 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>252</h1>
Chapter:	Staff Safety, Well-Being, and Resiliency	
Subject:	Staff Safety During Removals	Page 1 of 3
Approved:	Aryka Radke, Deputy Commissioner	Effective: 6/15/2023
Supersedes:	Family Services Policy 250	Dated: 2/24/2023

Purpose

To define the roles and responsibilities of staff, supervisors, district directors or managers, CIES, and central office when the department has obtained custody of a child and is planning for the removal of that child. This policy guides staff in how to:

- Assess potential risk and plan for teamed responses when removing a child; and
- Collaborate with law enforcement in planning for and conducting a removal.

Related Policies

Family Services [Policy 52](#): Child Safety Interventions – Investigations and Assessments

Family Services [Policy 82](#): Juvenile Court Proceedings – CHINS

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 140](#): Standby and Call-In

Family Services [Policy 150](#): Transportation of Children and Youth in DCF Custody

Family Services [Policy 250](#): Reporting and Responding to Staff Safety Threats

Family Services [Policy 251](#): Staff Safety in Homes and the Community

Family Services [Policy 255](#): HOPE (Helping Our Peers Excel) Team

Additional Resources:

[Family Services Staff Safety SharePoint Page](#)


[Law Enforcement and DCF FSD Removal Checklist](#)

[Removal Checklist for Huddles](#)

[Resource Family Safety Awareness Checklist](#)

Introduction

The work of the Family Services Division comes with inherent risks. The division’s work with families may cause stress to clients, and some clients may react to our intervention, especially the removal of their child, with feelings of anger or hostility, violence, or threats of violence towards staff. Such reactions create risks to the personal safety of staff. Hostility is most often directed towards the division itself, and the resultant safety concerns are applicable to any employee, community partner, or foster/kinship family acting on its behalf. The safety of Family Services staff in the field is a vital issue that must remain at the forefront at all times. The importance of staff safety should be given primary attention in the performance of work duties.

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>252</h1>
Chapter:	Staff Safety, Well-Being, and Resiliency	
Subject:	Staff Safety During Removals	Page 2 of 3

Policy

See Family Services [Policy 82](#) for information about seeking emergency care orders (ECOs) and CHINS petitions.

Special Considerations When Planning for Removals

The process of seeking custody of a child or youth comes with inherent danger to the young person, division staff, and the accompanying law enforcement officer(s). Only law enforcement has the authority to take a child into physical custody. It is best practice for the officer(s) and division staff to be in close contact and coordination to support the safety of the child(ren) and everyone involved.


Removal huddles are a key tool in planning for the details of staff safety and roles and responsibilities for the removal and placement. The [Removal Checklist for Huddles](#) is a resource to help guide planning. If law enforcement is involved in the pre-planning the [Law Enforcement and DCF FSD Removal Checklist](#) should be used to structure and guide that planning and collaboration. Clear roles and agreements shall be established regarding communication. If the removal occurs after hours or is planned to occur after hours, CIES should be involved in the huddle.

Anticipatory case consultations with the staff safety team are encouraged and may be requested at any time by all division employees. The division seeks to address staff safety in a preventative and planned way as much as possible, where staff safety enhances child safety and well-being. To request an anticipatory consult, division staff will complete the [Staff Safety Consultation Request Form](#), which prompts for preferred dates/times, other consultants who should be included, and other specifics about the situation. The form is automatically sent to the staff safety team.

An enhanced teamed response of two division employees in addition to the law enforcement officer(s) is the default method for removals and supporting children and youth through the often-traumatic transition of entering DCF custody.

Suggested steps when planning for removals includes:

- Having a planning conversation with law enforcement prior to arrival at the home utilizing the [Law Enforcement and DCF FSD Removal Checklist](#);
- Having an anticipatory consultation with the staff safety team;
- Using fleet vehicles and signing them out in advance;
- Deciding in advance who will be driving;
- Utilizing SafeSignal technology which can be used with or without cell service for emergency notification;

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>252</h1>
Chapter:	Staff Safety, Well-Being, and Resiliency	
Subject:	Staff Safety During Removals	Page 3 of 3

- Coming prepared with the required number of car seats and booster seats installed in the vehicle(s) to transport the children;
- Having a plan for:
 - Who will support each child, or who will get each child if they are in different locations;
 - Who will talk to and support the parents;
 - Who will gather the child’s important belongings, transitional objects (i.e., blanket, pillow, stuffed animals, toys, books, iPod, or other objects to which they are especially attached), clothing, and needed medications or prescriptions;
- Coordinating with foster or kinship parents to meet them at the most appropriate location depending on the circumstances (police station, fire station, their home, etc.).

By having a teamed response, there are additional supports for the child in an effort to lessen trauma associated with separation from their family.

As indicated above, an enhanced team response of two or more division employees along with law enforcement is the default method for removals. If there is a reason this cannot or should not occur, a huddle, check-in with leadership (or CIES after hours), or joint decision-making process must take place. For example, there may be instances where a family has been working with the division regarding the safety of their child and a plan is in place for what happens if the parent cannot safely care for their child or resume parenting (i.e., the parent may have shared the name and contact information of a relative they would like the child to be placed with or an out-of-home safety plan is already in place). In these circumstances, the child may already be with the intended caregiver or the parent may be willing to drop the child off at the district office or a pre-determined location. When this type of planning has occurred in advance, or in situations where an infant is receiving care in a hospital setting with hospital security, more than one family services worker may not need to be involved in the removal and placement process.

Documenting The Removal

Case notes should detail who was present and the location and events of the removal. The use of teamed responses should be documented. If a teamed response was not used, the reason why should be documented. Documentation of the following should also be included:

- Any unmet needs of the child that require follow-up;
- Immediate needs of the placement; and
- Any staff safety incidents.