



2024 Annual Report

Rutland County
Head Start



dream



believe



shine



Community
Care Network

Rutland Mental Health Services | Rutland Community Programs

About Us

Head Start is a federally funded program through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Head Start programs prepare America's most vulnerable young children to succeed in school and in life beyond school. To achieve this, Head Start programs deliver high-quality services to children and families with low incomes in core areas of early learning, health, and family well-being while engaging parents as partners every step of the way.

Rutland County Head Start is one of several community programs administered by Rutland Community Programs/Community Care Network.

Since Rutland County Head Start began 30 years ago, the program has offered preschool services, often in partnership with school districts. With Vermont's Universal Pre-Kindergarten program and demographic patterns, the need for center-based preschool has changed. Like many programs across the nation, RCHS needed to respond to the low enrollment numbers and address the community's needs.

After proposing a "change of scope" and negotiating with the Office of Head Start, Rutland County Head Start converted some of its 117 preschool slots to infant/toddler slots. The year 2024 was the first year with this new program design. Today, Rutland County Head Start serves 69 children ages birth to 5.

Head Start: 3 classrooms with 15 children each (45)
Early Head Start: 3 classrooms with 8 children each (24)

Rutland County Head Start started services for infants and toddlers ages 0-3 on January 1, 2024. This accomplishment brought the first Early Head Start program to Rutland County. The EHS program has been 100% enrolled with a waitlist since the program began.



Rutland County Head Start Team



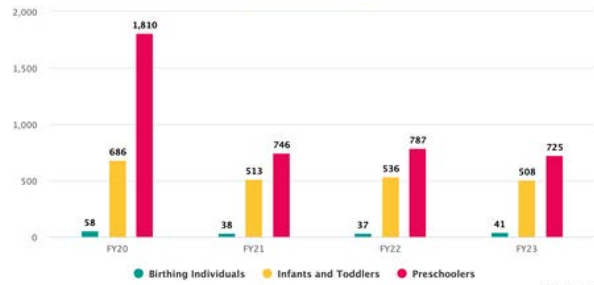
Program Leadership Team

Donna Barrow, Head Start/Early Head Start Director
Missy Burke, Education Manager
Jen Drew, Fiscal/Admin Coordinator
Angela Goepel, Health Manager
Melissa Hoyer, Classroom Teams Supervisor
Kristen Nugent, Family Services Manager
Hailey Paschold, ERSEA Manager
Bonnie Wilson, Classroom Teams Supervisor

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT DATA

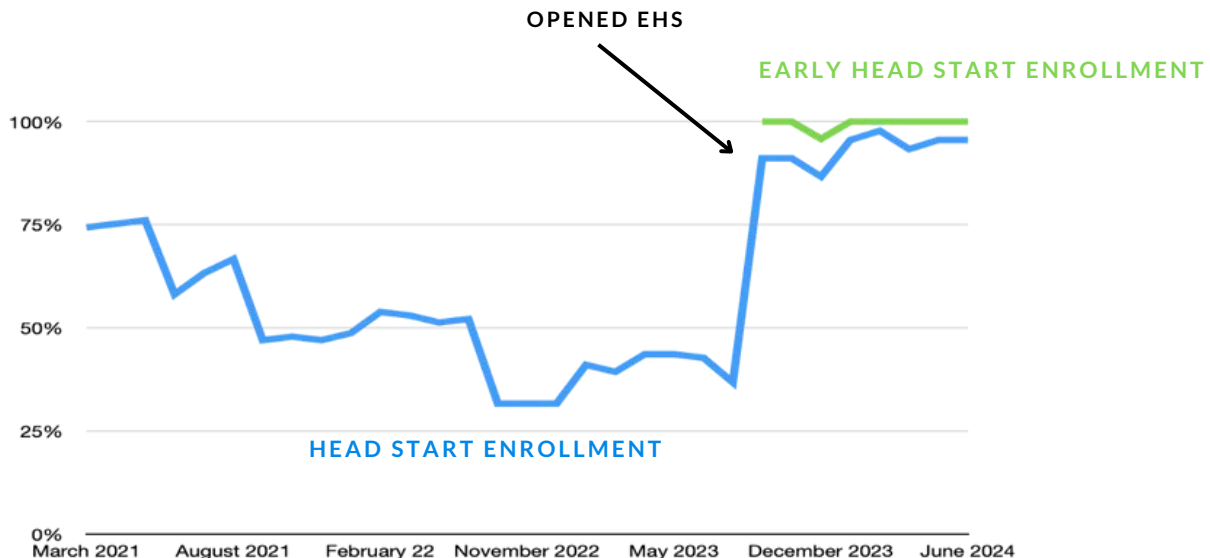
Trends in 2024

- Housing insecurity increased
- Mental health and special education needs of children in VT and Rutland County increased
- Urgent need for quality, center-based infant and toddler care
- Decreasing need for preschool care due to Universal Pre-K and demographic changes



Vermont's decreasing enrollment of Head Start (preschool-age) children compared to stable enrollment of Early Head Start (infant/toddler age) children from 2020-2023 reinforced the need for infant toddler care in Rutland County.

Positive impact of "Change of Scope" and opening Early Head Start on program enrollment.

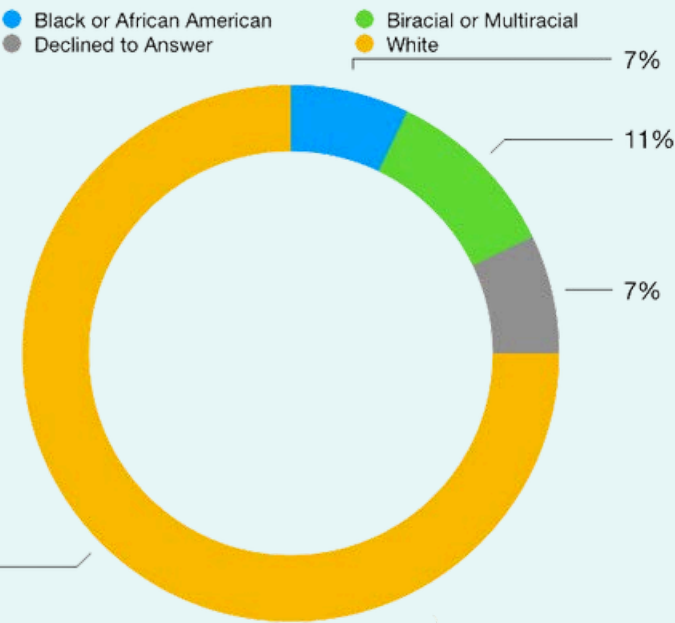


INFANTS AND TODDLERS SERVED IN 2024

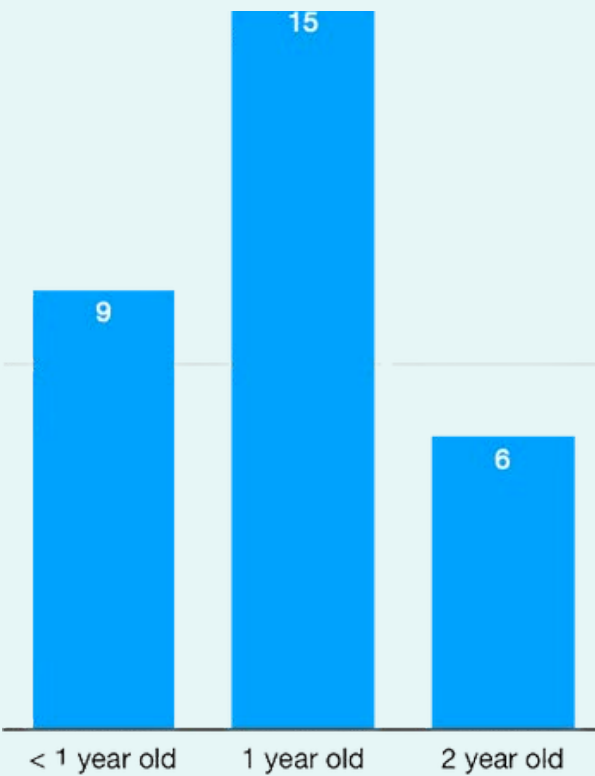
2024 - 30 Infants/Toddlers Served:

- 20 Children in EHS received public assistance
- 4 Children in EHS were in foster care
- Children in EHS t were unhoused in 2024

Ethnicity Early Head Start



EHS Children by Age



21

English Speaking

2

Learning another language
in addition to English

1

Language Other Than English



PRESCHOOLERS

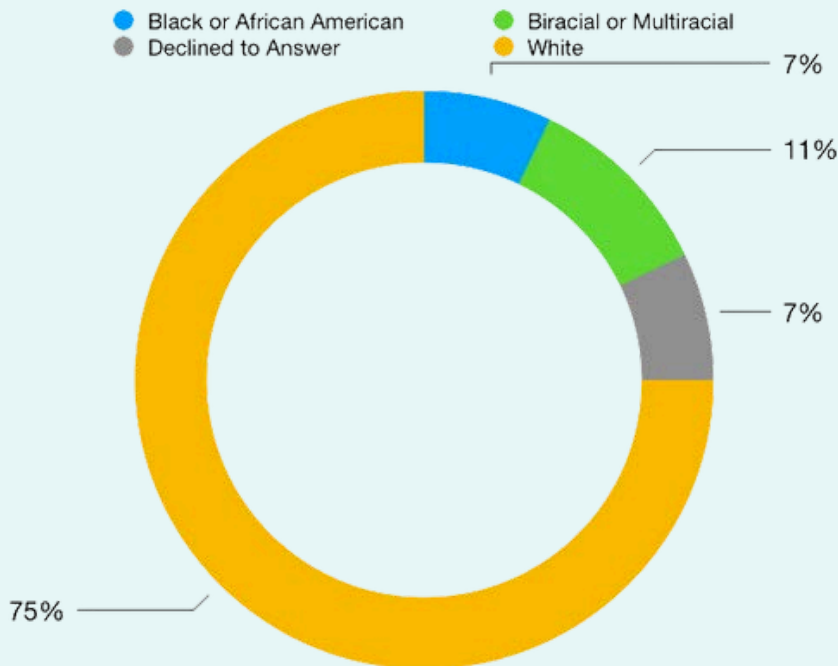
Head Start: Children Served:
56

3 year olds - 4
4 year olds - 28
5 year olds - 24

2024 - Preschoolers Served:

- 5 Children lived at or below the federal poverty line
- 38 Children in HS received public assistance
- 7 Children in HS were in foster care
- 7 Children in HS were unhoused in 2024

Ethnicity Head Start



**16 Head Start Children
Transitioned to
Kindergarten in 2024**

Top Preschool Goals from Children's Parent Survey:

- Managing feelings, emotions, actions, and behaviors
- Self-care skills: washing hands with soap and water, dressing themselves, brushing teeth, using the bathroom independently
- Fine Motor: Demonstrates increasing control, strength, and coordination of small muscles, holding a pencil, working on puzzles, cutting with scissors, writing and painting, buttoning.

SCHOOL READINESS GOALS

School Readiness Goals 2024

Children will develop a sense of wonder, a willingness to participate, persist in their efforts, have the ability to connect past learning to new situations and develop cognitive self-regulation skills. **(Approaches to Learning)**

Children will develop their skills necessary to foster secure attachments with adults, maintain healthy relationships, regulate behavior and emotions, and develop a healthy concept of personal identity. Children will participate fully in learning experiences and form positive relationships with teachers and peers. **(Social and Emotional Development)**

Children will increase their language and communication skills in meaningful experiences that require them to effectively express their ideas and feelings, listen, and understand others. Children will understand basic concepts about books, or other media, the alphabet, and letter-sound relationships. **(Language and Literacy)**

Children will develop mathematical thinking skills to logically solve problems and make connections in the world around them. Children will expand their curiosity and motivation to learn by asking questions, making observations and building on natural experiences. **(Cognition)**

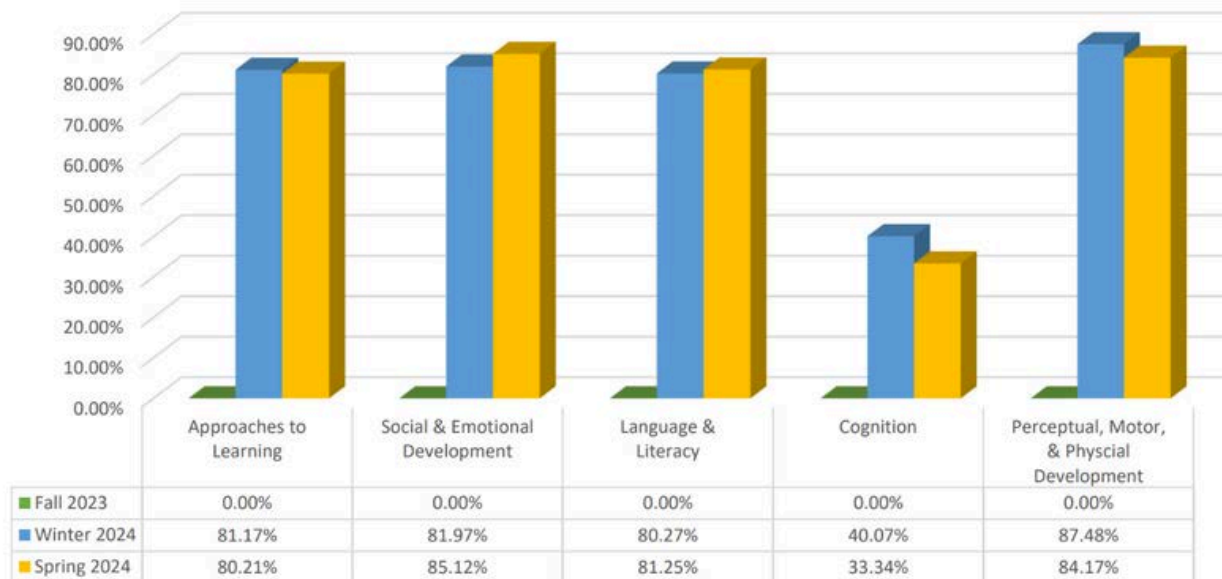
Children will develop early health habits to support physical well-being, use of their bodies, muscle control, appropriate nutrition, exercise, hygiene, and safety practices. **(Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development)**



PROGRESS ON SCHOOL READINESS GOALS IN 2024

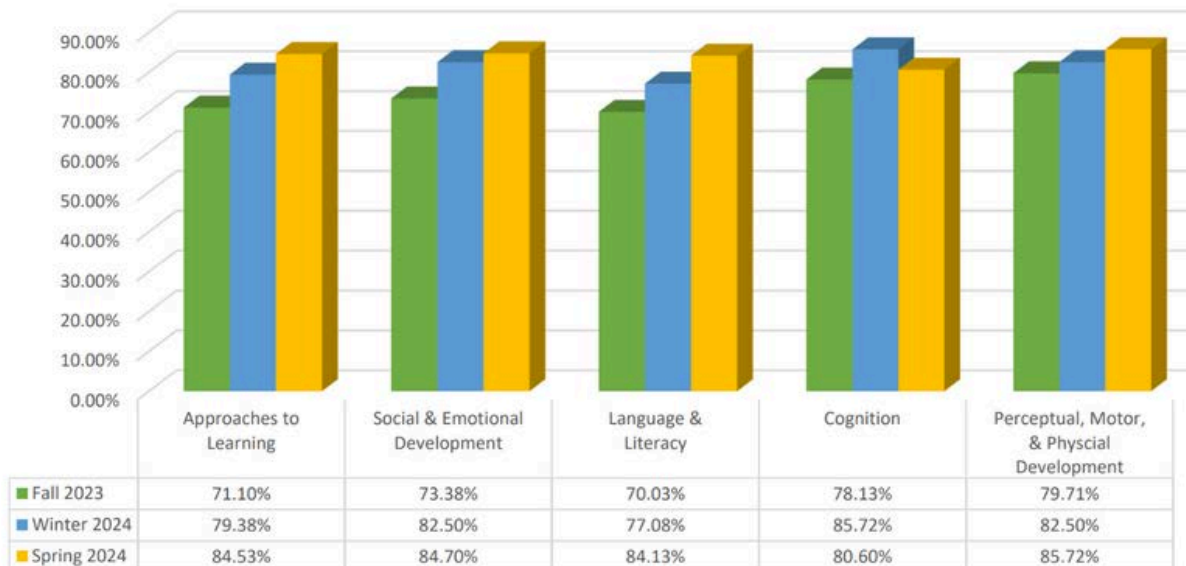
Head Start Progress on School Readiness Goals

Mean Percentage of Early Head Start Children Meeting RCHS School Readiness Goals



Early Head Start Progress on School Readiness Goals

Mean Percentage of Head Start Children Meeting RCHS School Readiness Goals



Almost all of the Head Start preschoolers showed improvement in school readiness goals in 2023-2024, and 85% met or exceeded these goals. The 15% who did not may reflect the need for increased special education and mental health support for the 25% of Head Start children with special education plans and the 50% with mental health plans.

HEALTH DATA

- All families have secure health and dental health homes.
- All children receive growth, hearing and vision screenings.
- All children receive developmental screening using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire and social and emotional growth screening using the Ages and Stages- Social Emotional Questionnaire.
- Staff make keeping kids safe in our centers, outside, and on the bus their number one priority.
- Eating at Head Start and Early Head Start is fun. Family style meals are provided for every child that will meet 2/3 of the nutritional needs they have for the day.

MEDICAL & DENTAL EHS

- 20 of 30 EHS children up to date on immunizations,
- 21 of 30 EHS children received preventative dental care in 2024 but only 12 of 30 had a dental home.
- 100% infants and toddlers were up to date on their primary health care.



MEDICAL & DENTAL HS

- 19 Preschoolers had chronic health conditions and received treatment.
- 98% of preschoolers up to date on immunizations.
- Only 68% of preschool children had preventative oral health care (dentist shortage in Rutland County).
- 100% of Preschoolers had a medical home.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

- 18% of Head Start children had IEPs in 2024.
- In 2024, 9 infants/toddlers were referred for special education evaluation six qualified for special education services and were found to have a disability.
- 23 % OF Infant/Toddlers had an IFSP during 2024.

MENTAL HEALTH

- In 2024 RCHS increased mental health consultation to classrooms, children, staff and families. RCHS was asked to present at the ACF National Conference on Mental Health Innovations in Early Childhood Education.
- All 6 EHS teachers and 6 HS teachers received consultation from a licensed Mental Health Provider.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parents are involved in RCHS and EHS through a number of activities. All parents participate in home visits, and many parents spend time in Head Start classrooms at parent meetings, volunteering at events like “Giving Thanks.”

Rutland County Head Start has a beautiful family resource and art center that serves as the hub of the family community.

Parents are also involved in program and community activities such as Wednesday morning coffee and chats, parent/child playgroups, family movie nights, and parent education sessions. In collaboration with our partner program, Rutland Mental Health Services, parents are provided free parent support programs such as Circle of Security and new baby groups, facilitated by trained mental health clinicians.

Parents play a vital role in program leadership, holding positions on the policy council, Health Advisory Committee, and RCP Board of Directors.

Rutland County Head Start and Early Head Start provide interpreters for families that do not speak English so that they can be involved in the program and attend various activities.

In 2024, parents played a pivotal role in the launch of the Early Head Start Program. Erynn Hazlett, Policy Council Chair, presented to the community along with local leaders and state congressional staff in support of the RCHS EHS Program.



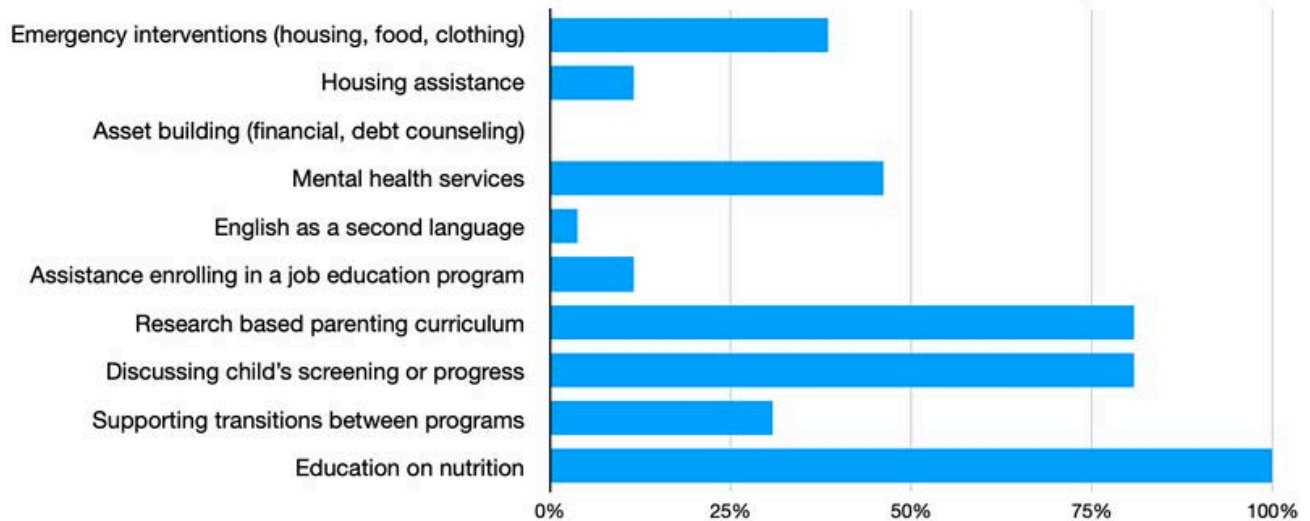
FAMILY SERVICES IN 2024

	Head Start	Early Head Start
Total Families	51	26
Single Parent Families	26	18
Two Parent Families	25	8
Foster Parents	1	3

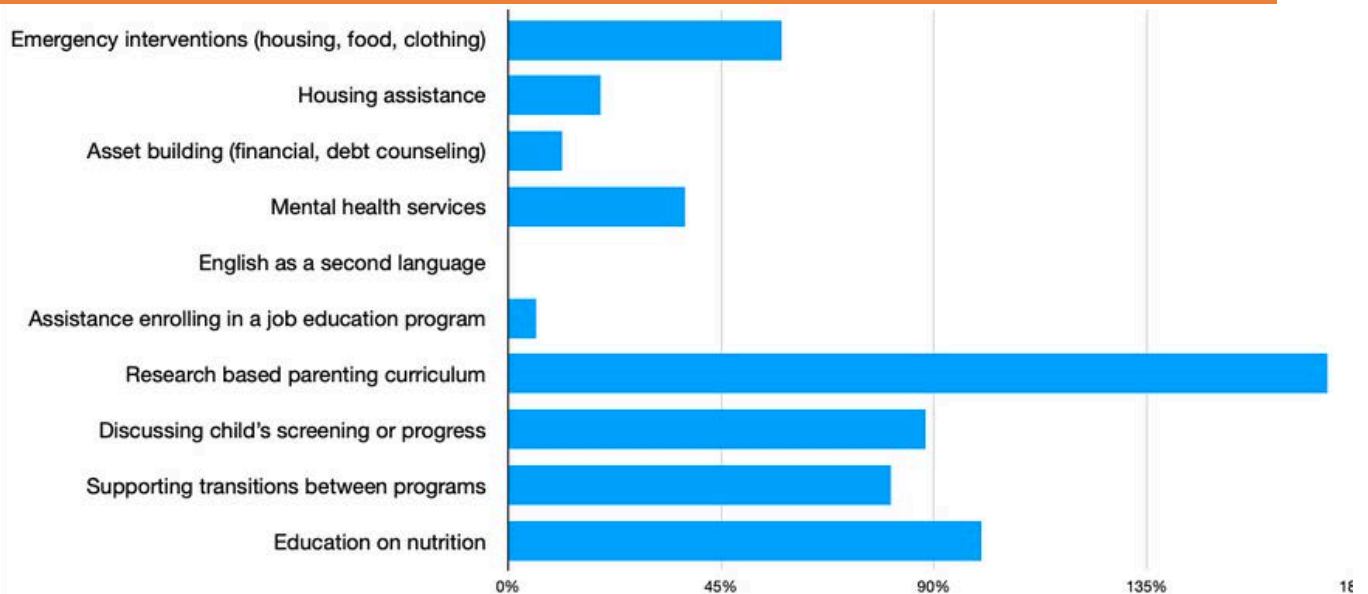


During the 2023-2024 school year RCHS, the number of unhoused families doubled. This has been an increasing trend since 2019.

Percentage of Families Receiving Services (Early Head Start)



Percentage of Families Receiving Services (Head Start)



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS IN 2024

Bowse Trust
Castleton University
Children's Integrative Services
Community College of Vermont
Department of Children and Families
Delta Dental
Homeless Prevention Center
Operation Dolls
Greater Rutland Supervisory Union
Let's Grow Kids
Rutland City Public Schools
Rutland Mental Health Services
Vermont Arts Council Partnership
Vermont Outdoor Adventure Program
Women Infants and Children
Wonderfeet Museum



Panel Discussion



Josie Babcock
Inter-Council Tribe of
Michigan



Donna Barrow
Rutland County Head Start, VT



Marty Elquist
The Children's Cabinet,
Nevada



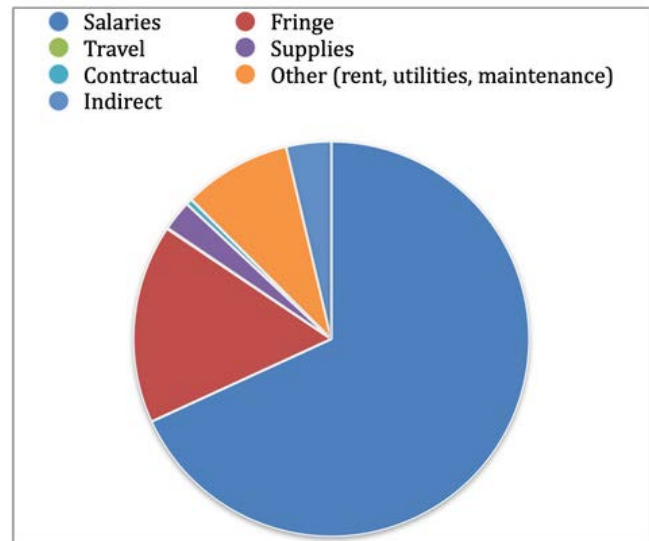
BUDGET AND FINANCIAL DATA

The federal grant period for Rutland County Head Start is from January 1 through December 31, although the program year runs from September through May. For the calendar year 2024, Rutland Community Programs was awarded \$1,958,898 in Head Start and Early Head Start funds from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This award includes a 3.25% cost of living adjustment (COLA) applied to staff salaries. It also includes funds for training and technical assistance for both programs.

EARLY HEAD START 2024

INFANTS AND TODDLERS

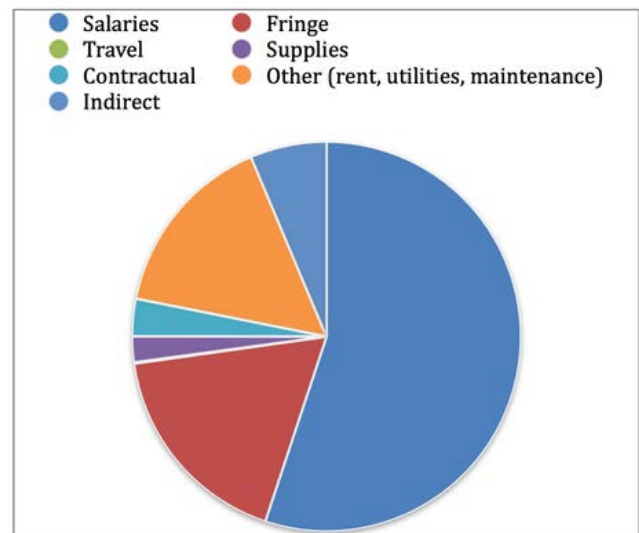
Salaries	\$629,450
Fringe	\$150,533
Travel	\$525
Supplies	\$22,985
Contractual	\$4,730
Other (rent, utilities, maintenance)	\$81,712
Indirect	\$33,850
	\$923,785



HEAD START 2024

PRESCHOOLERS

Salaries	\$545,866
Fringe	\$175,052
Travel	\$975
Supplies	\$21,199
Contractual	\$30,760
Other (rent, utilities, maintenance)	\$153,827
Indirect	\$62,866
	\$990,545



2024 Non Federal Share

Act 166 - VT Universal Pre-K, Bowse Trust-EHS Seed Money, Child and Adult Care Food Program, ChildPlus-In Kind Discount, Let's Grow Kids - EHS Seed Money, Parent and Community VolunteerWork, VT Child Care Subsidy

RESULTS OF RECENT AUDITS AND REVIEWS

2024 FINANCIAL AUDIT

RCHS's most recent audit examined RCHS for the period of April 1, 2023, through March 31, 2024, which is RCP's (RCHS) fiscal year. The audit was for the entirety of RCP, which includes other RCP programs (e.g., Foster Grandparents). The audit was completed on February 5 and was presented to the Board of Directors. The auditors gave RCHS the highest grade that they can assign.

FEDERAL HEAD START REVIEWS

2024 Office of Head Start Focus Area 2 Review (May 2024)

Rutland County Head Start participated in a four-day review of all program systems, practices, policies, and procedures. RCHS and EHS met all standards and demonstrated program policies, systems, and practices in compliance with the Federal Head Start Performance Standards except for two: (1) RCHS received a deficiency for our reporting system for the determination of established medical and dental care within the first 30 days after enrollment. RCHS is in the process of switching to a new data system, and this new report is now available, and the problem has been corrected; and (2) RCHS received a noncompliance due to the VT fingerprinting delays (outside of program control). The program will report on all corrections by November 9, 2024. Strong practices were noted in the areas of program governance, staff training/team building, and enrollment practices.

"The grant recipient offers staff members frequent opportunities within their regular work schedule to engage in team activities that foster safe and fun work environments that are different from professional development opportunities."

2024 Office of Head Start CLASS Review

Every five years, the Office of Head Start conducts a review of classroom and teaching practices, known as the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). From March to May 2024, observations were conducted in the RCHS preschool classrooms. The CLASS tool looks at three domains and ten dimensions of teacher-child interactions and measures those observed interactions on a seven-point scale. The results of the CLASS review of RCHS preschool classrooms are in the table to the right.

DIMENSION	SCORE
Emotional Support*	5.5833
Positive Climate	6.00
Negative Climate	1.17
Teacher Sensitivity	4.83
Regard for Student Perspectives	4.67
Classroom Organization	4.7778
Behavior Management	5.00
Productivity	5.50
Instructional Learning Formats	3.83
Instructional Support	2.4444
Concept Development	2.17
Quality of Feedback	2.33
Language Modeling	2.83

LOOKING AHEAD

As we move forward into 2025, our focus will remain on enhancing our programs and services to better meet the needs of the families we serve. We will continue to prioritize collaboration with local organizations, ensuring that we are maximizing our resources and creating a network of support for our community.

As we embark on this journey, we invite families and community members to engage with us. Your feedback and involvement are invaluable to our mission, and we encourage you to share your thoughts and ideas as we work together to create a brighter future for our children.

Here's to a successful and impactful 2025, filled with hope, growth, and positive change for all families in Rutland County!



Early Head Start Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

(left to right): Jay Slenker, RCP Board Chair, Mike Doenges, Rutland City Mayor, Dick Courcelle, CCN Chief Executive Officer, Ethan Avendaño-Lawrence, LICSW, U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders Office, James McNerney, U.S. Senator Peter Welch's Office, Jessica Nordhaus, U.S. Representative Becca Balint's office, Barbara and David Gincola, Property Owners, Donna Barrow, Rutland County Head Start Director.



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Rutland County Head Start



Community Care Network
Rutland Community Programs
thriving community. empowered lives

