

Act 108 – Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Working Group

08/31/2026

In Attendance (Working Group Members Highlighted):

1. Jeffrey Mbarushimana, Office of Racial Equity
2. Ellen Amstutz, Vermont Parent Child Centers
3. Scotty Tabachnick, School Principal
4. Kara Campbell Morin, Northeast Kingdom Human Services
5. Jonathan Williams for Joy Kitchell, Prevent Child Abuse Vermont
6. Lindsay Barron, DCF-FSD
7. Charlie Gliserman, VT Network for Domestic and Sexual Violence
8. Jenn Poehlmann, Center for Crime Victim Services
9. Matthew Bernstein, Office of the Child Youth and Family Advocate
10. Dr. James Metz, Physician Co-Chair
11. Ashley Nutbrown, Lived Experience Expert
12. Nancy Miller, DCF-FSD
13. Hannah Marble, DCF-FSD

*Please note that no designated lived experience experts joined the group today. As the statute requires, the Vermont Child, Youth, and Family Advisory Council will formally designate one individual to participate in future meetings. The Vermont Parent Representation Center is no longer a functioning entity and has agreed that the OCYFA should appoint a second member to fulfill the legislative mandate.

Agenda:

1. Arrivals / Intros / Agenda additions - 15 mins
2. Review Group Mandate - 15
3. Discuss scope of the problem we are addressing – 30
4. Discussion
5. Procedure/Admin/Housekeeping – 20

Details:

1. Arrivals / Intros – 15 mins
 - Name and pronouns, organization representing, restate/revise the one thing you hope the working group accomplishes
2. Review and clarify Act 108 statutory mandate – 15 mins
 - Re-read key statutory sections, discuss what this group can/should/could do
3. Scope of problem we are addressing – 30 mins

- Review Vermont data: #1 in nation in per capita reporting, data by reporter type, region, etc. Send link to child trends data in notes what is post response services data from CIES calls
- Hear from practitioners: What are you struggling with in the current system? Where is clarity needed?
 - A group member shared that when a report is not accepted and the reporter receives a letter indicating that that more detail being included would be appreciated/helpful.
 - The same group member shared that they do not receive training from their attorneys on mandated reporting within their organization.
 - The same group member shared that there is a lack of clarity on what should be reported. A change in training will be an “easy sell” for educational staff. They do not blame DCF when reports are not accepted, however, they do not always feel that they are getting what is needed as reporters, and in turn, the children/youth they serve are not either. There is concern among educators that not reporting has legal ramifications, and this is a worry that is often thought about. However, they make sure to report within the 24-hour timeframe.
 - A group member shared that people do not always consider the harm that can be caused by making a report.
 - A group member shared that sometimes a report is made to outreach for help for the family. The framework for helping a family in VT can be, “almost detrimental.” The group member asked if there is a way to embed a continuum of support when there are signs and symptoms of a, “non optimal” upbringing for a child or youth.
 - A group member mentioned the concept of having a warm line and questioned if 211 is being accessed instead of reporting to DCF.

4. Discussion

- A group member shared that the mandated reporter training states that the primary function of FSD is not to connect families with services. It is to intervene in situations where a child is unsafe. When calling in reports before, that has not been the understanding.
- A group member shared that prevention is important, while noting that child protection agencies have had an evolving relationship with prevention over the years, depending on where the system’s focus has been.
- The same group member cautioned against relying too heavily on the child protection agency as a vehicle for prevention. There can be a tendency for both CPS workers and community providers to act out of fear. CPS workers may

worry, *“What if I don’t do something and something bad happens?”* Providers can experience that same fear when deciding whether to make a report or connect a family with other resources.

- The same group member raised the broader question of where prevention efforts should sit within the larger system and how we can create clear pathways for families to access preventive support without unnecessarily involving the child protection system.
- A group member posed the question if under the Agency of Human Services there was a “Department of Prevention” that housed a warm line, gave trainings, etc. as a separate entity from FSD. A group member responded that their organization does prevention work, training, and other proactive support offerings. In other states this entity is folded into state government.
- A group member shared that there is research about providing funds being proven to support prevention. Stating, “there is no prevention for abusive head trauma, or periods of purple crying.” The group discussed that this may not be within the scope of the Working Group. The group member provided links to the research cited:
 - <https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/increasing-families-incomes-helps-meet-childrens-needs-and-reduces>
 - <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2801496>
 - [Cash Transfers in the Perinatal Period and Investigations of Infant Maltreatment | Pediatrics | JAM...](#)
 - [Using Tax Credits to Prevent Child Abuse | Pediatrics | American Academy of Pediatrics](#)
 - [Assessment of Rates of Child Maltreatment in States With Medicaid Expansion vs States Without Medic...](#)
- The most recent "reenvision AHS" effort was through Act 119 of 2024: <https://humanservices.vermont.gov/act119>. A group member shared this link in response to the question about a new AHS prevention Division.
- A group member shared that they believe trauma informed investigations are within the scope of the group, as well as sexual abuse by non-caretakers.
- A group member shared that when children/youth are scared after there's a report, they stop sharing information. “You get on a merry go round and report every day. It’s an unspoken thing that happens and I’m sure it contributes to the volume of the reports.”
- The group discussed an agenda item being added around equity— racial/economic, etc. in reporting.

5. Procedural/Admin/Housekeeping – 20 mins

- The OCYFA Advisory Counsel is meeting next week and will have a final determination on the lived experience experts who will join the group.
- Follow up will occur to secure a member of law enforcement on the group, per the statutory mandate.
- Send any per diem requests to Hannah Marble for processing (hannah.marble@vermont.gov).
- The group determined that they would follow [Robert's Rules of Order](#). Group members should review this prior to the next Working Group.
- Discussion surrounding a survey occurred to receive feedback from non-group/non statutorily designated consultation sources. A group member has already started this process, they will share their questions at the next meeting.

Future Scheduled Working Groups:

September 29, 2026: 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM

October 20, 2026: 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM

November 16, 2026: 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM

No meeting in December.

Hannah will send out a scheduling poll for January, February, and March meetings, to occur on Monday to accommodate legislative scheduling needs.

Before the Next Meeting:

Review the [Practical Guide for Consensus Driven Decision Making](#)

Review of the [Bi-Partisan Policy Center's Federal and State Roles in Defining Child Abuse and Neglect](#)

Review [Robert's Rules of Order](#).

Send through any proposed group agreements to the Chair

Review 33 V.S.A. § 4912 and 33 V.S.A. § 4913

Materials to Review (if not yet completed):

Review the data referenced in the bill from [Child Trends](#).

Complete the new [Vermont Mandated Reporter Training](#).

Review the [DCF-FSD Website](#)