



First Children's Finance

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Child Care Expansion Continues as 23 Vermont Programs Receive Make Way for Kids Grants

Vergennes, Vermont — First Children's Finance Vermont (FCF VT) is proud to announce the latest recipients of the **Make Way for Kids (MWFK) Infant and Toddler Capacity Building Grants**, supporting early childhood entrepreneurs who are expanding access to high-quality, affordable child care across the state.

This round of grants will help **23 programs in 10 counties** open or expand, creating hundreds of new child care spaces and dozens of new jobs statewide — with a focus on serving infants and toddlers, the age groups facing Vermont's most significant shortage of available slots.

"Vermont's early childhood entrepreneurs are committed to meeting the needs of families in their communities," said **Erin Roche, Director of First Children's Finance Vermont**. "They use these grants to meet the rising needs of families by growing their programs and opening new programs. Every new slot represents not just a place for children to learn and thrive, but the vision, creativity, and leadership of entrepreneurs strengthening communities across Vermont."

The newest grantees reflect the creativity and commitment of Vermont's early childhood community.

In **Berlin, Acorn Hollow Village School** is preparing to open its doors as a full-time child care rooted in Waldorf philosophy and nature-based education. The school will launch with a **toddler class for 10 children and a preschool class for 16**, adding **26 new child care spaces** in Central Vermont. With an emphasis on immersive outdoor learning, trauma-responsive care, and strong community connections, Acorn Hollow Village School aims to foster creativity, resilience, and joy for every child.

Samantha Latrielle Family Child Care Home in **Bridport** is creating a new home-based program designed to support infants, toddlers, and preschoolers in a nature-inspired, sensory-rich environment. The project will add **six new child care spaces** in rural Addison County, giving families more local options for high-quality, full-time early care. The space will feature an engaging outdoor play area, enhanced indoor classrooms, and materials aligned with Vermont licensing and STARS quality standards, helping Latrielle provide nurturing, developmentally appropriate learning for all children in her care.

In **Colchester, Early Learning Center** is expanding and relocating to a new 5,760 sq. ft. site that will be in Williston. The move will add **37 new child care spaces** for children ages six weeks to six years while continuing the center's 40-year commitment to inclusive care and strong community partnerships. The expanded facility will allow Early Learning Center to better serve its current families, accommodate new enrollments, and enhance learning environments with updated classrooms, outdoor spaces, and developmentally appropriate resources, ensuring children thrive in a safe, engaging, and supportive setting.

Janet McLaughlin, Deputy Commissioner of the **Vermont Department for Children and Families (DCF) Child Development Division**, said, "These grants

are a direct investment in Vermont's children, families, and communities. Every new child care space helps families access reliable, high-quality early learning, strengthens local economies, and ensures that children have the supportive environments they need to thrive."

In the latest round of grants, **23 projects in 10 counties** were awarded a total of **\$310,000**. New grantees include (by county):

- **Addison:** Samantha Latrielle Family Child Care Home; Growing Tree LLC
- **Bennington:** UCS Infant Toddler Center North (*pending acceptance*)
- **Chittenden:** Early Learning Center, LLC; Milton Family Community Center
- **Franklin:** Erin Moser Family Child Care Home; Emily Tessier Family Child Care Home; Tina Lothian Family Child Care Home; Little Summit Child Care
- **Orange:** Lit'l Bit Home Childcare LLC
- **Orleans:** Ashley Weikel Family Child Care Home; Alisha Byrd Family Child Care Home; Tiah Kneeland Family Child Care Home
- **Rutland:** The Little Bee Hive Childcare Center LLC; Lyndsay Bassalin Family Child Care Home; Allison Heflin Family Child Care Home; Places You'll Grow LLC
- **Washington:** Acorn Hollow Village School LLC; Cabin Cubs Daycare; Turtle Island Children's Center
- **Windham:** Horizon Early Learning Program; The Pumpkin Patch LLC
- **Windsor:** Merridith Sylvester Family Child Care Home

The MWFK grants are funded by the Vermont Department for Children and Families Child Development Division and administered by First Children's Finance Vermont, which provides business coaching, technical assistance, and access to capital for child care programs.

The next round of funding opportunities opens November 17, with applications due January 30, 2026. For more information or to apply, [visit First Children's Finance Vermont](#) or email vtgrants@firstchildrensfinance.org.

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.