding-covid-19-era-enrollment-drops-among-early-grade-public-school-students/>

⁶<https://assets.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-2022kidscountdatabook-2022.pdf>

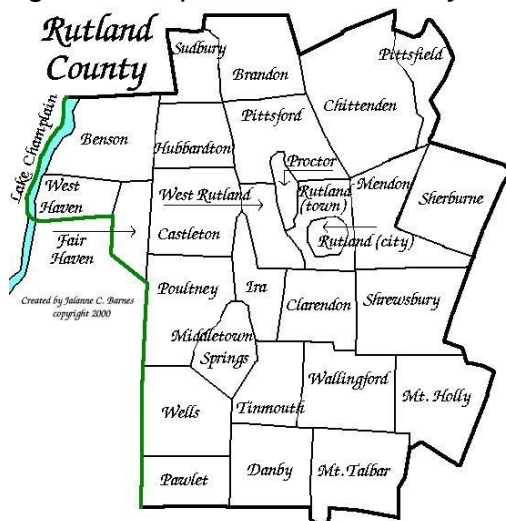
Section 2: Demographic Profile of Service Area

The purpose of this section is to meet the requirement of 1302.11(b)(i): The number of eligible infants, toddlers, preschool age children, and expectant mothers, including their geographic location, race, ethnicity, and languages they speak.

Overview

Rutland County Head Start serves Rutland County in Vermont, with its primary service focus in Rutland City. The declining numbers of Head Start Eligible children in surrounding areas combined with Pre-K services through public school districts has changed the need for center-based services outside of Rutland City and neighboring towns.

Figure 2: Map of Rutland County, Vermont.



Population

The Rutland County Head Start (RCHS) service area is Rutland County, Vermont. The 2020 census reported Rutland County's population at 60,572, making it the second largest county in Vermont. Estimated census data from July 2022 estimates Rutland County's population is 60,271. Rutland County is in western Vermont, with Windsor County to the east, Addison County to the north, and Bennington County to the south, with Lake Champlain and New York to its west. Rutland County comprises 28 towns ranging in population from under 300 to 16,000.

Rutland City is the region's urban center with 15,695 residents (Census estimates from July 2022). Rutland City is the third largest municipality in Vermont. Rutland has six sub-

regional centers of economic activity and a series of smaller rural villages surrounded by agricultural and forest land.

Chart 1: Population by City/Town/Village in Rutland County

Demographic Statistics in Rutland County and Rutland City⁷

Poverty thresholds for the U.S. Census Data below are defined by the following thresholds (federal poverty level guidelines 2024):

- \$15,060 annual income for one individual
- \$20,440 for two people in a family
- \$25,820 for three people in a family
- \$58,100 for nine or more people in a family

Table 1. Demographics of Rutland County and Rutland City, July 2022 estimates

Demographic	Percent	Number
Rutland County	100%	60,271
Under Age Five	4.1%	2,471
White	96.5%	58,162
Hispanic or Latino	1.9%	1,145
Two or More Races	1.6%	964
Language Other Than English at Home	4.1%	2,471
Living in Poverty	12.4%	7,473

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/rutlandcountyvermont>

Rutland City	100%	15,695
Under Age Five	3.5%	549
White	94.8%	14,879
Hispanic or Latino	2.1%	330
Two or More Races	3.5%	549
Language Other Than English at Home	6.8%	1067
Living in Poverty	15%	2,354

Head Start Eligible Children Estimates: Rutland County

Based on the 2021 population estimates, there are roughly 260 children under age five in rural Rutland County eligible for Head Start or Early Head Start services.

Table 2: Data: Head Start Eligible Children, Estimated Based on Poverty Level

Data Type	Number	Percent
Total Population	60,271	100%
# Children Under Age 5	2,471	4.1%
% Poverty Level	7,474	12.4%
Estimated # of EHS-HS-eligible children=306		

Notably, the poverty level in Rutland City is significantly higher (15%), where the greatest density of population resides (15,695). Taking this factor into account, the number of eligible children could be as high as 370.⁸

⁸ Source: U.S. Census Bureau <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/rutlandcountyvermont>

Households and Families

There are 25, 334 households in Rutland County. The household size is 2.31 people.

Family households with married couples make up 60.4%; households with a female householder represent 11.4% of family households; male householders represent 6% of family households. ⁹

Income/Poverty

The median household income in Rutland County is \$62, 641 with per capita income at \$36,845. 12.2% of Rutland County Residents live in poverty. ¹⁰

Of the estimated population for Rutland County, 3.6% are at or below 50% of the poverty level. 13.4% are at 125% of the poverty level. ¹¹

Table 3: Income in Rutland County, 2021 ¹²

	Households	Families	Married-Couple Families	Non-Family Households
Total Estimated Population	24,998	14,425	11,558	10,573
Less than \$10,000	3.6%	1.7%	.8%	7.1%
\$10,000 to \$14,999	6.5%	2.6%	.7%	11.9%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	9.2%	5%	2.8%	16.7%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	9.4%	6.1%	5%	14.9%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	13.2%	10.2%	9%	16.4%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	19.1%	20.3%	19.8%	17.2%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	13.5%	18.1%	20.2%	6.9%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	15.6%	22.2%	25.2%	5%

⁹ Census Reporter Data <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US50021-rutland-county-vt/>

¹⁰ U.S. Census, Quick Facts: Rutland County <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/rutlandcountyvermont>

¹¹ <https://data.census.gov/table?q=poverty+in+Rutland+County,+VT&tid=ACSST5Y2021.S1701>

¹² <https://data.census.gov/table?q=income+in+Rutland+County,+VT&y=2021&tid=ACSST5Y2021.S1901>

	Households	Families	Married-Couple Families	Non-Family Households
\$150,000 to \$199,999	5.6%	7.8%	9.5%	2.3%
\$200,000 or more	4.2%	6%	7.1%	1.5%

Rutland County Labor and Economic Summary

Rutland’s labor force was the third largest in Vermont with 3,446. However, jobs have been declining in the region. Since 2010, the labor force has decreased by 9.4%.

The most recent data from census.gov reports 703 total employer firms in Rutland City (2017). The median income in Rutland City is \$53,304 (2022) and the per capita income (2021) was \$35,603 in the last 12 months. (*NOTE: Per capita is income distributed across every man, woman, and child.*) Data for Rutland City shows a 15% poverty rate, compared to 12.4% in Rutland County. Statewide, Vermont census data shows a 10.4% rate of persons living in poverty.

The four largest revenue sectors (*plus mining) in Rutland City:

- Health Care and Social Assistance 473,776
- Retail Sales 441,1991
- Accommodation and Food Service Sales 69,027
- Transportation and Warehouse 11,902
- *Rutland maintains a Mining industry (with .9 percentage points higher than the state’s share)

The median gross rent for Rutland County is \$846.

Unemployment Information

“Unemployment rates in the United States had been steadily declining since 2011 until the onset of the pandemic. Vermont rates mirrored that trend, declining from 6% in 2011 to 2.5% at the beginning of 2020. Rutland County trends also showed a decline over the same period, but with slightly higher numbers than the state rates: from 7.6% in January 2011 to 3.2% in January 2020.”¹³

¹³ Rutland Regional Medical Center Community Health Needs Assessment 2021

The unemployment rate in the Rutland County Labor Market Area was 3.1% in February 2024 compared to 2.3% statewide.¹⁴

Transportation

Public bus transportation is available in the Rutland Region with fixed routes and commuter services running to and from Rutland City, provided by Marble Valley Regional Transit District (MVRTD), often referred to as “The Bus”. Routes include Rutland City, Rutland Town, Proctor and the Killington area. Regional services are provided to Fair Haven, Killington, Middlebury, Manchester and Ludlow with stops in between. RCHS sites in Rutland City are all on public transit routes. Fixed routes within Rutland City operate every half hour 8:00am-4:30pm, Monday-Saturday.

In Vermont, 63% of children under 6 living in households with incomes below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) live in rural areas where having a vehicle is critical to access basic goods and services, as well as to get to work and school.

Rutland County Head Start program data, including recorded reasons for absences and withdrawals from the program, indicates transportation as a barrier to attending. This includes access to a safe, reliable vehicle and affordability of gas.

Figure 3: Rutland County: Bus routes¹⁵



¹⁴ Labor Market Data by County <https://labor.vermont.gov/labor-market-information/county-data>

¹⁵ Rutland Regional Planning Commission Rutland Regional Plan 2015, Marble Valley Regional Transit District

Education

In 2021, 93.6% of Rutland County residents had attained a High School diploma or equivalent; 33% had a bachelor's degree or higher.¹⁶

The total public-school enrollment in Rutland County was 8,626 for 2023. Of these students, 755 were reported as enrolled in PreK-EEE for 2023, an increase from the 697 reported in 2022. There was a sharp increase in PreK enrollment as reported by the Vermont Education Dashboard between 2018 (489 students) to 2019 (792). A decrease was reported from 2019 (792) to 2020 (709), and in 2020 (680). PreK-EEE showed an increase between 2021 (680) and 2022 (697).¹⁷

Housing

The Updated Vermont Housing Report offered insight into the complexity of the housing market in Rutland City and the intersection with families living in poverty. Rutland City Housing data shows that affordability problems are mostly in the rental market and these problems are driven by low incomes in the area. They report that census data indicates that rental affordability problems are most severe for renters at the low end of the income spectrum. "Housing problems in Rutland are as much a job problem as a house problem."¹⁸ Of Rutland County's estimated 32,634 housing stock, 57% were owned occupied, 20% were seasonal, recreational, or occasional use, and 23% were rental properties.¹⁹

Rutland County and Rutland City continue to see downward population and household trends. The Vermont Housing Report forecasted a continued loss of population in the coming months. The study reports a 5-year average estimate of population for Rutland City with a 4.6% decline in population (3.2% for Rutland County).

Many Rutland households have relatively low incomes. Sixty-five percent of renters (and ¼ homeowners), have incomes below \$35,000 a year (2019). Even with relatively lower housing costs, renters in Rutland face affordability challenges due to their low incomes.²⁰

¹⁶ U.S. Census. Rutland County: Quick Facts:<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/rutlandcountyvermont>

¹⁷ Vermont Education Dashboard: Enrollment 2022 <https://education.vermont.gov/data-and-reporting/vermont-education-dashboard/enrollment>

¹⁸ <https://d3oenxrebt8fm.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Rutland-Housing-Market-Update.pdf>

¹⁹ Vermont Housing Needs Assessment: 2020-2024
https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/ACCD/ACCD_Web_Docs/Housing/Housing-Needs-Assessment/VT-HNA-FEB-20.pdf

²⁰ <https://d3oenxrebt8fm.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Rutland-Housing-Market-Update.pdf>

Housing is considered affordable when expenses are less than 30% of monthly income; when expenses are 30% or less of monthly income, it is likely there is remaining income to cover other necessities. 35% of Rutland County households pay more than 30% of their income towards housing, and 15% of households pay 50% or more of their monthly incomes towards housing. This is considered severely high and puts these households at high risk of housing instability, including frequent moves, eviction, foreclosure and homelessness.

Though vacancy rates vary by town, Rutland County's estimated vacancy rate is 5.5%, which is higher than the state rate of 3.4%, and is the second highest rent vacancy statewide.

Rutland County is also the highest in the state for older homes, with the median home being built in 1969. Older housing stock is of concern for several reasons. Homes built before 1978 are likely to have lead paint, which can be a major health risk, especially for young children. Homes built before 1980 may have asbestos, which requires professional remediation if disturbed during renovations. Older homes are often less energy efficient than newer homes, leading to higher energy cost-burden for households living in these homes.²¹

During Covid-19, funds for past-due and currently due rent and utilities were made available through Vermont Emergency Rental Assistance Program (VERAP). As of March 2023, 2,038 Rutland County residents received an estimated \$18.8 million dollars in funding, second only to Chittenden County. This program has gradually scaled down their funding for eligible residents beginning in December 2022 and is now subject to available funds and residents at or below 30% area median income currently receive only 70% of assistance.

Approximately 59% of Rutland County residents receiving VERAP funds are located in Rutland City, for a total of \$11.5 million dollars. Second to Rutland City is Brandon; 7% of Rutland County residents receiving VERAP funds reside in Brandon and 6% reside in Fair Haven.²²

People & Families Experiencing Homelessness

According to the 2023 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report released by HUD last week, the rate of homelessness in Vermont was 2nd highest in the United States. During the January 2023 point in time count, 3,295 people were experiencing homelessness, or 51 out of every 10,000 people. Vermont experienced the largest percentage increase nationwide in experiences of family homelessness since the pandemic began, increasing by 213% (794 more people) since 2020, the last count before the pandemic.

²¹https://www.vhfa.org/documents/publications/vt_hna_2020_report.pdf

²²<https://erap.vsha.org/>

Of the Vermonters experiencing homelessness during the 2023 count, 4% were unsheltered.

In most counties in Vermont, the number of people experiencing homelessness increased between 2022 and 2023, with the greatest rate of increase in Rutland County. The number of children experiencing homelessness increased by 36%, up to 654 children.²³

Figure 4. HUD 2023 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report

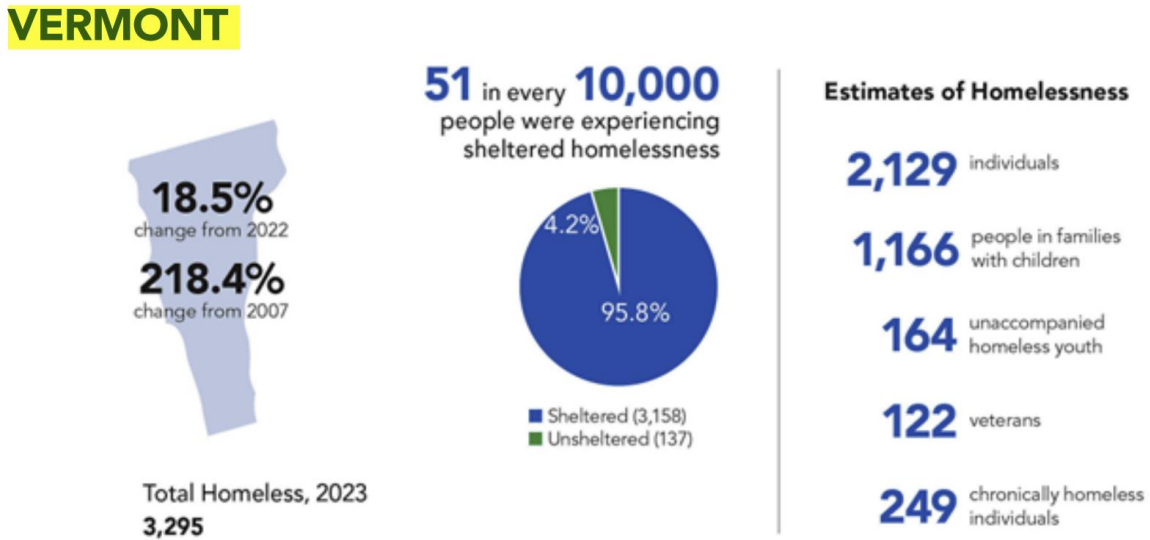


Chart 2. Characteristics of Households & People Experiencing Homelessness in Rutland County²⁴

	Rutland County							
	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016
Total homeless individuals	654	374	344	126	96	114	183	138
Total adults homeless	515	336	296	98	64	92	143	112
Children (under age 18)	139	38	48	28	32	22	40	26
White individuals	587	359	317	119	90	103	175	132
Asian individuals	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Black individuals	33	8	12	1	4	6	7	5
Other-multiple race individuals	33	7	15	6	2	5	0	1
Total homeless households	425	306	265	95	54	91	137	106
Emergency shelter	110	10	8	115	13	28	90	62
Publicly funded hotel	102	289	253	86	28	39	23	22
Transitional housing	313	6	4	9	7	21	35	29
Unsheltered	2	1	0	2	6	3	12	15
Chronic homeless households	21	22	50	18	5	15	8	5
Households fleeing domestic violence	15	25	31	17	13	24	41	30
Veterans homeless	17	7	13	12	10	18	17	19

²³The 2023 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress
<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2023-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

²⁴ <https://www.housingdata.org/profile/population-household/homelessness>

McKinney-Vento Data

The McKinney-Vento definition of “homeless children and youth” means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and includes children and youths who:

- Share the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason
- Live in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations
- Live in emergency or transitional shelters
- Are abandoned in hospitals
- Have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not normally used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings
- Are migratory and qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described in the above situations

According to Vermont's Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program, there were 1,620 homeless children/youth enrolled in public school during the 2020-2021 academic year in Vermont.²⁵ The 2022 State of Vermont's Children, released by Building Bright Futures, identified a sharp increase of Vermont children under 9 enrolled in school who meet the McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness, from 247 in 2020-2021 to 398 in 2021-2022.²⁶ Further, homelessness in families with children increased at a greater rate than families without children: Vermont's Annual Statewide Count of Those Experiencing Homelessness 2022 report shows the number of persons experiencing homelessness and in a household with children increased by 36% compared to the 2021, compared to 5% of people in households with adults only.²⁷

Table 4. Homeless children in Vermont 2015-2023²⁸

School Year	Enrolled Homeless Children/Youth
2015 – 2016	1,098
2016 - 2017	1,097
2017 - 2018	722

²⁵ VT Agency of Education, Education for Homeless Children and Youth

²⁶ Building Bright Futures, The State of Vermont's Children, 2022 Year in Review

²⁷ VT Agency of Education, Education for Homeless Children and Youth

²⁸ <https://helpingtohousevt.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2022-Vermont-Point-in-Time-Report.pdf>

School Year	Enrolled Homeless Children/Youth
2018 - 2019	1,008
2019 - 2020	883
2020-2021	1,006
2021-2022	1,312
2021-2022	1,620

Graph 1: Rise in Number of Homeless Children in Rutland County 2015-2022

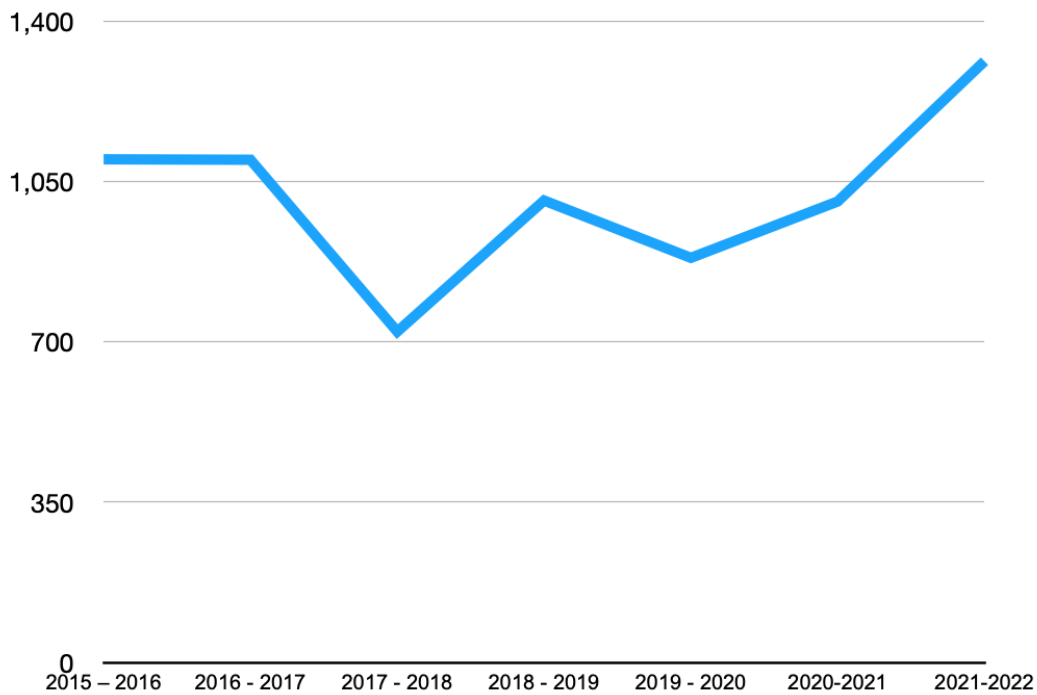
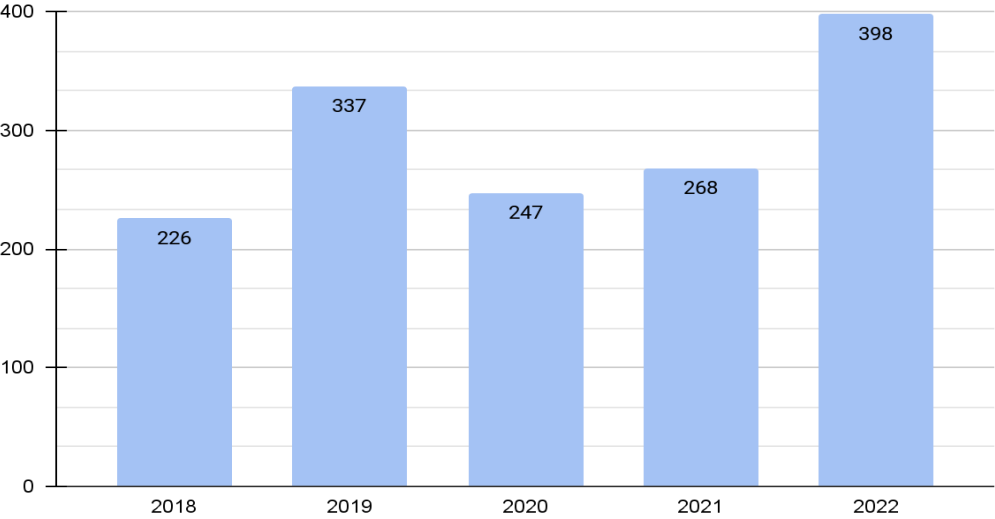


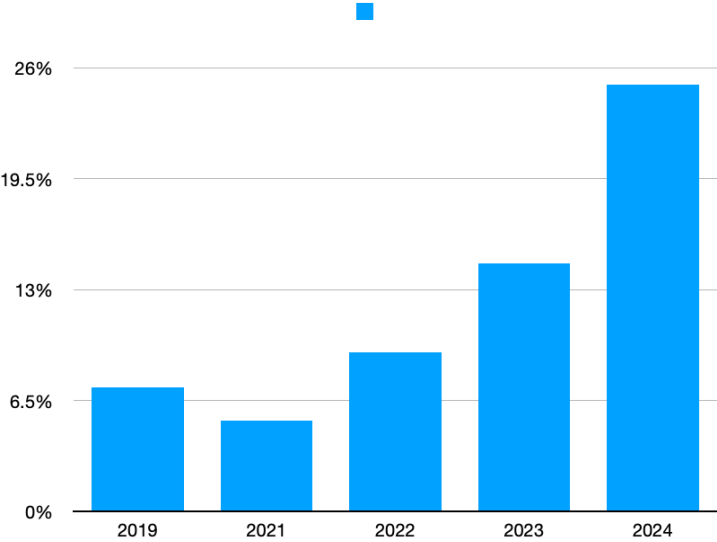
Figure 5: Students under 9 Eligible for McKinney- Vento Homelessness Assistance



At Rutland County Head Start, 10 (10) families with 11 children were homeless at some time during the 2022-2023 program year; 7 families acquired housing during that period. During the 2023-2024 year Rutland County Head Start had 17 homeless children enrolled (10 current and 7 withdrawn) the percentage at the end of the 2023-2024 school year was 25% homeless for whole program (HS/EHS)

Program Information Report from past years is listed below:
 2023 - 14.55%
 2022 - 9.33%
 2021 - 5.32%
 2019 - 7.25%

Table 5. Percentage of Homeless Children Enrollment (2019-2024)



Foster Children

The report for Rutland County Children Removed to Foster Care During October 2021 through September 2022 shows 52 total removals to foster care during that time frame. 11 of these 52 children were re-entries into foster care.

Rutland County saw a higher percentage of removals for caretaker drug or alcohol abuse when compared to state rates. Rutland County was 44% and the state rate was 36%. Rutland County also saw a higher percentage compared to state rates for removals for caretaker inability to cope, 19% versus 11%.

Table 6. Rutland County Children Removed to Foster Care During October 2021 through September 2022²⁹

	Count	Rate
Total Removals to Foster Care	52	
Removals for Neglect	18	35%
Removals for Caretaker Drug or Alcohol Use	23	44%
Removals for Physical Abuse	1	2%
Removals for Caretaker Inability to Cope	10	19%
Removals for Inadequate Housing	1	2%
Removals for Incarceration	2	4%
Removals for Child Behavior	6	12%
Removals for Abandonment	3	6%
Removals for Sexual Abuse	1	2%

²⁹ <https://fosteringcourtimprovement.org/vt/County/Rutland/>

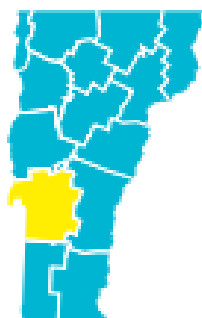
Section 3: Other Child Development Data and Child Care Resources

The purpose of this section is to meet the requirement of 1302.11 (b)(iv). Other child development, child care centers, and family child care programs that serve eligible children, including home visiting, publicly funded state and local preschools, and the approximate number of eligible children served.

Stalled at the Start Vermont’s Child Care Challenge: An Analysis of Supply and Demand for Regulated Child Care for Children Birth through Five in Vermont (February 2022) produced by Let’s Grow Kids, offers insight into the estimated need for care by age group. This study focuses on regulated early childhood education programs in Vermont. Regulated programs that serve infants, toddlers, and/or preschoolers include registered family child care homes, licensed family child care homes, and center-based child care and preschool programs.

Let’s Grow Kids identifies that within Rutland County, 718 infants, 361 toddlers, and 792 preschoolers are likely to need care. To meet the demand, Rutland County would need 436 infant slots, 91 toddler slots, and 271 preschool slots.

RUTLAND COUNTY BY THE NUMBERS



CHILDREN LIKELY TO NEED CARE:

- 718 Infants
- 361 Toddlers
- 792 Preschoolers

CHILD CARE SPACES NEEDED TO MEET DEMAND:

- 436 for Infants
- 91 for Toddlers
- 271 for Preschoolers

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Statewide in 2022, approximately 61% of infants, 25% of toddlers, and 31% of preschoolers likely to need care do not have access to regulated early care and education programs. Rutland County is in trend with the statewide figures; 61% of infants, 25% of toddlers, and 34% of preschoolers likely to need care do not have access to regulated early care and education programs. Within Rutland County, as well as statewide, these percentages jump significantly when considering children who do not have access to high quality programs.³⁰

³⁰ https://letsgrowkids.org/client_media/files/FinalSATS2022.pdf

Child Care Access and Need

Table 7. Rutland County & Statewide Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers Without Access to Child Care 2022³¹

	Rutland County	Statewide
Infants		
Likely to need care but don't have access to regulated programs	61%	61%
Likely to need care but don't have access to high-quality programs	83%	76%
Toddlers		
Likely to need care but don't have access to regulated programs	25%	25%
Likely to need care but don't have access to high-quality programs	76%	54%
Preschool		
Likely to need care but don't have access to regulated programs	34%	31%
Likely to need care but don't have access to high-quality programs	58%	52%

The Vermont Child Development Division (CDD) provides Vermont Child Care Provider data through data.vermont.gov, with the most recent data update on January 20, 2023. Note that licensed capacity may not reflect the enrollment at a particular provider. For example, a center may opt to keep classroom sizes smaller based on the needs of the

³¹ https://letsgrowkids.org/client_media/files/FinalSATS2022.pdf

children or program philosophy or may have reduced classrooms due to staffing shortages.

The table below reflects the maximum number of licensed slots available in Rutland County as of the January 2024 report. This table shows a decrease in number of providers from the previous January 2023 reports. The number of providers in 2023 was 99 with a licensed capacity of 3,216.

Table 8. Number of Child Care Providers and Licensed Capacity in Rutland County (updated January 2024) ³²

	Number of Providers	Licensed Capacity
Center-based child care and preschool programs	43	1,444
Center-based child care and preschool programs (non-recurring)	1	59
Licensed family child care homes	3	34
Registered child care homes	27	270
After school providers	19	1,165
Total	93	2,972

The Vermont Child Care Provider Data report, updated in January 2024, also looks at capacity and vacancy rates by town. As of the January 2024 update, there are an estimated 1,472 child care slots for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers and 68 vacancies, approximately a 4.6% vacancy rate. The location of child care is generally aligned with the population size within Rutland County; Rutland City has 37% of programs and 635 of 1,472 total slots (43%).

³² Vermont Child Care Provider Data updated: January 2024

Child Care Capacity and Vacancy Rates

Table 9. Child Care Provider Capacity and Vacancy Rates by Rutland County Town (Excludes non-recurring care, inactive programs, and afterschool programs.)³³

Town	# of Programs	# of Programs STARS High Quality Rating (4-5 stars)	Infant /Toddler Capacity	Infant /Toddler Vacancy	Pre-SCHCapacity	Pre-SCHVacancy
Benson	2	1	4	0	20	0
Brandon	3	2	27	2	56	0
Castleton	5	4	19	0	22	0
Chittenden	3	1	4	0	37	2
Clarendon	1	1	0	0	39	4
Danby	2	2	12	2	26	0
Fair Haven	4	2	12	0	21	0
Ira	1	0	4	1	2	1
Killington	1	1	0	0	30	0
Mendon	0	0	0	0	0	0
Middletown Springs	1	1	0	0	15	0
Mount Holly	1	1	0	0	20	0
Pawlet	2	1	4	0	22	0
Pittsford	2	1	4	0	17	0

³³ Vermont Child Care Provider Data updated: January 2024

Town	# of Programs	# of Programs STARS High Quality Rating (4-5 stars)	Infant /Toddler Capacity	Infant /Toddler Vacancy	Pre-SCHCapacity	Pre-SCHVacancy
Poultney	3	3	8	0	58	0
Proctor	2	2	26	0	44	0
Rutland City	27	11	271	10	364	28
Rutland Town	3	1	22	3	47	2
Shrewsbury	1	1	0	0	16	0
Tinmouth	1	1	0	0	18	0
Wallingford	3	2	34	6	52	2
Wells	1	1	0	0	22	0
West Haven	1	0	26	2	20	2
West Rutland	3	1	8	1	19	0
TOTAL	73	-	485	27	987	41

Publicly Funded State and Local Preschools ³⁴

Act 166 of 2014 provides access to publicly-funded prekindergarten education for Vermont students. All prekindergarten education programs, including Head Start and public school-operated programs, must meet the following requirement to operate in Vermont:

- Maintain either NAEYC accreditation or a minimum of 4 STARS in Vermont's Step Ahead Recognition System,
- Currently licensed or registered by the Department of Children and Families, and is in good regulatory standing

³⁴ State of Vermont, Agency of Education, Universal Prekindergarten: Act 166

- Curricula is aligned with the Vermont Early Learning Standards
- Staff meet specific professional standards. Private pre-qualified prekindergarten programs must employ, or contract the services of, at least one teacher who holds a valid Vermont educator licensing with an endorsement in either early childhood education or early childhood special education.

20 programs in Rutland County are public pre-qualified PreK programs. These programs account for 432 of 987 preschool slots.

13 programs in Rutland County are private pre-qualified PreK programs that account for 267 of the 987 preschool slots.

Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten Enrollment in Rutland County 2023

Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten enrollment numbers offer a snapshot into the numbers of children in Rutland County Schools between ages 4 and 5 years old. Pre-Kindergarten programs offering early education to 4-year-olds is a factor in the declining need for Head Start Slots in Rutland County. For example, 104 4-year-olds in Rutland City attended Pre-Kindergarten through public elementary schools. Before universal Pre-K in Vermont, eligible Head Start Children in that cohort would have needed early childhood programming. There is an argument that eligible children (due to social determinant’s impact on school readiness) would be better served by Head Start Programs, but this assessment does not include efficacy data for Universal Pre-K for children experiencing poverty and adverse childhood experiences. Quality ratings are discussed below.

Table 10. 2023-Prekindergarten and Kindergarten Enrollment in Rutland County³⁵

Supervisory Union	School	Pre-K Enrollment	K - Enrollment (FT)	SU Pre-K and K Total
Slate Valley Unified School District				
	Benson Valley School	21	14	200
	Castleton Elementary	29	37	

³⁵ Vermont Education Dashboard:
<https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoiMzA2YWMyNjctODI0MS00YTEwLTIiODctZGQ1YTE0Yjc5ZWY0IiwidCI6IjIwYjQ5MzNiLWJhYWQtNDMzYy05YzAyLTcwZWRjYzYzNTIjNiJ9>

Supervisory Union	School	Pre-K Enrollment	K - Enrollment (FT)	SU Pre-K and K Total
	Fair Haven Grade School	32	29	
	Orvell Village	24	14	
Bennington Rutland Supervisory Union				
	Currier Memorial #23	13	10	246
	Dorset School	6	14	
	Flood Brook USD #30	45	24	
	Manchester Elementary	45	30	
	Mettawee Community School	26	16	
	Sunderland Elementary	7	10	
Greater Rutland Supervisory Union				
	Middletown Springs Elementary	12	14	298
	Poultney Elementary	56	31	
	Proctor Elementary	30	15	
	Rutland Town Elementary	38	29	

Supervisory Union	School	Pre-K Enrollment	K - Enrollment (FT)	SU Pre-K and K Total
	Wells Village School	15	9	
	West Rutland School	24	25	
Mill River Supervisory Union				
	Clarendon Elementary School	26	23	126
	Shrewsbury Mountain School	14	6	
	Tinmouth Elementary School	15	6	
	Wallingford Village School	22	14	
Rutland City School District				
	Northeastern Primary	57	69	226
	Northwestern	47	53	
Rutland NE Supervisory Union				
	Barstow Memorial	30	9	249
	Lothrop School	22	18	
	Neshobe School	69	58	

Supervisory Union	School	Pre-K Enrollment	K - Enrollment (FT)	SU Pre-K and K Total
	Otter Creek Academy	30	13	

Quality Care

Vermont’s Steps Ahead Recognition System (STARS) is designed to promote the strengths that early educators bring to their work every day at early childhood education programs like interactions with children and families, staff training, and administrative practices. Through STARS, programs can receive a quality designation of 1 to 5 stars, with a 5-star designation being the highest quality recognition level a program can receive.

Since the 2016 Stalled at the Start report, Vermont has seen an increase in the number of high-quality programs (rated 4 or 5 STARS). Both Rutland County Head Start centers hold a 5 STARS rating.

Table 11. Quality of Programs in Rutland County Ranked by STARS Updated January 2023³⁶

Ranking	Number of Providers in 2023 (of 80)	Number of Providers in 2024 (of 75)
N/A	1	1
1 STARS	19	19
2 STARS	4	4
3 STARS	13	8
4 STARS	25	22
5 STARS	18	19

³⁶ Vermont Child Care Provider Data updated: January 2024

Of the 73 active, licensed family and center-based providers that serve infants, toddlers, and preschool age children in Rutland County in January 2024, approximately 56% have achieved a 4- or 5-STAR rating and are considered high quality programs.

According to the Rutland Regional Planning Commission, childcare professionals they spoke to in the development of the childcare chapter of the Regional Plan mentioned the increasing number of children in the region who struggle with mental health issues, behavioral issues, and/or disabilities. Children with these needs require specialized services that are not available at many childcare facilities, especially in small towns with few providers to begin with.

Operating Hours and Schedules

Beginning in 2022-2023, Rutland County Head Start transitioned to a School Year Schedule. Until then, the program operated before and after care (8:00-5:00 p.m.) and during scheduled school breaks and summer. This program structure met the needs of many Rutland County Head-Start eligible families. However, the extended care program structure had a negative impact on staff and program quality. It was difficult to attract and retain quality staff. Further, staff turnover rates threatened the quality of the programming. This coupled with the workforce crisis following COVID-19 pandemic led the governing body to change the structure to a school day (8:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.) and school year calendar. Rutland County Head Start will continue to collect and evaluate community data and feedback from families and staff to develop programming to best serve the community's needs. This section of the 2024 RCHS Community Assessment reviews the available data related to program schedules for early care in Rutland County.

- Of the 73 programs in Rutland County, 21 follow a school year only calendar (approximately 29%).
- 20 of the 21 programs that follow a school year calendar are considered high quality and rank 4 to 5 STARS (one program is not yet rated).
- Majority of programs within Rutland County open between 7:00am-8:00am and the majority close between 4:30-5:30 pm.

Table 12. STARS Ranking of Programs in Rutland County That Follow School Year Calendar Updated January 2024³⁷

Ranking	Providers (SY Calendar)	Total Providers	Percentage
N/A	1	1	100%
4 STARS	9	22	41%
5 STARS	11	19	58%

Table 13. Opening Hours for Programs in Rutland County³⁸

Time Program Opens	Number of Programs
5:00am	1
5:30am	2
6:00am	4
6:30am	4
6:45am	2
7:00am	16
7:15am	3
7:30am	16
7:45am	7
8:00am	12
8:15am	3
9:00am	1

³⁷ Vermont Child Care Provider Data updated: January 2024

³⁸ Vermont Child Care Provider Data updated: January 2024

11:30am	1
N/A	1

Table 14. Closing Hours for Programs in Rutland County ³⁹

Time Program Closes	Number of Programs
11:30am	1
11:45am	1
1:00pm	2
2:00pm	2
2:30pm	6
2:45pm	4
3:00pm	6
3:15pm	1
4:00pm	3
4:30pm	9
4:45pm	1
5:00pm	17
5:15pm	1
5:30pm	13
6:00pm	4
N/A	2

³⁹ Vermont Child Care Provider Data updated: January 20, 2023

Affordability

Stalled at the Start Vermont's Child Care Challenge from February 2022 identified that Vermont families can spend almost 30% of their annual income on child care, even with financial assistance. In contrast, the U.S. Agency of Health and Human Services' Department for Children and Families recommends that families spend no more than 7% of their annual income on child care. There is a significant gap between what the federal government considers affordable and what families are actually paying for child care in Vermont.⁴⁰

According to the Rutland Regional Plan adopted in 2018, affordable care for infants and toddlers (children under 2 years) is difficult to find throughout the region. This is due to the additional expenses required for infant care, as child care licensing regulations call for a lower provider to child ratio compared to preschool aged children.⁴¹

Affordability is also an issue for early childhood educators. Vermont, like many other states, has been working to advance the quality of child care and early learning by supporting early childhood educators in advancing their skills and education. Vermont child care licensing regulations and Head Start performance standards require specific staff qualifications based on staff role and program size. However, the average annual salary for an early childhood educator is far lower than the average annual salary for a Vermont kindergarten teacher, though the qualifications are similar.

Vermont has made significant changes to help more families afford child care across the state. Beginning in April 2024, Vermont state expanded the income eligibility criteria for Vermont's child care tuition assistance program (*known as the Child Care Financial Assistance Program, or CCFAP*). As of April 2024, families who earn up to 400% of the federal poverty guideline may be eligible for tuition assistance. This will increase again in October 2024 to 500% of the federal poverty guideline. CCFAP pays a higher rate on behalf of families based on the number of STARS the program has earned.⁴²

⁴⁰ Stalled at the Start https://letsgrowkids.org/client_media/files/FinalSATS2022.pdf

⁴¹ Rutland Regional Planning Commission, Rutland Regional Plan, 2018
https://publicservice.vermont.gov/sites/dps/files/documents/Pubs_Plans_Reports/Act_174/RRPC/Rutland%20Regional%20Plan%20Adopted%20June%2019_%202018.pdf

⁴² <https://letsgrowkids.org/newsroom/child-care-tuition-assistance-coming-soon-for-more-vermont-families>

Table 15: Child Care Financial Assistance State Rates, December 2023⁴³

Child Care Financial Assistance State Rates
Effective December 17, 2023

The State rates are the maximum amount the State will pay to a child care provider on behalf of a family receiving child care financial assistance. The State will pay the State Rate regardless of the provider rate agreement. For more detailed information about payments, which includes examples, please see our fact sheet.

Licensed Center		State Rate	Registered Home		State Rate
Infant	Full Time	\$471	Infant	Full Time	\$304
	Part Time	\$258		Part Time	\$166
	Extended Care	\$640		Extended Care	\$413
Toddler	Full Time	\$443	Toddler	Full Time	\$285
	Part Time	\$243		Part Time	\$157
	Extended Care	\$602		Extended Care	\$386
Preschool	Full Time	\$439	Preschool	Full Time	\$284
	Part Time	\$240		Part Time	\$155
	Extended Care	\$597		Extended Care	\$385
School age	Full Time	\$371	School age	Full Time	\$270
	Part Time	\$204		Part Time	\$149
	Extended Care	\$505		Extended Care	\$367

Important Definitions
 Authorized Hours of Care:
 Full Time Weekly—26 to 50 hours a week
 Part Time Weekly—1 to 25 hours a week
 Extended Care—more than 50 hours a week

Child's Age
 Infant—birth up to 24 months old
 Toddler—2 up to 3 years old
 Preschool—3 up to 5 years old
 School age—5 up to 13 years old (19 if child has special needs)



Teacher Salaries for Private vs. Public PreK Programs

“In particular, early childhood education experts have warned about the implications of disparities in salary and benefits between public school educators and private school educators (Ackerman et al., 2009; Barnett & Kasmin, 2017; Chaudry, 2017; Phillips, Austin, & Whitebook, 2016). PreK teachers who work for public schools typically receive substantially higher salaries and better benefits than PreK teachers who work for private centers. In theory, this puts public schools in a better position to attract and retain the best and most experienced teachers... (Ackerman et al., 2009; Chaudry, 2017).”⁴⁴

Kindergarten Readiness

Since 2000, Vermont has gathered information on the readiness of children entering kindergarten by surveying kindergarten teachers about students’ knowledge and skills within the first six to ten weeks of school. The table below shows the percentage of children in each of the Local Education Agencies (LEAs) for RCHS who are deemed “kindergarten ready” as a percentage of all children entering kindergarten.

The 2016-2017 school year marked the deployment of the new *Ready for Kindergarten! Survey* (KRS), with changes in scoring methods, and criteria used for identification of students “ready.” The new survey also includes new and revised questions, including six

⁴³ Child Care Financial Assistance State Rates, December 2023
<https://outside.vermont.gov/dept/DCF/Shared%20Documents/CDD/CCFAP/CCFAP-State-Rates.pdf>

⁴⁴ Source: Prekindergarten Education Study: Final Report (2018) Subtitle: Act 11 (Special Session) of 2018, Section E.500.7 <https://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/edu-legislative-report-act-11-prek-evaluation-final-report.pdf>

in the Physical Development and Health domain. The KRS is not a direct assessment of children; rather, it relies on the accumulated observational knowledge the teacher has developed about the child during the first few weeks of kindergarten. It is also important to take into consideration the impact of COVID-19.

Table 16. Rutland County LEA Percentage of Public School Students Deemed Kindergarten “Ready”⁴⁵

	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Bennington-Rutland SU	88.89%	87.18%	88.00%	88%
Greater Rutland County SU	83.33%	85.84%	76.00%	81%
Mill River Unified SU	78.18%	69.57%	88.00%	55%
Rutland Northeast SU	76.27%	84.85%	82.00%	85%
Rutland City SD	68.53%	76.23%	71.00%	87%
Slate Valley Unified School District	84.21%	90.16%	95.00%	90%

⁴⁵ Vermont Agency of Education, Statewide Report on Kindergarten Readiness, Ready For Kindergarten! Survey 2019-2012, 2020-2021, 2021-2022, 2022-2023

Section 4: Children with Disabilities

The purpose of this section is to meet the requirement of 1302.11(b)(i)(c): Children with disabilities, including types of disabilities and relevant services and resources provided to these children by community agencies;

Special Education Child Count Data

This section will present the most recent data associated with special education in Vermont. The data accounts for children receiving Part B Services of Individuals with Education Act (IDEA) (ages birth through age 2) and IDEA, Part C (ages 3 through age 5 / up to 21).

Special education in Rutland County is managed through Supervisory Unions and delivered through public school districts. Rutland County has 7 Supervisory Unions (listed below).

Note on Special Education Data for Rutland County

The Vermont Agency of Education website/ report on special education counts for young children has not been updated since the last Community Assessment Data (2015, VAE Child Count). However, more recent Vermont reports were used to provide updated data sets. The declining population in Rutland County, State Funded Pre-K availability, and COVID-19 impact likely had effects on the number of young children receiving special education services under Part C and Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Part C services are for eligible infants and toddlers (0-3 years) and Part B special education services are provided to eligible preschoolers (3-5 years).

The Office of Special Education for all of Vermont reported an increase in infants and toddlers receiving early intervention services under IDEA, Part C (from 2.95% in 2014-15 to 3.7% in 2019-20. Children receiving Part B (ages 3-21) increased from 8.85% in 2014-15 to 9.86% in 2019-20

The Office of Special Education reported child count data for all Vermont preschoolers receiving individualized education plans. Table 16 presents the state-wide data disaggregated by ages under Part B of IDEA. A total of 1,361 preschoolers (ages 3-5) have IEPs. The majority of preschoolers (ages 3-5) receive special education in a regular early childhood program (N=935) followed by receiving special education services in their home (N=112). A scant number receiving special education in a separate special education class (N=5) or separate school (N=6).⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Blog 2022 <https://sites.ed.gov/osers/2021/04/osep-releases-fast-facts-on-part-c-and-b-new-data-files-and-part-b-personnel/> SY 2020-21 Child Count/Educational Environment Data Groups (EDFacts file spec FS089; Data group 613) Date: 07/07/2021

Table 16 provides more recent data on special education services for infants and toddlers up to age 3. These services are provided by Children’s Integrated Services and the IFSP is part of the One Plan for children and families. Services for children between age 2 and three are six times greater than for infants ages 1 and under and more than twice the number for children between ages 1 and 2. This is an important consideration for RCHS’s new Early Head Start program and has implications for Child Find and the developmental screenings conducted on all children within the first 45 days. ⁴⁷

Table 17. Child Count 2021-2023 ⁴⁸

A.1. Age Group and Settings of Infants and Toddlers, Ages Birth through 2

Age Group	Home	Community-Based Setting	Other Setting	Total	Percentage
Birth to 1	85	12	14	111	10.83
1 to 2	252	36	9	297	28.98
2 to 3	525	72	20	617	60.2
Total (Birth through 2)	862	120	43	1025	100

Table 18. Number of 3, 4, and 5 year-olds in Vermont Receiving Special Education Services ⁴⁹

Description	3 year-olds	4 year-olds	5 year-olds	All Ages Total
Total number of children with IEPs	454	689	218	1,361
a1. Number of children attending a regular early childhood program and receiving the majority of special education and related services in the regular early childhood program	274	502	159	935

⁴⁸ VT Child Count Year 2020-2021, retrieved from:

<https://outside.vermont.gov/dept/DCF/Shared%20Documents/CDD/CIS/Child-Count/Child-Count-2021.pdf>

⁴⁹ Office of Special Educaiton and Rehabilitation Blog 2022 <https://sites.ed.gov/osers/2021/04/osep-releases-fast-facts-on-part-c-and-b-new-data-files-and-part-b-personnel/>

b1. Number of children attending separate special education class	4	1	0	5
b2. Number of children attending separate school	2	4	0	6
b3. Number of children attending residential facility	0	0	0	0
c1. Number of children receiving special education and related services in the home	45	46	21	112

Table 19. Infants and Toddler Exiting Part C Services by Race/Ethnicity 2022-2023⁵⁰

Hispanic /Latino	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Black or African American	Native Hawaiiin or Other Pacific Islander	White	Two or More Races	Total
16	6	22	27	2	922	83	1078

⁵⁰ Vermont Exiting Part C 2022-2023 retrieved from: <https://outside.vermont.gov/dept/DCF/Shared%20Documents/CDD/CIS/Child-Exit-Data/Child-Exits-2022-2023.pdf>

Table 20: Race/Ethnicity and Settings of Infants and Toddlers (birth through 2) / Part C⁵¹

B.1. Race/Ethnicity and Settings of Infants and Toddlers, Ages Birth through 2

Race/Ethnicity	Home	Community-Based Setting	Other Setting	Total	Percentage
Hispanic/Latino	8	1	0	9	0.88
American Indian or Alaska Native	1	0	0	1	0.1
Asian	13	1	0	14	1.37
Black or African American	21	1	0	22	2.15
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	3	0	0	3	0.29
White	758	107	39	904	88.37
Two or More Races	56	10	4	70	6.84
Total (Birth through 2)	860	120	43	1023	100

Table 21 --⁵²

Number of infants and toddlers with IFSPs who primarily receive early intervention services in the home or community-based settings	Total number of Infants and toddlers with IFSPs	FFY 2019 Data	FFY 2020 Target
873	899	96.49%	97.30%

⁵¹ Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Blog 2022 <https://sites.ed.gov/osers/2021/04/osep-releases-fast-facts-on-part-c-and-b-new-data-files-and-part-b-personnel/>

⁵² SY 2020-21 Child Count/Educational Environment Data Groups (EDFacts file spec FS089; Data group 613) Date: 07/07/2021

Disability Categories

Table 22. Percent of Children with Disabilities (IDEA) by Disability Categories, ages 3-5⁵³

Disability Category	Vermont State	Nationwide
Autism	2.3%	8.9%
Deaf-blindness	0%	0%
Developmental delay	93.7%	37
Emotional disturbance	.1%	.4%
Hearing impairment	.2%	1.2%
Intellectual disability	.1%	1.9%
Multiple disabilities	.5%	1.1%
Orthopedic impairment	0%	.8%
Other health impairment	1.3%	3.1%
Specific learning disability	.2%	1.4%
Speech or language impairment	1.5%	43.7%
Traumatic brain injury	0%	.1%
Visual impairment	.1%	.4%

The Vermont Agency of Education website/ report on special education counts for young children has not been updated since the last Community Assessment Data (2015, VAE Child Count). Table 18 reflects IDEA 2014 Child Count data and was published in 2016.

How IDEA Part B and Part C Services Are Delivered in Vermont

All Vermont school districts have Essential Early Education (EEE) programs. This statewide program coordinates early childhood special education services for children aged three to five. Services are administered by local school districts in conjunction with local early childhood service providers to ensure inclusive educational environments. Most of the children who receive early special education services do so in a typical preschool or child care setting.

⁵³<https://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/edu-data-vermont-state-special-education-profile-2016.pdf>

RCCHS has formal agreements with all Rutland County supervisory unions and school districts to coordinate disability services (and kindergarten transition). Additionally, RCCHS participates in the Children's Integrated Services (CIS) Program of the Vermont Department for Children and Families. CIS brings parents and professionals together to identify areas where young children may need additional support. RCCHS has an inter-agency agreement to guide service partnership.

Section 5: Characteristics of Head Start Children

The purpose of this section is to meet the requirements of 1302.11(b)(i): Data regarding the education, health nutrition and social service needs of Head Start eligible children and their families; the education, health, nutrition and social service needs of Head Start eligible children and their families as defined by families of Head Start eligible children and institutions in the community that service young children.

Age Distribution

The percentage of children age 4 served by RCHS in 2022-2023 is higher than other Head Start programs nationally (33 percent), based on the Head Start Program Fact Sheet 2022 (U.S. Administration for Children and Families).

Table 23. Child Age Distribution of RCHS at Time of Enrollment / Entry (2021-2022)⁵⁴

Age	Number	Percentage
Age 3	24	43.64%
Age 4	29	52.73%
Age 5	2	3.63%
Total Actual Enrollment	55	100%

Family Educational Characteristics

The majority of RCHS families have at least one parent or guardian with a high school diploma or GED.

Table 22. Educational Characteristics of RCHS Families 2022-2023⁵⁵

Type of Degree	# of families
An advanced degree or baccalaureate degree	3

⁵⁴ 2021-2022 Head Start Program Information Report

⁵⁵ 2022-2023 Head Start Program Information Report (not all families disclosed educational information)

An associate degree, vocational school, or some college	8
A high school graduate or GED	28
Less than high school graduate	6

Because county educational data is only available at the individual level and not aggregated by family, it is difficult to determine how RCHS parents compare countywide, however.

*Table 24. Educational Attainment for Rutland County*⁵⁶

Type of Degree	% of Population
An advanced degree or baccalaureate degree	25%
An associate degree or some college	23%
A high school graduate or GED	28%
Less than high school graduate	6%

Typical Work, School, and Training Schedules of Parents

*Table 25. Typical Work, School, and Training Schedules of Parents with Eligible Children (1302.12iii)*⁵⁷

Location	Data Type	2015-2019	2016-2020	2017-2021
Children under age 6 with all available parents in the labor force in Rutland County	Percent	72.9%	75.3%	79.4%

⁵⁶ U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2022 Estimates

⁵⁷ <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/8503-children-under-age-6-with-all-available-parents-in-the-labor-force?loc=47&loct=5#detailed/5/6808/false/1692,880/any/17161>

Table 26. Parental Employment Status at Time of Child Enrollment (2023) ⁵⁸

	Number of Families at Start of Enrollment	Number of Families at End of Enrollment
At least one parent/guardian is employed, in job training, or in school	32	31
Neither/no parent/guardian is employed, in job training, or in school	18	17

At enrollment for 2022-2023, 0 families had at least one parent/guardian who is a member of the United States military on active duty and one family with a parent/guardian who is a veteran of the United States military.

Health Indicators

Overview. Nationally, the 2022 National Kids Count Data reports positive trends in child well-being. The state-to-state comparison of overall child well-being reports Vermont in the category of “best” overall well-being in the U.S. and ranked number 5 in the country. The report underscored that the national data masks variations in child well-being. The health data reported for children in Vermont similarly masked the variability among demographic groups within the state. In a state-to-state comparison Vermont ranks in the “best” category at the 3rd best ranking in the U.S. Disaggregated Vermont Health and Well Being Data is presented in this section for Vermont Adults and children.

Mental Health. Generally, Vermont residents have comparable health indicators as national averages (about 1 in 6 reports poor mental health). However, among the demographic of families served, particularly the experience of living in poverty, there exists great disparities in Quality of Life and Mental health. In 2021 Vermonters with poor mental health for high income individuals is 11%. In contrast, 33% of individuals with incomes less than \$25,000 annually experience mental health problems. Rutland County reports 16% poor mental health, a similar proportion of all Vermont Counties

⁵⁸ 2022-2023 Head Start Program Information Report

“Mental health can’t be separated out from cognitive development, language development, and social competence. They all have their roots early on in either a sturdy or weak foundation” Jack P. Shonkoff, Director, Harvard Center for the Developing Child.” Jack P. Shonkoff, M.D., Director, Harvard Center for the Developing Child

Table 27. Mental Health Disparities in Vermont Adults by Demographic Characteristic ⁵⁹

Comparison Data / Mental Health Disparities in Rutland County*			
Women	13%	Men	8%
High School or Less	21%	College or More	9%
Income < 25K	33%	Income > 75K	11%
LGBTQ+	31%	Non-LGBTQ+	14%
Disability	10%	No Disability	33%

**NOTE: Poor mental health defined as 14+ days in the last 30 where mental health self-reported as not good.*

According to the 2022 Vermont Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, one quarter of Vermont adults report being told they have depressive disorder. Vermont’s reported rates of depressive disorder are significantly higher than national (25% vs 21%).

⁵⁹ Vermont Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Report, <https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/HSI-BRFSS-2021-DataSummary.pdf>

Table 28. Depressive Disorder in Vermont Adults by Demographic Characteristic ⁶⁰

Comparison Data / Depression Disorder Disparities in Rutland County*			
Women	31%	Men	20%
Income < 25K	43%	Income > 75K	22%
LGBTQ+	45%	Non- LGBTQ+	23%
Disability	43%	No Disability	20%

Health Conditions in Vermont

Disaggregated data on health conditions among adults and children in Vermont illuminate the concerning trends correlating income level with incidence of health conditions. From an ecological view of parenting and child development, costs, stress, and access complicate and hinder family stability, quality of life, and service needs. Social determinants of health is a term that describes social, economic, and physical conditions in which people live that may affect their health. Studies have shown that growing up in poverty (affecting over 15 million children in the U.S.) has serious implications and lifelong effects on children’s physical and mental health. Health data described in this section has implications for Rutland County Head Start’s families and children. This includes family stabilization, school readiness, and far-reaching effects on health, mental health, and quality of life. Further, the dynamic and cumulative harm associated with growing up in poverty shows that poor children are more likely exposed to multiple adversities and trauma including parent incarceration, domestic violence, housing instability, household substance abuse, and discrimination. This impairs parental capacity and ability to provide a secure base and resiliency buffering associated with a safe, stable, responsive, and nurturing environment for children. These circumstances during the first five years of life are associated with changes in early brain development and lifelong outcomes. ⁶¹

⁶⁰ Vermont Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Report, <https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/HSI-BRFSS-2021-DataSummary.pdf>

⁶¹ Francis L, DePriest K, Wilson M, Gross D. Child Poverty, Toxic Stress, and Social Determinants of Health: Screening and Care Coordination. Online J Issues Nurs. 2018 Sep;23(3):2. doi: 10.3912/OJIN.Vol23No03Man02. Epub 2018 Sep 30. PMID: 31427855; PMCID: PMC6699621.

- **Asthma.** Adults: One in eight Vermont adults currently have asthma (12%), statistically higher than the 10% of U.S. adults. According to the 2021 Vermont Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Report, the greatest disparity in asthma rates among adults in Vermont is between (a) individuals with and without disabilities (19% and 9%), and (b) low- and high-income adults (11 % and 18% respectively). [Note: cost burden on families with increased health problems. rates related to social determinants but also related to access issues (i.e., Medicare less likely to refer to specialists. poverty and medications that control conditions?)
- **Diabetes and Pre-Diabetes.** At 9%, Vermont adults have lower rates of diabetes than all U.S. adults (11%). The rate of diabetes in Vermont adults is more than twice as high as the U.S. average. Prediabetes has similar rates in Vermont with 9% of adults reporting having pre-diabetes. There is a significant difference between lower and in higher income Vermont adults:
 - Diabetes. <25K Income VT (15%) compared to >75K Income VT (7%)
 - Pre-Diabetes <25K Income VT (15%) compared to >75K Income VT (6%)
- **Obesity.** In the 2021-2022 Head Start Program Information Report for Rutland County Head Start, 8 students were considered overweight (BMI at or above 85th percentile and below 95th percentile for child's age and sex) and 11 children were considered obese (BMI at or above 95th percentile for child's age and sex)⁶². The 2020 Weight Status Among Infants and Children in WIC report shows 17.5% of children in Rutland County are considered overweight and 15.5% are considered obese. Statewide, the WIC report shows 16.3% are considered overweight and 13.5% are considered obese. This report states the prevalence of obesity increases among children with lower socioeconomic status and obesity increases slightly in older children when broken down by age group.⁶³

Of the 55 families receiving RCHS services during 2022-2023 (this includes families who dropped out during the program year), 17 families reported receiving services under the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).

Primary Health Care Access ⁶⁴

- According to the County Health Rankings in 2017, the rate of people without medical insurance had decreased to 6% from 11% in 2008. The Vermont

⁶² 2021-2022 Head Start Program Information Report

⁶³ <https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/cyf-WIC-Infant-Child-Weight-2020April-Final.pdf>

⁶⁴ Rutland Regional Medical Center Community Health Needs Assessment 2021

Department of Health, however, also specifies the number of people who are under-insured which plays a role in access to care.

- The VDH 2018 Health Assessment states that 27% of people under 65 with private insurance in Vermont were under-insured because of high deductible plans, uncovered care, or both.
- On a positive note, 99% of children in Vermont have health insurance.
- The primary care ratio in Rutland County is high compared to that of other counties in Vermont, with 1330 people to one provider.

Dental Care

Dental care availability in Rutland County has increased in recent years, however, a significant percentage of low-income residents in Rutland County either do not have access to preventive, primary, or specialty dental care, or do not seek it out.

- Rutland celebrated the opening of Community Kids Dental in 2022. As of Winter 2023, Community Kids Dental does not have a dedicated pediatric dentist. According to the 2019 VT Census of Dentists, there were only 14 pediatric dentists statewide.
- Access to dental care is a concern: it is estimated that only 57% of the population has dental insurance.⁶⁵
- The percentage of children treated in an office in Rutland is significantly lower than the rest of Vermont, as is the percentage of children treated in any setting.⁶⁶
- 60% of Rutland Medicaid-- enrolled children aged 2-5 received dental services by a dental provider in 2017.
- Poverty has a significant impact on a child's oral health. Children eligible for the national school lunch program are more likely to have tooth decay.⁶⁷
- About one in four (24.8%) of Vermont's children need dental care – with 18% needing early dental care for untreated decay or broken fillings and 6% needing urgent dental care due to pain or infection⁶⁸ of Vermont's children need dental care – with 18% needing early dental care for untreated decay or broken fillings and 6% needing urgent dental care due to pain or infection⁶⁹
- Parent/guardian's oral health has a significant impact on a child's oral health. Children whose parents/guardians have lost three or more teeth due to dental disease are more likely to have tooth decay.
- Parents of children with disabilities also face barriers to accessing oral health care both for themselves and for their children including a lack of childcare,

⁶⁵ Rutland Regional Medical Center Community Health Needs Assessment 2021

⁶⁶ Oral Health in Rutland Office of Local Health and Vermont: June 2019

⁶⁷ Keep Smiling Vermont The Oral Health of Vermont's Children 2022-2023

⁶⁸ Keep Smiling Vermont The Oral Health of Vermont's Children 2022-2023

⁶⁹ Keep Smiling Vermont The Oral Health of Vermont's Children 2022-2023

conflicting oral health advice from pediatric medical providers, and dental offices that lack the capacity to provide accommodations for children with disabilities.⁷⁰

- About one-third of Vermont's children have experienced tooth decay. Although Vermont's children have less tooth decay than the general U.S. population, too many still suffer from this preventable disease.
- Rutland County Head Start children receive dental support through a Tooth Tutor, which is a grant funded program through Delta Dental.

Medical Conditions ⁷¹

- Rutland Hospital Service Area has the highest hospitalization rates for asthma complications for all age groups, more than twice that of the statewide rate (14.4 compared to 6.3 per 10,000).
- Rutland also has the highest prevalence of current asthma for both adults and children (14%) compared with the rest of the state, at 11% and 12%, respectively.
- The Department of Health Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Rutland County Profile shows Rutland with a statistically significant number of people with asthma and COPD (19.2%) compared to the state rate (15.7%)
- Rutland County rates for cardiovascular disease, cancer, and diabetes are all above the state rate.
- The Vermont Department of Health (VDH) illustrates that the majority of Rutland County residents do not meet daily aerobic exercise recommendations and that 21% of adults smoke cigarettes. These are two behaviors that contribute to poor health outcomes, such as cardiovascular disease.
- The VDH also indicates that hypertension, arthritis, and obesity (age 20+) rates in Rutland County are all statistically significant when compared to state rates.
- Depressive disorder, falls in older Vermonters, skin cancer, and asthma rates are also trending in the wrong direction as we look at overall community health.

Mental Health

- Community Care Network provided 178,296 hours of service to 3,094 clients across the functional service areas of Developmental Disabilities Services, Substance Use Disorders Treatment, Community Rehabilitation and Treatment, Adult Behavioral Health Services, Child and Family Services and Mental Health Crisis Services.⁷²
- Community Care Network implemented a new, 24-hour a day, 7-day a week Crisis Text Line via support from the Vermont Community Foundation to allow for

⁷⁰Keep Smiling Vermont The Oral Health of Vermont's Children 2022-2023
<https://www.astdd.org/docs/vermont-kindergarten-and-3rd-grade-2022-2023.pdf>

⁷¹ Rutland Regional Medical Center Community Health Needs Assessment 2021

⁷² Community Care Network 2022 Impact Report

even greater accessibility and levels of comfort among those seeking assistance during a mental health emergency.

Substance Use ⁷³

- The preliminary 2021 opioid-related accidental and undetermined fatal overdose data show an increase in opioid-related fatal overdoses. At this time, data shows a 33% increase from 158 deaths in 2020, to 212 in 2023.
- The percentage of fentanyl involvement continues to increase. Fentanyl was involved in 95% of opioid-related deaths in 2023. Cocaine was involved in 58% of opioid-related fatal overdoses in 2023. Involvement of methamphetamine fell from 10% in 2021 to 5.6% in 2023. Heroin involvement in opioid-related fatal overdoses decreased dramatically from 25% in 2020 to 10% in 2021, to 5.7% in 2023. ⁷⁴
- The National Survey on Drug Use and Health for 2021 and 2022 show Vermont had the second highest rate of alcohol use disorder among the states. Vermont is also ranked number two for binge drinking. 57% of Vermonters responded yes to consuming alcohol in the last 30 days, the 3rd highest in the nation. ⁷⁵
- According to the Monthly Opioid Morbidity & Mortality Report published in February 2024, Rutland County saw 31 opioid deaths in 2023. This is the second highest number by county, second to Chittenden County at 47. ^{76 77}

⁷³ Opioid-Related Fatal Overdoses Among Vermonters April 2022

⁷⁴ Monthly Opioid Morbidity and Mortality Report February 12, 2024

<https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/document/dsu-monthly-opioid-report.pdf>

⁷⁵ National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/data-we-collect/nsduh-national-survey-drug-use-and-health>

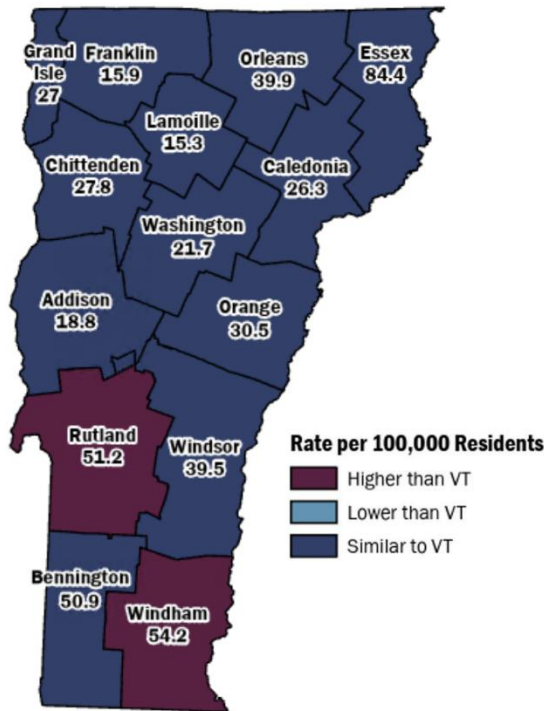
⁷⁶ Alcohol-Related Deaths Among Vermonters January 2023

⁷⁷ Monthly Opioid Morbidity and Mortality Report February 12, 2024

<https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/document/dsu-monthly-opioid-report.pdf>

Figure 6: Opioid Overdose Death Rates by County of Residence Compared to Statewide Rate Through November 2023 ⁷⁸

Opioid overdose death rates per 100,000 Vermont residents



Free and Reduced Lunch

Rutland County has a higher percentage of students eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) than the state average, which was 37% percent in 2021-2022. The table below shows free and reduced lunch data at the school district/supervisory union level in Rutland County. The primary service area for RCHS, Rutland City, has the highest concentration of population in the county and has the highest FRL eligibility rate in the county.

Per the Vermont Agency of Education Annual Statistical Report on Percent of Students Approved for Free and Reduced Price School Meals, in school years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, meals have been free to all students, using USDA waivers. However, schools have been instructed to carry over student eligibility for free and reduced meals from the school year 2019-2020 for students who remain enrolled, unless new information is available. Schools have also continued to receive direct certification information and to collect new applications from newly enrolled students and for

⁷⁸ Monthly Opioid Morbidity and Mortality Report February 12, 2024
<https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/document/dsu-monthly-opioid-report.pdf>

households whose economic status has changed. Even though meals are free to all students, there is some incentive for households to submit applications so that they can become eligible for the Pandemic-EBT benefit.

Table 29. Rutland County School District Free and Reduced Lunch 2021-2022 ⁷⁹

School District	Students Eligible for Free/Reduced Lunch
Bennington-Rutland SU	39%
Greater Rutland County Supervisory Union	34%
Rutland City School District	64%
Rutland Northeast SU	45%
Mill River Unified SU	43%
Slate Valley Unified Union School District	41%

Domestic Issues ⁸⁰

- Since 1994, Chittenden and Rutland Counties have had the largest percentage of domestic violence homicides – each of those two counties account for 17% of all domestic violence-related homicides. However, the population of Chittenden County is nearly three times larger, approximately 168,865 as compared to 60,591 in Rutland, according to 2021 census data.
- In 2022, there were 454 Relief from Abuse (RFAs) filed in Rutland County (435 were filed in 2021). 273 temporary orders were granted in 2022, a significant increase from the previous year, and 100 final orders were granted.

⁷⁹ Vermont Agency of Education, Child Nutrition Programs, Annual Statistical Report, Percent of Students Approved for Free and Reduced Price School Meals, School Year 2021 – 2022

⁸⁰Domestic Violence Fatality Review Commission Statistical Report Recommendations and Trends 2022

- Rutland County had the 2nd highest rate of RFAs in 2022 (454 filed), second only to Chittenden County (651 filed).
- NewStory Center reported a 36% increase from 2021 to 2022 in the number of people served.
- NewStory Center reported 8,013 bednights; survivors were housed in their residential shelter as well as local motels.
- NewStory Center fielded 497 calls via their 24/7 crisis hotline, providing emotional support, information, and referrals. ⁸¹

The table below shows the total number of child safety interventions, investigations, and substantiated investigations for Rutland County. Notably, the Child Protection Line for reporting concerns about a child’s safety and well-being, saw a 22% decrease in calls between 2019 and 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic which saw the shutdown of schools, child cares, and other in-person social services. The Child Protection Line received 2,785 more calls in 2021 compared to 2020; the Department for Children and Families attributes this increase to the return to “normal operations” since the pandemic began. In 2022, the Child Protection Line received 19,725 calls (an increase of 1,218 from 2021). In 2022, at least 75% of reported calls came from mandated reporters, with educators making approximately 30% of reports (the largest category of calls made by mandated reporters).

Table 30. Child Safety and Well Being: Interventions & Outcomes- Rutland District 2017-2021 ⁸²

Calendar Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total Child Safety Interventions:	573	525	486	370	472	467
Investigations	324	302	279	173	187	224
Assessments	249	223	207	197	285	243
Child Abuse Assessments	146	122	132	115	165	141
Family Assessments	103	101	75	82	120	102

⁸¹ NewStory Center Annual Report FY2022

⁸² 2021 Rutland District Office

<https://outside.vermont.gov/dept/DCF/Shared%20Documents/FSD/Reports/CP-RUTLAND.pdf>

Outcomes of Interventions						
Investigations Substantiated	65	66	68	48	55	39
Cases Opened for Services	103	105	90	64	113	78

Public Assistance

Twenty (20) out of 50 RCHS families received public assistance such as TANF or SSI in 2022-2023. Thirty-five (35) families received services benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also known as 3SquaresVT, formerly referred to as Food Stamps.

10 (10) families with 11 children were homeless at some time during the 2022-2023 program year; 87 families acquired housing during that period.⁸³

The table below shows the number of Rutland County families receiving ReachUp and 3SquaresVt (food stamps) assistance in February 2024. There has been little change year to year.

Table 31 Rutland County Reach Up & 3SquaresVT February 2024⁸⁴

	Families Households	Recipients	Children Under 18	Benefits %
ReachUp	431	1,091	772	12%
3SquaresVT	4,985	8,147	2,334	12%

Head Start Services Requested from RCHS Families

The table below summarizes the family support services requested and received by RCHS families during the 2022-2023 school year.

⁸³ 2022-2023 Head Start Program Information Report

⁸⁴ Vermont Economic Services Division ReachUp/3SquaresVT Families, Recipients and Benefits February 2024

Table 31. Family Support Services Requested by RCHS Families 2022-2023 ⁸⁵

Services Requested	# Families
Emergency/crisis intervention such as meeting immediate needs for food, clothing, or shelter	4
Mental Health services	32
Housing assistance such as subsidies, utilities, repairs, etc.	7
Job Training	0
Adult education such as GED	7
Child abuse and neglect services (referrals)	0
Substance misuse prevention/treatment	0
Education on marriage/relationships	10
Health education (medical and oral health)	45
Research based parenting curriculum	43
Number of families receiving at least one service	45

⁸⁵ 2022-2023 Head Start Program Information Report

Section 6: Strengths of Community and Community Resources

The purpose of this section is to meet the requirement of 1302.11(b)(v & vi): Resources in the community that could be used to address the needs of Head Start eligible children and their families and; strengths of the community.

Strengths of Community

Rutland County is a vibrant part of Vermont state, with beautiful rural landscapes, lakes, and an active downtown area within Rutland City. Many small towns in the region host a variety of community events, where families and community members gather, such as town wide sales, cookoffs, shopping, town meeting days, holiday celebrations, arts events and concerts. Schools are community hubs and host a plethora of events, including club activities and sports.

Farmers markets throughout the region are major strengths of our community, as they bring community members and partners (such as WIC) together and provide access to locally produced food and goods, even throughout the winter.

Green Up Days in Rutland County bring out a ton of community members and families who show their care for their community by keeping it clean and beautiful.

The availability of services and resources in Rutland County are also incredible strengths within our community.

RCCHS partners with numerous government and community agencies to support the needs of low-income families and children.

Government

The primary conduit for social services support is the Vermont Agency of Human Services- Department for Children and Families district office in Rutland City. Services include the following:

- **Child Development Division.** The Child Development Division's goal is to increase accessibility to high-quality child care and child development services by working with programs within communities to coordinate and deliver services that meet families' needs.
- **Office of Disability Determination Services (DDS).** The Vermont Office of Disability Determination Services determines the eligibility of Vermonters who apply for disability benefits under Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). DDS also determines the medical eligibility of Vermonters who apply for Medicaid based on having a disability.
- **Family Services Division (FSD).** The mission of the Family Services Division is to protect children and strengthen families, in partnership with families and

communities. FSD works with thousands of Vermont families who are struggling and need help to keep their children safe.

- **Office of Child Support (OCS).** OCS is the state agency responsible for establishing, collecting upon, enforcing, and modifying support orders for children who do not live with both parents. OCS helps to establish parentage; establish an order for child and medical support; modify or enforce an existing order for child and medical support; make support payments to the custodial parent; and locate a missing noncustodial parent.
- **Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO).** The OEO administers the Federal Community Services Block Grant through five Community Action Agencies that provide direct services to nearly 40,000 Vermonters, including emergency food shelves, emergency housing assistance, employment counseling and search, and health and nutrition services.

Community Resources

Throughout Rutland County, numerous organizations work in an integrated fashion to address the often-complex needs of low-income families. These include but are not limited to:

- Bennington-Rutland Opportunity Council (BROC)- employment, housing, education
- Castleton Cares- food program
- Child Care Support Services of Rutland County- child care subsidy assistance
- Child First Advocacy Center- prevention, intervention, treatment of child abuse
- Children's Integrated Services- early intervention, family support services, prevention services
- Early Childhood Clinical Services (Rutland Mental Health Services)- mental health services
- Easterseals- family support, development screenings, early intervention
- Evergreen Substance Abuse Center (Rutland Mental Health Services)- substance use resources
- Everyone Eats- food program
- Fair Haven Concerned- food program, supplies
- First Step Pregnancy Clinic- medical services, childbirth education
- Hireability (previously Voc Rehab)- employment and career development
- Homeless Prevention Center- housing and rental assistance
- Housing Trust of Rutland County- housing and rental assistance
- Marble Valley Lions Club - assistance with Eyeglasses
- Neighborworks of Western Vermont- housing assistance, heating assistance
- NewStory Center- emergency shelter services for domestic violence victims
- Open Door Mission- emergency shelter, clothing, supplies

- Pat's Place- clothing for children and adults
- Pawlet Community Church - food program
- Pittsford Food Shelf- food program
- Planned Parenthood- medical services, childbirth education
- Poultney Public Library- free family movie nights, hat/toys/craft supplies swaps
- Restorative Justice Center -Rutland County- restorative crime response
- Rutland Area Visiting Nurse Association- medical services, childbirth education
- Rutland Community Cupboard- food program
- Rutland County Eats- food program
- Rutland County Free Clinic- free adult health/dental clinic
- Rutland County Parent-Child Center- early intervention, food and housing resources, parent education
- Rutland Housing Authority - housing and rental assistance
- Rutland Regional Medical Center- medical services, mental health services
- Salvation Army- food program, utility assistance, clothing assistance
- Turning Point Recovery Center- substance use resources
- United Way of Rutland County- assistance with community resources
- Vermont 2-1-1- assistance with community resources including housing, utilities, education, employment, health care, mental health
- Vermont Achievement Center- child care support services, therapy pool
- Vermont Catholic Charities- housing assistance, food assistance, utility assistance, counseling services
- VT Dept of Health- medical services, mental health services
- VT Dept of Labor- employment assistance
- West Ridge Center for Addiction and Recovery- substance use resources
- WIC
- WSYB Christmas Fund- holiday assistance

Early Childhood Mental Health Services

Rutland County Head Start and Rutland Mental Health Services' Early Childhood Team continue to operate with greater levels of collaboration and integration. The direct service program provides experienced Case Managers and Therapeutic Support Specialists to support children's therapeutic goals. This staff works in partnership with Rutland County Head Start to serve the most challenged families and young children of Rutland County. Early Childhood Mental Health consultants serve the Head Start program with an array of basic observations, specialized observations geared toward helping children with intensive needs, and overall support for Head Start teachers.

The Early Childhood Team provides consultation and training to Rutland County Head Start. For 2021-2022, 46% of enrolled children were served with clinical services at Head Start. Mental Health Support services include (a) psychotherapy and clinical support to families and children, (b) case management and coordination, and (c) in-class therapeutic support to children. These services help address the behavioral and mental health initiatives underway in the program. As mentioned earlier in this report, since COVID-19, Rutland County Head Start teachers anecdotally report an increase in children's behavioral and mental health challenges. This is consistent with recent research and reports from other Head Start and Education programs. The teaching teams are in need of intensive and specialized support to meet the education and kindergarten-readiness goals of the Head Start.

During Spring of 2023, RCHS reached out to Castleton /VTSU and developed partnership to support our team practices in responding to behavior and mental health (staff, families, and children). The program piloted a number of initiatives to increase child behavior support and staff wellness:

- Hybrid Functional Assessment
- All-Staff Positive Behavioral Training
- School Mural Project

This key partnership helped the program identify a greater need for mental health support and to elevate mental health as program priority and budget priority. In response to the behavioral data and the opinion of the Castleton Experts, RCHS instituted the following program-wide mental health programming:

- Summer 2023: 4-week paid pre-service: group and individualized behavior/trauma-informed
- Mental Health Consultation 5-10 hours a week
- Head Start Preschool Reflections Meetings with each HS team with mental health consultant: Positive Behavior Support and Reflective Team Meetings
- Early Head Start Circle of Security Training for all staff and reflection meetings with all teaching teams developed and delivered by Rutland Mental Health.
- Program/child/family consultation and individualized support
- Early Head Start: program change to convert slots to infant/ toddler care
- Castleton/VTSU on-site Creative Arts and Expression Course and ongoing Consultation
- Exploring Pilot University / Head Start Lab demonstration project