



Vermont

Early Education Initiative

Vermont has two pre-k programs. The state legislature established the Early Education Initiative (EEI) in 1987 to prepare at-risk preschool children for success in kindergarten and beyond. EEI coordinates with community programs to serve children who are ineligible or inadequately served by existing early childhood education programs. While not included in this summary, Vermont also allows public schools to provide pre-k to 3- and 4-year-olds using the state's funding formula for kindergarten through grade 12. More than half of these programs are offered in partnership with community-based providers, such as child care centers, Head Start, and parent-child centers.

Eligibility

Income: children with family incomes below 185 percent of the federal poverty level receive priority

Age: 3- to 5-years-old

Priority: children with risk factors, including: low-income, developmental delays, risk of abuse or neglect, limited English proficiency, exposure to violence and substance abuse, social isolation, low parental education, and other research-based risk factors

Length of Program

Hours/day: locally determined; a minimum of 10 hours per week

Days/year: locally determined; a minimum of 32 weeks per year

Eligible Providers

Public schools, Head Start, child care centers, parent-child centers, home-based providers, community resource and referral agencies (56 percent of programs are in public schools)

Number Served

1,089 (2004-05)¹

Total Annual Budget

\$1,328,785 (2004-05), from state general funds

Monitoring

The Vermont Department of Education is responsible for monitoring programs and conducts on-site visits approximately once per year. All center-based programs must meet child care licensing standards. Center-based programs are also encouraged to seek national accreditation (currently one-third have accreditation and half are in the process). Home-based programs are exempt from accreditation standards. All programs must develop curricula that are aligned with the Vermont Early Learning Standards.

¹ For updated figures on the program budget and number served, please see the NIEER State Preschool Yearbook at: <http://nieer.org/yearbook/states/>

Governance

How are state pre-k programs integrated into community-based settings?

Each school district determines whether or not to include community-based providers. The state does not require integration, although it is strongly encouraged by the Department of Education. The local Early Childhood Council must review all applications for funding. Eligible grantees include school districts, Head Start programs, child care programs, parent-child centers, and other public or private agencies.

Are there requirements to integrate the state pre-k and subsidized child care programs at the state or local level?

There is no requirement, but integration with community-based providers occurs at both the state and local level. Programs that have been cooperatively developed by community and school organizations are more likely to receive funding.

Procedures and Supports for Community-based Providers

What are the rules/guidelines for notifying and selecting pre-k providers?

There are no mandated guidelines for notifying providers, but local Early Childhood Councils help to spread the word. The application process is the same, regardless of the type of program setting. There is no on-site review during the selection process, but the approval of the local Early Childhood Council is required. All applicants must meet quality standards prior to approval for funding.

What resources are available to help providers become eligible to deliver pre-k services?

Due to limited funding, the EEI program has not grown since the early 1990s, so there has been no need to help providers become eligible. The statute does allow funds to be used for training of parents and staff, materials and equipment, and “other costs,” but this is only after a program is awarded a grant.

Do teachers working in community settings earn comparable wages and benefits once they obtain the same credential as teachers in school-based settings?

There are no policies to ensure this happens, and often different levels of compensation and benefits exist.

Supports for Working Families

Is there any explicit discussion in the legislation or regulations of extending the day, coordinating with the child care subsidy program, or helping working families?

No, but grantees must identify how they are meeting the needs of working families and report to the department of education. The department strongly encourages programs to take the needs of working families into consideration in their design.

What policies help working families access pre-k and other supports?

There are no specific policies, but providers are encouraged to assist families as needed. The statute does instruct the commissioner to consider the transportation needs of children and parents when awarding grants, but transportation continues to be a problem for many programs.

Funding

What is the per-child payment for the pre-k program?

Grantees receive a set amount (\$29,400 in 2002-03/\$30,000 in 2004-05) and must serve at least 12 children. However, all grantees combine these funds with other sources, so that on average, 30 percent of program expenditures come from EEL.

How does the state pre-k funding affect other potential sources of funds for a provider?

Pre-k funds are flexible, and designed to fill the gaps created by other programs. They do not affect any other funds a program receives.

Sources

- Interview: Jim Squires
- Website: http://www.state.vt.us/educ/new/html/pgm_earlyed.html
- Legislation: Laws and regulations of the Department of Education
<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/statutes/fullsection.cfm?Title=16&Chapter=133&Section=04014>
and <http://www.leg.state.vt.us/statutes/chapters.cfm?Title=16>

Additional resources:

- Education Commission on the States profile
http://www.ecs.org/dbsearches/search_info/PreK_ProgramProfile.asp?state=VT and
<http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/27/24/2724.htm#res>
- Vermont Profile, standards based accountability system (University of Kentucky):
<http://www.ihdi.uky.edu/Sparc/states/VT.pdf>

For information about national trends, read CLASP's *All Together Now: State Experiences in Using Community-Based Child Care to Provide Pre-kindergarten* at http://www.clasp.org/publications/all_together_now.pdf.