



Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5)

Vermont has been awarded a \$12.7 million grant from the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration of Children and Families to strengthen and better connect the state's early care and education system. This grant, awarded through the Preschool Development Grant Birth Through 5 (PDG B-5) program, will focus on increasing child care capacity, modernizing early childhood data systems, and strengthening pathways that connect families to programs and services.

The Vermont Department for Children and Families' Child Development Division (CDD) is leading the implementation of the PDG B-5 2026 project, in collaboration with Building Bright Futures (BBF), the Agency of Education (AOE), the Vermont Department of Health's (VDH) Family and Child Health Division, and the Department of Mental Health (DMH). Together, these organizations will work to strengthen early childhood infrastructure across child care, Universal Prekindergarten education, Head Start, health care and mental health services, and other efforts that support children's development and family well-being.

The PDG B-5 2026 project advances the priorities of PDG partner organizations and Vermont's Early Childhood Strategic Plan. Grant activities align with three overarching goals, as follows:

Goal 1: Reconcile fragmented elements into a unified system

PDG B-5 2026 supports cohesion across early childhood programs, services, and workforce pathways through the following activities (responsible organizations for each activity are identified in parentheses):

1. Develop a phased **Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) alignment plan** to expand access, fix fragmentation, and improve coordination and date use (CDD, AOE, BBF).
2. Select and plan a statewide **Coordinated Intake and Referral System (CIRS)** to support a smooth and timely path from assessment to services (VDH).
3. Strengthen **developmental screening** through improved training, practice, and infrastructure (VDH).
4. Design a coordinated, statewide **mental health and behavioral support framework** for all early learning settings (DMH, CDD, AOE).
5. Inform long-term planning and policy through a comprehensive **ECE Workforce Analysis** (CDD).



6. Pilot a **family child care degree pathway** to reduce barriers for family child care educators (CDD).
 7. Strengthen provisional licensure and a new apprenticeship-to-licensure model (CDD, AOE).
 8. Align **ECE workforce pathways** to reduce higher education and workforce barriers (CDD, AOE, partners).
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Goal 2: Expand program availability, quality, and viability

PDG B-5 2026 provides investments in child care capacity, program quality, and business viability through the following activities (responsible organizations for each activity are identified in parentheses):

1. Fund **infant/toddler capacity grants, Special Accommodations Grants,** and transportation supports (CDD).
 2. Provide **business technical assistance, coaching, and financing** for EC programs through First Children's Finance and establishing a Child Care Capacity Coalition (CDD); leveraging CACFP to expand meals for children and program revenue (AOE).
 3. Analyze and improving the **Specialized Child Care system** (CDD).
 4. Expand **family access to the Child Care Financial Assistance Program** through outreach and eligibility system improvements (CDD).
 5. Strengthen **high-quality care** through Vermont's STARS Quality Recognition and Improvement System through improved tools that support coaching and continuous improvement; improved statewide data collection to identify program needs, and the creation of family education materials (CDD).
 6. Implement a **digital criminal background check system** to reduce hiring timelines and expand workforce capacity. (CDD)
 7. Enhance **health and safety** through statewide technical assistance and coordinated cross-agency supports (VDH), evidence-based professional development (CDD, AOE) and distribution of health and safety supplies to EC programs (VDH).
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Goal 3: Align and share information and data systems

PDG B-5 2026 improves Vermont's data infrastructure through the following activities:



State of Vermont, Department for Children and Families, Child Development Division
Vermont PDG B-5 2026 Initiative

1. Develop an integrated **Child Development Data Information System** for licensing, credentialing, and workforce management (CDD).
 2. Modernize the **Children’s Integrated Services (CIS) data system** to improve efficiency, accuracy, and access to services. (CDD)
 3. Expand **Vermont’s Early Childhood Data and Policy Center**, including integration of Head Start PIR data and community needs assessments (BBF).
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Request for Proposals

In the first quarter of 2026, Vermont will issue requests for proposals to support these activities. Grant activity work will take place during the 2026 calendar year; all activities will conclude by December 30, 2026.

Contact

If you have questions about the 2026 PDG grant, grant activities, or requests for proposals, visit CDD’s [PDG webpage](#), or contact Margaret.Barch-Pearsall@vermont.gov.