



**Vermont Children's Justice Act Task Force
2022 Annual Reporting**

GRANT: Children's Bureau
Office on Child Abuse and Neglect
Children's Justice Act Grant FY 2022
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AGENCY FEDERAL ID: 03-6000274

AGENCY DUNS NUMBER: 80-937-6155

CLOSING DATE: June 14, 2022

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I. Task Force Membership:

a. Name, Title, Organization, Brief Description of relevant background, task force designation

Vermont Children's Justice Act Task Force Membership Listing				
Task Force Membership Designation	Name	Title	Organization	Relevant Background/Experience
Law Enforcement	Pam Hango	SIU Board Manager	VT Special Investigation Unit Board	Pam has 16 years' experience in law enforcement, the majority of which was spent with Vermont State Police, but also in local municipalities as well as dispatch, and 13 years with Human Services, to include investigations for the Secretary of State's office.
Criminal Court Judge	<i>Under Recruitment</i>			
Civil Court Judge	Judge Ben Joseph	Retired VT Court Judge	VT Court Administration	1998 to 2015: VT Superior Court Judge serving on Criminal, Civil and Family divisions. Current State Legislator
Prosecuting Attorney	Rose Kennedy	VT State's Attorney	VT State's Attorney Generals Office	Rosemary is the State's Attorney in Rutland County, Vermont. She is the primary prosecutor for child sexual abuse cases.
Defense Attorney	Marshall Pahl	Chief Juvenile Defender	VT Defender General's Office	Former appellate and trial level criminal defense attorney.
Attorney for Children	Jennifer Hurlburt-Poehlmann Wendy Loomis (as back up)	Public policy/ legislative liaison Executive Director	Rutland Children's Advocacy Center & VT Children's Alliance State Chapter	Current Director of the Vermont Children's Alliance (CAC State Chapter) and the Executive Director of the Rutland CAC.
Child Advocate	Kelly Woodward	Victim Advocate	Franklin County State's Attorney's Office Northwest Unit for Special Investigations	For the past 24 years, Kelly has been the Victim Advocate at the Northwest Unit for Special Investigations, a Child Advocacy Center, and the Franklin County State's Attorney's Office. Her caseload is primarily providing victim services to children who have been abused. Prior to her

				current position, she was an investigative social worker for the Department of Children and Families. Her current memberships in Vermont include the Criminal Rules Committee, Franklin County Sexual Assault Team, NUSI MDT Team, Children's Justice Act, SANE Board, and she holds a National certification as a Sexual Assault Intervention Specialist, Advanced Level, through the National Organization of Victim Assistance.
Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)	Robert Post	Programs Mgr. Court Improvement GAL Director	VT Court Administration	Has worked as the interim GAL Director, currently hired permanently as the Program Manager.
Health Professional	Tracy Wagner	SANE RN VT SANE Board Pediatric Medical Director	VT SANE Board	Peds nurse for > 30 years: acute inpatient care, high-tech home care, visiting nurse, and peds. offices as a Nurse Educator, to Assistant Nurse Mgr. Has MA in nursing & certified Peds. in 2005, became a Forensic Nurse in 2009 & obtained national certification as a SANE-P in 2013. Is the Ped. Clinical Coordinator for the VT SANE Program, Nurse Clinician with the Child Safe Program at UVM. Experienced foster/adoptive parent and parenting children with complex medical, emotional, and physical disabilities.
Mental Health Professional	Gary Marvel	Supervision & Re-Entry Coordinator Co-Director of VT Center for Prevention & Treatment of Sexual Abuse	VT Dept of Corrections Agency of Human Services	Expertise in current best practice for supervision and treatment of adults with sexually harmful behaviors. Previous child welfare social worker.
Child Protective Services	Nancy Miller	Child Safety Manager	VT DCF/Family Services	Has been with Family Services Division since 2006, with experience in the front end, ongoing and JS population- 13 years conducting child abuse investigations and assessments and

				supervising that work. Nancy oversees policy and practice related to child safety interventions and child safety related decision making in the ongoing work. Additionally, Nancy provides consultation to the field and assists with training related to child safety.
Individual Experienced in Working with Children with Disabilities	Rachel Wessel	Children's Services Specialist	VT Dept. of Aging and Independent Living, Developmental Disabilities Services Division	Rachel is a licensed clinical social worker and manages the state-wide system of care for children with developmental disabilities. In her previous roles she supported children with chronic and complex medical needs, adolescents with mental health and substance use challenges.
Parent/ Representative of Parent Group	Larry Crist	Executive Director	VT Parent Representation Center	Holds a law degree & MSW, 45 years of legal & social service in government & non-profit. Managed legal & mental health services in correctional, court & community-based settings at the city, county & state levels. First Director of VT Child, Foster & Adoption Care Licensing, Deputy-Comm. Dept. of Health, Comm. of the Dept. of Aging & Disabilities. Currently serving as Exec. Dir. of the VT Parent Representation Center.
Adult Former Victim of Child Abuse and Neglect	Kelli Gile	Therapist	Private Practice	Kelli Gile holds an MSW from the University of Vermont and a BSW from the University of Maine, Orono. For the past 10 years, Kelli has practiced social work both in the states of Maine and Vermont, most recently as a Family Services Worker with the state of Vermont, DCF services. Currently, Kelli has her own practice as a child, adolescent, and adult therapist located in Barre, VT
Individual Experienced in Working with	Mark Redmond	Executive Director	Spectrum Youth and Family Services	Mark has been Spectrum's Executive Director since 2003. He has worked with homeless and at-

Homeless Children and Youth				risk youth since 1981 - in New York City; Westchester, NY; and Stamford, CT. Before coming to Spectrum, Mark was the Associate Executive Director of the Domus Foundation and helped start the city's first charter school for low-income middle school children. He has a Bachelor's degree in Finance from Villanova University and a Masters in Public Administration from New York University.
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b. Function

- The purpose of the CJA Task Force is to oversee the appropriation of Vermont CJA funds to support the improvement and strengthening of the front-end, or the intake and investigative components of the child protection and child welfare system. This mission requires a spirit of collaboration and a positive working relationship between the Department for Children and Families (DCF) and the Children's Justice Act Task Force. As such, each party in the collaboration has a specific role to play. The respective roles are:

1. The role of The Department for Children and Families is to:

- a. Administer the CJA Grant and assign the function of Grant Manager to a position within the Department for Children and Families.
- b. Facilitate the appropriate business office process of grant funding allocation, based on recommendations it receives from the CJTF.

2. The role of Task Force members:

- a. Act with regard for the well-being and welfare of children and youth.
- b. Contribute to the review of applications for funding
- c. Contribute to the Three-Year Assessment review and evaluation process in their specific area of expertise.
- d. Adhere to state confidentiality requirements.
- e. Regularly attend and fully participate in all scheduled meetings.
- f. Meeting Facilitation: The Meeting Facilitator shall preside at the CJTF meetings and perform duties as appropriate to the mission of the CJTF. Each meeting agenda will contain a standing time to appoint a member for facilitation of the meeting. Members will volunteer to act as the facilitator and be noted in the meeting minutes.

3. The role of the State Coordinator/Grant Manager:

- a. Administer the CJA funds.
- b. Serve as grant administrator on CJA funded projects.
- c. Provide advice, guidance, technical assistance, and information regarding the expected role and function of the CJTF as mandated by the requirements of the CJA Program Instruction.
- d. Attend all CJTF meetings.
- e. Keep CJTF members apprised of the meeting schedules and distribute minutes and other pertinent mailings necessary for Task Force members to fulfill their responsibilities.

- f. Act as liaison between CJTF and the Federal Administration for Children and Families to facilitate communication.
- g. Act as liaison between CJTF and the Vermont Department for Children and Families to facilitate communication.
- g. Present financial reports to task force members' status of CJA funds available for allocation to future projects.

Meetings

- 1. CJTF meetings will occur at least four times per year.
- 2. The State Coordinator/Grant Manager, in consultation with the Task Force, may schedule special meetings.
- 3. The Task Force sets the agenda for the regular and special meetings as a standing agenda item at each meeting.
- 4. The Grant Manager shall document in minutes all regularly scheduled and special CJTF meetings, including any major decisions, action items, recommendations from the CJTF to The Department for Children and Families, and responses from the Department for Children and Families regarding recommendations previously submitted.
- 5. Upon their approval by a majority of a quorum vote at the next scheduled CJTF meeting, the CJTF minutes will be made a permanent record and maintained by the State Coordinator/Grant Manager.

Voting

- 1. Each member of the CJTF shall have one vote.
- 2. Voting will take place in person at the meetings, phone in attendance, or electronic communication with a response time set by the coordinator.
- 3. A quorum for the transaction of business shall consist of one more than half of the current membership of the CJTF. The members in attendance at a meeting where a quorum is not present, may elect (by majority vote), to proceed with the business of the meeting subject to ratification when a quorum is present at the next meeting.
- 4. Any member who directly or individually may benefit from a grant application before the CJTF shall abstain from discussion and voting on the matter.
- 5. Any member with a conflict of interest in an issue being considered by the CJTF, shall make a declaration to that effect, and abstain from further discussion and voting on that issue.

II. Prior Year Performance Report May 2021 to May 2022

1. Guardian ad Litem Program

In Vermont, by statute, a Guardian ad Litem (GAL) is assigned to each child involved in a CHINS (child in need of care or supervision) case to act as an independent advocate for the best interests of the child. It is imperative to have a well-staffed and well-trained pool of volunteers to ensure the delivery of competent and effective advocacy to assist the court as well as state and community stakeholder partners in the adjudication of cases involving abuse and neglect of children. Continued education and professional development for the GAL's is a large part of preparing them for service.

a. **Activity:**

i. Vermont Judiciary/Court Administrators Office/Vermont Guardian ad Litem Professional Development Training Series:

- The following topics were presented at training:
 - Best Practice Tips for GAL's: Panel Discussions with staff from the Department for Children's and Families, Family Services Division, Experienced GAL's and Attorney's.
 - We Are Our History – History of Racism in Vermont Then & Now
 - Living Black & Brown in Vermont
 - From the Personal to the Systemic
 - Child and Adolescent Mental Health Diagnosis
 - Overview of Medications Used in Pediatric Psychology
 - Evidence Based (non-pharmacological) Treatment Resources for Vermont Youth
 - What is ACT 264/Coordinate Service Planning and How GAL's Can Make Best Use of it?
 - Keeping Kids Safe in Residential Placements
 - Panel Discussion with Residential Service Providers

b. **The Current Task Force Recommendation(s)/Goal(s) that would be addressed by this activity:**

- ##### i. Professional Training - Professional training on various aspects of child abuse and neglect.

- ii. The Vermont Guardian ad Litem Program – Vermont’s Guardian ad Litem (GAL) program will be strengthened through regular training and increased outreach for active volunteers.
- c. **CJA Required Category**
 - i. A, C
- d. **Description of Evaluation Work:**
 - i. **Evaluation Methods**
 - The GAL program regularly monitors the progress and performance of its volunteers. Each county is assigned a GAL coordinator whose primary job is to make sure GAL’s are performing to standards and providing effective advocacy. GAL program management is also in close contact with judges and attorneys and community providers who regularly provide feedback regarding GAL involvement and performance in cases.
 - ii. **Outputs**
 - The project served 176 Vermont Guardians ad Litem
 - iii. **Outcomes**
 - There are 287 Guardian ad Litem’s in the State of Vermont.
 - Providing a well-trained and effective advocate to each child in a CHINS case ensures that the child has independent representation in addition to an attorney that focused on expressed interest representation. This valuable GAL input can assist the court in seeing a more complete picture of the child’s needs, interests and well-being as the case moves through court.

2. **The Vermont Children’s Alliance**

Multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs) are the foundation of the Child Advocacy Center model and a team’s ability to work together is critical to the community’s ability to protect child and hold offenders accountable. The National Children’s Alliance (NCA) is the national associate and accrediting body for the Children’s Advocacy Centers (CACs). NCA opened in 1994 and has created standards for accreditation, with member CACs across the country and state chapter organizations in all 50 states. The Task Force voted to provide CACs and SIUs equal portion of the CJA award. CACs and Special Investigations Units will exist statewide and have the necessary training, investigative equipment and technological resources to function effectively.

- a. **Activity**
 - i. The Northwest Unit for Special Investigations and OUR House Child Advocacy Center in Washington County installed forensic interview equipment

- ii. The Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations purchased earbuds for forensic interviewers
 - iii. The Vermont Child's Alliance brought MDT training to Vermont CAC directors
 - iv. VOX radio spot to raise awareness of CACs and the Vermont Children's Alliance
- b. List of Subgrantees**
 - i. The Northwest Unit for Special Investigations
 - ii. OUR House Child Advocacy Center
 - iii. The Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations
- c. The Current Task Force Recommendation(s)/Goal(s) that would be addressed by this activity:**
 - i. (NUSI) To improve and update our video recording equipment and increase security of individual videos and data files. (Washington) To have a system that recorded interviews without any issues with sound or visual quality.
 - ii. (CUSI) To improve child forensic interviews
 - iii. (Statewide) To raise awareness of the availability of child advocacy centers statewide and how they can help families and communities
- d. CJA Required Category**
 - i. A, B, C
- e. Description of Evaluation Work**
 - i. Evaluation Methods**
 - (NUSI) Routine use of and administrative assessment the equipment and per review. (Washington) Ongoing assessment of the equipment and team feedback.
 - (CUSI) Evaluations will be made through MDT and Peer Review
 - (Statewide) Output Measurement Survey to be completed by MDT members statewide before the end of the year
 - ii. Outputs**
 - NUSI serves both Franklin County, Vermont (population 49,402, 2019) and Grand Isle County, (population 7,235, 2019) Vermont. Washington County Vermont has a population of 58,409 (2019).
 - CUSI serves Chittenden County Vermont (population 163,774, 2019)
 - Statewide – population of Vermont 623,989
 - iii. Outcomes**
 - (NUSI) The children of Franklin and Grand Isle counties have benefitted from then new system by assuring that their interview is videotaped whenever they arrive in the NUSI offices and there

is no need for them to return or to reschedule their interview. The videotapes can be shared securely with partners and during discovery for prosecutions. The overall quality of the videotapes has improved, making individual investigator's case work more streamlined. (Washington) Forensic interviews will be able to be reviewed at a later date which will avoid additional interviews and trauma to the child.

- (CUSI) Chittenden County has some of the largest number of child abuse and neglect cases. This equipment will allow those who provide interviews a more effective manner to proceed with an interview without physical interruptions such as having to leave the interview room.
- (Statewide) CAC directors who attend MDT and accreditation training will have a renewed sense of mission and decreased concern surrounding the accreditation process. They will have tangible tools to assist in improving their relationship with their MDT.

3. **SANE Program**

Pediatric forensic nurses provide unique, trauma-informed medical care and evidence collection for pediatric victims of child sexual abuse and child physical abuse. This project will enhance the clinical skills of pediatric forensic nurses through providing nationally recognized best-practice professional development. This will improve the clinical care provided directly to pediatric patients who are victims of child sexual and physical abuse.

a. **Activity**

- Provide training opportunities for at least 7 nurses from a range of hospital settings to access best-practice professional education from the International Association of Forensic Nursing.
- Improve sharing of best practice nursing techniques through peer consultation and review.

b. **The Current Task Force Recommendation(s)/Goal(s) that would be addressed by this activity:**

- Maintain and further develop the Vermont Sexual Assault Nurse Examine Program. The project aims to provide nationally recognized professional development and to support the enhancement of clinical skills of pediatric and adolescent sexual assault nurse examines across Vermont.

c. **CJA Required Category**

- A, B, C

d. **Description of Evaluation Work**

i. **Evaluation methods**

- Nurses who received additional professional development have been asked to contribute to the overall development and offering of the annual forensic nursing course, offered by the Vermont Forensic Nursing Program.

ii. **Outcomes**

- Forensic nurses were able to access professional development to improve their clinical practice providing care to victims of abuse and assault. This includes evidence-based patient assessment, consistent with practices to collect and preserve evidence and utilizing trauma-informed methodologies to support child well-being.

4. **The Vermont Children's Justice Act Task Force**

- a. **Activity:** Ongoing administration of the Task Force meetings, grant process and Federal requirements.
- b. **The Current Task Force Recommendations(s)/goal(s) that would be addressed by this activity:**
- c. **CJA Required Category:** A, B, C
- d. **Evaluation Methods:** Annual Report and Federal Three-Year Assessment.
- e. **Outputs:**
 - i. Task members are engaged and supported in a process to seek improvement areas and collaboration across disciplines that respond to child abuse and neglect.
- f. **Outcomes:**
 - i. Task Force members regularly attend bi-monthly meetings.
 - ii. Vermont organizations involved in the identification, investigation and prosecution of child abuse and neglect cases get funding for their work.
 - iii. A review of the system response for investigation and prosecution of child abuse and neglect cases is undertaken by a diverse group of professionals.

Linkages between CJA and Other Children's Bureau Programming

Linkage to Anti-Trafficking Efforts

The state of Vermont was awarded a \$1.2 million grant to combat human trafficking. Phase I of this grant was designed to support the delivery of comprehensive and specialized services for all victims of human trafficking and the investigation and prosecution of sex and labor trafficking cases. Through the grant, three positions

entirely dedicated to promoting victim-centered and trauma-informed investigations and comprehensive service delivery was developed and funded within the past three years. The \$1.2 million grant covered a three-year period beginning October 1, 2018. Vermont did not apply for Phase II of the grant; however, applied for a one-year extension. The Human Trafficking Task Force will continue their work without the grant and focus on building and strengthening multi-disciplinary teams. Vermont's Human Trafficking Task Force consists of a statewide steering committee and four sub-committees (Training/Outreach, Victim-Based Services, Law Enforcement, and Labor Trafficking). The statewide task force is focused on both adult and child/youth trafficking victims. Through this task force, Vermont currently has two Human Trafficking Case Managers for the state and has seen the need for additional case management capacity. The focus of the past few years has been on developing protocols, working agreements, and policies regarding each of their roles and the work. Emphasis continues to be placed on supporting consultation and multi-disciplinary team meetings, which is grounded in the belief that no one can combat trafficking alone. Consultation and MDTs have supported family services workers in obtaining ideas for potential resources in the community, learning more about a youth's individual risk factors, developing safety plans and case plans specific to trafficking, connecting youth to victims' services providers, and supporting criminal prosecution processes.

Within the Department for Children and Families (DCF), Family Services Division (FSD), a Human Trafficking of Minors Workgroup exists. Membership and linkage to the CJA Task Force includes:

- CJA Coordinator / FSD Child Safety Manager
- FSD Human Trafficking Consultant / ICPC and ICJ Compact Administrator
- FSD Policy and Planning Advisor
- FSD Domestic & Sexual Violence Unit Director and Specialists
- AGO Attorney
- FSD Family Services Workers, Supervisors, Directors, and Operations Managers
- Human Trafficking Case Managers
- Statewide Task Force Co-Chair
- Agency of Education (AOE)
- Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (VNADSV)
- Prevent Child Abuse Vermont (PCAV)
- Residential Treatment Program Staff, Clinicians, and Directors
- Community Agencies and Advocacy Groups

Policy & Practice Updates:

As a continuation of our work related to the Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act and associated with our Family First Prevention Services Act implementation, FSD has developed a "risk of sex trafficking" definition through the use

of a screening tool. FSD is currently piloting the screening tool and hopes to finalize and validate the product in the future.

FSD continues to work on developing a standalone human trafficking policy and protocol for investigations in collaboration with federal and state partners. Revisions to our runaway policy are also underway.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, a statewide need for guidance pertaining to internet safety for children and youth was identified. FSD developed a three-page guidance document titled *Internet Safety for Children & Youth and Caregiver Monitoring & Supervision* which addresses:

- Household rules, norms, and expectations;
- Agreements about internet use;
- Security/privacy settings and monitoring;
- Conversation prompts for talking to kids; and
- Additional resources.

Training Updates:

Human trafficking related training for staff is currently offered online and via podcast for staff. Training content about human trafficking is also included in the child abuse advanced practicum courses. Additionally, there are plans to update the existing online training for caregivers about human trafficking. We will also be discussing a prevention curriculum to use with youth who are considered to be at high risk or confirmed victims of trafficking. At this time, we have not determined which curriculum would best serve Vermont's population of youth.

Data/Tracking Updates:

In 2021, FSD accepted and investigated 43 new reports of child sex trafficking. An additional 36 unaccepted reports were flagged for child sex trafficking. Within the 43 accepted reports, approximately 84% of the child victims were female. 36 reports involved girls and 7 reports involved boys. In 2021, the youngest child victim was 6 years old. Ages ranged from 6-17. There was a significant increase in accepted trafficking reports last year. Since 2018, there has been an average of 27 cases accepted per year (compared to 43 this year). The number of unaccepted reports has also risen.

National Collaborative Efforts:

Vermont participates in two national human trafficking learning and information sharing groups with other states:

- National Child Welfare Anti Trafficking Collaborative
- National Compendium of State-Run Anti-Trafficking Initiatives

Vermont will be assessing its protocols and practices while completing the National Advisory Committee State Self-Assessment Survey, intended to showcase innovative and successful work and to identify areas where additional resources are needed to address the sex trafficking of children and youth.

Linkage to other Children's Bureau Processes

Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP)

Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR)

Description of any activities undertaken in the last year to link/align the State's CJA work with work related to the State's Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) and/or Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP).

- The DCF Family Services Division (FSD) Policy and Planning Advisor, who is responsible for the creation of Vermont's Annual Progress and Services Report and Child and Family Services Plan, attends the Children's Justice Act Task Force meetings regularly.
- The Task Force receives copies of the APSR and the CFSP and these reports are built into the agendas annually, with emphasis placed on issues related to child abuse investigation and assessment. The Vermont APSR and CFSP are documents used in planning and research for our Three-Year Assessment.
 - April 23, 2021 agenda included Family Services Division Program Improvement Plan related to timely closures of child abuse investigations and assessments and Family Services Division's continuous quality improvement efforts.

Vermont's 2020-2024 Child and Family Services Plan

<https://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/FSD/pubs/CFSP2020-2024.pdf>

Vermont's 2021 Annual Progress and Services Report

<https://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/FSD/Docs/APSR2021.pdf>

Vermont's 2022 Annual Progress and Services Report

<https://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/FSD/Docs/APSR2022.pdf>

Linkage to Court and Legal Representation Improvement Work

- The Programs Manager of the Court Administrators Office serves on the CJA Task Force.

- Annually, the Agenda includes a report from the Programs Manager on current court improvement projects, current data from the court system and connections that can be made between the Task Force work and the CIP.
- CJA Task Force Agenda, February 22, 2022 : presentation on the Court Improvement Project and update from members of the CHINS reform workgroup
 - VT CHINS report
 - <https://legislature.vermont.gov/assets/Legislative-Reports/CHINS-Reform-Wrkgrp-Report-12.11.18-Final.pdf>
- A subcommittee has been developed to look at recommendations from our parent advocate member which stem from a review of overturns of substantiations and removal of names on the Child Protection Registry. The subcommittee is currently looking at the following areas for potential system improvement:
 - Standard of proof for placement on the child protection registry
 - Documentation challenges in investigations
 - Challenges related to statute/ categories of abuse and neglect
 - Challenges related to policy / substantiating abuse and neglect

I. Prior Year Line Item Budget Expenditure \$72,220.00- G-2001VTCJA1

1. The Vermont CJA Task Force, Department for Children and Families/ Family Services Division and the Department Business Office worked diligently to obligate and expend all CJA Funds within a one-year period to avoid overlap in dual VT Federal Fiscal Year (FY). The VT Federal FY is 10/01 to 09/30. We have found this creates less confusion, more effective and clear liquidations of the funds.
2. In partnership with Vermont CJA Task Force, Department for Children and Families/ Family Services Division (DCF/FSD) and the Department Business Office, it was determined that the most efficient and effective way to distribute CJA funding to the provider network was to establish three block grants with the following providers. The following block grant recipients are responsible for the development, administration, distribution and oversight to qualifying agencies hereby known as subgrantees that will improve the processes by which the State responds to cases of child abuse and neglect (Cases of child abuse and neglect includes child sexual abuse and exploitation and cases of suspected child abuse or neglect related fatalities). DCF/FSD monitors block grant recipient's, and subgrantees activities to ensure funds are being used per Federal Guidelines documented in the Program Instruction.
3. At the January 18, 2019 CJA Task Force Meeting 8 members were present and 7 absent. The 8 members present voted unanimously to divide the total CJA Grant award between the following recommended areas:
 - a. The Vermont SANE Program.
 - b. The Vermont Children's Alliance:
 - i. The Task Force voted to provide the CACs and the SIU equal portions of the total CJA award. Since these organizations are co-located and for financial management simplification, they agreed to have their individual amount combined as one sum and managed by the VT Children's Alliance.
 - c. The Vermont Guardian ad Litem Program.
 - d. Administrative: The Department bills administrative fees for the CJA Coordinators time.

(scroll to next page for line item budget)

FY21 CJA Line Budget			
FY-21 Total Federal Award			\$72,220.00 (G-2001VTCJA1)
Grantee	Grant Number	FY	Amount
DCF	5% Admin	FY-21	\$8,611.00
Total			\$8,611.00
Vermont Network Against Domestic & Sexual Violence	03440-28439-VNADSV-CJA-FY21	FY-21	15,902.25
Total			15,902.25
Vermont Guardian Ad Litem	03440-28437-MOU-GAL-CJA-FY21	**FY-20	11,143.91
		FY-21	15,902.25
Total			27,046.16
Vermont Children's Alliance	03440-28438-VTCA-CJA-FY21	FY-21	\$31,804.50
Total			\$31,804.50
Total using FY-20 funds (G-1901VTCJA1)			\$11,143.91
Total using FY-21 funds (G-2001VTCJA1)			\$72,220.00
Total FY-21 Budget			\$83,363.91

V. Application for Proposed Activities

1. The VT SANE Program:

- a. **Narrative:** Enhancing the Professional and Clinical Development of Pediatric and Adolescent Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners in Vermont. The project aims to provide nationally recognized professional development and support the enhancement of clinical skills of pediatric and adolescent sexual assault nurse examiners across Vermont. The project will lead to best-practice, uniform approaches to the medical assessment of victims of child sexual abuse and assault and help ensure that high-quality forensic evidence and documentation is available in cases of child abuse and assault, when patients have been seen by a pediatric or adolescent sexual assault nurse examiner.
- b. **Goals & Objectives:**
 - i. Goal: Improve Medical Response to Child Sexual Abuse and Assault
 - a. Objective: Enhance professional development of pediatric and adolescent Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners through International Association of Forensic Nursing membership and attending the IAFN Annual Conference.

Attending SANEs will represent multiple regions in Vermont, including large and small or more rural hospitals.

- ii. Goal: Statewide Use of Best-Practice Approaches to Trauma-Informed Medical Care for Pediatric and Adolescent Sexual Abuse Victims
 - a. Objective: SANEs who attend the IAFN conference will work to adopt at least one learning in their practice setting, in partnership with other SANEs in their practice setting.

c. Areas of Impact: B

d. Contributes to reform/improvement: The project aims to provide nationally recognized professional development and support the enhancement of clinical skills of pediatric and adolescent sexual assault nurse examiners across Vermont. This project will lead to best-practice, uniform approaches to the medical assessment of victims of child sexual abuse and assault and help ensure that high-quality forensic evidence and documentation is available in cases of child abuse and assault, when patients have been seen by a pediatric or adolescent sexual assault nurse examiner.

e. The Current Task Force Recommendations(s)/goal(s) that would be addressed by this activity:

- i. SANE: Continued support for training, evidence kit distribution, collection and transport.

f. Evaluation Methods:

- i. Documenting membership and attendance to ensure that SANEs representing a diversity of regions and hospital settings benefit from the enhancement of their professional and clinical skills.
- ii. SANEs will report on their adoption of best practice learning in their practice setting.

g. Outputs:

- i. International Association of Forensic Nursing membership and attendance of the IAFN Annual Conference.

h. Outcomes: SANEs provide highly specialized, trauma informed approaches to medical care for children and adolescents across the state. By supporting and enhancing the professional and clinical development of SANEs, child victims of abuse will receive consistent and best-practice evidence informed care. Injuries and abuse will be documented according to a standardized evidence collection kit, ensuring that this forensic evidence can assist in child abuse investigations and assessments.

2. The Vermont Children's Alliance:

- a. Narrative / Goals & Objectives/Subgrantee:** The Vermont Children's Alliance will subgrant with the following providers (SIU and CAC's) to allow for the

implementation of the following forensic interviewing tools to provide the areas served through these organizations reliable interviewing tools to improve forensic interviewing capabilities.

- i. Northwest Unit for Special Investigations/NUSI is implementing Case Cracker.
 - ii. Our House is Implementing IRecord.
 - iii. Chittenden County Child Advocacy Center is implementing Comtek.
- b. Area of Impact:** For all projects outlined above areas of impact is A.
- c. Contributes to reform/improvement:** Upgrading forensic interviewing equipment to newer, more reliable equipment will ensure the interviews are uninterrupted or rescheduled and will not need to be repeated, possibly causing (re)traumatization to the victim.
- d. The Current Task Force Recommendations(s)/goal(s) that would be addressed by this activity:**
 - i. CAC's and SIU's: Continued support for technological resources and trainings
- e. Evaluation Methods:** Routine use of equipment, ongoing technical training, maintenance agreements and acquisition of updates.
- f. Outputs:** To replace the undependable outdated forensic interviewing equipment with reliable, user-friendly equipment to ensure improved quality of forensic interviewing.
- g. Outcomes:** Upgrading the forensic interviewing equipment to newer, more reliable equipment for these programs will ensure the interviews are uninterrupted or rescheduled and will not need to be repeated, possibly causing (re)traumatization to the victim.

4. The Vermont Department for Children and Families

- a. Narrative / Goals & Objectives:** The Vermont Department for Children and Families (DCF) will strengthen its procedures for reviewing reported abuse and neglect as well as examine treatment service access and delivery.
- b. Area of Impact:** C
- c. Contributes to reform/improvement:** The Vermont Department for Children and Families is the sole agency legislated as responsible for collecting reports of child abuse and neglect. The federal and state requirements for this Department create a system of ongoing review, assessment and reform of practice and policy to ensure the best outcomes for child victims.
- d. Evaluation Methods:** Department for Children and Families employee surveys, Family Services Annual Progress and Services Report and Child and Family Services Plan.
- e. Outputs:** Number of projects directed at achieving best practice and/or promising practice that is driven by research.

f. Outcomes: Increase in knowledge, skills and attitudes, high satisfaction reports and lower turnover of professionals. Increase effective responses to child abuse and neglect, support to Family Services Workers engaged in cases of child abuse, neglect, sexual abuse/exploitation and human trafficking.

Proposed Sub-grantees: Individuals, units and workers within the Division of Family Services and/or the Vermont Center for Prevention and Treatment of Sexual Abuse.

5. The Vermont Children's Justice Act Task Force

- a. Goals & Objectives:** The Vermont Children's Justice Act Task Force (VCJATF) will continue to meet regularly, assess the needs of the state and participate in relevant trainings and activities.
- b. Area of Impact:** A, B, C
 - c. Contributes to reform/improvement:** The Task Force reviews and monitors the system response to child abuse and neglect, seeking gaps and areas of potential improvement. Because the representation of the Task Force is made up of the very professionals who actively make up the child abuse and neglect response system, we are in a unique position to conduct this work.
 - d. Evaluation Methods:** Self assessments, yearly reports and the Three Year Assessment
 - e. Outputs:** Task Force membership complete, yearly recommendations to Secretary achieved, annual application, reports and Three-Year Assessment completed as required, funds directed appropriately, attendance at the Annual Grantees Meeting.
 - f. Outcomes:** Increased knowledge, skills and awareness of issues across the system of response to child abuse and neglect cases in all disciplines involved in these cases.

Proposed Sub-grantee: Vermont Children's Justice Act Task Force

5. The Vermont Guardian ad Litem Program

1. Narrative Description of proposed program/activity:

- a. Annual Guardian ad Litem Statewide Professional Development Training:
- b. Re-evaluation and Re-Design of the Vermont Guardian ad Litem (GAL) pre-service training and materials.

2. Goals & Objectives:

- a. Goal:** To educate and prepare volunteer Guardians ad Litem to serve on CHINS cases advocating for the best interests of children.

- i. **Objective:** Enhance training and education for GAL's to ensure volunteers are well informed and competent to serve as independent advocates for children who have experienced abuse and neglect. An effective GAL can be extremely valuable in their role to make certain that the child is seen and heard, and his/her best interests are being considered in judicial decision making.
 - b. **Goal:** To educate and prepare volunteer Guardians ad Litem to serve on CHINS cases advocating for the best interests of children.
 - i. **Objective:** Enhance pre-service training to ensure volunteers are well informed and competent to serve as independent advocates for children who have experienced abuse and neglect. The information provided prepares the GAL to begin taking cases and interacting with our systems. The information provided must be current, valuable and organized so the GAL is prepared with the information needed to do the work. The project includes a rework of our GAL training manual as well as the GAL programs policy and procedure manual which will all reflect on current best practices.
- 3. **Area of Impact:**
 - a. A.
 - b. A and C.
- 4. **Contributes to reform/improvement:**
 - a. Ongoing training and education for GAL's is vital to ensure volunteers are well informed and competent to serve as independent advocates for children who have experienced abuse and neglect. An effective GAL can be extremely valuable in their role to make certain that the child is seen and heard, and his/her best interests are being considered in judicial decision making.
 - b. Pre-service training is vital to ensure volunteers are well informed and competent to serve as independent advocates for children who have experienced abuse and neglect. The information provided prepares the GAL to begin taking cases and interacting with our systems. The information provided must be current, valuable and organized so the GAL is prepared with the information needed to do the work. The project includes a rework of GAL training manual as well as the GAL programs policy and procedure manual which will all reflect on current best practices.
- 5. **The Current Task Force Recommendations(s)/goal(s) that would be addressed by this activity:**
 - a. GAL: Continued support for training.
- 6. **Evaluation Methods:** The GAL program regularly monitors the progress and performance of its volunteers. Each county is assigned a GAL

coordinator whose job it is to make sure that GAL's are performing to standards and providing effective advocacy. GAL program management is also in close contact with judges and attorneys who regularly provide feedback regarding GAL involvement in cases.

7. **Outputs:** Numbers of trainings held, increases in numbers of GALs available and geographic access to them, lower turnover rates, increase knowledge to allow GALs to be more prepared and informed to serve vulnerable children in Vermont, GAL's have increased access to valuable information to better inform their practice and be prepared to serve children who have experienced abuse and neglect.

8. **Outcomes:**

- a. Providing a well-trained and effective advocate to each child in a CHINS case ensures that the child has independent representation in addition to an attorney that focuses only on what is best for that child. This valuable input can assist the court in painting a more complete picture of the child's needs and interests as the case moves through court.
- b. Providing a well-trained and effective advocate to each child in a CHINS case ensures that the child has independent representation in addition to an attorney that focuses only on what is best for that child. This valuable input can assist the court in painting a more complete picture of the child's needs and interests as the case moves through court. Being able to provide a more robust better organized pre-service training will enable volunteers to start their service as GAL's more informed and prepared to serve vulnerable children in Vermont.

II. **Proposed Line Item Budget -\$72,220.00- G-2001VTCJA1**

1. Line-item budget detailing proposed allocation of CJA funds for VT Federal Fiscal year 21.
2. The Vermont CJA Task Force, Department for Children and Families/ Family Services Division and the Department Business Office work diligently to obligate and expend all CJA Funds within a one-year period to avoid overlap in dual VT Federal Fiscal Year. The VT Federal FY is 10/01 to 09/30. We have found this creates less confusion, more effective and clear liquidations of the funds.
3. In partnership with Vermont CJA Task Force, Department for Children and Families/ Family Services Division (DCF/FSD) and the Department Business Office, it was determined that the most efficient and effective way to distribute CJA funding to the provider network was to establish three block grants with the following providers. The following block grant recipients are responsible for the development, administration, distribution and oversight to qualifying agencies hereby known as subgrantees that will improve the processes by which the State responds to cases of child abuse and neglect (Cases of child abuse and neglect includes child sexual abuse and exploitation and cases of suspected child abuse

or neglect related fatalities). DCC/FSD monitors block grant recipient's, and subgrantees activities to ensure funds are being used per Federal Guidelines documented in the Program Instruction.

a. The Vermont SANE Program.

b. The Vermont Children's Alliance:

ii. The Task Force voted to provide the CACs and the SIU equal portions of the total CJA award. Since these organizations are co-located and for financial management simplification, they agreed to have their individual amount combined as one sum and managed by the VT Children's Alliance.

c. The Vermont Guardian ad Litem Program.

i. \$11,143.00 (G-1901VTCJA1) was carried over from VT FY20 for Vermont Guardian Ad Litem, grant #03440-28386-MOU-GAL-CJA-FY20. This occurred due to COVID-19 delaying the delivery of Vermont Guardian Ad Litem training.

4. Administrative.

i. The Department will bill administrative fees for the CJA Coordinators time. Originally, we capped the administrative fee at 5% (\$3,611.00) and set aside \$5,000.00 for the annual CJA meeting due to the unknown direction of the meeting. It was indicated on 3/2/2021 at a quarterly CJA meeting that the annual CJA meeting will be held virtually. Due to this DCF has reallocated \$5,000.00 to be used towards administrative fees for the CJA coordinators time.

(Please scroll down for line-item budget)

FY21 CJA Line Budget			
FY-21 Total Federal Award		\$72,220.00 (G-2001VTCJA1)	
Grantee	Grant Number	FY	Amount
DCF	Admin	FY-21	\$8,611.00
Total			\$8,611.00
Vermont Network Against Domestic & Sexual Violence	03440-28439-VNADSV-CJA-FY21	FY-21	15,902.25
Total			15,902.25
Vermont Guardian Ad Litem	03440-28437-MOU-GAL-CJA-FY21	**FY-20	11,143.91
		FY-21	15,902.25
Total			27,046.16
Vermont Children's Alliance	03440-28438-VTCA-CJA-FY21	FY-21	\$31,804.50
Total			\$31,804.50
Total using FY-20 funds (G-1901VTCJA1)			\$11,143.91
Total using FY-21 funds (G-2001VTCJA1)			\$72,220.00
Total FY-21 Budget			\$83,363.91

*Please note due to the Annual CJA Meeting occurring virtually \$5,000.00 was reallocated to DCF admin.

**Please note \$11,143.00 was carried over from VT FY20 for Vermont Guardian Ad Litem, grant # 03440-28437-MOU-GAL-CJA-FY21. This occurred due to COVID-19 delaying the delivery of Vermont Guardian Ad Litem training.

IV. Amended Recommendations from the 2021 3YA assessment

Area A.

The Vermont CJA Task Force recommends continuing support to groups and programs dedicated to investigating, and the judicial handling of child abuse and neglect, such as GAL's, SANE's, and CAC/SIU's. This support could include providing grant monies towards technological maintenance and upgrade for things like audio-visual recording of forensic interviews, and SANE test kits; or towards training for detectives and social workers who conduct child abuse investigations, and SANE nurses and GALs to approach their respective roles in a manner which will reduce trauma and ensure procedural fairness.

The Vermont CJA Task Force also recommends further exploration of the investigative, administrative, and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect through review of the processes, policies and statutes which guide this

work. This could be done through review of recommendations from parent and child advocacy organizations, as well as review of any efforts taken by Family Services Division related to this area of practice.

Area B.

The Vermont CJA Task Force recommends continuing exploration of programs for testing innovative approaches and techniques which may improve the prompt and successful resolution of civil and criminal court proceedings or enhance the effectiveness of judicial and administrative action in child abuse and neglect cases, such as programs like the Judicial Magistrate pilots occurring around the state, as well as continuing to learn about the efforts and recommendations from efforts such as the CHINS reform workgroup, the Court Improvement Program, or the Vermont Parent Representation Center. The Vermont CJA Task Force recommends continuing support for training to enhance the performance of guardians ad litem for children and would welcome learning about other opportunities to support this realm of the work (as described in area B of the CJA program instructions).

Area C.

The Vermont CJA Task Force recommends that we educate ourselves further about efforts underway to reform state laws, ordinances, regulations, protocols, and procedures to provide comprehensive protection for children as described in area C of the CJA program instructions. This includes continuing to learn about the efforts and recommendations from efforts such as the CHINS reform workgroup, the Court Improvement Program, or the Vermont Parent Representation Center. This could also include learning more about recent statutory changes in Vermont such as the passage of a bill related to the Office of Child Advocate, and a bill related to Vermont's participation in the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children.

