

## MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

### Vermont Department for Children and Families Vermont Head Start Association May 2011

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this Agreement is to reinforce our commitment to supporting operating partnerships between the Department for Children and Families, Family Services, Child Development and Economic Services (Reach Up) Divisions and Head Start, Early Head Start, and the Head Start Collaboration Office. These partnerships focus on outreach and services to children and families to improve access and continuity of comprehensive, high quality services which promote child wellbeing and family strength.

This Agreement is designed to offer guidance for developing statewide, regional and local agreements intended to improve coordination of services to children and families and to strengthen relationships between agencies and programs.

#### **Strengthening Families**

Strengthening Families, an initiative of the Center for the Study of Social Policy, is an approach to work with children and families which focuses on building five research-based, protective factors with families aimed at:

- preventing child abuse and neglect,
- promoting optimal child development, and
- building financial security.

Those protective factors have been identified as hallmarks of family strength and they allow families to create healthy, nurturing environments which promote the positive development of children.

**Participants in this Agreement pledge to focus on the reduction of risk for children and families through the constructive building of the following protective factors to ensure the safety, health and financial stability of families so that children can be raised successfully in their own homes.**

- ✦ **Parental Resilience:** the capacity to cope with all types of challenges
- ✦ **Social Connections:** positive relationships with friends, family members, neighbors, and others who can provide concrete and emotional support to parents


- ✦ **Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development:** accurate information about raising children and appropriate developmental expectations for their behavior
- ✦ **Concrete Support in Times of Need:** financial security and access to informal and formal supports
- ✦ **Social and Emotional Competence of Children:** the ability of children to interact positively and articulate their feelings


**In partnership, participants in this Agreement will develop systems and protocols to improve coordination and collaboration by:**

- ✦ Designating staff from each program to oversee and manage this Memorandum;
- ✦ Jointly establishing a referral and eligibility verification process between Family Services, Reach Up, Child Care Financial Assistance Program, Head Start and Early Head Start programs;
- ✦ Developing opportunities for cross-training with staff to educate each other about program language, goals, objectives, policies and available services;
- ✦ Developing joint trainings on topics of mutual interest;
- ✦ Jointly developing strategies to communicate to parents, foster parents, and Family Services and Reach Up staff about the benefits of high quality care, education and comprehensive services available through Head Start and Early Head Start;
- ✦ Building upon and aligning family engagement, parent involvement and case planning goals;
- ✦ Holding joint case planning meetings (in accordance with local protocols) to share family objectives and goals and to discuss the progress of families who are receiving services from one or more program; and
- ✦ Coordinating home visits (when appropriate) so that families may benefit from coordinated services and supports;
- ✦ Assessing opportunities for further collaboration with the larger Agency of Human Services Integrated Family Services efforts (including Children's Integrated Services, prenatal to six).

**Agreement Review**

This Agreement will be reviewed annually and updated as needed.

  
 Dave Yacovone, Commissioner  
 Department for Children and Families

  
 Paul Behrman, Chairperson  
 Vermont Head Start Association

5/24/2011  
 Date

6/9/11  
 Date