



Addressing Diaper Need In Vermont



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Executive Summary

The Junior League of Champlain Valley is an all-volunteer organization that seeks to address needs in Vermont that are not being met by government or other organizations. In 2017, it identified a lack of diapers for children in low-income families as such an unmet need for thousands of Vermont families. In 2018, a group of Junior League volunteers established the Diaper Bank. Partnering with five organizations and relying primarily on community diaper drives, they succeeded in distributing more than 35,000 diapers and diapering supplies in their first year.

With inflationary pressures, diapering costs can now exceed \$80/month per child, a significant expense for families that already struggle to meet expenses for housing, food and transportation—especially given that there is no government program that offers financial assistance to purchase diapers. When families run out of diapers and are forced to use creative solutions, it produces a significant healthcare and hygiene problem, and may limit parents' ability to work because childcare providers require a supply of disposable diapers with each child.

Over the course of five years, the Junior League developed a program that will distribute close to a million free diapers in 2022. The Junior League's model for community service, however, is not to address such needs on a permanent basis, but rather to prove that it can be done and then once the program is established, find an organization to take it over and sustain it.

The Junior League volunteers who have led this effort need to transfer the program to an organization with paid staff dedicated to this mission. There is no capacity to grow the program further or even sustain it indefinitely at its current level. For the past three years, the State of Vermont has provided some funding to support the program. This study, whose mandate was to develop a model and means for the benefits of free diapers for low-income families to continue, recommends that Vermont build on the success of the Junior League's partnership with the State.

Extensive research informs these recommendations, based on data provided by the Junior League and its agency partners, input from Vermont government officials, meetings with a core team of nonprofit leaders in Vermont, focus groups with families receiving or needing free diapers, and research from the National Diaper Bank Network.



The current Diaper Bank, though successful, is not sustainable as an all-volunteer operation.

Recommendation

The study team determined that state funding for a new or existing nonprofit organization is the most feasible and cost-effective means to meet the needs identified. This approach offers both simplicity and continuity in that it builds on the existing program. Families that currently benefit from the program will continue to benefit.

Without the burden of extensive fundraising, the staff of the nonprofit can be focused on the primary mission of delivering as many diapers as possible to its partner organizations (food shelves, Parent Child Centers, childcare providers, and other organizations). Using information from the Junior League and a survey of its partners, the study team estimates that in its first year (State Fiscal Year 2024), the new Vermont Diaper Bank (VDB) would distribute over 1.25 million diapers at a total cost of about \$377,000.

Of all the options studied, this model has the highest efficiency, with more dollars going to the actual supply of diapers, rather than staff or overhead costs.

The recommended state-funded nonprofit alternative has the lowest total cost per diaper distributed.



Other Options Considered

The study looked at four other options in detail but determined that they were infeasible (at least in the near term) or not as cost effective as the recommended option. A state voucher program could distribute vouchers to needy families (using an existing program such as WIC to define eligibility). Even meeting half of the diaper need among this population, the program would cost more than \$2 million per year and force retailers all over Vermont to deal with the administrative burden of handling paper vouchers. A state-run diaper distribution program would also cost more than \$2 million, require a staff expansion, and the establishment of a distribution network. For already overburdened state agencies, this concept was deemed infeasible, especially in the near term.

Two other versions of the nonprofit concept were considered: one with the State providing half the funding for the program (as opposed to 100% as in the recommended option), and the other with the State providing no funding. These models would result in fewer diapers being distributed at a significantly higher cost per diaper. The staff of the nonprofit would be larger as it would need to include the capacity for fundraising and grant writing and all partners involved would treat the diapers as a scarce resource, since they would know that the supply depended on philanthropy, rather than a dedicated state budget appropriation.

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- Matt Levin, Vermont Early Childhood Advocacy Alliance
- Amy Johnson, Vermont Parent Child Center Network
- Beth Truzansky, Building Bright Futures
- Katarina Lisaius, Vermont Department for Children and Families

Introduction

In 2018, the Diaper Bank was established by a group of volunteers through the Junior League of Champlain Valley (JLCV) whose members saw a need that was not being met by existing government subsidies or other support programs. Partnering with five organizations and relying primarily on community diaper drives, JLCV succeeded in distributing more than 35,000 diapers and diapering supplies in their first year.

Four years later, the JLCV Diaper Bank is partnering with 57 organizations and has distributed more than two million diapers. The Junior League has secured state funding for the procurement of diapers only; storage and distribution costs are borne by the Junior League, as are the responsibilities of administering the program. Once every four weeks, approximately 25 partner organizations pick up diapers from the South Burlington warehouse, while other diapers are driven to a distribution site in Norwich by volunteers using a rented truck every six weeks.

Given the need of Vermont families for access to diapers and diapering supplies (see page 6), this system is no longer adequate or sustainable. The Junior League's model is to identify a need in society that is not being met by government or other organizations and develop a program to address it. Then, once the program is established, the Junior League seeks to find an organization to take it over and sustain it. The JLCV volunteers who have led this effort are reaching the point of burnout and need to transfer the program to an organization with paid staff dedicated to this mission; there is no capacity to grow the program further or even sustain it indefinitely at its current level.

Purpose of the Study

JLCV and the Vermont Foodbank, acting as fiscal sponsor, engaged an outside firm, Aplomb Consulting LLC, in partnership with Steadman Hill Consulting, Inc., to guide the planning process for a sustainable model to replace the volunteer efforts of JLCV. The purpose of the study is to analyze and document diaper need in Vermont, develop alternative models to meet that need, and recommend the most effective option for consideration by the Vermont Legislature. Ideally, the recommended model would provide uninterrupted service to the families and children who rely on the JLCV Diaper Bank while allowing the JLCV to end its role in running the Diaper Bank as soon as July 2023.



Research Process

The study team conducted numerous activities to gather information about diaper need in Vermont and the impacts of the current Diaper Bank, including the following:

- A survey of all the partner organizations who receive diapers from the Diaper Bank
- Follow-up interviews with more than 15 of these organizations
- Discussions with state agency representatives
- Focus groups with individuals who benefit from the diapers provided through the Diaper Bank
- Tabulations of the number of diapers needed by low-income families in Vermont, using a range of income thresholds

The team also engaged leaders of the National Diaper Bank Network (NDBN) in discussions about similar programs around the country, ways that NDBN can support local or statewide diaper banks, different models used elsewhere to meet diaper need, and efforts at the federal level to establish a new diaper benefit or incorporate diaper support into existing programs.

Using this information, the study team developed a set of options to replace the existing volunteer-based diaper bank and estimated the costs and volume of diapers associated with each of the options. These options were presented to the Core Team, made up of representatives from JLCV, the Vermont Foodbank, the Vermont Early Childhood Advocacy Alliance, the Parent Child Center Network, the Vermont Department for Children and Families, and Building Bright Futures.

Overview of the Report

This introduction is followed by four chapters that present the findings from the study. The next section presents additional history of the JLCV Diaper Bank, both to honor the tremendous contribution this volunteer organization has made to improve the lives of low-income Vermonters with small children, as well as to establish the baseline against which alternative models will be compared. The section following documents and quantifies the need for diapers in Vermont based on the research conducted in this study. Section 4 establishes the scope of the proposed program, identifying which needs will be addressed and which will not, at least in the short term. The fifth section presents the recommended option in detail, as well as brief summaries of the other options considered. The report concludes with the next steps necessary to bring the plan to fruition.



The Diaper Bank to Date



Origins

The Junior League of Champlain Valley (JLCV) has done an extraordinary job of expanding upon prior regional efforts to establish Vermont's first statewide diaper bank in a span of five years. In Fall of 2017, JLCV, a volunteer-based organization that seeks to address needs not being met by government or other organizations, learned about diaper need in Vermont and decided to do something about it in their region.

At the time, there were a variety of regional efforts around the state to get diapers to low-income families, some more established than others. Many of these regional efforts were based out of Parent Child Centers, with informal, yet long-standing, structures. Occasionally the Vermont Foodbank would receive a donation of diapers and distribute them to its partners, but these were not adequate to meet the ongoing need.

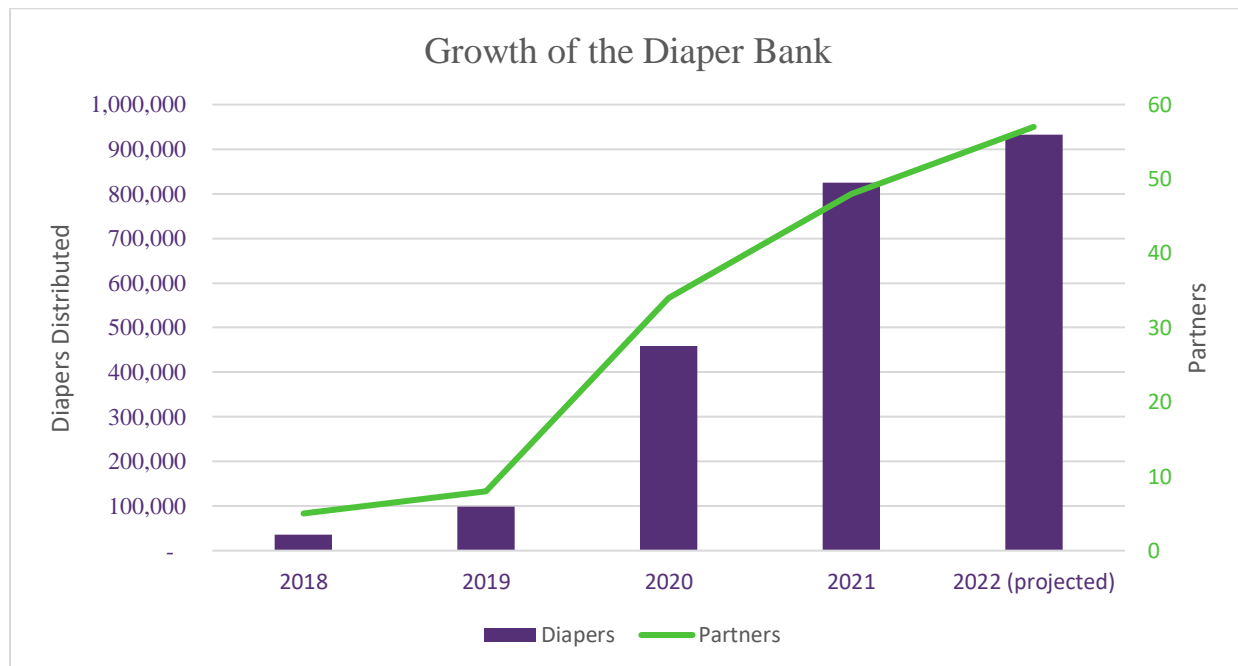
Starting with one partner organization in their region—Feeding Chittenden, a food assistance program of the Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity—JLCV learned that eight to ten people per day were inquiring about diapers at just the one location. In January 2018, JLCV led a diaper drive, setting up collection bins at childcare centers and at Healthy Living, a natural foods supermarket in South Burlington. The diapers collected through this drive were repackaged into bundles of 25 and then given to Feeding Chittenden to distribute to families in need.

In March 2018, JLCV received a donation of 40,000 diapers from Seventh Generation, which is based in Burlington, VT. To handle that volume of diapers, JLCV rented a small warehouse space near Burlington International Airport. The \$600 monthly rent and other expenses were covered by fundraising. Shelving for the warehouse was donated by another organization. With this initial supply of diapers, JLCV began distributing supplies to local food shelves in November 2018 on a bimonthly basis. In between distributions, they collected additional diapers through diaper drives. The Junior League hoped to someday be able to deliver 100,000 diapers to families living in poverty in Vermont. In the Diaper Bank's second year (2019), they fell just short of that goal.

Expansion

The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic changed everything, including the scale of the Diaper Bank. Just as the Vermont Foodbank greatly expanded its operation to provide food to the many Vermonters suddenly in need of assistance, the Diaper Bank shifted into overdrive. In the Spring of 2020, JLCV established relationships with additional partner organizations all over the state. Seventh Generation made another large donation of diapers to expand the supply, but more importantly, JLCV, with the encouragement and support of the Vermont Early Childhood Advocacy Alliance, applied for and received a grant from the State for \$50,000, funded out of federal Covid relief money. With this money, JLCV started purchasing diapers and ceased running diaper drives. It also started purchasing wipes. The source for these supplies has been Jubilee, a company based in North Carolina that manufactures “off-brand” diapers. Beginning in Fall 2020, the distribution schedule changed from bimonthly to monthly. In addition, JLCV rented a 10-foot truck every six weeks, packed it full with diapers and drove it to Norwich to offer a more convenient pick up location for partners in the eastern and southern parts of Vermont.

From eight partners and 99,000 diapers distributed in 2019, the program nearly quintupled to 34 partners and 458,000 diapers distributed in 2020. The growth continued in 2021. The State of Vermont provided an additional \$82,000 grant for State Fiscal Year 2022 (starting July 2021). In March 2021, the organization received another large donation of diapers from Seventh Generation; this time, a full truckload (28 pallets). They did not have enough space in the warehouse by the airport for that many diapers but were fortunate to be able to store them in unused space at University Mall in South Burlington. In addition to the donated diapers, the program has benefited from corporate and foundation grants, including from the Hoehl Family Foundation, Target’s Community Engagement Funds, the Pomerleau Foundation, and the Northfield Savings Bank Community Giving Program.



In 2021, the JLCV diaper bank distributed nearly 825,000 diapers, working with 48 community partners, including food shelves and Parent Child Centers all over Vermont. The network by this point covered 13 of Vermont's 14 counties, though the distribution was strongest in Chittenden County. In almost all cases, the partners provide the transportation from the South Burlington warehouse or the rented truck in Norwich to the food shelves, childcare centers, Parent Child Centers and other distribution points. Some partners coordinate and send a van to pick up for a group of organizations. Staff members from many partners come in their private vehicles to the warehouse and take as many as they can fit for their organization.

Present Operations

The current Diaper Bank operation is similar in scale to what was achieved in 2021. The State provided another grant, this time \$180,000 for SFY 2023. The total number of partners is up to 57, and from January through October of 2022, some 717,000 diapers had been distributed. It is clear to the volunteers who run the program that JLCV does not have the capacity to expand the program further, and indeed, it does not have the capacity to sustain the program indefinitely. The Junior League model is to identify an unmet need, set up a program to address it, and then search for a means for a permanent and sustainable solution. The Diaper Bank has achieved the first two steps of this process. This study aims to achieve the third step.



Determination of Need

The fact that the JLCV Diaper Bank distributed 825,000 diapers in 2021 and is on track to distribute even more in 2022 is a clear indication that low-income Vermonters have a need for free diapers. The average cost to purchase diapers is about \$80 per month per child, a significant expense for families that already struggle to meet expenses for housing, food and transportation. Beyond this evidence, the study team performed research and data gathering to further establish and quantify this need.

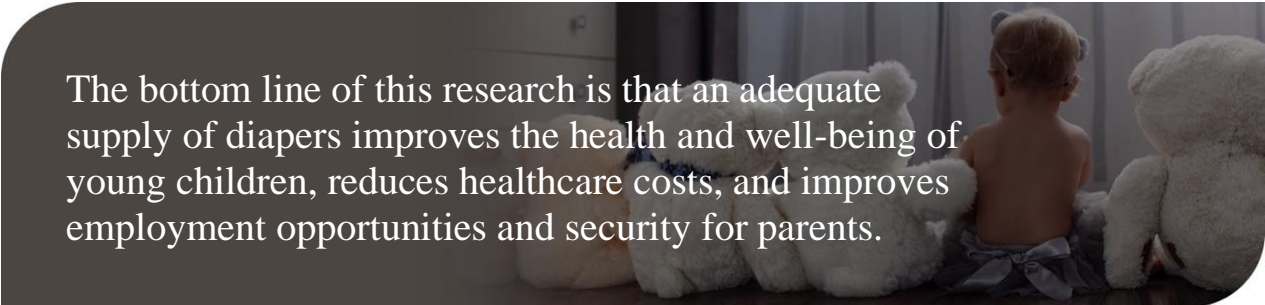
National Research

The National Diaper Bank Network sponsors research into diaper need and the impacts of diaper banks. Its [website](#) summarizes many of these studies and contains links for more detail. A [study](#) by Sallie Porter and Lorraine Steefel, published in 2015, helps to explain the negative impacts on children and low-income families that stem from a lack of diapers. When diapers are not changed as frequently as they should be, often because a family may be stretching their supply as far as they can, children are more likely to suffer from diaper dermatitis. According to the study, “[d]iaper-related conditions account for approximately one million pediatric outpatient visits each year for children four years of age and under.” Because federal programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as Food Stamps) and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) are not permitted to be used to purchase diapers, low-income families are forced to use whatever available cash they have for diapers, meaning that they have less to spend on other essential items.

Further, low-income families tend to pay more for diapers and face more constraints than middle- and upper-income families:

Because of economic constraints, these families often cannot buy in bulk; lack transportation to supermarkets, discount stores, and warehouses with the lowest diaper prices; have limited or no Internet access for purchasing; and must rely on local convenience stores to purchase diapers. Cloth diapers are seen by some as cost-saving because they may be reused; however, low-income families may not have adequate resources required for the purchase of sufficient amounts and facilities for daily laundering. Further, many child care centers require infants to wear disposable diapers. (Porter and Steefel, 2015)

If parents do not have an adequate supply of disposable diapers, they may be unable to leave their children with childcare providers, causing them to miss work, thus further reducing their income. In addition to these physical impacts of a lack of diapers, there is the anxiety and stress low-income parents must feel knowing that they are unable to keep their babies comfortable and free of problems like diaper dermatitis.



The bottom line of this research is that an adequate supply of diapers improves the health and well-being of young children, reduces healthcare costs, and improves employment opportunities and security for parents.

Among the studies of diaper bank impacts highlighted on the NDBN website are reports on programs in Connecticut and North Carolina. The North Carolina study found that in addition to the primary benefit of supplying diapers for families, the diaper bank had a number of other benefits in connecting families to other services and enhancing communication with clients. The Connecticut [study](#) delves more deeply into the impacts on recipient families, using an extensive survey. Among the findings are the following:

- At least 60 percent of diaper recipient households had incomes of less than \$20,000.
- Among the recipient children, the incidence of diaper rash decreased by one-third.
- The number of patient-days during which children suffered due to diaper rash was reduced more than four times, from 17,679 days to 4,096.
- Clean diapers from The Diaper Bank of Connecticut helped prevent diaper rash, and speed recovery of existing diaper rash and related ailments, thereby lowering medical costs through fewer visits to pediatricians and fewer purchases of over-the-counter and prescription drugs and treatments.
- More than half (56%) of parents who needed childcare to go to work, missed work because of an inadequate supply of diapers.

Vermont Data Analysis

How great is the diaper need in Vermont? The answer depends on the definition of low income. The most expansive assistance program for Vermont's children is Dr. Dynasaur, part of the Medicaid program. Children under the age of 19 are eligible for Dr. Dynasaur if their family income is below 317% of the federal poverty level (FPL). The FPL scales according to household size. For a family of four, the threshold in 2022 is \$27,750. Thus, families with two children would qualify for Dr. Dynasaur if their income was up to about \$88,000. There are currently 9,020 children enrolled in Dr. Dynasaur who are under the age of three. In addition, there are about 6,800 three- and four-year-olds, some of whom still use diapers. (A very small number of older children use diapers as well.) Assuming 10% of three-year-olds and 1% of four-year-olds wear diapers regularly, the total population of Dr. Dynasaur children wearing diapers is about 9,400. Using research on the typical number of diapers per day used by children of different ages, it is estimated that these children use about 24.4 million diapers per year.

The WIC program has a lower threshold for eligibility, at 185% of the FPL (\$51,337 for a family of four). According to statistics from the Vermont WIC office, there are 5,500 children under the age of three enrolled in WIC and approximately 400 three- and four-year-olds who are assumed to be using diapers. (Note that there are certainly some children who are eligible for WIC who are not enrolled, but there is not an exact count available.) Using similar assumptions to those described above, total annual diaper usage among children in the WIC program is about 15 million.

There is not an exact count of the number of children under the age of three living in households with income below the FPL, but data from the US Census indicates that the figure is approximately 2,300. Diaper use among this population is approximately 4 million per year.

No matter the definition, it is clear that the current program is not meeting all of the need for diapers in Vermont. Of course, it is not the case that a program has to supply 100% of the diapers needed to be deemed successful. Many programs aim to supply 50% of the diapers needed or a different proportion keyed to ensure that a family has an adequate supply for their children to attend childcare regularly.

The research in this study aimed to gauge how much need is being addressed by reaching out to the Diaper Bank’s partners, social service agencies, and families.

Survey

Early in this study, an online survey was sent to all the partners on the Diaper Bank’s contact list—some 80 individuals among the 57 partner agencies. A total of 50 individuals responded. A full summary of the survey results is presented in Appendix A, but some of the key findings are as follows:

- **57%** of respondents indicated that they had put limits on the number of diapers any one family could receive.
- **60%** of respondents felt that demand for diapers would increase “somewhat” or “a lot” if the availability of diapers were announced more widely.
- **56%** of respondents did no advertising about the availability of diapers, mostly for fear that if they did, they would be unable to accommodate the demand.
- **50%** of respondents felt that the allocation of diapers received from the Diaper Bank was meeting all of the needs in their area.

In response to open-ended questions, Diaper Bank partners expressed appreciation for the following aspects of the JLCV program:

- Reliability, simplicity, and regularity
- Ability to pick and choose sizes
- Immediately available to people in need without having to go through a state or federal process
- Responsiveness of the Diaper Bank to questions and excellent communication and care.

One respondent noted the following:

The Diaper Bank has allowed us to maintain an ample supply of all sizes of diapers for our clients. It has been very helpful to families to have this extra economic support. The Diaper Bank helps to remove financial barriers for families who are working hard to improve their lives and those of their families.

Another comment stated:

This is such an amazing service being offered. I really hope the State understands diaper need in our community and the deficiencies in our current safety net programs to be able to purchase diapers. That said, I hope the State does not make this an administrative nightmare to access later. Keep it simple and uncomplicated. Use the existing mechanism and partnerships but fund it to sustain it.

Such comments as these are similar to other statements of support from Diaper Bank partners. Two examples are the following:

“

The Diaper Bank has been a godsend to Lund families. They work closely with us to make sure our clients have what they need while they engage in treatment. This program helps to remove financial barriers for families who are working hard to improve their lives and those of their children. We are so grateful for this important partnership.

- *Tricia Coates, Lund*

Previous to our discovery of the Champlain Valley Diaper Bank we only had sporadic donations of diapers for our clients and only a few random sizes which no-one could count on. Today we have a good supply of all sizes from newborn to toddler and our shoppers are really starting to count on this. Diapers are expensive and not covered by any assistance programs, so the Diaper Bank has made a huge difference for our clients with children in diapers. Thank you.

- *Peter Leonard, Randolph Food Shelf*

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Focus Groups and Interviews

To obtain a fuller understanding of the need for diapers and the impact of the JLCV Diaper Bank, the study team organized focus groups of agency partners and individuals who received diapers. The team also contacted fifteen partner organizations to probe certain questions more deeply than was possible on the survey described above.

Appendix B contains a summary of information gleaned from these outreach activities. High-level findings include the following:

- Free diapers can be a game changer for families in crisis. Agencies and families reported not only the economic benefits of free diapers, but also a tremendous reduction in the stress that they have in their lives. This was particularly true for parents of large families.
- Stigma is real. Many agencies reported that families are often reluctant to seek help or to take as many diapers as they might need. Agencies also noted that they sometimes lacked storage and staffing as a barrier to distributing enough diapers to meet the need.
- Families learn about diapers through providers and word of mouth.
- When asked about the possibility of receiving vouchers (or EBT cards) for diapers instead of actual diapers, most preferred diapers. Some liked the idea of the vouchers but raised significant concerns about transportation and other logistical concerns.
- Cloth diapers, which are used by about 5% of American parents, were intriguing to a small number of families, but even those families were concerned with the arduous work and logistical challenges of being able to wash cloth diapers.



Scope of the Program

Discussions about the Diaper Bank inevitably raise questions about which products are included in its offerings. This section is intended to address these questions, at least for the near term. It is necessary to specify what is included and what is not to be able to generate cost estimates for the various models being considered.



Types of Diapers

Cloth Diapers

There are a range of estimates as to what percentage of families use cloth diapers instead of disposables, at least part of the time. Most surveys estimate the figure at 5 to 10%, meaning that over 90% of families use disposable diapers all the time. It is a fact that virtually all childcare services for infants and toddlers require disposable diapers; thus, any family with working parents needs to have a supply of disposable diapers. In order to use cloth diapers, a family must have a washing machine, since washing diapers at a public laundromat is not allowed.

During the study, the consultant team learned of [The Cloth Option](#), a nonprofit organization dedicated to supplying low-income families with cloth diapers and information on how to use them. The team talked to the Vermont representative of The Cloth Option, and she was happy to offer the organization's services to anyone who currently receives diapers from the Diaper Bank, but who was interested in using cloth instead, at least part of the time.

Discount vs. Name Brand Disposables

Other than the donations from Seventh Generation and participants in the diaper drives, the diapers supplied by the Diaper Bank have been "off-brand" diapers manufactured by Jubilee. The National Diaper Bank Network has a program to purchase Huggies diapers at a discounted price, as Huggies is a founding sponsor of NDBN. Any diaper bank model that supplies physical diapers will likely rely on

one of these sources, as they offer the lowest-cost price per diaper. A model that supplies cash or vouchers for retail purchases would allow families to buy name brand diapers or store brands such as Parents Choice from Walmart.

Compostable and Eco-friendly Diapers

A small part of the disposable diaper market consists of compostable or eco-friendly diapers. These diapers have fewer chemicals and are made using renewable sources. The primary downside of these diapers is the cost, which can be double or even triple the cost of standard disposables. For this reason, these diapers cannot serve as the main supply for the Diaper Bank, but they could be available in limited cases.

Ages

Small children are not the only people who use diapers. Older children with various types of disabilities may need to use diapers until adulthood, but this is a very small number of cases compared to the population of low-income infants and toddlers. Older adults may need to use diapers when they encounter incontinence or other problems. The proposed model for the Vermont Diaper Bank will not attempt to address either of these populations in the immediate term but could add these products later.

Ancillary Products

Many diaper banks supply wipes along with diapers, including JLCV's Diaper Bank. The proposed models will include wipes, but the experience of the Junior League is that the cost associated with wipes is small compared to that of diapers. It is recognized that women in low-income families also have difficulty affording menstrual products, and some diaper banks have expanded into this area. In consultation with the Core Team guiding the study, it was decided to focus on diapers and baby products.



Recommendation and Other Options

This section of the report presents the recommended model for the future Vermont Diaper Bank once the Junior League of Champlain Valley steps back from operations sometime in 2023. Instead of first discussing all the different options studied, the text immediately below describes the recommendation, and is then followed by discussion of the other options studied but not recommended and the reasons why. The end of this section describes capital projects that could be pursued as the recommended model is implemented, as well as a summary of funding sources.

Recommended Option

The recommendation of this study is to work with an existing nonprofit or establish a new nonprofit organization dedicated to the mission of supplying diapers to low-income families, and provide funding for it through a grant from the State, administered by the Department for Children and Families or another state agency. As will be explained in more detail below, this option is the most cost-effective way of distributing diapers to families in need and leverages existing resources to establish a simple and sustainable model with a high degree of continuity from the existing program.

Structure

The Vermont Diaper Bank (VDB) would be run by a nonprofit corporation. It could be created as a new organization which would need to obtain section 501(c)(3) status from the Internal Revenue Service, or it could be added as a new mission component to an existing nonprofit or network of community-based organizations, such as the Parent Child Center Network. The organization would become a member of the National Diaper Bank Network, as JLCV is now. If there is a delay in obtaining 501(c)(3) status, the organization could temporarily arrange a fiscal sponsorship agreement with an existing nonprofit.

Staffing

The VDB would have one or two dedicated staff members for the near term. There would be a full-time Executive Director and then likely a part- or full-time assistant. The responsibilities of these staff members include the following tasks:

- Purchasing of diapers and wipes
- Communication with and cultivation of community partners
- Coordination of diaper distribution
- Recruitment and coordination of volunteers
- Limited delivery of diapers to key locations
- Accounting and reporting as required by the State grant
- Grant writing and limited fundraising for special projects
- Budgeting and communication with the board of directors
- Other corporate tasks (tax filings, registrations, insurance)

Features

The proposed organization would function very similarly to the existing Diaper Bank run by JLCV, but it would include some additional features to address special conditions and maximize flexibility and satisfaction of the beneficiaries of the program.

Diaper Distribution

As a member of the National Diaper Bank Network (NDBN), the VDB would purchase diapers and wipes using the special discounted rate established by NDBN with Huggies (about 15 cents per diaper). This membership also allows for the VDB to take advantage of diaper donations or special low-cost purchases that arise from time to time through NDBN.¹

In the immediate term, diaper storage and distribution would be based out of the warehouse space that JLCV rents near Burlington International Airport. This space is affordable (rent is about \$650 per month) and is already set up with shelving, although the height of the loading dock is not the standard height for tractor trailers, which complicates the unloading of diapers from the supplier. The new director would inquire with commercial real estate agents in the Burlington area as well as the Upper Valley about other warehouse spaces that would meet the needs of the diaper bank. If another space in the Burlington area comes available that is superior to the current space (more space, standard height loading dock, not vastly more expensive) the Executive Director in consultation with the Board of Directors of the organization could decide whether it would be worth the effort to move the operation.

Until now, distribution in the Upper Valley has occurred via a U-Haul rental truck every six weeks or so. This practice can continue, or if a warehouse space is available, the VDB could rent it for a more permanent base of operations.

As described below, the VDB should also pursue funding for a permanent facility, perhaps through a federal earmark. A feasibility study for such a facility would be completed first (at a cost of \$15,000 to \$20,000).

Volunteers are a critical element of the current diaper bank and would continue to be essential for the future nonprofit. The very small paid staff of the VDB would not be able to handle all of the physical tasks of loading and unloading diapers, nor handling all of the activity on distribution days. It is hoped



¹ In September 2022, JLCV was offered an opportunity to purchase a truckload of diapers, about 220,000 diapers, at a cost of \$6,000, or about 2.7 cents per diaper, an 80% discount off the regular (already-discounted) cost.

that some Junior League volunteers would continue to help with the new diaper bank, at least for the first year or two as the VDB establishes a regular volunteer pool.

Virtually all of JLCV's agency partners pick up their supply of diapers either from the South Burlington facility or from the rental truck at Norwich. In the survey conducted as part of this study, 93% of respondents indicated that they could continue to handle this part of the distribution, though some respondents noted that it would be a great benefit if diapers could be delivered to them. In the immediate term, it is recommended to continue to rely on agency partners to pick up their supply of diapers as they do now.

Depending on staff and volunteer capacity, the VDB could begin to take on some responsibility for delivering diapers to partners in those cases where the partners do not have large enough vehicles or sufficient staff time to acquire as many diapers as they need for their clients. In the short term, this delivery should be done through additional truck or van rentals, but in the longer term, as described below, the VDB could consider purchasing a small truck for this purpose.

Currently, diaper distribution occurs once per month. Several agency partners requested that the schedule be changed to twice per month. This doubling of access should be a short-term goal of the VDB. It is envisioned that as a result, the effort associated with each distribution day would be lower (thereby reducing the number of volunteers needed) as many partners are satisfied with the current monthly schedule. Those partners could be split up so that some received diapers in the first week of the month and others in the third week of the month, while yet another set would receive diapers in both the first and third weeks.

As should be clear from the above text, the basic recommendation is that the VDB should continue the successful practice developed by JLCV during the initial phase of operations but begin to explore alternatives and means to expand the capacity of the diaper bank, as well as the level of service to the agency partners. The VDB is envisioned to grow organically in this way, as the Board and Executive Director work with partners to fill in gaps, relax constraints, and gradually meet a greater share of diaper need in Vermont.

Home Delivery

Even though JLCV has partners all over Vermont, some low-income families do not have access to the free diapers from the Diaper Bank. Some parts of the state, such as Bennington County, have relatively few partner agencies, and even in areas with many partners, families may face transportation or other barriers that prevent them from being able to get to their local food shelf, Parent Child Center (PCC) or other participating organization. For such families, the VDB could offer a home delivery option. It should be noted that staff from PCCs occasionally visit the homes of clients and thus would be able to deliver diapers on those occasions without incurring additional costs or burdens on staff time. However, these visits generally do not occur on enough of a regular basis to provide a reliable supply of diapers to those families.

Home delivery of diapers is more expensive on a per-diaper basis than bulk distribution through agency partners, and so it is recommended that only a small percentage (5% or so) of VDB's diaper purchasing budget be used to support this option. Families who wish to take advantage of this program would need to submit an application and explain why they are not able to obtain diapers through a

nearby food shelf or other partner, as well as document their financial situation. Given the greater expense per diaper, the VDB could require families to contribute something toward the purchase of these delivered diapers, similar to an insurance co-pay (though the co-pay could be waived for the lowest-income families who have no other way of obtaining diapers). This option could also take care of the small number of families that need diapers in larger sizes for older children with special needs, since the VDB should not incur the cost and burden of stocking diapers in sizes with very low overall demand.

The home delivery option recommended here makes use of online retailers rather than VDB staff packing and shipping diapers themselves. While it is theoretically feasible for VDB staff to do this, it is time consuming and costly to handle orders, package and ship the diapers and track inventory on an ongoing basis, while also dealing with bulk distribution to partners. With online retailers handling the delivery of diapers, VDB staff has only to track the funds used for each client.

Because home delivery would be an attractive option for just about anyone, it will need to be limited through an application process. It is likely that the small budget set-aside will not be sufficient to meet the demand, but given the higher cost per diaper (38 cents per diaper or more vs. 15 cents for diapers through NDBN), it is necessary to limit the volume of home delivery diapers in order to maximize the overall number of diapers supplied by the VDB.



Cloth Option

As described earlier, an existing nonprofit organization called [The Cloth Option](#) offers free cloth diapers and training assistance to low-income families that want to use cloth rather than disposables. It is recommended that all VDB partners post contact information for The Cloth Option where families currently receive diapers. For families that cannot easily get to food shelves and PCCs and have access to a washing machine, The Cloth Option may be a substitute for the home delivery option described above. It is assumed that this option would be pursued by a small number of families, since nationally only 5 to 10% of families use cloth diapers, and more affluent families are likely overrepresented in that subset of households.

Costs and Funding

There are four categories of cost associated with operating the Vermont Diaper Bank:

- Staff salaries and benefits
- Purchasing supplies (diapers and wipes)
- Transportation
- Overhead (rent, insurance, utilities, etc.)

The estimated costs for these items vary with the scale of the program (how many diapers are distributed) and with the source of funding. To the extent that the VDB relies on philanthropy and grants rather than dedicated state funding, staff costs will increase because fundraising and grant writing are labor intensive activities.

The least expensive way, on a per-diaper basis, to supply free diapers to low-income families in Vermont is for the State to supply all or virtually all of the funding for the VDB. The funding could flow through a state agency, such as the Department for Children and Families, via a contract with the VDB, but there may be other channels through which the funding to flow, depending on how the VDB is structured. With dedicated funding from the State, all of the staff resources at the VDB can be focused on procuring and distributing diapers, rather than on fundraising. Dedicated funding from the State also allows budgets to be set with precision and diapers to be distributed with confidence, rather than a “scarcity mentality” which afflicts nonprofits that rely on philanthropy.

Based on the current distribution of about 830,000 diapers by JLCV, the response of each partner concerning how many additional diapers they believe they could distribute, and the impact of wider advertising of the availability of diapers, the estimated statewide volume of diapers for the first year of operation comes to about 1.25 million.² The cost for 1.25 million diapers and wipes is about \$202,000. Adding 5% (\$10,000) would allow for another 25,000 diapers to be distributed through the home delivery program. The total diapers distributed and other estimated program costs are shown in the table below:

	Diapers Dist'd	Inventory Cost	Staff	Overhead	Transport	Total
FY24	1,275,300	\$212,625	\$140,000	\$20,000	\$5,000	\$377,625

² Note that even with this expansion over the current volume, the figure is still well below the estimates of diaper need discussed earlier based on eligibility for Dr. Dynasaur or WIC, or simply based on the federal poverty level, which ranged from 4 million to 24 million diapers.

The inventory cost includes the price of diapers at 15 cents each (on average) and wipes at 1.2 cents each, with a cost of 40 cents per home delivery diaper. The staff cost includes a full-time Executive Director at an annual cost of \$100,000 (including salary and benefits) and a part-time assistant at \$40,000 per year. It is vital to note that the staffing level and cost estimate assumes a reliance on a pool of volunteers to assist with the handling of diapers, similar to the JLCV model. Overhead includes rent, utilities, insurance and other supplies. Transport costs include truck rental fees (at more than three times the rate currently paid by JLCV, to allow for growth).

It is assumed for future years that the program will grow organically through word of mouth and direct outreach, with the pace of growth increasing after the second year. The bulk of future cost increases would be primarily due to a larger volume of diapers being distributed, rather than staff or overhead costs. That is, if the program costs more in the future it is because it is more successfully achieving its mission of meeting diaper need in Vermont. Furthermore, with greater volume in the future, economies of scale would reduce the total cost per diaper distributed, possibly to as low as 23 cents per diaper.

This program cannot be handled effectively by paid staff alone.

It is essential to note that these cost estimates assume a supply of volunteer labor to assist with the handling of diapers.

Part of the staff responsibility will be to recruit and coordinate volunteers.

Data Gathering and Reporting

As the beneficiary of a state grant, the Vermont Diaper Bank will be responsible for gathering data about the program and reporting back to the State about its effectiveness. At a minimum, the VDB will need to track and report the numbers of diapers and wipes distributed to each of its partners. The VDB will also need the cooperation of its partners to tabulate the number of families that have benefitted from the program. Some partners may currently track this, but food pantries and food shelves are likely not tallying the number of unique individuals who receive diapers per year or per month. Detailed tracking may not be required by the State, but estimates of the number of families benefiting from the program will be a critical performance measure for the program.

The State is also likely to be interested in tracking the effects on the wellbeing of families participating in the program. These results will need to be gathered through surveys or focus groups. Both the state and federal government may be interested in “wraparound” benefits these families could receive; that is, if a family is receiving diapers from a food shelf but is not enrolled in other programs for which they are eligible, then the diaper program may be an effective means of “getting them into the system” to receive other benefits.

Other Options Considered

Besides the state-funded nonprofit option described above, the study team considered several other alternatives to meet diaper need in Vermont. These are discussed briefly below, followed by a summary evaluation of the options. See Appendix C for tables presenting all of the financial assumptions and calculations for each of the options.

State Voucher Program

Under this option, diapers would become an entitlement for a specific population based on household income. This means that the eligible population, however it is defined (see below), will be entitled to receive cash or a cash-equivalent to cover some or all of the expense of diapers for children up to a specified age. It would thus be similar to other income-based entitlement programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

For the purposes of this report, it is assumed that the benefit would be distributed to eligible families through a voucher program. The vouchers would be used by recipients to purchase diapers from retailers, predominantly brick and mortar stores in Vermont, but potentially online retailers if the technical details could be worked out.

There are significant logistical challenges with this approach. Research in California and elsewhere has shown that trying to use EBT (electronic benefit transfer) cards for the diaper benefit, and being able to restrict the added cash to diaper purchases, has significant technical challenges and is not feasible in the near term. Likewise, Vermont State officials within the Vermont Agency of Human Services noted that this would require new procedures that could be quite challenging, especially given staffing challenges that the State is currently experiencing.

A range of possible eligibility criteria were examined, including the federal poverty level (FPL), WIC (185% of FPL), and Dr. Dynasaur (317% of FPL). For the latter two definitions, any child age zero to two already in the WIC or Dr. Dynasaur program would automatically receive the benefit, but people who are eligible for those programs but not participating could also receive the benefit if they filed an application specifically for the diaper benefit. For the FPL definition, all families would have to file an application to join the diaper benefit program. For all definitions, families with children age three or older who still use diapers would need to apply for extended benefits.

For the sake of evaluation, the WIC definition was chosen as the most appropriate threshold for eligibility. As indicated earlier in this report, the total number of diapers used by children in the WIC program is roughly 15 million per year. It was assumed that the State would supply a benefit equal to 50% of the need, allowing for the purchase of 7.5 million diapers. On a per child basis, this benefit would come out to approximately \$30 per month.

The total cost of the program, however, goes beyond the value of the vouchers. There would need to be staff time devoted to administering the program. There would also be printing and mailing costs. Further, these costs do not include the additional burden placed on retailers to handle and process the vouchers and request reimbursement from the State. The per diaper cost in this program would reflect retail prices rather than bulk wholesale (or discounted NDBN) prices. Diapers purchased in retail stores can range from 25 to 37 cents per diaper, though there are some cheaper options for off-brand diapers at Walmart and Costco.

The annual total cost of the program would be in the range of \$2.2 million. It would clearly serve more people than the recommended option, but at a much higher total cost. People who are not eligible for WIC, including non-citizens, would be excluded from the program. Further, there may be parts of Vermont where there are no retailers who are willing to accept the vouchers, given the administrative burden. That could eliminate the benefit of the program for many people.

State Diaper Distribution



Under this option, the State itself would establish a diaper bank and handle all of the purchasing and distribution of diapers. The State would have to hire staff, identify or build warehouse space, and build a distribution network. It is likely that if the State ran the program, then access to the diapers would be limited to families that met some eligibility criterion (like WIC) rather than allowing anyone who entered a food shelf to receive the diapers. If the State decided to work with the fifteen Parent Child Centers as the primary means of distribution, then the PCCs would likely need to add staff and acquire storage space for the diapers, as well as checking recipients for eligibility and doing all of the record keeping. These costs were not estimated for this analysis, but would be substantial.

This program, assuming it aimed to meet 50% of the need of WIC-eligible children, would also cost upwards of \$2 million per year. The diapers themselves would be cheaper because the State could buy them at wholesale prices (though it is unclear if the State could be a member of NDBN), but there would be much higher staff and other costs. If the PCCs were the main distribution points, then families that could not get to those locations easily may be effectively excluded from the program. Non-citizens may also be excluded from the program, depending on the definition of eligibility.

Initial consultation with state employees indicates that it is extremely unlikely that state agencies would have the capacity to undertake such a program in the near term (within two or three years), even if the Legislature decided to fund it. Even the voucher program would stretch the capacity of existing staff beyond what is feasible, if it were to be at the scale discussed above.

Other Nonprofit Alternatives

The other alternatives studied were variations of the recommended option, based on a nonprofit organization operating the diaper bank in a manner similar to the Junior League. The primary variable was the degree of state support for the organization. In one scenario (Alternative A), the State would fund 50% of the total operating expense, and in the second (Alternative B), the State would not fund any of the operating expense. In each case, the VDB would generate money through fundraising and grants to replace the money from the State, compared to the recommended option.

For Alternative A, it is assumed that in addition to the Executive Director, there would need to be two full-time staff members to assist with fundraising and grant writing, as well as regular operations. It is further assumed that the volume of diapers distributed would be lower, with a base level of 1 million, rather than 1.25 million in the recommended option, increasing to 1.7 million over the five-year span (instead of 3 million). The volume is assumed to be lower partly because of “scarcity mentality” in that the VDB and its partners would not advertise availability as aggressively and may limit the number of diapers per family more than they would if it were a state-funded program and the supply were more assured.

The total cost in the initial year would be higher than the recommended option, but the total cost in FY28 would be lower because the volume of diapers would be so much lower. The total cost per diaper would be quite a bit higher than the recommended option, ranging from 40 cents per diaper in FY24 down to 32 cents per diaper in FY28 (compared to 30 cents down to 23 cents). Of course, the cost to the State would be lower, since it would only be funding 50% of the operation.

For Alternative B, staff costs would be greater with a fourth staff member added to coordinate diaper drives and other fundraising. The assumed volume would be even lower, with an FY24 projection of 700,000 diapers (less than the current volume of the Junior League), increasing to 1.1 million by FY28. The Junior League is able to distribute over 800,000 diapers per year because of the state funding it receives. The new VDB would likely need to cut back on supply until it could generate enough grants and donors to replace the state funding. Further, the “scarcity mentality” would be worse than Alternative A if the State had no role in funding the organization.

The total cost in the initial year would be yet higher than Alternative A due to the additional staffing, but the FY28 cost would be a little lower because of the lower volume of diapers. The total cost per diaper would be nearly 60 cents at first, declining to about 47 cents per diaper in the fifth year.



Evaluation Matrix and Rationale for Recommendation

The table below summarizes the financial estimates for each of the options analyzed, using FY24 figures to represent the program's performance.

<i>OPTION</i>	Total Diapers	Total Cost/ Total Diapers	Total Cost	State Cost	Fund-raising
<i>Direct benefit</i>	7,500,000	\$0.29	\$2,192,000	\$2,192,000	\$0
<i>State-operated distribution</i>	7,500,000	\$0.26	\$1,970,000	\$1,970,000	\$0
<i>State-funded nonprofit</i>	1,275,300	\$0.30	\$377,625	\$377,625	\$0
<i>Partly state-supported nonprofit</i>	1,020,300	\$0.42	\$425,100	\$212,550	\$212,550
<i>Privately funded nonprofit</i>	700,000	\$0.61	\$426,400	\$0	\$426,400

To help determine which model would be the best solution, the study team developed five evaluation measures and then scored each of the alternatives on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the best performance. The evaluation measures were as follows:

- **Feasibility** – The likelihood that the program could be implemented, especially in the short run
- **Cost per diaper** – The total cost per diaper distributed through the program, which includes staff, overhead and transportation costs
- **Meets needs** – To what extent the model meets the need for diapers in Vermont
- **State cost** – The annual cost to the state budget to support the program (with low points given to the most costly program to the State, and the most points to the program with no state funding)
- **Federal grant** – The possibility that the program could take advantage of a grant issued by the federal Department of Health and Human Services (discussed in more detail at the end of this section)

The team also assigned weights to these evaluation measures, based on their varying importance to successful program:

- **Feasibility** – 25 points
- **Cost per diaper** – 30 points
- **Meets needs** – 20 points
- **State cost** – 15 points
- **Federal grant** – 10 points

These weights reflect the opinion of the team that the cost effectiveness (cost per diaper) is the most important factor, followed by the feasibility of the program. Meeting the needs of Vermonters is the next most important factor. State cost was also deemed important at 15 points. The Federal grant could be a significant source of funding, but was rated at only 10 points, taking into account that it remains speculative at this point as to whether it will be offered and what restrictions it would have in place.

The scores applied to each of the options are shown in the table below. The composite score in the righthand column reflects the weights applied to each of the evaluation criteria. The highest possible score would be 100, if an option scored 10 for each of the measures.

<i>OPTION</i>	Feasibility	Cost/ diaper	Meets needs	State cost	Federal grant	Score
<i>Direct benefit</i>	4	9	10	1	0	59
<i>State-operated distribution</i>	1	8	10	3	0	51
<i>State-funded nonprofit</i>	10	10	4	8	5	80
<i>Partly state-supported nonprofit</i>	7	5	3	9	5	57
<i>Privately funded nonprofit</i>	5	3	2	10	5	46

The state-run programs, including the direct benefit and the distribution models, score poorly on feasibility, as noted earlier in this report, given the bureaucratic challenges, needs for flexibility and overall disruption to the families in need. Likewise, the uncertainty of success could provide enough reasons to give one pause before undertaking such a new approach, one that no state has successfully implemented, or even tried as far as the research shows. An assumption built into the evaluation is that state-run programs could meet a greater need and the overall cost per diaper would be low, but the overall cost would likely be unrealistic given budgetary pressures. Moreover, the state-run programs would not be eligible for the federal HHS grant (see below), while the nonprofits might be.

The scoring matrix demonstrates why the third option, the state-funded nonprofit, is the recommended option. It is the most similar to the existing JLCV program, and thus essentially “turn-key.” It has the greatest feasibility, especially in the short term and is the most cost-effective option. The cost to the State is not zero, but it is not wildly out of line with the level of support that the State has provided to the Junior League over the past three years. It maintains a supply of diapers to the partners of the Junior League and offers continuity to those families who have been depending on the diaper bank. Perhaps the greatest challenge, which would be true of most of the options, is finding excellent staffing. While it does not meet all of the needs, it has the potential to grow, and with additional state funding, could meet a greater percentage of the need in the future.



Potential Capital Projects

The Vermont Diaper Bank can function with rented facilities for the near term, and potentially indefinitely, but it could benefit from a permanent distribution facility and office. The two points of distribution established by the Junior League—Chittenden County and the Upper Valley—make sense to offer convenient access to the majority of the state with a minimal footprint. A permanent facility could be established in either location, with a satellite facility in the other location. The permanent facility would include office space for staff as well as warehouse space for the diapers and supplies.

Preliminary discussions with the staff of Senator Sanders indicate that the VDB could apply for a federal earmark to build a facility. As mentioned earlier, a feasibility study for a facility would cost between \$15,000 and \$20,000, and the facility itself would likely cost in the range of \$1 million to \$1.5 million depending on the overall size and the dimensions of the finished office space.

The other capital item that could be considered would be a delivery truck. It is unlikely that a truck would be needed within the first year or two of operations, but if the demand grows and more partners request deliveries rather than sending their own cars and vans to pick up diapers, then a truck owned by the VDB would make sense. A small truck, costing in the range of \$50,000, would likely suffice for several years.

Funding Sources

For a human service program like the VDB, there are essentially two possible sources of funding: philanthropy and government. Unless a very wealthy donor steps forward and creates a \$30 million dollar endowment for the VDB, obtaining money through grants and direct fundraising is very labor intensive and fraught with uncertainty. For the immediate term, given the support the State has already given to the Junior League's Diaper Bank, the State is the most obvious source of stable funding.

While the state-funded nonprofit was chosen as the recommended alternative for the short term, the best long-term solution to diaper need in Vermont, and across the United States, is for the federal government to add support for diaper purchases to one of its existing benefit programs such as WIC, Head Start, Medicaid, SNAP, TANF, or another similar program. Of course, should the federal government reinstate the Child Tax Credit, which gave most families \$300 per month for children under the age of 6, child poverty may be reduced to such an extent that most diaper need will disappear. After all, diaper costs average about \$70-\$80 per month.



If the federal government does not act, the State could decide to take on the problem more directly in the future, replacing the VDB with a direct benefit. While this was judged to have poor feasibility in the short term, it may be more feasible five to ten years in the future as the functionality of EBT cards change and as a constituency for diaper support grows. The aging of the population in Vermont (third highest average age in the US) adds impetus to create incentives for families with children to locate here.

As mentioned above, there is a federal grant program through the Department of Health and Human Services that may support the VDB in the future. The 2022 grant round was available only to state associations of community action programs, but NDBN has been lobbying HHS to make it available to nonprofit diaper banks as well. The recent round, with \$10 million in funding, was focused on data gathering and research into the impacts of diaper bank programs. It is unclear whether the program will have future grant rounds, who will be eligible and what the focus will be, but the VDB, in partnership with the National Diaper Bank Network, should monitor HHS funding announcements and consider applying in 2023 or thereafter if it is eligible.

Finally, the VDB would also have the option of applying for an operating funds earmark as an alternative to, or in addition to, the capital earmark described above. A federal earmark would help relieve the State from some of its funding obligation, at least temporarily, and allow for expansion of the program.



Next Steps

The goal of this study was to develop a recommendation for a sustainable model for a diaper bank in Vermont so that the benefit of free diapers now enjoyed by many low-income families can continue uninterrupted even as the Junior League steps back from its long commitment to addressing this need. Based on the analysis presented in this report, a state-funded nonprofit will be the most feasible and cost-effective means to continue the flow of diapers to low-income families.

The Vermont Legislature would need to consider this recommendation in its upcoming session beginning in January 2023. Ideally, with a positive initial reaction from key committee chairs, the Junior League and its partners could begin the process of establishing a new nonprofit or creating a new program within an existing nonprofit. Creating a corporation is relatively simple, though establishing a board of directors will be a bit of a challenge and applying for 501(c)(3) status a bit more of a challenge. If a new nonprofit is to be established, a partner organization, such as the Vermont Foodbank or Vermont Parent Child Center Network, could act as a fiscal sponsor in the short term until the VDB is able to gain its own nonprofit status.

If the Legislature approves of the concept, it would be ideal for the program to be incorporated into the base budget for the state agency that would award the contract. Base funding, as opposed to a grant supported by one-time funds, would allow the organization to focus on its mission right away, rather than on an immediate appeal for additional funds.

Simultaneous with this effort, the Board of Directors of the VDB would need to conduct a search for the Executive Director. Ideally that person would be hired by Summer 2023 and begin to take over the program from the Junior League. The VDB, once established and staffed, would join the NDBN and begin its program of diaper distribution.



Appendix A – Survey Results

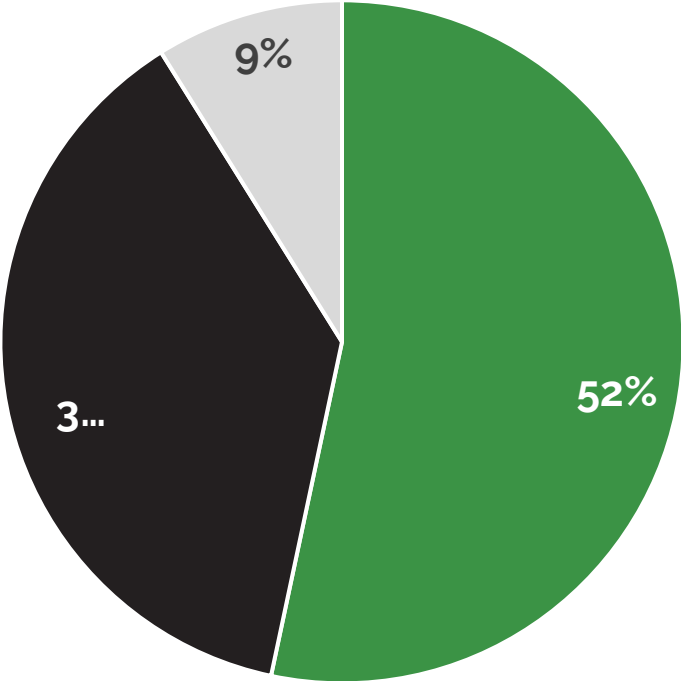
In July 2022, the consultant team conducted a brief survey of the partner agencies that receive diapers from the Junior League’s Diaper Bank. Through the survey, the team sought to understand the degree to which the existing program met the need for diapers in Vermont; how much the partners have promoted the availability of diapers, or conversely limited their distribution; how well the program has worked for them thus far; and ways in which the program could be improved.

The pages that follow show the basic tabulations of the responses to each of the questions and highlight some of the comments and suggestions supplied by the partners. Overall, there was a great deal of appreciation for the existing program and a desire to build upon its success.

Methodology

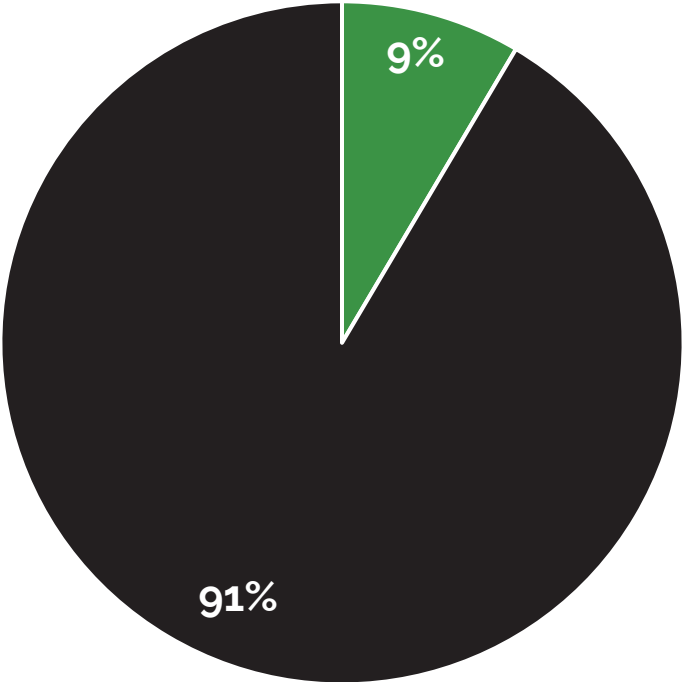
- Twelve question survey developed in Google Forms
- Link sent to all 79 partners in the VDP contact list plus HOPE in Lyndonville
- Survey held open for three weeks with two reminders sent
- 50 responses obtained, representing 48 distinct partners

To what extent are the needs in your area being met by the current allocation of diapers you are receiving from the Junior League?



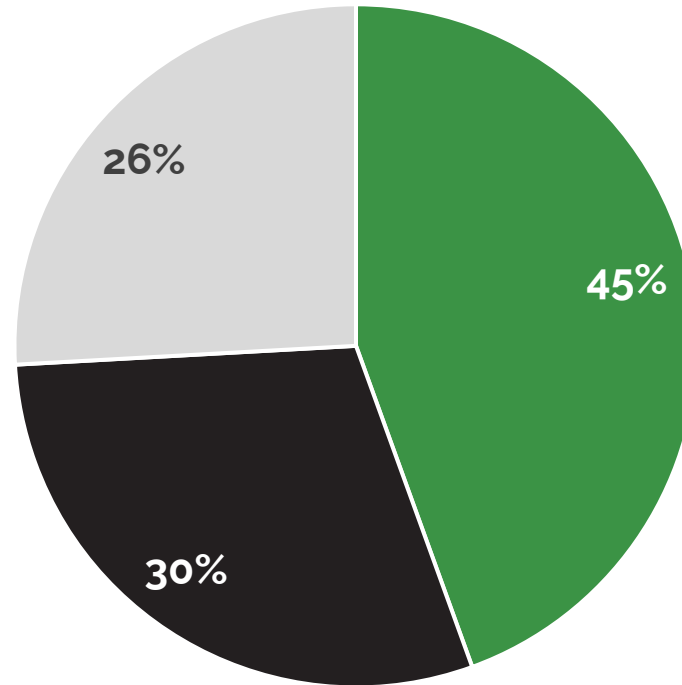
■ All ■ Most (>75%) ■ Partly (<75%)

Do you purchase diapers beyond what you receive from the Diaper Bank?



■ Yes ■ No

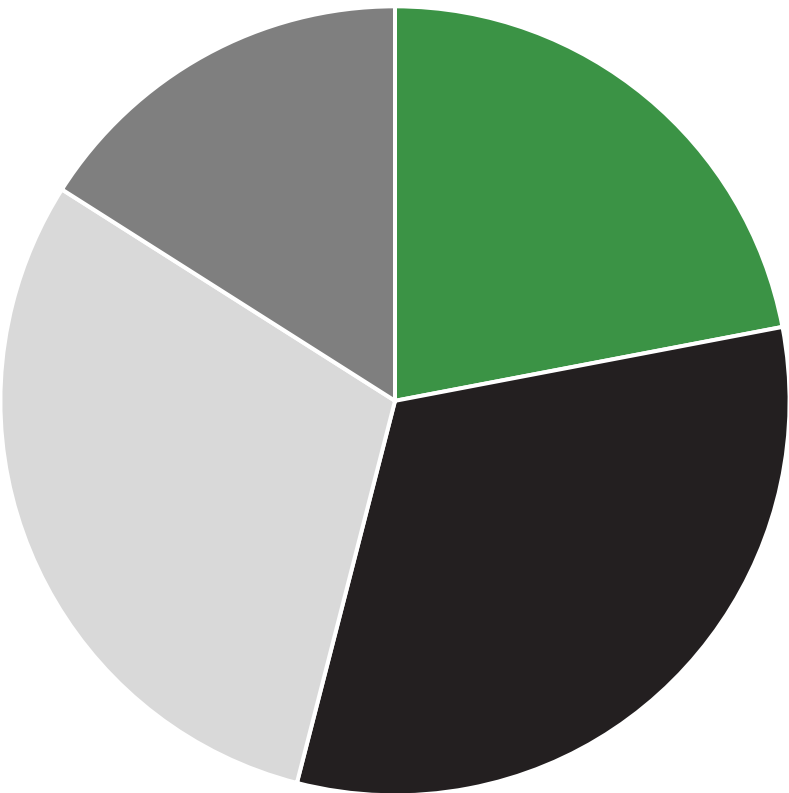
Have you done any advertising or other activity to make people aware that diapers are available?



■ Yes* ■ Just word of mouth ■ No

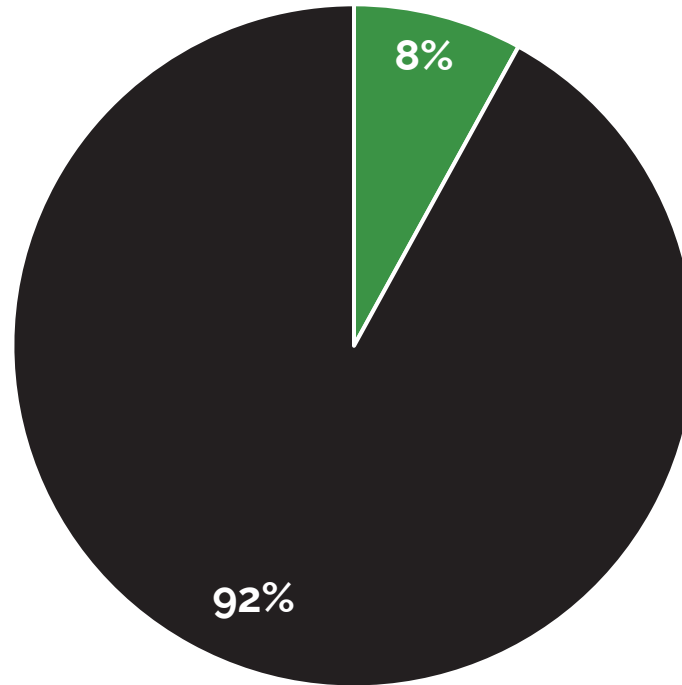
*Yes responses include Facebook and other social media

How much would demand increase if the availability of diapers were announced more widely?



■ A little (<20%) ■ Somewhat ■ A lot (>50%) ■ Unsure

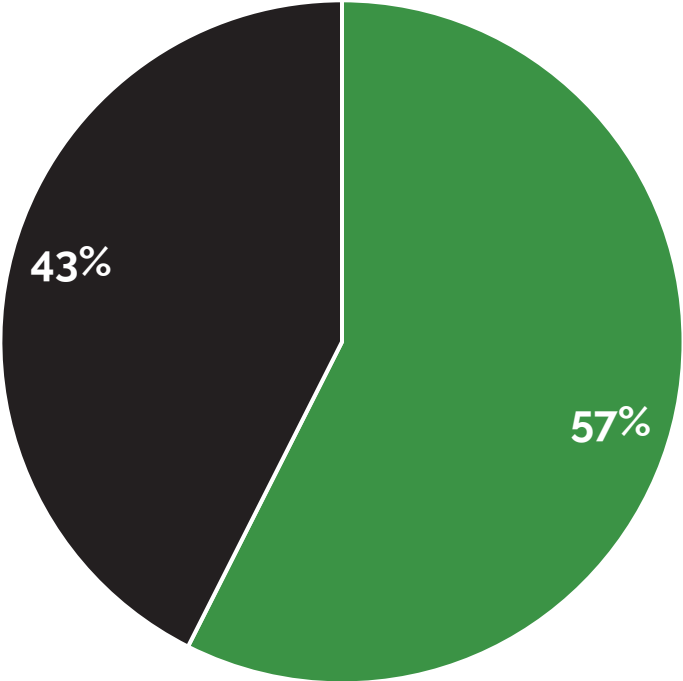
Do you think there needs to be eligibility requirements for people receiving free diapers?



■ Yes* ■ No

*Suggested requirements include income threshold or whatever rules apply to come to a food pantry

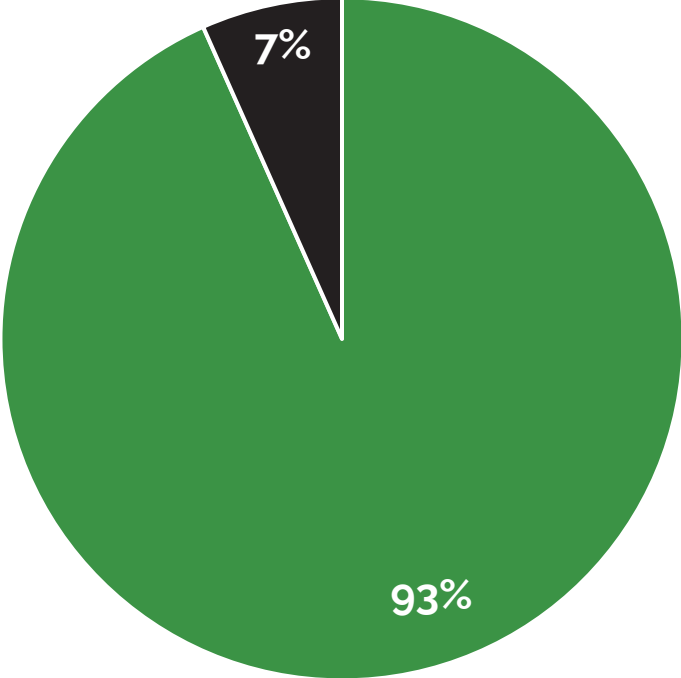
Have you ever limited the amount of diapers any one family can receive?



■ Yes ■ No

Limit most commonly one package per child per visit

Can your organization continue to pick up diapers from a central location indefinitely (on your own or in concert with other nearby partners)?



■ Yes ■ No

One Thing Most Helpful about Diaper Bank Program

- The Diaper Bank has allowed us to maintain an ample supply of all sizes of diapers for our clients. It has been very helpful to families to have this extra economic support. The Diaper Bank helps to remove financial barriers for families who are working hard to improve their lives and those of their families.

Delivery to Upper Valley

Immediately available to people in need without having to go through a state or federal process

Reliability, simplicity and regularity

Fast, friendly encounters and high degree of trust

It brings families to the pantry, especially this summer when food insecurity is high.

Ability to pick and choose sizes

Low barrier to entry. I can ask for the quantity I need for whoever we decide to distribute to without getting quagmired in reports, minutiae or eligibility criteria.

One Thing to Change about Diaper Bank Program

Making it more efficient and accessible. Having an online option to procure diaper bank items as well as report our data on a monthly basis would be very helpful.

Increase the frequency of pick up.

Delivery, as it takes a commercial vehicle to get all we need

In the ideal world, more cloth diapers would be great. Wondered if there are donations of those too???

Love it when we can order diapers through the Vermont Food Bank so we can get our needs once a month in our regular delivery.

If I could dream it would be more central location. We are fortunate that Rutland parent child center picks up for us so I only have to drive an hour one way to get from them.

Other Comments

- This is such an amazing service being offered. I really hope the State understands diaper need in our community and the deficiencies in our current safety net programs to be able to purchase diapers. That said, I hope the State does not make this an administrative nightmare to access later. Keep it simple and uncomplicated. Use the existing mechanism and partnerships but fund it to sustain it.

Praise for Amanda...Universal!

Appendix B – Focus Group Results & Agency Interviews

This report is heavily informed by hearing directly from parents served by the Vermont Diaper Bank and the providers at agency food shelves and social assistance programs. This appendix includes a brief methodology and then detailed responses from parents and agency representatives, fleshing out the key findings listed on page 10 in the main body of the report

Methodology

Between September 1 and December 8, 2022, the study team conducted focus groups and interviews with agency representatives, who collectively addressed the diaper need throughout Vermont.

Focus Groups

Eight focus groups reached 27 families who used the donated diapers and wipes. Most of these participants were mothers, although there were a few fathers included, and most were birthright citizens, although we also heard from New Americans, originally from African countries.

Participants were recruited to be part of the focus groups through fliers and emails distributed to JLCV's partner agencies across Vermont. Each participant received a \$50 gift card for participating in the focus group.

Most participants were eager to share their viewpoints and have their voices heard. To encourage candor, participants were assured that none of their comments would be attributed directly to them. All focus groups were conducted over Zoom, and each had between one to three participants. Focus groups lasted up to 90 minutes, and participants were encouraged to offer their thoughts, whether in agreement or disagreement with what others in the group were saying. Conversations were open-ended and largely based on five questions:

- Need: What are your needs for diapers? Are you receiving enough diapers through the Diaper Bank? Or do you need to supplement them?
- Impact: What is the impact of not having enough diapers?
- Outreach: Is word getting out to families in need about the diaper bank?
- Preferences: Would you use cloth diapers?
- Solutions: Would you prefer that the state give you diapers, or would you prefer a voucher or an EBT card so that you could purchase diapers independently?

Agency interviews

In addition to the focus groups, the study team contacted 79 agencies, including parent-child centers, offices of economic opportunity, food shelves, medical clinics, mental health designated agencies, refugee resettlement organizations, and other social service agencies, inviting them to meet with us one-on-one or in groups to supplement the research. Twenty agency leaders participated in our research.

Detailed responses from parents and agency representatives

The quotes below reflect the personal experiences and opinions of those surveyed. The study team cannot vouch for the accuracy of any of these statements.

- Free diapers can be a game changer for families in crisis.

“It’s made a gigantic difference for me financially, especially being a single mom of four.”
[Parent]

“Having help with diapers has been huge. I went from unemployed to homeless, and having free diapers takes the weight off my shoulders.” [Parent]

“I think the Junior League is meeting a real and unmet need of the community. Three out of five kids don’t have enough diapers. That creates a health and equity problem in Vermont.”
[Agency]

“The diaper program frees up money for other things. Especially with the price of food going up at the grocery store. It’s a necessity, and you can’t really get around it. You have to find the money for it somehow.” [Parent]

“We’ve always been able to survive, but the money we’re saving on free diapers does make a difference for us. It’s nice to have a cushion.” [Parent]

“Affording fuel and things like that is a lot less stressful with free diapers.” [Parent]

“It’s nice to have free diapers. We really appreciate all the help the diaper bank gives us.”
[Parent]

“Families need diapers. They can hardly afford diapers. The families I support are on subsidy from the state... it’s an issue for them to buy diapers. I supply them with daycare and give the parents the diapers to use at home.” [Agency]

“It would be a total disaster if the Diaper Bank went away.” [Agency]

“When we told families about the diapers, families would say, ‘Wow this is wonderful.’ There was an audible sigh of relief and palpable excitement around diapers.” [Agency]

“The past two years have been a struggle for me financially. We bought a house at the beginning of COVID, but I had to go to work part-time. Diapers are the one thing that’s off our plate for a little bit, and it’s been very, very helpful. For families, it’s one thing we can get help with, and it’s less stress for us to worry about.” [Parent]

“The diaper bank has been incredibly helpful. I have bills to pay, and having the meals brought to me and free diapers is really nice.” [Parent]

“For the most part, I’m getting enough diapers for my toddler. For my 4-year-old, it’s hit or miss. But I do know who to ask to bring more.” [Parent]

“When we don’t have enough diapers, we find ways to stretch the ones we do have further.” [Parent]

“Food can be sourced through many programs. Diapers cannot.” [Agency]

“When I don’t have enough wipes, I use cloths from the hospital and wet them.” [Parent]

“I get enough diapers from Amanda [to distribute to families]. But some months it comes down to my last box of diapers. We will likely run out of diapers this month, and if so, I’ll drive to Burlington to get some more diapers.” [Agency]

“When families run out of diapers, they’ll use washcloths, grocery bags, or other unsanitary or unsafe options. People get desperate.” [Agency]

- Stigma is real. Many agencies reported that families are often reluctant to seek help or to take as many diapers as they might need. Agencies also noted that they sometimes lacked storage and staffing as a barrier to distributing enough diapers to meet the need.

“We no longer ask for any need of income. We want to reduce or avoid stigma. It’s horrible! Stigma can last a lifetime.” [Agency]

“I have friends who could use the free diapers. But they won’t take them.” [Parent]

“I’ve seen families who just take a few diapers, and I have to encourage them to take more.”
[Agency]

“Sometimes I’ll only take a few diapers because I really need them. But I know that there are other families out there who need them more than we do.” [Parent]

“When my first one was born, I didn’t ask for diapers. But now I need them. And so, I do.”
[Parent]

“In cases where I couldn’t get free diapers, I have had to ask my dad. And that was a difficult conversation.” [Parent]

“There are no barriers to the diaper bank. You come as you are and we’ll help you as you can.”
[Agency]

“[The free diapers are] meant to be a supplemental supply. It’s not supposed to be a main source. And that’s because of limited supply.” [Agency]

“I do supplement my diaper needs by buying them myself sometimes. Sometimes it’s okay for me to supplement. Sometimes it’s tight.” [Parent]

“We would give out more diapers, and we could probably give out twice as many, but we have nowhere to store the diapers. Look at our space. It’s completely packed. There is literally no more room. Plus, we’re a charity and we rely on volunteers. We literally couldn’t afford to give out more diapers...we simply don’t have the staff. But we know that the families need more.” [Agency]

“It’s the expense. Access to us is challenging, and storage is a constraint. If we had to store diapers, they’d be put in a dirt garage.” [Agency]

- Families learn about diapers through providers and word of mouth.

“We went through a really rough month back in May because my husband was laid off in between seasons. We didn’t have a lot, and we ended up visiting the food bank. The food bank told me about the diaper bank.” [Parent]

“My cousin didn’t know about the program. When she had a baby. I told her about it.” [Parent]

“We see young women who hear that we have diapers. People are just thrilled.” [Agency]

“All my friends are getting free diapers right now.” [Parent]

“Honestly, getting diapers is a big reason for people to come to their appointments – whether it’s their mental or counseling appointments. They don’t have the resources to get food or diapers. If we have the diapers, we’re more likely to get them to come into the building.”
[Agency]

“When we give out diapers, I can almost see when a child is born, because the smaller sizes are coming out.” [Agency]

“I knew about the program, but I wasn’t able to access it unless I started with Head Start.”
[Parent]

“People who are struggling, all the way from abject poverty to those underemployed. They just need some help.” [Agency]

“If we do a home visit, they don’t always answer the door. Now, when we’re bringing diapers, they’ll invite us in. And then we’ll get to do parent education and parent support tasks. Sometimes people don’t confirm their appointments, but they much more often confirm if they have diapers.” [Agency]

“All my friends who are mothers use the diaper program now. Information spreads through word of mouth.” [Parent]

“Originally, we had a core group of shoppers (clients who were really in poverty), and they needed every single opportunity that they could get food. Now, we’re helping families who either something has happened to them, like one of the folks lost a job, and now a number of people have started to use us above and beyond being in poverty. They’re not making it 100%.” [Agency]

“You don’t really hear about the program unless you’re connected with another mom.”
[Parent]

“My friends already know about the diaper bank.” [Parent]

“A lot of my friends have kids, but none of them use the diaper bank. But they don’t need it like I do.” [Parent]

“We would increase communications to families and spread the word more, if we had more diapers.” [Agency]

- When asked about the possibility of receiving vouchers (or EBT cards) for diapers instead of actual diapers, most preferred diapers. Some liked the idea of the vouchers, but raised significant concerns about transportation and other logistical concerns.

“For me, delivering diapers is better than an EBT card. I have a hard enough time getting to the store for groceries, so I’d prefer diaper deliveries. I don’t know where I could go to get them near me.” [Parent]

“Regarding EBT cards it would be easier to receive diapers. Many people don’t have access to transportation.” [Agency]

“I like the idea of a voucher because you can pick your own brand. But I also like the convenience of not having to shop for diapers when it’s done this way... it’s one less thing on the list. Either way would be great.” [Parent]

“Vouchers require access to transportation. Both have utility, depending on certain client needs and constraints.” [Agency]

“I’m not sure I’d want everyone in the EBT program to have access to diapers. That might lead to abuse.” [Agency]

“It sounds like a lot of red tape.” [Agency]

“If a voucher were specifically for diapers, that could work. Many of our families struggle with transportation. If you have your six-month old and you’re on the bus, that’s difficult. I like the possibility of an option. But I’d rather have the physical diapers.” [Agency]

“If there were a voucher specifically for diapers that could be fine, although that adds a layer for transportation for people who don’t have vehicles.” [Agency]

“I think the diapers would be better than vouchers. But a combination could be fabulous.” [Agency]

“If you had a card, it could help a lot. But I’m not familiar with that system. As a home provider, I probably wouldn’t be given a card. It would be for parents only.” [Agency]

“The card would be pretty convenient... but finding diapers in the store would be the hardest part. I know during the formula shortage it was so hard to find anything.” [Parent]

“An EBT card would be better for me.” [Parent]

“I think they should use the EBT system or farm it out to a nonprofit. Just dropping the program would be a really bad idea.” [Agency]

“An EBT card would be helpful. I haven’t had sizing issues, but my son does leak through the diaper bank diapers.” [Parent]

“Vouchers are a possibility, but transportation is a big challenge. And one more trip can be too much.” [Agency]

“I like the idea of cards if they give you the choice of brands. I feel like the diaper bank ones tend to run small. I have to go to the store anyway, so it wouldn’t be an extra trip.” [Parent]

“EBT cards for diapers would be helpful. My daughter has rashes from the diaper bank diapers, so I’d like to choose from a few brands.” [Parent]

“Vouchers and EBT cards sound convenient, but it sounds not very cost effective. But for the rest of the system, it’d be very nice because of our access to diapers in Bennington. But there’s the challenge of transportation, or just physically carrying the diapers. Plus, people love to have their home case worker show up with diapers – they love that.” [Agency]

- Cloth diapers, which are used by about 5% of American parents, were intriguing to a small number of families, but even those families were concerned with the arduous work and logistical challenges of being able to wash cloth diapers.

“For me, disposable is the way to go. Cloth is not for me.” [Parent]

“In my day (my kids are 40) we used cloth diapers. But the world has changed.” [Agency]

“I wanted to use cloth diapers, but then I heard all the nightmare stories.” [Parent]

“Quality of diapers – no complaints. Some families have allergies, but they haven’t had challenges with the diapers we offer.” [Agency]

“I tried cloth diapers with my older child. They didn’t work well, and I didn’t have time to keep up with it.” [Parent]

“No one has asked about cloth diapers.” [Agency]

“I looked into cloth diapers for the last baby I had, but then free diapers came up, so I didn’t try it.” [Parent]

“I did cloth diapers with my two oldest kids, but having a third, cloth diapers were too crazy for me. Too much work! But I wasn’t prepared for how much it actually costs to buy [disposable] diapers and wipes.” [Parent]

“I thought about using cloth, but my dad didn’t want me to put them in our washing machine.” [Parent]

“We used cloth in the past, but we have a shallow well. So that makes things harder now... with water drying up.” [Parent]

- **Additional comments**

“I think it would be difficult for the state to administer the program as well as the Junior League has.” [Agency]

“I think there’s a greater need that’s not being met.” [Agency]

“I don’t worry about program abuse, because the staff who hand out the diapers know their clientele really well, including their background circumstances.” [Agency]

We’ve seen an increase of need for diapers, especially with inflation. We’ve increased our ordering. [Agency]

We have a number of families of mixed race. And we have a small population of New Americans, and we believe that we should be expecting more. [Agency]

“In the nonprofit world we wear a lot of hats. We don’t devote a lot of energy on diapers. It’s not one staff person’s main focus. It’s time and energy. We don’t focus on diapers. We’re just starting to get more access and have a better relationship with the Diaper Bank. It’s so helpful having an organization like the Diaper Bank to focus on just that.” [Agency]

“The food bank often has menstrual products, and that would be a perfect match. We would love if the diaper bank could also deliver those.” [Agency]

Appendix C – Financial Analysis of Options

In order to produce the figures shown on pages 17 and 22, a number of assumptions and calculations were made for each of the options considered in this study. This financial analysis is laid out in the tables in this appendix.

The tables show the analysis of each of the five options in the order they are listed in the table on page 22. The format of the first table is different from the others, since it does not involve the distribution of diaper, but rather just of vouchers to eligible families. This table includes three different eligibility criteria that were considered: Dr. Dynasaur (317% of federal poverty level), WIC (185% of federal poverty level), and poverty (100% of federal poverty level). For this last criterion, since there are no existing programs that use 100% of FPL, it was assumed that families below this income level would need to apply for the program, which would reduce the number of people who actually participated. It was assumed that only 60% of eligible families would both learn about the program and go to the trouble of applying.

The other four tables show some assumptions at the top and then estimates for the number of diapers distributed, costs, and various efficiency measures for State Fiscal Year 2024. Potential capital costs are shown at the bottom of each table.

Establish a voucher program for eligible individuals to purchase retail diapers

Assumes local or online retailers are willing to accept vouchers

Assumes adding cash benefit to EBT cards limited to diaper purchases is infeasible (as found in a California study)

Three potential definitions of eligibility

All levels assume a 0.5 FTE equivalent staff person at DCF to administer the program

Average retail cost per diaper assumed to be \$0.25 based on range of \$0.11 for Parent's Choice/Walmart to \$0.37 for Pampers

Additional administrative burden on retailers to handle vouchers not quantified

1) Dr. Dynasaur as eligibility criterion

Number of Vermonters age 0 to 3	9,020	No application needed; automatically eligible
		Application needed; assume small percentage request (10% of 3 year olds; 1% of 4 year olds)
<u>Ages 3 and 4</u>	<u>3,797</u>	
Total children in program	9,388	
Based on assumed levels of diaper usage by age (9 per day for newborns, down to 4 per day for 3-year olds)		
Total diapers used by this population	24,377,956	
Total subsidy (based on \$30/mo.) to meet half of need	\$3,379,853	
<u>Staff cost and benefit for 0.5 FTE</u>	<u>\$75,000</u>	(assumed total of \$150K including fringe)
Total cost	\$3,454,853	

2) WIC (Women, Infants and Children) as eligibility criterion

Vermonters age 0 to 3	5,513	No application needed; automatically eligible
		Application needed; assume small percentage request (10% of 3 year olds; 1% of 4 year olds)
<u>Ages 3 and 4</u>	<u>3,229</u>	
Total children in program	5,881	
Total diapers used by this population	15,000,000	
Total subsidy (based on \$30/mo.) to meet half of need	\$2,117,333	
<u>Staff cost and benefit for 0.5 FTE</u>	<u>\$75,000</u>	(assumed total of \$150K including fringe)
Total cost	\$2,192,000	

3) FPL (Federal Poverty Level) as eligibility criterion

Required application process		
Children in poverty under age 5	3,737	from census
Proportion successfully completing application (and of diaper age)	<u>60%</u>	Assumed that paperwork burden is too great for a portion of eligible individuals
Children in program	2242	
Total diapers used by this population	3,777,750	
Total subsidy (based on \$60/mo.) to meet all of need	\$1,614,384	
<u>Staff cost and benefit for 0.5 FTE</u>	<u>\$75,000</u>	(assumed total of \$150K including fringe)
Total cost	\$1,689,384	

Establish new program at DCF or other agency to purchase and distribute diapers

Program director salary and benefits	\$150,000	
Other staff salary (3 FTEs) and benefits	\$360,000	
Storage	\$30,000	Warehouse rental (possible use of existing state facilities?)
Transport	\$50,000	Assumes delivery to 15 PCCs
Shipping	\$30,000	For families not able to reach PCCs
Diapers	0.18	Cost per diaper (Jubilee equivalent)

Policy: Meet 50% of need for WIC eligible children

Diapers Dist'd	7,500,000
Diapers	\$1,350,000
Staff	\$510,000
Storage	\$30,000
Transport/ Shipping	\$80,000
Total	\$1,970,000
Overall Cost per diaper	\$0.26
Pct of cost spent on diapers	69%

Establish new non-profit or add to mission of existing non-profit; funding from State

ED salary and benefits	\$100,000	
Volunteer manager	\$40,000	
Insurance and rent	\$20,000	
Transport	\$5,000	
Diapers	\$ 0.16	Cost per diaper through NDBN plus wipes
Current level	830,000	
Meet all needs of current partners	975,000	
With expanded outreach	1,250,000	

Diapers Dist'd	1,250,000
Diapers	\$202,500
Reserved for home delivery	\$10,125
Home delivered diapers	25,300
Total diapers incl. delivery	1,275,300
Total diaper cost incl. delivery	\$212,625
Staff	\$140,000
Overhead	\$20,000
Transport	\$5,000
Total	\$377,625
Overall Cost per diaper	\$0.30
Pct of cost spent on diapers	56%

Distribution center capital cost	\$1,500,000
Delivery truck cost	\$50,000

Establish new non-profit or add to mission of existing non-profit; funding from state and philanthropy

ED salary and benefits	\$100,000	
Other staff salary and benefits (2)	\$120,000	
Insurance and rent	\$30,000	
Transport	\$5,000	
Diapers	\$ 0.16	Cost per diaper through NDBN plus wipes

Diapers Dist'd	1,000,000
Diapers	\$162,000
Reserved for home delivery	\$8,100
Home delivered diapers	20,300
Total diapers incl. delivery	1,020,300
Total diaper cost incl. delivery	\$170,100
Staff	\$220,000
Overhead	\$30,000
Transport	\$5,000
Total	\$425,100
State share	\$212,550
Overall Cost per diaper	\$0.42
Pct of cost spent on diapers	40%

Distribution center capital cost	\$1,500,000
Delivery truck cost	\$50,000

Establish new non-profit or add to mission of existing non-profit; funding from philanthropy

ED salary and benefits	\$100,000	
Other staff salary and benefits (3)	\$180,000	
Insurance and rent	\$30,000	
Transport	\$3,000	
Diapers	\$ 0.16	Cost per diaper through NDBN plus wipes

Assumes home delivery option would not be available due to cost

Diapers Dist'd	700,000	
Diapers	\$113,400	
Staff	\$280,000	
Overhead	\$30,000	
Transport	\$3,000	
Total	\$426,400	
State share	\$0	
Overall Cost per diaper	\$0.61	
Pct of cost spent on diapers	27%	

Distribution center capital cost	\$1,000,000	(smaller building due to lower volume)
Delivery truck cost	unlikely	