 <b>VERMONT</b> DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES <b>Family Services Policy Manual</b>		<h1>121</h1>
Chapter:	Planning with Children and Families	
Subject:	Notification of Changes for Children and Youth in DCF Custody	Page 1 of 2
Approved:	Aryka Radke, Deputy Commissioner	Effective: 6/15/2023
Supersedes:	Family Services Policy 121	Dated: 10/24/2016

## Purpose

To describe the requirements for formally notifying parents and others of changes important to the plan for the child or youth in DCF custody.

## Related Policies

Family Services [Policy 91](#): Kinship Care & Collaboration with Relatives  
Family Services [Policy 94](#): Foster Care Placements & Collaboration with Caregivers  
Family Services [Policy 99](#): Confidential Placements  
Family Services [Policy 123](#): Reviewing Case Plan Decisions  
Family Services [Policy 124](#): Family Time (Parent/Child Contact)  
Family Services [Policy 125](#): Permanency Planning for Children and Youth  
Family Services [Policy 159](#): Foster and Kinship Parent Safety


## Policy

To ensure prompt and accurate communication with parents, foster or kinship families, and members of the child or youth’s safety network, family services workers should inform them as soon as possible of important changes in the child’s living situation or the plan for the child. Conversations with parents about placement and the child’s permanency plan are ongoing and parents should be empowered to identify the names of relatives and fictive kin who may be placement options or important connections for the child. This process is typically initiated prior to the beginning of a CHINS proceeding, particularly during safety planning, and then through family time coordination and family finding referrals. The conversation is ongoing throughout the duration of the family’s open case.

SSMIS autogenerates placement change letters when a change has been made within the database. Family services workers will always determine the appropriateness of utilizing these letters and should decide the best method of sharing information for each individual family. Notice requirements may be waived for casework or safety reasons. Change of placement notice is not required when the child is on a planned, temporary stay elsewhere, for example visiting with parents.

### Notifying Parents of Changes in Placement or Family Time

Parents of children in DCF custody should know where their children are living unless casework or safety issues prohibit this. Division staff should discuss proposed changes

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of placement with parents in advance whenever possible. Notification regarding changes in placement will occur through a conversation, either in-person or by phone. If family services workers are unable to reach parents by phone, written notice may be a back-up measure to assure that notice has occurred. Family services workers should always be mindful of the safety concerns associated with putting an address in writing, particularly if there is a history of prior violent or threatening behavior. Consultation with the division’s staff safety team, domestic violence specialists, or human trafficking consultant are encouraged depending on the circumstances of the safety concern.

Parents will also be notified of significant alterations in the pattern or plan for family time which will result in reduced contact with their child. This notice should be verbal whenever possible, with written notice serving as a backup. When necessary to ensure the child's well-being, changes in the plan for contact may be made without advance notice.

**Notifying Substitute Care Providers of Changes in Placement**

Substitute care providers will receive written notice of a pending change of placement unless:

- They have requested the child’s immediate removal;
- Their license has been suspended or revoked; or
- The provider is under investigation by the department based on alleged misconduct. In this last instance, the child will be moved when the local district office believes that the investigation will have a significant adverse impact on the child.

Notice to substitute care providers is not required in emergency circumstances. An emergency includes any situation which, in the opinion of the district office, places that child's health, safety, or well-being in immediate jeopardy.