



# First Children's Finance

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Grants Awarded to 22 Vermont Child Care Programs  
to Expand Infant and Toddler Services**

*Vergennes, Vermont* — First Children's Finance VT is proud to announce the latest recipients of the Make Way for Kids (MWFK) Infant/Toddler Capacity Building Grants. These grants support Vermont's early childhood entrepreneurs in addressing the state's critical need for high-quality, affordable child care.

Last year, Make Way for Kids grants supported the creation of more than 750 child care slots and 225 new jobs across Vermont. Among the newest grantees are **Sabrina Weber Family Child Care in Bennington** and **The Balancing Act Enrichment Center in Essex**. Both projects will expand access to early childhood education, with a focus on infants and toddlers, the age group facing the most significant shortage of available child care slots in the state.

"We're committed to helping build strong, sustainable child care businesses that families can rely on," said **Erin Roche**, Director of **First Children's Finance VT**. "The Make Way for Kids Infant/Toddler Capacity Building grants support programs as they open or expand to better meet the needs of their communities. With the momentum from Act 76, we see growing interest from early education professionals who want to offer high-quality, affordable child care across Vermont and we are proud to support their efforts."

Sabrina Weber Family Child Care plans to open as a registered family child care home in June, adding two infant slots, two toddler slots, and two preschool slots in Bennington. The project will provide much-needed early learning opportunities in a county where 61% of infants lack access to child care, according to the [2024 Stalled at the Start report](#). Weber will use grant funds to create an outdoor play space with a fence and large outdoor toys, upgrade indoor facilities, and purchase essential materials such as sleeping mats, tables, cubbies, and art supplies.

Owner **Sabrina Weber** said, "A new generation of child care program directors is emerging: well-prepared, entrepreneurial, and committed to ensuring that all children have access to

quality early learning. This grant from First Children's Finance helps us to create a nurturing, inclusive space where families have flexible options and providers can support children's unique needs."

In Essex, the Balancing Act Enrichment Center is expanding its toddler program by adding three additional toddler slots and five pre-K slots. The center initially launched its toddler program last year with six slots but quickly realized the growing demand. This expansion requires hiring an additional staff member and acquiring new materials to support high-quality learning experiences.

Balancing Act Enrichment Center Director **Bonnie Thomas** said, "Expanding our toddler program is an exciting step forward. We've listened to the needs of our Essex families and are pleased to respond. As the center is owned and founded by the Reeve's Family, who also created Regal Gymnastics and the preschool, and have supported the Essex community for over twelve years, we're committed to fostering children's growth. Our program offers a healthy balance of exercise and curriculum designed to meet a wide range of developmental milestones."

**In the latest round of grants, 22 projects in 9 counties were awarded a total of \$543,000.** New grantees include (by county):

- **Addison:** Starksboro Cooperative Preschool
- **Bennington:** Jessica Pinsonneault Family Child Care Home; Sabrina Weber Family Child Care Home; Curious Kids Childcare LLC
- **Chittenden:** The Balancing Act Enrichment Center; Crockett Academy for Early Liberal Arts; ONE Arts Community Schools - Health Network; Little Learners LLC
- **Franklin:** The Learning Tree Childcare Center; Kiaralynn Wimble Family Child Care Home
- **Lamoille:** Laura Branca Family Child Care Home; Kid Savvy Family Childcare; Little Roots Learning, LLC; Round Hill Kids
- **Rutland:** Littlest Lambs at Grace
- **Washington:** Ashley Hedges Family Child Care Home
- **Windham:** Horizon Early Learning Program, LLC; Neighborhood Schoolhouse
- **Windsor:** The Mill School; Bright Beginnings and Bright Beginnings Preschool; Bambino University LLC

Funds for these grants are provided by the State of Vermont Department for Children and Families Child Development Division. **Janet McLaughlin**, Deputy Commissioner of the Child Development Division, said, “The Department for Children and Families knows that investing in child care businesses supports Vermont’s families and communities. Through our partnership with First Children’s Finance, we are proud to support these grants to start up and expand child care programs and increase the number of child care spaces for Vermont’s infants and toddlers.”

**The next round of funding opportunities is now open, with applications due on May 3, 2025.** For more information or to apply, [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 [www.firstchildrensfinance.org/vermont](http://www.firstchildrensfinance.org/vermont).