

AGENCY OF EDUCATION  
Barre, Vermont

**TEAM:** School Finance

**ITEM:** Will the State Board of Education grant renewal of approval as an Other Education Program to **Sunrise Family Resource Center** in Bennington, VT, to serve pregnant and/or parenting youth in grades 9-12?

**SECRETARY'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

**That the State Board of Education grants renewal of approval as an Other Education Program to Sunrise Family Resource Center in Bennington, VT, to serve pregnant and/or parenting youth in grades 9-12. This approval is for a three-year term through June 30, 2021; and**

**That approval is conditional on the requirement that the program must report to the Agency of Education within five business days whenever any changes occur in programs, policies, facilities, staffing, or administration during the approval period.**

**STATUTORY AUTHORITY:** Title 16 V.S.A. § 1073(b)  
State Board of Education Standards I-IV

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

1. The Sunrise Family Resource Center is a member of the VT Child Center Network. Sunrise operates a program titled Opportunities—A place for success for pregnant and parenting adolescents in Bennington County. The program is a comprehensive and holistic effort providing support to female and male youth seeking to earn a high school credential as they transition into parenthood and adulthood.
2. Opportunities is a day program able to serve 15 pregnant and/or parenting youth in grades 9-12. The goal of the Opportunities' teen parent education program is to create an environment that is respectful and safe for student learning and exploration, and one that encourages student involvement. The program operates 27.5 hours per week, 180 days per school year and follows the Mt. Anthony Union High School's school calendar. There also is a six-week summer program, which runs in partnership with the Department of Labor.

3. Opportunities provides education in the core subject areas, parenting and childcare education/support, mental health services via an on-site clinician at Mt. Anthony Union High School, as well as family support to enable success at and beyond the program. Sunrise's onsite NAEYC Accredited, Five STAR early childhood and education program is utilized by the Opportunities program youth. Sunrise's early childhood program is licensed to operate by the Division for Children and Families (DCF). All Opportunities students qualify for child care support through Reach-Up or Vermont's Child Care Financial Assistance Program. Sunrise does not charge parents a "co-pay" to cover the true cost of this crucial service. Parents and children received breakfast and lunch daily, and transportation when needed, at no cost.
4. A mentoring program provides opportunities for our students to be introduced to workplace skills by a staff mentor, including working in the early childhood program, the lunch program or offering administrative support. The program has received a Certificate of Occupancy (CO) from the Town of Bennington Department of Code Enforcement Division for use of the buildings for educational purposes. The Division of Fire Safety has an agreement with the Town of Bennington to handle CO matters in Bennington proper. Sunrise Family Resource Center has four separate two-story buildings:
  - The main building is located at 244 Union Street in Bennington and houses Sunrise's administrative staff and Reach-Up Case Manager. There is a conference room and kitchen, both of which serve as classroom areas for the Opportunities program.
  - The Victorian building is located at 238 Union Street. Two of our early childhood classrooms are located on the first floor. Children's Integrated Services (CIS) and Child Care Financial Assistance Program staff are located on the second floor. There is a family resource room on the second floor where parents can access materials, meet privately with staff and/or nurse their infants.
  - Behind the Victorian building at 238 Union Street is our "Barn." The downstairs houses an early childhood classroom and work experience site. There are offices for our Executive Director and Family Advocates upstairs.
  - The building located at 226 Union Street houses the Job Club Program on the first floor with our Opportunities classrooms on the second floor. There are laptops located in the classrooms for student use.
5. All Opportunities students must be enrolled in a public or approved independent school. Usually the youth are enrolled at Mt. Anthony Union High School. The academic programs for the students are developed on an individual basis and coordinated with the enrolling secondary school. There is a written agreement between Opportunities and the enrolling secondary school(s), which outlines the course(s) to be completed, the credit goal, and credit transferability. This agreement is signed by the student, parent/guardian (if applicable), and the school's counselor and administrator.
6. Opportunities employs an experienced educator who teaches English, social studies, parenting, and PREP (sex education/relationship class), and a part time math/science teacher. Additional classes provided are in nutrition, resume writing, and job readiness.

Opportunities has curriculum/instructional materials and a small library onsite. The town library is easily accessed, as it is located just down the street within walking distance. A program coordinator who is supervised by the agency's Executive Director oversees opportunities.

7. Opportunities maintains student health, attendance and assessment records. Fire drills are conducted on a regular basis.
8. The school district of residence, pursuant to Act 192 of the 2007-2008 legislative session, pays the program 83 percent of the prior year's statewide average net cost per pupil as calculated under 16 V.S.A. § 825 minus debt service, prorated based on the pupil's full-time equivalent enrollment in academic courses at the teen parent education program.
9. The enrolling high school is responsible for special education services to qualifying students. Opportunities works with area schools, to provide special education services directly or through contract with a private or public educational agency.

**FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:** none

**STAFF AVAILABLE:**

Cassandra Ryan, Fiscal and Regulatory Compliance Coordinator