

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>152</h1>
Chapter:	Coordinating with Others	
Subject:	Empaneled Multidisciplinary Child Protection Teams	Page 1 of 3
Approved:	Christine Johnson, Deputy Commissioner	Effective: 10/14/2020
Supersedes:	Family Services Policy 59	Dated: 11/3/1999

Purpose

To describe the procedure for empanelment of short-term and ongoing members of multidisciplinary child protection teams.

Introduction

33 V.S.A. § [4917](#) authorizes the Commissioner of the Department for Children and Families (DCF) to empanel, through appointment, members of local multidisciplinary child protection teams. These teams are comprised of professionals from a range of disciplines (i.e., medicine, mental health, social work, nursing, child care, education, law, law enforcement, or corrections), non-professionals, and family members. These teams serve families whose children are at risk of abuse or neglect through case specific planning and coordination of services. Additionally, these teams strengthen and coordinate a community’s response to concerns regarding child abuse and neglect through public information and education.

Definitions

Appointment: Under the provisions of 33 V.S.A. § [4917](#), appointment enables service providers to meet and share information on an ongoing basis for the purpose of reviewing cases and coordinating services without violating a family’s right to confidentiality in order to better serve families and provide for a child’s safety.

Empanelment: The act of officially appointing an individual to an empaneled multidisciplinary child protection team.

Temporary Appointment: Situations where service providers working with a family are appointed on a one-time basis under the provisions of 33 V.S.A. § [4917](#).

Policy

33 V.S.A. § [4918](#)(a) states: “Multidisciplinary teams shall assist local district offices of the department in identifying and treating child abuse or neglect cases. With respect to any case referred to it, the team may assist the district office by providing:

- (1) case diagnosis or identification;
- (2) a comprehensive treatment plan; and
- (3) coordination of services pursuant to the treatment plan.”

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Multidisciplinary teams may also provide public informational and educational services to the community about identification, treatment, and prevention of child abuse and neglect. It shall also foster communication and cooperation among professionals and organizations in its community, and provide such recommendations or changes in service delivery as it deems necessary (33 V.S.A. § [4918\(b\)](#)).

33 V.S.A. § [4917](#) allows the DCF Commissioner or their designee to empanel a multidisciplinary team or a special investigative multitask force team or both wherever in the state there may be a probable case of child abuse or neglect which warrants the coordinated use of several professional services. These teams shall participate and cooperate with the local special investigation unit in compliance with 13 V.S.A. § [5415](#).

The DCF Commissioner or their designee, in conjunction with professionals and community agencies, shall appoint members to the multidisciplinary teams which may include persons who are trained and engaged in work relating to child abuse or neglect such as medicine, mental health, social work, nursing, child care, education, law, or law enforcement. The teams shall include a representative of the Department of Corrections. Additional persons may be appointed when the services of those persons are appropriate to any particular case.

33 V.S.A. § [4921\(e\)\(1\)\(A\)](#) gives the department the ability to release information to an empaneled group. However, the empanelment process does not provide the same protections to other team members. Empanelment does **not** negate the federal information protections of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) or 42 CFR Part 2 which protect medical and substance abuse treatment information.

A member of the team includes anyone who participates in a meeting of the empaneled multidisciplinary team. Family members who are participating in a team meeting do not need to be empaneled. Most members of these teams serve one-year terms. However, in the interest of promoting effective case review and coordination, some professionals will be members for only one or two meetings. No person will participate in child protection team meetings without being empaneled, except for family members.

Empanelment Process

During the month of September, every child protection team will submit a list of team members for the year to the district director in the local office to ensure open communication and collaboration between the team and the local district office. The director will forward the lists to the DCF Commissioner or designee (a designated person in central office). The Commissioner or designee will empanel the team and members for the year, beginning October 1. During the year, if there are changes in long

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term members, teams will send updates to the district director, stating which members to add or delete. The director will forward this to the Commissioner or central office designee for empanelment. These will be sent in a timely fashion so that members do not participate in meetings without being empaneled.

The DCF Commissioner has authorized district directors to empanel short-term members of child protection teams. Teams will submit names of members to be empaneled for one month or less, to the district director in their area. Teams must submit the names with sufficient notice so that directors have at least four working days to respond.

Teams that have representation from more than one district office should include all relevant district directors in their communication.

Referrals to Child Protection Teams

Service providers, educators and other professionals can refer a family to a *Child Protection Team*. Families can request this team meeting. District office staff may request a *Child Protection Team Meeting* on any family with child protection issues, whether or not the concerns rise to the level of a report of child abuse or neglect.