



**UPDATE: Summary of October 20, 2016
Meeting of the Blue Ribbon Commission**

In its October meeting, the [Blue Ribbon Commission on Financing High Quality, Affordable Child Care](#) finalized its report on the cost of providing high-quality child care as well as its report on what Vermont families can afford to spend on high-quality child care and discussed what a delivery system for high-quality care would look like.

The True Cost of High-Quality Child Care

The Commission reviewed a revised report from Public Consulting Group (PCG) detailing the true cost of quality and discussed whether or not to include professional development, transportation and comprehensive services in the overall cost. Some commissioners expressed concern about the inclusion of comprehensive services that already exist or that could logically be funded by other existing systems.

“I think we can reach our desired level of quality [child care] by using some systems already in place,” Commissioner Reeva Murphy said. Murphy pointed to the line items for dental care and nursing as services she felt should be covered by the health care system.

The cost of quality report was created in collaboration with Commissioner Paul Behrman and adapted from the current Head Start model for cost of care. Behrman said, “I agree there are aspects of existing systems that we would hope would be more connected to the early education system, whether that’s the health care system or family support system. If we envision a high-quality system—yes, some of the components are pretty expensive—but not all of these expenses have to be new expenses. They could be covered by existing systems.”

Commissioners also discussed whether to include transportation in the overall cost. Commissioner Murphy expressed concern that committing to daily transportation and busses would sacrifice daily interactions between parents and providers. Commissioner Donna Bailey said, “I’m representing parent-child centers with mostly low-income families who don’t have cars. We have to fundraise to get kids bussed to where they need to go. You can have all the great child care in the world but if kids aren’t getting there, it’s not working. In our education system, we accept nurses and transportation and comprehensive services so why are we questioning these line items for early education?”

Ultimately, the BRC reached a consensus to:

- Include professional development in the cost of care calculations
- Roll comprehensive services into one cost (including health care costs) with acknowledgment that it would be beneficial and cost-effective to utilize existing systems
- Remove transportation from the overall cost, while keeping the cost of transportation data as a reference point
- Create a separate section discussing the importance of access when considering high-quality child care and the need to further review transportation

What Can Vermont Families Afford to Pay?

The Commission reviewed PCG’s report on the affordability of high-quality child care and multiple proposals for how to set a baseline and a cap for financial assistance without creating a benefits cliff.

Commissioners agreed that the point at which financial assistance would begin declining on a sliding fee scale should be the point at which a family could cover all of its basic needs except child care, and determined this financial assistance “floor” would be \$59,661 for a family of 3. This means a family of 3 earning less than \$59,661 would not have to pay anything for child care and the level of financial assistance would decrease on a sliding scale from there. The commissioners also agreed to set a cap (“ceiling”) for financial assistance at \$178,983, the basic needs budget multiplied by 3.

How Do We Pay for High-Quality Child Care?

After a lengthy discussion about financing options and a potential delivery system for affordable, high-quality child care, the commissioners recognized the need for more time to come to a consensus. Jessica Blackman, administrator for the Commission, proposed meeting again Thursday, October 27.

Timeline for Final Report

The timeline for the Commission’s final month is as follows:

- PCG will provide BRC with a preliminary final draft of its report by November 7
- Commissioners will review and submit feedback by November 15
- A final BRC meeting will occur November 17 to finalize the report
- The final report will be submitted November 28

The Commission’s next scheduled meeting is Thursday, November 17, 10 AM – 12:30 PM in the Fourth Floor Conference Room of the Pavilion Office Building in Montpelier. The Commission is hoping to schedule a meeting within the next two weeks to discuss PCG’s financing report. We will provide any scheduling information as soon as it is available.