



## **First Children's Finance**

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**Media Contact:**

Erin Roche

802-341-0368

[erinr@firstchildrensfinance.org](mailto:erinr@firstchildrensfinance.org)

### **New Grants Deliver \$264,500 for Child Care Programs Across Vermont**

*Vergennes* — Twenty child care programs across Vermont will receive a total of \$264,500 through the latest round of Make Way for Kids (MWFK) Infant and Toddler Capacity Building Grants, supporting projects that will open new programs, expand existing capacity, and preserve critical child care services for Vermont families.

Funded by the Vermont Department for Children and Families Child Development Division and administered by First Children's Finance Vermont, the grants support projects in 10 counties and reflect the many ways communities are working to strengthen Vermont's child care system. Recipients include new family child care homes preparing to open their doors, established programs expanding to serve more children, and providers making investments that help sustain existing child care capacity.

"Behind every child care slot is a business leader making significant investments in their program, whether that's renovating a space, purchasing equipment, or taking the leap to open a new business," said **Erin Roche**, Director of First Children's Finance Vermont.

"These grants help make those investments possible and support the people and organizations working every day to meet the needs of Vermont families."

In **Sutton, Justin Williams** is preparing to open a new family child care home that will provide six full-time spaces for infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children, helping address ongoing demand for child care in the Northeast Kingdom.

After stepping away from operating Red Doors Children's Center in 2022, Williams said he continued hearing from families looking for child care and recognized both the community's need and his desire to return to the profession.

"The need for quality child care hasn't gone away, and neither has my passion for this work," said Williams. "Whether you're a man or a woman, what matters is your commitment to creating a safe, welcoming place where children can learn and grow. This grant helps make it possible for me to return to work that feels meaningful and needed."

**The Learning Tree** in **Bennington**, operated by Southwestern Vermont Medical Center, received funding to expand and enhance its outdoor learning environment. The project will add new playground space, shade structures, equipment, and safety improvements, helping preserve access to child care for hospital employees and other local families.

"By investing in our child care program, we're investing in the employees who care for our region every day," said **Audra Lamoureux**, Director of Child Care Services at The Learning Tree. "These improvements will help ensure children have a safe, engaging outdoor environment while allowing us to continue providing high-quality care for the families who depend on our program."

Together, the projects demonstrate that strengthening Vermont's child care system requires investment from many different partners, including entrepreneurs, nonprofit organizations, employers, and community institutions.

"These grants help early childhood educators respond to the needs they see in their communities," said **Janet McLaughlin**, Deputy Commissioner of the Vermont Department for Children and Families Child Development Division. "Whether supporting a new family child care home or helping an established program continue serving families, these investments have lasting benefits for children, families, employers, and communities."

The Make Way for Kids grants are part of Vermont's ongoing efforts to expand access to high-quality, affordable child care and support the sustainability of the state's early childhood education sector. Other recipients include, by county:

### **Bennington County**

- The Learning Tree
- Ciarra Mould Family Child Care Home

### **Caledonia County**

- Justin Williams Family Child Care Home

### **Chittenden County**

- Bluebird Montessori
- First Roots-Wild Roots

- OZ Full Circle Preschool
- Brigitte LaRentas Family Child Care

### **Franklin County**

- Erin Moser Family Child Care Home

### **Lamoille County**

- The Wild Place – A Next Generation

### **Orange County**

- Little Red Wagon
- Curious Cubs of Williamstown

### **Orleans County**

- Sierra Riendeau Family Child Care Home

### **Rutland County**

- Allison Heflin Family Child Care Home
- Steps to Success Program LLC
- Fox Hollow Forest School

### **Washington County**

- Acorn Hollow Village School

### **Windham County**

- The Neighborhood Schoolhouse
- Horizon Early Learning Program-West

### **Windsor County**

- Caitlin Gagner Family Child Care Home
- Hartland Early Learning Center
- Sugar Maple School

For more information about Make Way for Kids grants and other business support opportunities for child care programs, visit First Children's Finance Vermont or email [vtgrants@firstchildrensfinance.org](mailto:vtgrants@firstchildrensfinance.org).

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**About First Children's Finance VT**

First Children's Finance VT supports the growth and sustainability of child care programs by providing business resources, technical assistance, and access to capital. FCF partners with the Vermont Child Development Division and other state agencies to help ensure equitable access to high-quality early childhood education. Learn more at [firstchildrensfinance.org/vermont](https://firstchildrensfinance.org/vermont).