

Vermont Educational Surrogate Parent Program is funded by a grant from the Vermont Department of Education to the University of Vermont, Center on Disability and Community Inclusion. The Vermont Department of Education and the University of Vermont are committed to ensuring that all of its programs and facilities are accessible to all members of the public and that all activities and programs are nondiscriminatory in design, application and performance.

ED 82
 Educational Surrogate Parent Program
 Vermont Department of Education
 120 State Street
 Montpelier, VT 05620-2501

*Vermont Department of Education &
 University of Vermont, Center on
 Disability and Community Inclusion*

VERMONT EDUCATIONAL SURROGATE PARENT PROGRAM

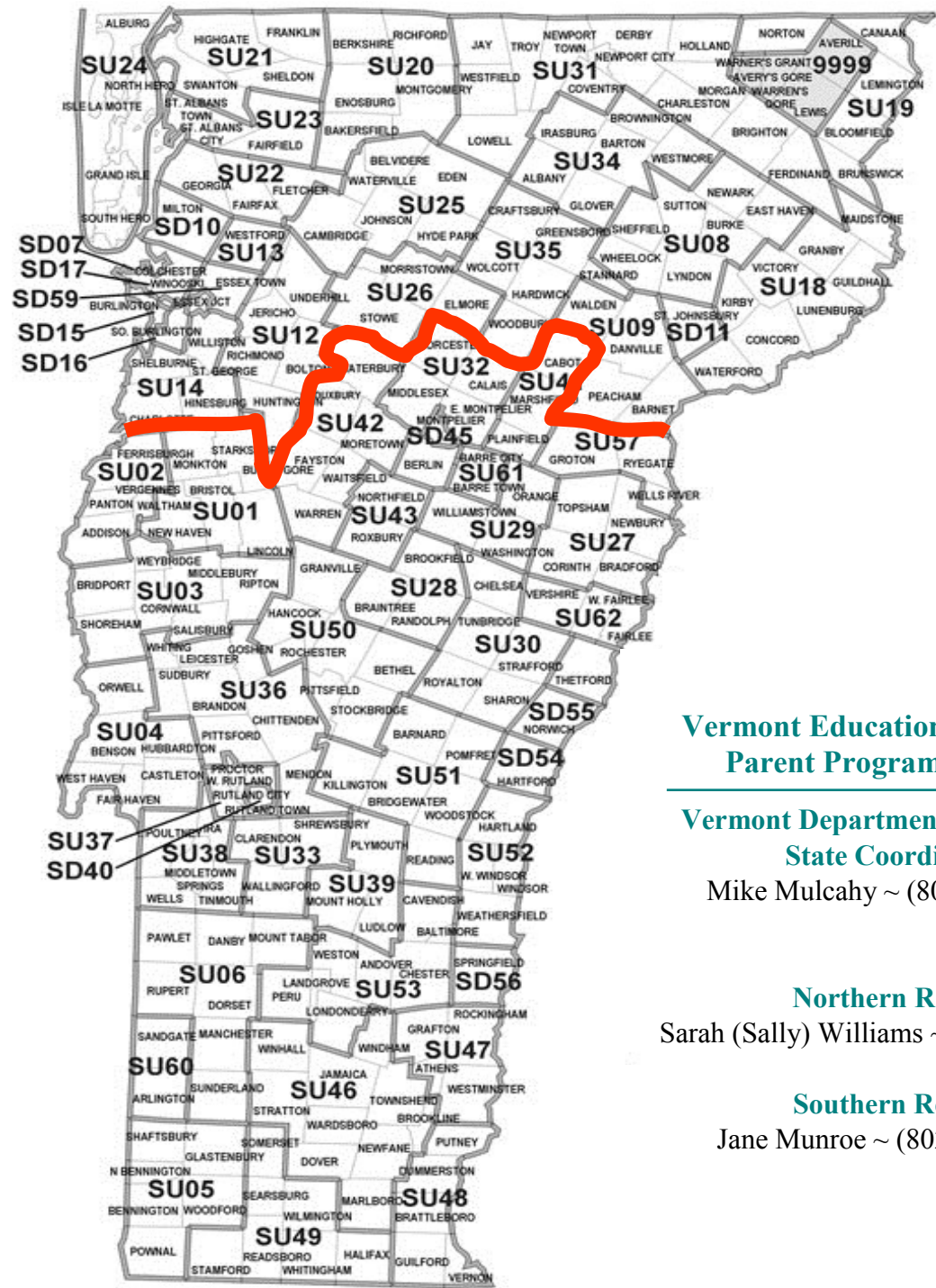


What Does The Vermont Educational Surrogate Parent Program (VESPP) Do?

VESPP recruits, trains, appoints and supports volunteers to fill the parent role in the special education planning process for students who are in state care, whose parents are not known or cannot be located, or who are unaccompanied youth as defined by the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

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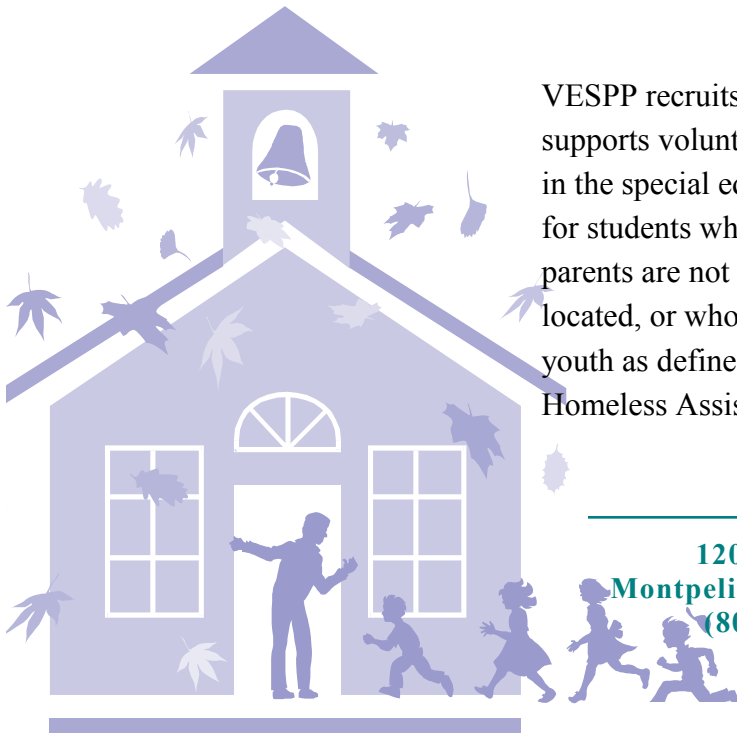
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http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/pgm_interagency/surrogate_parent.html



Why is there an educational surrogate parent program?

Parental involvement in planning a child's special education program is essential for the child's success. It is also required by federal and state regulations. In Vermont, parents lose their education rights when their children enter state custody. By appointing an Educational Surrogate Parent, VESPP ensures that the educational rights of infants, toddlers and students are represented in the special education process.

When a child or youth is in state care or his or her parents cannot be located, a "surrogate parent" is appointed to represent the child as the parent participant in the special education planning process. An educational surrogate parent is assigned when a student is eligible for early intervention or special education or is being evaluated for eligibility and one of the following applies:

- The student is in the custody of the commissioner of VT Department for Children & Families, Division for Families and Children (DCF)
- The student is age 18 through age 22 and has a public guardian appointed by a Vermont Court
- The parents of the student are not known or cannot be located
- The student is an unaccompanied homeless youth as defined by the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act ((34 CFR 300.519 (a) (4))

Who are these children?

They range in age from birth to 21 years of age, have a disability and receive, or are being evaluated for, special education/related services. They are children and youth in care of the state through VT Department for Children and Families (DCF) or have a public guardian appointed. They also may be children whose parents are not known or cannot be located. They live in:

- Foster homes
- Group Homes
- Residential schools or treatment centers (in and out-of-state)
- Correctional facilities
- At home with their birth, foster or adoptive parents or relatives



They demonstrate a delay in learning or have a disability that affects their learning and need early intervention services or specialized instruction to meet their educational needs.



What are the responsibilities of the educational surrogate parent?

The educational surrogate parent becomes familiar with the student's educational needs, reads the student's education records and meets with the student's teachers and other team members to review evaluation information and develop the student's Individual Education Program (IEP) or Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP, which is for infants and toddlers).

They attend meetings with the school team as needed to review the child's program and educational progress. Educational surrogate parents may also participate in the interagency planning process when there is a need to coordinate services. The actual amount of time involved varies depending on a student's needs.

What kind of assistance is available to educational surrogate parents?

VESPP staff members are available to:

- Provide technical assistance and answer questions
- Help problem solve difficult situations.
- Provide ongoing training and information
- Talk to school staff and other team members
- Attend school meetings when asked to do so by the parent or the school.



What training is required to be an educational surrogate parent?

Volunteers must attend a one to three hour training session led by a VESPP regional coordinator. Training sessions are informal and conducted in small groups or individually. Volunteers are given information regarding the special education process, available services and resources and parental rights and responsibilities as provided by law. Based on the needs of the student, and the knowledge & experience of the volunteer, additional training may be necessary.



Who can be an educational surrogate parent?

Volunteers may be foster parents, a guardian ad litem, a student's family member or an individual from the community who is interested in assisting a student in need of representation in the special education process. Federal law does not allow an educational surrogate parent to be an employee of a public agency involved in the education or care of the child. The volunteer must have the knowledge and skills that ensure effective representation of the child, and must not have any interest that conflicts with the best interest of that child.