

Stakeholder Working Group for Facility Planning for Justice-Involved Youth Meeting Minutes – July 15, 2026

Waterbury State Office Complex, Ash Room, Waterbury, VT (In-person)

Katie Whitney called the meeting to order at 3:06 p.m.

Attendees

- Katie Whitney, Agency of Human Services, Facilitator
- Justin Davis, Agency of Human Services, Facilitator
- Jen Herbert, DCF Clinical Director (standing in for Mel)
- Sandi Hoffman, Commissioner of DCF
- Sandra Chittendon, lived experience; special education advocate
- Charlie Parker Gliserman; Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence
- Marshall Pall, Deputy Defender General
- John Bouchard, lived experience; parent of a youth at Red Clover
- Laura Carter, Racial Justice/Racial Equity
- Aubrey Benneit, Data Manager
- Jenn Garabedian, Department of Ageing and Independent Living
- Matthew Bernstien, Office of Child and Family Youth Advocate
- Dana Robson, Department of Mental Health Children's Care Management Director
- Karen Vastine, Chair, Council for Equitable Youth Justice

Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- What Has Been Decided / What Remains Open for Stakeholder Input
- Strengthening the Process: Shared Agreements and Meeting Structure
- Stakeholder Discussion and Feedback
- Public Comment
- Future Meeting Scheduling
- Themes Heard and Next Steps
- Closing

Summary of Proceedings

Welcome and Introductions

- Commissioner Hoffman welcomed the group, apologized for the prior meeting's organizational issues, and committed to being present and engaged.
- Meeting format: Sessions will remain in-person while the group forms cohesion and shared expectations; a virtual/hybrid option will be introduced later.
- Housekeeping: Draft minutes and agendas were posted but not shared 5 days in advance; DCF will meet that advance-notice timeline going forward.

- Decision-making authority: DCF is responsible for developing the program but emphasized the need for stakeholder input to build the best model. Commitment to prevention was reiterated, recognizing that secure treatment is sometimes necessary.
- Revisions: A member proposed some revisions to the 6/15 Minutes; Commissioner Hoffman directed him to coordinate with Tyler Allen.
- Program decisions communicated by DCF (already determined):
 - A secure treatment facility is needed in Vermont; Red Clover's current size and infrastructure are insufficient.
 - Facility site: South Burlington site selected.
 - Operations: DCF will continue to contract for operations.
 - Capacity: 8 crisis beds and 6 treatment beds.
- Areas where stakeholder feedback is requested (non-exhaustive):
 - Trauma-informed, evidence-based practices
 - Oversight structure
 - Policy considerations
 - Programming (treatment, education, recreation, community interaction)
 - Implementation considerations
 - Family engagement practices
 - System-of-care step-down programming
 - Restorative justice approaches
 - Resources and connections (educational, medical)
 - Additional concerns to better meet the needs of children served
- Red Clover was emphasized as temporary and not designed as desired for the target population.

Strengthening the Process: Shared Agreements and Meeting Structure

- Purpose:
 - Collaboration and shared ideas
 - Fulfilling statutory expectations
 - Leveraging shared wisdom and multiple perspectives
 - Achieving positive outcomes in the best interest of children and communities
- Process:
 - Clarify decision-making process
 - Clarify objection/appeal process
 - Not all questions can be answered in real time
 - Clarify how agendas are built; provide prep time and visual presentations
 - Provide frequent written updates in advance; invite written comments before meetings
- Participation:
 - One person speaks at a time
 - Critique ideas constructively; ask for elaboration rather than attacking
 - Respect final decisions and focus on next steps
 - Assume positive intent
 - Question raised: whether/when the group will vote on items

Stakeholder Discussion and Feedback

- Group needs to function effectively:
 - Dedicated discussion on bed planning
 - Incorporating restorative justice
 - Transparency on DCF's planning process, timelines, decision points, and specific asks for feedback
 - Orientation on current project status (offer of 1:1s; broader overview requested for the next meeting)
 - Oversight structure is a priority and cross-cutting topic
 - Clarify what is already under consideration, where that information comes from, and the decision-making timeline

Public Comment

- None

Future Meeting Scheduling

- Request for a longer next meeting, including a 30-minute project overview/orientation before discussion next meeting
- Preparation: Emphasis on distributing materials in advance to use meeting time effectively.
- Format: One more in-person meeting, then shift to a virtual/hybrid option.
- Schedule:
 - Next in-person meeting: Wednesday, September 2, 2026, 2:00–3:30 p.m., Waterbury State Office Complex.
 - Frequency: Monthly meetings, aligned to the project timeline (target opening spring 2028).

Themes Heard and Next Steps

- Themes: Clarity on roles/authority, oversight design, bed planning, restorative justice integration, and improved pre-meeting materials.
- Next steps: Provide an orientation at the next meeting; clarify decision/objection processes; specify feedback requests by topic and timeline.

No formal motions were made, and no votes were taken.

Meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Action Items

- DCF/AHS staff: Distribute agendas, draft minutes, and materials at least 5 days in advance of meetings.
- DCF/AHS staff: Provide a 30-minute project overview/orientation at the start of the next meeting (current status, decision points, timeline).
- DCF: Clarify and document the decision-making and objection processes; explain how agendas are built and what feedback is being sought each meeting.

- Tyler Allen: Receive and coordinate review of minutes revisions from Matthew Bernstien.
- DCF/AHS staff: Prepare visual materials and a written update in advance of the next meeting.
- DCF: Schedule focused discussions on oversight structure, bed planning, and restorative justice integration.

Next Meeting

- Wednesday, September 2, 2026, 2:00–3:30 p.m.
Waterbury State Office Complex (in-person; hybrid to follow in subsequent meetings)