

Prenatal Engagement and Family Support Working Group – Act 136 (H. 657)

July 31, 2026

In Attendance:

Lauren Higbee, Office of the Child Youth and Family Advocate,
Raelyn Maynard, Individual with Lived Experience
Katelyn Larose, Individual with Lived Experience
Alison Robinson, Recovery Partners Vermont
Cammie Naylor, Vermont Legal Aid
Ilisa Stalberg, Division of Family and Child Health
Kate Bailey, Voices for Vermont's Children
Larry Crist, Vermont Parent Representative Center
Meghan Masterson, Kid Safe Collaborate, Children of Recovering Mothers
Michelle LaLiberte, VT Family Network
Marshall Pahl, Defender General's Office
Aryka Radke, DCF-FSD Family Services Deputy Commissioner
Lindsay Barron, DCF-FSD Director of Policy and Planning
Hannah Marble, DCF-FSD Director of Communications & Legislative Affairs
Jessica Barquist, Planned Parenthood

1. Introductions

- Please share your name, pronouns, agency/role
- What should we know about you that we wouldn't know through a virtual meeting?
- If this was the Working Group's only meeting, what is one thing you want the final report to say?
- Selection of a Chair (Facilitated by OCYFA) – Co-Chairs were selected through a vote, with a quorum present: Lauren Higbee and Meghan Masterson.

2. Community Agreements

- No talking over one another.
- Use the raise-hand feature on Teams/Zoom as much as possible, while recognizing that some participants may be joining by phone or through other technology.
- "Step up, step back": balance speaking and listening and make space for all members to contribute.
- Be aware of speaking time and limit individual speaking time when possible.

- Avoid acronyms when possible; if an acronym is used, define it.
- When materials are distributed in advance, make every reasonable effort to review them before the meeting. Chairs will allow adequate time for members to review and discuss materials.
- If a quorum is present at the start of the meeting, it will remain present, even if a voting member needs to sign off.
- A discussion of the meeting structure occurred, including if the meeting is defined as an “open” meeting, if guests may participate, confidentiality requirements, recording, and taking of minutes.

3. Review of Act 136, Section 16: “Prenatal Engagement and Family Support Working Group” and Discussion

- Review of Act 136, Section 16: “Prenatal Engagement and Family Support Working Group” occurs, as a walkthrough of the bill.
- An overview of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) was provided
- An overview of the deferred screening process was provided by DCF
 - Participants asked if most reports are substance abuse related, if families are notified that a report has been made against them, and clarification was provided that notification of a report is only made if a report is accepted, at the time of acceptance 30 days prior to a pregnant person’s due date.
- Act 108 was referenced by a group member, including that it provides more time for the work to occur, and the coordination of the groups will be important
- Review occurred of the statutory charge and purpose of the Working Group.
- Discussion surrounding the scope of the Working Group occurred, including the question raised by a member about whether the work should focus on an overhaul, modifications, or alternatives to the current approach.
- A group member expressed a desire to keep the scope focused on prenatal to birth, noting that this period presents unique and complex issues.
- A group member suggested that the statute provides a general statement of what the Working Group is intended to accomplish, but that the group needs to further define and develop the substance of that charge.

4. Proposed framework for the Working Group’s work – Proposed by a Group Member

- What is the current system and why does it operate that way?

- What are the concerns, challenges, and unintended consequences with the current approach?
- How is the current process carried out in practice?
- What alternatives, models, or proposals should the Working Group consider?
- What information and recommendations should ultimately be included in the final report?

5. Next Steps / Calendaring / Final Report Discussion

- Calendaring:
 - Schedule the remaining four meetings.
 - Doodle poll for scheduling.
 - Intention to have one meeting before school starts.
- Action Items:
 - Meeting minutes sent to group.
 - Resources from today's meeting logged and made available to the group.
 - Written information provided ahead of next meeting on the current process, with attention/lens on reducing expert speak (e.g., "screening out").
- Future materials / questions:
 - National practices/review of other jurisdictions.
 - Existing Vermont procedures and practices.
 - Question regarding support for parents who have an open case involving an older child and become pregnant.
 - DCF data from the past two years.

6. "Parking Lot" Items

- Can we define/learn the existing procedures and practices associated with the current practice in the state?
- Is there a place where we can find a review of national practices?
- If or how are parents supported if there is an open case involving an older child and they become or are pregnant during the course of that previously open case?

Today's Resources:

[Vermont CAPTA Notification Guide](#)
[CAPTA FAQs](#)
[Family Services Policy #51](#)