

Reach Up: One-Time Use of Underutilized Funds

In Accordance with Act 74 Section E.323

The Fiscal year 2022 Appropriations Act provides that, the Department for Children and Families (DCF) shall report to the Joint Fiscal Committee at its September 2022 meeting on the status of funds available and timing of one-time payments to participating families.

The Reach Up Program, funded by the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), helps eligible parents set and reach short and long-term goals that will enable them to financially support their minor, dependent children. Families are eligible for the program based on income and living expenses and who lives in your home. Program details can be found online at <https://dcf.vermont.gov/benefits/reachup>.

Due to the pandemic and economic impacts, it was difficult for our consultant to estimate the Reach Up caseload trend. For years, we had seen a decline in the caseload, and the earliest attempt to predict the caseload did not end up reflecting the increase that actually happened. The caseload and cost per case ended up trending upwards in comparison to our projections at the time of Budget Build last year. The average monthly caseload in SFY22 was 144 households higher than the average monthly participant caseload in SFY21. Furthermore, the average cost per case in SFY22 was \$94 dollars higher on average than the prior year's cost per case.

With SFY22 Reach Up actualities, there is no underutilized funding for one-time payments in SFY23.

Reach Up Caseload Data:

SFY 2022 Month	Households		Recipients		\$ Redeemed		
	RU	RA	RU	RA	RU	RA	
JUL	3,018	205	7,238	665	\$1,691,805	\$6,853	COVID
AUG	3,017	205	7,228	674	\$1,947,678	\$4,980	COVID *new strd amts - 8/1
SEP	3,161	197	7,642	642	\$1,974,625	\$8,527	COVID *Unemployment benefits end
OCT	3,283	210	7,997	686	\$2,104,334	\$6,628	
NOV	3,320	230	8,129	734	\$2,181,181	\$9,155	
DEC	3,371	232	8,302	745	\$2,217,212	\$10,522	
JAN	3,438	218	8,523	696	\$2,276,965	\$8,917	
FEB	3,438	223	8,554	709	\$2,733,270	\$8,521	*due to the State holiday on March 1st, the DCF Business Office made March benefit payments in February
MAR	3,468	224	8,627	722	\$1,824,020	\$8,361	
APR	3,483	229	8,690	753	\$2,301,549	\$8,938	
MAY	3,468	229	8,597	778	\$2,328,383	\$8,589	
JUN	3,481	233	8,678	771	\$2,281,462	\$7,718	
YTD AVG.	3,329	220	8,184	715	\$2,155,207	\$8,142	
YTD Total					\$25,862,484	\$97,708	

Prepared by Economic Services Division, Process and Performance Unit

Source: Household and Recipient figures are from PPR extracts of ACCESS data. \$ issued comes from the DCF Reach Up financial monitoring worksheet

Month Prepared: May 2022

During the pandemic, the State issued four one-time payments to Reach Up families to help with pandemic-related and back-to-school costs.

Date	Funding Source	Number of Households	Total Amount
November 2020	Coronavirus Relief Fund	3,000	\$1,297,500
December 2020	Coronavirus Relief Fund	3,300	\$1,290,300
August 2021	Pandemic Emergency Assistance Fund	3,077 (payment issued per child; 5,300 children)	\$1,615,489
November 2021	General Fund	3,490	\$1,296,375
Total			\$5,499,664

Supporting Reach Up families to meet their personal goals and to exit the program is a priority of the Department for Children and Families. During the 2022 Legislative Session, DCF worked closely with legislators on adapting the Reach Up Program to be family-centered utilizing the universal engagement model. With the changes in Act 133, Reach Up case managers work with families on goal-setting to reach their family goals as well as financial stability. Currently, DCF is upgrading our Information Technology systems to implement the changes from Act 133, with the programmatic changes to be implemented by January 2024. The Reach Up Program remains committed to supporting families, providers, and communities to meet their family needs.