

Vermont Birth to Five: Single program with expanded focus

July 16, 2015—The Permanent Fund for Vermont’s Children today announced the launch of Vermont Birth to Five (VB5), bringing together the work of Vermont Birth to Three (VB3) and the Vermont Community Preschool Collaborative (VCPC) to ensure greater coordination of efforts toward achieving the Permanent Fund’s mission, which is to assure that every Vermont child has access to high quality, affordable early care and education.

The announcement comes as legislation signed by Governor Shumlin in June promises to shine a light on early childhood issues by establishing a Blue Ribbon Commission On Financing High Quality, Affordable Childcare.

“With the opportunities on the horizon for expanded public support of early care and education, we are restructuring to better serve our youngest citizens,” said Becky Gonyea, who has led VB3 since 2014 and will serve as the VB5 Director.

Mark Sustic, who spurred the creation of VCPC and has been a consultant for the organization since its inception, is transitioning out of this formal role but will remain a trusted advisor to VB5.

“Vermont would not be nearly as far along with preschool and early education if not for Mark Sustic,” said Permanent Fund President Rick Davis. “His community-based approach and skill of bringing together superintendents and childcare providers created the environment for successful collaboration in this effort.”

According to Davis, VB5 has emerged from programmatic efforts that already have a track record of good work in Vermont:

- For a decade, VCPC has worked to break down historic divisions between private programs and public schools. Through technical assistance and community grants, VCPC supports the establishment of partnerships between private child care providers and public schools to offer public pre-kindergarten education in more than 100 Vermont communities. With the passage of Act 166, which ensures universal access to 10 hours of pre-kindergarten education for all

of Vermont's three and four year olds, VCPC has focused its efforts on a successful implementation of the law by September, 2016.

- Established in 2011, VB3 has sought to address gaps and augment existing services to directly support registered home-based child care providers, with a specific focus on infant and toddler care. Its quality improvement initiatives have included professional development, mentoring, and creating sustainable business practices. Over the past three years, VB3 initiatives have expanded to include center-based programs and children ages birth to five. Most recently, VB3 launched a center-based mentoring initiative to support programs to successfully create partnerships with schools to offer public pre-kindergarten education under Act 166.

The Permanent Fund's signature programs also include VB5's sister organization, Let's Grow Kids—a statewide campaign raising awareness of the importance of the first five years.