

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO DCF's Family Services Division



This information is important. If you need help understanding it, tell us.

Ova informacija je važna. Ako Vam je potrebna pomoć da je razumijete, obavijestite nas. *(Bosnian)*

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Ces informations sont importantes. Si vous avez besoin d'aide pour les comprendre, dites-le nous. *(French)*

Iyi n'inkenuzo ngirakamaro. Tubwire, mugihe woba ushaka impfashanyo y'ugusobanukirwa. *(Kirundi)*

यो जानकारी महत्वपूर्ण छ। यदि तपाईंलाई यो बुझ्न सहयोग चाहिएमा, हामीलाई भन्नुहोस्। *(Nepali)*

Macluumaadkan waa muhiim. Haddii aad u baahan tahay caawimaad ah fahanka macluumaadka, noo sheeg. *(Somali)*

Esta información es importante. Si usted necesita ayuda para comprenderla, infórmenos. *(Spanish)*

Maelezo haya ni muhimu. Ikiwa unahitaji msaada wa kuyafahamu, tueleze. *(Swahili)*

Đây là thông tin quan trọng. Nếu quý vị cần trợ giúp để hiểu thông tin này, hãy cho chúng tôi biết. *(Vietnamese)*

Department for Children and Families

Family Services Division

280 State Drive, HC 1 North
Waterbury, VT 05671-1030

Website: Go to <http://www.dcf.vt.gov/fsd>.

District Offices: See district phone numbers on back cover.

24-Hour Child Abuse Hotline: Call 1-800-649-5285 toll free.

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If you're involved with the Family Services Division (FSD) of the Department for Children and Families (DCF), this guide can help you understand:

- ⇒ What is happening to your family.
- ⇒ Why it's happening.
- ⇒ How we'll work with you and other family members.
- ⇒ What your role will be in the process.

If you have questions at any time, please ask!

Section 1: Family Services Division

The Family Services Division (FSD) has two major roles:

- 1. To make sure children and youth are safe from abuse, their basic needs are met, and their families are supported to achieve these goals.**

This includes:

- ⇒ Responding to reports of suspected child abuse and neglect.
- ⇒ Evaluating children's safety through investigations and assessments.
- ⇒ Engaging with families to increase safety.
- ⇒ Seeking court involvement when necessary to keep children safe.
- ⇒ Licensing and regulating out-of-home placements for children and youth.
- ⇒ Working with parents and relatives towards children's safe return home.
- ⇒ Finding permanent homes for children who can't return home safely, preferably with relatives or other people they know.

CHILD WELFARE

- 2. To support youth at risk of harming themselves or others and youth/young adults on juvenile probation or youthful offender status.**

This includes:

- ⇒ Determining their strengths and challenges.
- ⇒ Providing needed services to them and their families.
- ⇒ Placing youth in temporary out-of-home care when necessary to keep them or their communities safe.
- ⇒ Working towards their safe return home.
- ⇒ Finding permanent homes for those who can't return home safely, preferably with relatives or other people they know.
- ⇒ Working with youth/young adults on their successful completion of probation.

YOUTH JUSTICE



Our Mission

We work with families, partners, and communities to increase safety and law abidance for children and youth. We achieve this by:

- ➔ Keeping families together safely.
- ➔ *And if that's not possible*, placing children and youth in temporary homes until we can safely reunify them with their families.
- ➔ *And if that's not possible*, developing lifelong connections for them.

What We Believe

- ➔ **Children deserve to be safe, heard, and connected to their communities.**
- ➔ **Families know themselves best.**
 - ⇒ We value their expertise.
 - ⇒ We see them in the context of their culture and community.
 - ⇒ We believe they can grow and change.
 - ⇒ We see them as active participants and partners in the process.
- ➔ **Interventions should:**
 - ⇒ Be the least intrusive necessary.
 - ⇒ Rally caregivers and safety networks to take action.
 - ⇒ Happen quickly to achieve child and community safety.

Principles That Guide Our Work

- ➔ **Safety organized:** We arrange our practice around child and community safety.
- ➔ **Child-centered:** We help make sure children and youth understand what's happening and have a voice in deciding what should change.
- ➔ **Family-focused:** We help caregivers and families understand the needs of the children/youth and take protective actions.
- ➔ **Collaborative & sustainable:** We join with caregivers and safety networks to develop sustainable safety for children and youth.
- ➔ **Restorative:** We give those who have:
 - ⇒ Been harmed, the opportunity to discuss the impact of the harm.
 - ⇒ Caused harm, the opportunity to assume responsibility for their actions and take steps to make it right.
- ➔ **Safety culture:** We pay attention to:
 - ⇒ The needs of our staff.
 - ⇒ Vulnerabilities in the system.
 - ⇒ Continuous improvement and accountability.
 - ⇒ Times when high risk, high consequence decisions are being made.

To learn more about our work,
read our Practice Model at
<https://dcf.vermont.gov/fsd>.

Laws & Policies That Govern Our Work

Federal Laws

There are several federal laws that govern our work. The main ones are:

- ➡ Title IV of the Social Security Act:
 - ➡ Promotes coordinated child and family services to ensure all children are raised in safe, loving families.
 - ➡ Covers the cost of foster care, adoption subsidies for children with special needs, and training for staff, foster parents and adoptive parents.
- ➡ Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA): Outlines the duty and power of the states to protect children.
- ➡ Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP): Supports state efforts to prevent delinquency and improve the juvenile justice system.

To learn more, go to:

- ➡ <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws-policies/federal-laws/laws>
- ➡ <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/about/legislation>

Vermont Laws

There are several state laws that govern our work . The main ones are:

- ➡ Title 33: Human Services, Chapter 49: CHILD WELFARE SERVICES
- ➡ Title 33: Human Services, Chapter 51: GENERAL PROVISIONS
- ➡ Title 33: Human Services, Chapter 52: DELINQUENCY PROCEEDINGS
- ➡ Title 33: Human Services, Chapter 52A: YOUTHFUL OFFENDERS
- ➡ Title 33: Human Services, Chapter 53: CHILDREN IN NEED OF CARE OR SUPERVISION

To learn more about these and other state statutes:

1. Go to the Vermont Legislature’s website: <https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/>.
2. Click on “Title 33” and then the chapter you want to review.

Family Services Rules & Policies

These policies and rules guide the work we do with children, youth, and families. They cover everything from responding to child abuse and neglect, to working with families in court, to placing children and youth in out-of-home care.

1. Visit our website at <http://dcf.vermont.gov/fsd>.
2. Click on “Laws, Regs & Rules”.

Frequently-Asked Questions About FSD

Will you take my child away?

It's important to know that we will work with you on a plan to keep your child at home, safely.

Research shows that children and youth are safer, healthier, and more secure when we:

- ➡ Involve parents and extended family members in planning for their safety.
- ➡ Provide parents with the supports and services they need to follow through with their plans.

FACT:

Most children do not come into state custody. Most stay home while we work with the parents.

If we can't put a plan in place to keep your child at home safely, your Family Services worker may take steps to have your situation reviewed by the court. A judge would then decide if your child needs to be placed in out-of-home care.

What happens if my child is removed from my home?

You can help make sure your child is safe while living away from home by telling us about safe places they could live. This could include with a non-custodial parent, grandparent, other relative, friend or someone else you think would be willing and able to safely care for your child. Family Services will explore these and other placement options.

Your family will then need to do the work necessary for your child to return home.

Will we have to go to court?

You will typically only have to go to court if:

- ➡ You refuse services and the state asks the court to order services.
- ➡ Your child is charged with committing a delinquent act.
- ➡ Your child is removed from your home.

What if it's my child's behavior that's the issue?

Sometimes, a family will call asking for our help because of their child's behavior (usually an older youth). If this applies to your situation, read *Section 3: Youth Justice in Vermont*.

Section 2: Child Welfare in Vermont

As Vermont's child welfare agency, we are responsible for making sure children and youth are safe, their basic needs are met, and families are supported to achieve these goals.



Families usually come to our attention when we receive reports saying their children were:

- ➡ Abandoned.
- ➡ Physically, emotionally or sexually abused.
- ➡ Not provided adequate food, clothing, shelter or health care (*neglect*).
- ➡ At significant risk of being abused or neglected (*risk of harm*). OR
- ➡ Without proper parental care or subsistence, education, medical or other care necessary for their well-being.

What Happens To The Reports We Receive

1. **A supervisor reviews each report to decide if it can be accepted for intervention.** The supervisor considers several things, including the:

- ⇒ Law in Vermont and departmental policy.
- ⇒ Child's age.
- ⇒ Alleged abuser's relationship to the child.
- ⇒ Nature of the allegation.

If the report is *not accepted*, FSD may direct the family to services in the community.

2. **If the report is accepted, the supervisor determines the appropriate intervention.** Vermont law allows for two types of intervention:

- a. Assessment: this is usually the preferred intervention.
- b. Investigation: this is the required intervention in certain situations, including when a report claims that:
 - ⇒ A child was sexually abused by an adult (18+).
 - ⇒ A child is at risk of harm for sexual abuse by an adult (18+).
 - ⇒ A person responsible for a child's welfare (*see definition on page 15*):
 - Abandoned a child.
 - Allowed a child to be exposed to methamphetamine production.
 - Did or didn't do something that resulted in a child's death or serious injury.
 - Maliciously punished a child.
 - Physically abused a child under three or a child of any age who does not talk/is not able to walk.

3. FSD opens the investigation or assessment.

A Family Services worker is assigned to the case and the selected intervention begins. This usually happens within 72 hours. It could be sooner if the child is in imminent danger. *The start of the intervention is typically when the parents become aware that FSD is involved with their family.*

Both types of intervention could include similar steps:

- a. Assessing the child's immediate safety.
- b. Assessing the risk of future maltreatment.
- c. Determining the outcome of the intervention.
- d. Opening a case for ongoing services.

How Child Safety Interventions Begin

INVESTIGATIONS	ASSESSMENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➡ An investigation typically begins with the Family Services worker interviewing the child mentioned in the report or observing the child if she or he does not talk.➡ Vermont law allows Family Services to interview children without the parents' knowledge or permission, but a neutral party must be present (e.g., teacher, school nurse, school principal or child care provider).➡ The parents are told about the interview and report as soon as it's reasonable and safe to do so.➡ The evidence needed to make a decision is gathered (e.g., taking photos of bruises, having the child examined by a doctor, and getting x-rays taken).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➡ An assessment typically begins with the Family Services worker contacting the parent(s) and asking for permission to interview the child mentioned in the report.➡ Parental permission is required to interview the child.➡ If the parents refuse to grant their permission, the division may change the intervention from assessment to investigation if they feel it's necessary to ensure the child's safety.

Next Steps In The Intervention

The following steps may happen for both investigations and assessments.

1. The Child Safety Assessment.

The worker's first priority is to assess the child's immediate safety using the *SDM® Assessment of Danger and Safety Tool*.

The assessment involves:

- A.** Visiting the family's home.
- B.** Interviewing the parents and other adults in the home who serve in a parental role.
- C.** Assessing factors such as:
 - ⇒ The child's vulnerability.
 - ⇒ Any caretaker conditions that threaten the child's immediate safety.
 - ⇒ The family's capacity to keep the child safe in the immediate future.
- D.** Identifying actions to immediately address any identified dangers/risks.
- E.** Determining the safety decision:
 - i. Safe - no dangers identified at this time; the child appears safe.
 - ii. Conditionally Safe - a safety plan is in place that addresses the identified dangers; if successfully carried out, the child may remain in the home.
 - iii. Unsafe - a court order/voluntary care agreement with placement outside the home is the only way to protect the child from immediate or serious harm.

2. The Family Risk Assessment.

The worker uses the *SDM® Risk Assessment Tool* to assess the risk that a family will maltreat the child in the next 12 to 18 months — without any intervention. If the parents don't live together and the child spends time in both homes, a risk assessment may be done for both households.

In most cases, the risk assessment will be completed:

- ➡ Investigation: no later than 60 days from acceptance of a report.
- ➡ Assessment: no later than 45 days from acceptance of a report.

At the end of the assessment, the worker determines the final risk level:

- ➡ Low Risk: case is closed.
- ➡ Moderate Risk: case is closed; family may be directed to community services.
- ➡ High or Very High Risk: case is opened for ongoing services.

If the alleged perpetrator is not a caregiver or household member, a risk assessment would only be conducted if the caregiver's ability to protect the child is in question. For example: a risk assessment would not be conducted if a report alleges a child was sexually abused by a teacher and there is no question about the parents' ability to protect the child from further abuse.

3. The Outcome of the Intervention.

At the conclusion of the intervention, the supervisor determines the outcome based on the information gathered. The possible outcomes are described below.

A. Assessments:

- i. A determination of the need for ongoing services — based on the assessed risk of future maltreatment.
 - ⇒ If the risk is high or very high, FSD opens a case to provide the family with ongoing services and works with the family to develop a *Family Support Case Plan* (see page 13) that addresses the identified risks.

B. Investigations:

- i. A determination of the need for ongoing services — based on the assessed risk of future maltreatment.
 - ⇒ If the risk is high or very high, FSD opens a case to provide the family with ongoing services and works with the family to develop a *Family Support Case Plan* (see page 13) that addresses the identified risks.
- ii. A determination of whether the reported abuse or neglect happened.
 - ⇒ If the evidence would lead a reasonable person to believe the child was abused or neglected, the report is *substantiated* and information about the person substantiated is entered into Vermont's Child Protection Registry. (See page 16 for more details about the Registry).
 - ⇒ If a report is *unsubstantiated*, a case could still be opened for services based on the assessed risk of future maltreatment.

4. Case Opened for Ongoing Services.

If a case is opened for ongoing services, a new Family Services worker will likely be assigned to the case. This person will work with your family to complete an initial *Family Support Case Plan* within 60 days of the initial risk assessment. The goal is to keep your family safely together and prevent the need for out-of-home care.

If there are still unresolved dangers, Family Services may pursue a court order to address them.

The Family Support Case Plan

If a case is opened for ongoing services, your Family Services worker will work with you to develop a *Family Support Case Plan*. The goal is to make your home safe, keep your child home, and strengthen your family.

The process will include:

1. Evaluating your child's condition (e.g., medical, dental, and psychological).
2. Identifying the issues your family has to address.
3. Identifying ways that your extended family members can help you address these issues.
4. Assessing your family's capacity to protect your child.
5. Identifying services and supports that are needed to reduce the risks. This could include things such as counseling, parenting classes, substance abuse treatment, and job training.

No one knows your family better than you, and we value and need your input. You can help your worker to identify your family's strengths, figure out what's causing the issues in your family, and decide what services and supports you need.

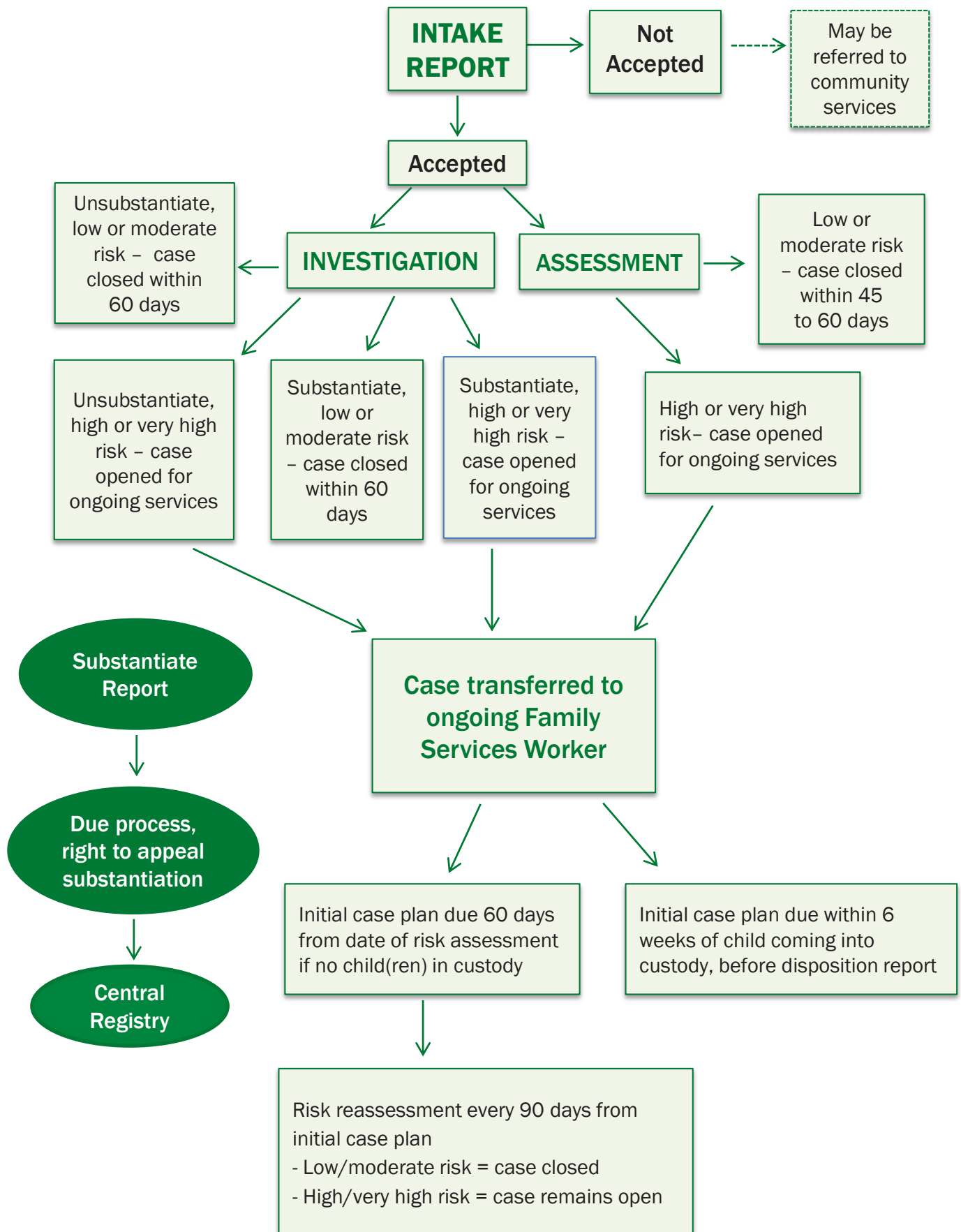
It might help to think of your case plan as a road map that:

- Tells you where you are going and how to get there.
- Helps you focus on the changes your family needs to make so your child can safely remain at home.
- Helps you keep track of the progress being made and what's left to do.
- Helps you move beyond our involvement with your family.

Making progress on your case plan is important. Take advantage of the services and supports that are offered.

- Every 90 days from the date of the initial case plan, your worker will conduct a *Risk Reassessment* to determine if the risk has been reduced enough to close the case.
- If the risk is not sufficiently reduced after two risk reassessments, the worker will discuss other possible approaches with his or her supervisor.

FSD Case Flowchart



Frequently-Asked Questions About Child Welfare

How is child abuse defined in Vermont law?

Vermont law (33.V.S.A. 49, § 4912) defines an abused or neglected child as:

A child whose physical health, psychological growth and development or welfare is harmed or is at substantial risk of harm by the acts or omissions of his or her parent or other person responsible for the child's welfare.

It also means a child who is sexually abused or at substantial risk of sexual abuse by any person and a child who has died as a result of abuse or neglect.

- **Person responsible for the child's welfare** includes the child's parent, guardian, foster parent and any other adult living in the child's home and serving in a parental role; an employee of a public or private residential home, institution or agency; or other person responsible for the child's welfare while in a residential, educational or child care setting, including any staff person.
 - **Harm** can occur by abandonment, emotional maltreatment, neglect, physical injury or sexual abuse.
 - **Risk of harm** means a significant danger that a child will suffer serious harm other than by accidental means, which would be likely to cause physical injury, neglect, emotional maltreatment or sexual abuse.
-
- **Emotional Maltreatment:** A pattern of malicious behavior, which results in impaired psychological growth and development.
 - **Neglect:** Failure to supply a child with adequate food, clothing, shelter or health care.
 - **Physical Injury:** Death, permanent or temporary disfigurement, or impairment of any bodily organ or function other than by accidental means.
 - **Sexual Abuse:** Any act or acts by any person involving sexual molestation or exploitation of a child, including but not limited to:
 - ⇒ Incest, prostitution, rape, sodomy.
 - ⇒ Lewd and lascivious conduct involving a child.
 - ⇒ Aiding, abetting, counseling, hiring, or procuring of a child to perform or participate in any photograph, motion picture, exhibition, show, representation, or other presentation which, in whole or in part, depicts sexual conduct, sexual excitement, or sadomasochistic abuse involving a child.
 - ⇒ Viewing, possessing, or transmitting child pornography, with the exclusion of the exchange of images between mutually consenting minors, including the minor whose image is exchanged.
 - ⇒ Human trafficking, sexual assault, voyeurism, luring a child, or obscenity.

Who can make a report?

Anyone can report suspected child abuse and neglect. Certain people, called mandated reporters, are required by law to do so (33.V.S.A. 49, § 4913). This includes:

- ➡ Any health care provider, including chiropractors, dentists, emergency medical personnel, hospital administrators, interns, licensed practical nurses, medical examiners, mental health professionals, osteopaths, pharmacists, physicians, physician's assistants, psychologists, registered nurses, resident physicians, and surgeons.
- ➡ Any individual employed by a school district or approved or recognized independent school, or contracted and paid by a school district or approved or recognized independent school to provide student services, including school superintendents, headmasters, teachers, student teachers, librarians, principals, and guidance counselors.
- ➡ Child care workers, police officers, probation officers, social workers and members of the clergy.
- ➡ Residential and non-residential camp administrators, counselors, and owners.
- ➡ Employees, contractors, and grantees of the Agency of Human Services who have contact with clients.

What happens if I am substantiated for child abuse or neglect?

Your name will be entered into Vermont's Child Protection Registry—a database of substantiated reports of child abuse/neglect. Before your name is placed on the Registry, DCF will send you a letter informing you about:

- ➡ Our intent to add your name to the Child Protection Registry.
- ➡ Your right to request a review to challenge the substantiation within 14 days of when the letter was mailed.

If you don't request a review in the time allowed:

- ➡ Your name will be added to the Registry.
- ➡ The department's decision will be final.
- ➡ You'll have no further right of review — until you're eligible to request a review to have your registry record removed.

Having a registry record may affect your ability to:

- ➡ Become a foster parent, adoptive parent, child care provider or teacher.
- ➡ Work with children, youth and vulnerable adults.

For more information, go to <https://dcf.vermont.gov/protection/registry>.

Section 3: Youth Justice in Vermont

As Vermont's youth justice agency, we provide supports and services to three groups of youth and their families:

1. Youth at risk (of harming themselves or others).
2. Youth on juvenile probation.
3. Youth/young adults on youthful offender status.



Youth At Risk

Sometimes, youth come to our attention because they are putting themselves or others at risk. We might, for example, get a report alleging a youth:

- ➔ Engaged in risky behaviors.
- ➔ Ran away from home.
- ➔ Has been truant from school without good reason (*for at least 20 days*).

These types of reports may be made by anyone; however, they are often made by parents who have little or no control over their children, don't know what to do, and are requesting our help.

Based on Vermont law, Family Services will generally not get involved:

- ➔ With youth between the ages of 16 and 17.5, unless they are at high risk of seriously harming themselves or others.
- ➔ Until the family has exhausted all other options for help.

Before we get involved, we talk to the family about any local services they've already accessed and direct them to other potential sources of help in their communities. This could include a mental health provider, school, substance abuse treatment program, or local coordinated services team.

If we are able to get involved, we will first conduct a Youth Assessment — a process that involves the Family Services worker, youth, and family (see more on page 20).

Depending on the assessed level of risk, the Family Services worker may:

- ➔ Direct the family to services in their community.
- ➔ Provide services to the youth and family.
- ➔ Petition the court for temporary custody.

Youth On Juvenile Probation

When a youth is charged with breaking the law, it usually goes to Family Court as a delinquency case. If this happens to your child, here's what could happen:

1. Your child will get a notice to appear in court (unless the State's Attorney tells you, in writing, that you don't need to go to court).
2. Before the first hearing, the court will send you information about the process along with some paperwork (e.g., *Juvenile Petition*, *Affidavit*, and *Application for Public Defender Services*).
3. Within 15 days, the youth will be offered a Youth Assessment (see page 20).
4. If the assessed risk is low or moderate, the case may be referred to diversion rather than court.
5. If the case goes to court, the judge may order Family Services to write a *Disposition Case Plan* describing:
 - ⇒ The issues that brought your child to court.
 - ⇒ The impact of the delinquent act on the victim and community.
 - ⇒ Your child's home, school, community and living situation.
 - ⇒ Your child's medical, psychological, social, educational, and vocational needs.
 - ⇒ Your child and family's strengths and risk factors.
 - ⇒ Proposed conditions of probation that address the identified risks and provide for reparation to victims and the community.
 - ⇒ A plan for services required to successfully complete probation.
 - ⇒ The responsibilities of the youth, family members, department, and treatment providers.
6. If your child admits to the allegations or the court finds your child to be delinquent, the judge may:
 - ⇒ Issue a *Juvenile Probation Certificate* that lists the duration of probation and the conditions they are required to meet (see more on page 20).
 - ⇒ Assign a Family Services worker to supervise your child's probation to make sure they meet the conditions. The judge could also assign supervision to a community program.

The purpose of juvenile probation is to get the youth to accept responsibility, get help, and learn to make better choices in the future.

Youth/Young Adults On Youthful Offender Status

In 2016, the State legislature changed the law to make youth under 22 eligible for youthful offender status when charged with a crime in Vermont.

This was done to:

- Bring the law in line with science, which shows that youth in that age group don't have fully developed brains and are more amenable to treatment and rehabilitation.
- Avoid treating juveniles as adults, with the exception of the most serious offenses.
- Mitigate major consequences for youth charged in adult court (e.g., a public record, exclusion from the military, and ineligibility for student loans).

A youthful offender proceeding begins when:

- A State's Attorney files a *Youthful Offender Petition*. OR
- The court's Criminal Division transfers a case to the Family Division for consideration of youthful offender status.

Here's what happen next:

1. Within 15 days, the youth will be offered a *Youth Assessment* (see page 20).
2. If the youth does not complete the assessment within 15 days and the court doesn't extend the timeframe for good cause, the court will reject youthful offender status.
3. If the assessed risk is low or moderate, the case may be referred to diversion.
4. If the case is not diverted, DCF has 30 days after the assessment is completed to file a *Youthful Offender Consideration Report* with the court's Family Division. It will include a recommendation about whether youthful offender status is appropriate and a description of the services that may be available.
5. The court will determine whether public safety will be protected if the youth is granted youthful offender status.
6. If the youth is not granted youthful offender status, the case will be transferred to the court's Criminal Division.
7. If the youth is granted youthful offender status the judge will issue a *Juvenile Probation Certificate* that lists the duration of probation and conditions they are required to meet (see page 20). Both DCF and the Department of Corrections will assign a worker to supervise probation, provide services, and help make sure the youth meets all conditions.
8. If the youth successfully completes the terms of probation, their Family Division court record will be sealed.
9. If the youth does not comply with the conditions of probation, a motion may be filed in court requesting termination of the youth's status as a youthful offender.

Youth Assessments

If the court orders the Family Services Division to develop a disposition plan for your child or to supervise your child's probation, a Family Services worker or contracted community provider will use the *Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI™)* to conduct a youth assessment.

The assessment process includes:

- ➔ Conducting interviews with the youth, family members, service providers, and others who know them.
- ➔ Reviewing any written materials available, including school reports and psychological evaluations.
- ➔ Identifying your child's challenges and strengths (*risk and protective factors*).
- ➔ Establishing goals and priorities for behavior change.
- ➔ Gaining a clear understanding of how your child and family functions as a system (e.g., structure, boundaries, patterns of communication).
- ➔ Developing a plan for services that address the relevant issues.

Juvenile Probation Certificate

If your child is placed on probation, the court will issue a *Probation Certificate* that lists the duration of the probation and the conditions your child is required to meet. For example, the court may require your child to:

1. Perform community service for a specific number of hours.
2. Engage in a restorative process to identify ways they can make amends to the victim.
3. Remain in Vermont unless they are granted permission to leave by the Family Services worker.
4. Not go certain places and/or see certain people.
5. Live at home or other place specified by the court.
6. Participate in services that are therapeutic, educational, and/or vocational.

You may be responsible for helping your child comply with these conditions. This might include, for example, driving your child to meetings and attending therapy together if it's recommended. If your child fails to meet the conditions of probation, he or she may have to go back to court. This could result in your child entering DCF custody and possible placement in a supervised setting.

Working with Adolescents and Justice-Involved Youth

To learn more about our work with youth, go to <http://dcf.vermont.gov/fsd/policies> and read the related policies. A few of them are highlighted below.

- ➡ Policy 60: CHINS(C) and (D) Assessments
- ➡ Policy 161: Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI)
- ➡ Policy 162: Juvenile Probation
- ➡ Policy 163: Engaging and Supporting Victims and Impacted Parties
- ➡ Policy 164: Youthful Offender Status
- ➡ Policy 165: Sealing of Juvenile Records
- ➡ Policy 175: Substance Use Testing, Screening, and Treatment for Youth

Frequently-Asked Questions About Youth Justice

How does the juvenile justice system differ from the adult criminal system?

The juvenile justice system takes a balanced approach that focuses on:

- ➡ Protecting the community from delinquency.
- ➡ Having youth take responsibility for their delinquent acts.
- ➡ Helping them develop the skills they need to live productive, responsible lives.

Will my child be taken into DCF custody?

While the court may transfer custody of a youth to DCF or someone else (e.g., a non-custodial parent or extended family member) at any point during the process, juvenile probation supports the placement of youth in their own communities, usually with their families.

Court-ordered conditions and supervision by a Family Services worker or contracted service provider help assure the needs of the youth, victim, and community are addressed. If the youth's needs or the risk to public safety cannot be addressed in their families, placement outside the home may be necessary and custody may be transferred to DCF.

Section 4: DCF Custody

This section will help you understand what will happen if your child comes into DCF custody.



Where Your Child Might Live

While in DCF custody, Family Services will decide where your child lives — with an emphasis on placing your child with relatives, friends, or someone else your child knows. Whenever possible, we'll place your child close to your home so it's easier to have time together (called *Family Time*).

Your child will most likely be placed in a foster home. This could be:

➤ In the home of a relative or family friend:

Your child may live with relatives or friends who become licensed as foster parents. This is called *kinship foster care*. Your friends or relatives will be subject to the same licensing process as non-related foster families. This includes passing background checks and attending specialized training.

➤ In the home of a non-related foster family:

If there are no relatives or friends available or appropriate to care for your child, Family Services will place your child in a non-related foster home.

CHILDREN SOMETIMES NEED A HIGHER LEVEL OF STRUCTURE & SUPERVISION THAN A FOSTER HOME CAN PROVIDE. THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE WHEN THEY HAVE BEEN CHARGED WITH, OR FOUND TO HAVE COMMITTED, A DELINQUENT ACT.

➤ Depending on the child's age and special needs, they could also be placed in a staffed care setting. This could include a residential treatment center, psychiatric institution, or group home.

These settings:

- ⇒ Provide group living situations with a high level of structure.
- ⇒ Include both large and small programs.
- ⇒ Are staffed 24-hours a day, seven days a week.
- ⇒ May provide schooling on site or in the community.
- ⇒ Are of various lengths, depending on the treatment needs being addressed.

Family Time

The goal is to have your first *Family Time* — scheduled contact between you and your child — within three working days of your child entering DCF custody. This is one of the best ways to help them cope with the feelings of separation and loss associated with out-of-home placement.

You should:

- ➔ Attend regularly and be on time.
- ➔ Tell your Family Services worker ahead of time if you can't make scheduled *Family Time* so your child won't be expecting you.
- ➔ Remain focused on your child's needs.

You may get the chance to work with a *Family Time Coach* who can help you to recognize and respond to your child's needs. To learn more, ask your worker for a copy of the Family Time Guidelines.

What You & Your Child Might Experience

Family Time might be a difficult and emotional experience for both you and your child.

- ➔ Your child may experience conflicting feelings.
They may, for example, feel both happy and sad, anxious and relieved, angry and guilty. This may lead to problem behaviors both during and after *Family Time* (e.g., hostility, clinginess, silence, tears, whininess, or ambivalence).

If you're concerned about your child's reaction to *Family Time*, talk to the *Family Time Coach*, Family Services worker, or foster parents.

- ➔ You may experience some challenging emotions.
You may experience confusion, anger and desperation as well as feelings of incompetency, inadequacy, inferiority, or shame. You may feel judged and pressured to perform to often unknown expectations.

Get support for yourself if you need it. Remember, these are normal feelings experienced by many parents.

Research has found that frequent, supported *Family Time* is strongly associated with successful family reunification and shorter out-of-home placement. Research also shows that children who are visited frequently are more likely to adjust well to being out of the home.

The Shared Parenting Meeting

Within five working days of your child coming into DCF custody, the Family Services worker will typically arrange a *Shared Parenting Meeting* to develop a plan for *Family Time*. This meeting will include you, the Family Services worker, your child's foster parents, and sometimes your child and other family members. If you'll be working with a *Family Time Coach*, they will usually attend.

During the meeting, you will:

1. Develop a plan for *Family Time* that benefits your child.
2. Talk about any safety concerns.
3. Write down all the decisions made, including:
 - ⇒ Where *Family Time* will take place.
 - ⇒ How often it will happen.
 - ⇒ Who will be there.
4. Share information about your child with the foster parents, including:
 - ⇒ Your child's likes, dislikes, and routines.
 - ⇒ People and things important to your child.
 - ⇒ Any health issues they should know about.
 - ⇒ Your family's traditions and culture.

At the end of the meeting, everyone gets a copy of the plan.

The parenting meeting can help you:

- ➡ Get to know the foster parents who will be caring for your child.
- ➡ Develop a supportive, positive relationship with them.
- ➡ Feel confident about your child's safety and well-being while in their care.

Studies show that when there is positive contact between birth parents and foster parents, children:

- ➡ Have more stable placements.
- ➡ Experience better emotional development.
- ➡ Are more successful in school.
- ➡ Return home sooner.

The Case Planning Process

Within the first six weeks of DCF custody, your Family Services worker will work with you to develop a plan to achieve a safe, permanent home for your child.

It will outline:

- ➡ Why your child came into DCF custody.
- ➡ Your family's goals, challenges, strengths, and support systems.
- ➡ The changes you, your child or both need to make.
- ➡ The supports and services you need from DCF and other service providers.
- ➡ The plan for *Family Time*.
- ➡ The initial case plan goal (usually reunification).

A team will be put in place to help you implement the plan, monitor your progress, and make any needed adjustments. In addition to you and your Family Services worker, your team could also include:

- ➡ Extended family members.
- ➡ Other people who support you and your child (e.g., teacher or family friend).
- ➡ Your child if she or he is old enough.
- ➡ Your child's foster parents.

The Case Plan Review

Every six months, your Family Services worker will invite team members to a meeting to discuss the progress made, whether the goal needs to change, and if other supports are needed for you or your child. A case reviewer who is not part of the team will facilitate the meeting.

Based on the group's discussion during the meeting, some changes may be made to the plan. If you disagree with parts of the case plan, the appeal process to handle such disagreements will be explained at the review.

When sufficient progress has been made on the case plan, DCF may recommend that your child return home. If it becomes clear that your child can't safely return home, the goal may be changed to looking for a permanent home for your child.

If you think that you are ready for your child to return home but your Family Services worker doesn't agree, you may ask your lawyer to request a court hearing. If a judge decides that your child can go home, DCF must obey the judge's order.

The Ultimate Goal of State Care

From a child's first day in state care, the Family Services worker typically works towards two goals at the same time:

1. To safely return the child home to the parents.
2. To help the child secure another permanent placement — preferably with extended family members or known connections— if they cannot safely return home.

This allows us to achieve a timely outcome that respects the child's need for stability. Living in uncertainty and moving between different living situations is disruptive to a child's development and well-being.

We are committed to helping you make your home safe for your child to return and providing you with the support and services you need to make this happen. You must also make a commitment: to do the work necessary for your child to return to your care — and to do it quickly.

The Permanency Hearing

Once a child has been in DCF custody for a year, the court will hold a *Permanency Hearing* to review the child's case plan, progress made, and plan for the future. This could happen sooner if the child is under seven. At the end of the hearing, the judge will order DCF to pursue one of the following options for achieving permanency:

1. Reunification: this is typically the initial case plan goal.
2. Adoption: if the child can't safely return home, the state will pursue adoption— first with people connected to the child (e.g., relatives, friends, foster parents) and then with other potential adoptive families. Once a child is adopted:
 - ⇒ The parents may be able to have some form of contact with the child if:
 - The adoptive parents agree to it (*non-enforceable*). OR
 - The birth parents and intended adoptive parents enter into a legally-enforceable agreement.
 - ⇒ The parents have no legal rights to, or responsibilities for, the child.
3. Permanent Guardianship: if a child is not likely to be adopted within a reasonable period of time, the state may pursue permanent guardianship with a relative or family friend. In a permanent guardianship:
 - ⇒ DCF is no longer involved.
 - ⇒ The guardian is responsible for the child's care, protection, and education.
 - ⇒ The parents retain certain parental rights and responsibilities.

Frequently-Asked Questions About DCF Custody

What if I disagree with a case plan decision?

If you don't agree with certain decisions made while your child is in DCF custody, you may request a review. Simply put, a review is a formal way of taking another look at a decision that has been made.

You should try to work out any disagreements with the Family Services worker first. If this is not possible, you may ask for a formal review of decisions such as the:

- ➡ Living arrangements.
- ➡ Plan for *Family Time*.
- ➡ Long-term goal (e.g., returning home or being adopted).

To request a review, write to the district director of the Family Services office you are working with. Your letter must be received no later than five days after you were informed about the decision in question.

Be sure to include:

- ➡ The decision you disagree with.
- ➡ Who made the decision.
- ➡ The decision you propose instead.
- ➡ The efforts you've made to resolve the situation.
- ➡ Your relationship to the child.
- ➡ Your name, address, and daytime telephone number.

The district director will contact you to set up a meeting. Following the meeting, you will be informed, in writing, of:

- ➡ The decision made.
- ➡ The reasons for the decision.
- ➡ Any options you have for further review.

We will not review decisions already made by a court or those scheduled to be heard in court within 30 days.

Section 5: The Court Process

See the flowchart on page 30 for a visual overview of the process.



Court Hearings That May Take Place

Following are brief descriptions of possible court hearings.

IF THE CASE BEGINS AS AN EMERGENCY:

➔ **Emergency Care Hearing:**

Children may be taken into emergency custody if they are in immediate danger, have run away, or been arrested. Parents may not know about an *Emergency Care Hearing* before it takes place. They:

- ➔ Happen quickly, day or night, in response to an emergency.
- ➔ Take place with a judge, by phone or at court.
- ➔ Are followed by a *Temporary Care Hearing* within 72 hours. The child could be placed in foster care during this time.

➔ **Temporary Care Hearing:**

The judge decides who should have custody of the child/youth until the next hearing. All parties involved (e.g., parents, DCF, State's Attorney, and the child) will have the opportunity to voice their opinions. The judge will consider placing the child back home or with a non-custodial parent, relative, family friend, other person known to the child/family, or DCF.

IF THE CASE BEGINS AS A NON-EMERGENCY:

➔ **Preliminary Hearing:**

If the case doesn't begin as an emergency, it usually starts with a Preliminary Hearing — within 15 days of the State's Attorney filing a petition with the court. The judge reviews the information presented in the petition and hears from the parties. The next hearing is typically a *Pre-Trial Hearing*.

NEXT STEPS IN THE COURT PROCESS:

➔ **Pre-Trial Hearing:**

Held about 15 days after either the *Temporary Care Hearing* or *Preliminary Hearing* to discuss whether the allegations in the petition will be admitted to or denied. This is an important decision because it affects what happens with the rest of the case. If the allegations are admitted to, it is called reaching the “merits” of the case and the next step is the *Disposition Hearing*. If the allegations are denied, the next step is the *Merits Hearing*.

A Status Conference is a court hearing that allows the judge and other parties to hear what is going on with the case. It may be held at any stage.

➡ **Merits Hearing:**

The *Merits Hearing* is similar to a trial.

- ⇒ The case is presented to a judge without a jury.
- ⇒ Witnesses may be called to testify under oath.
- ⇒ Testimony may be presented by family members, teachers, doctors, mental health providers, friends, witnesses, police officers, Family Services workers, foster parents, the child/youth and others.

After listening to the evidence, the judge may dismiss the case or issue one of the following findings:

- ⇒ *CHINS A* – the child has been abandoned or abused by his/her parents, guardian or other custodian.
- ⇒ *CHINS B* – the child is without proper parental care or subsistence, education, medical or other care necessary for his/her well-being.
- ⇒ *CHINS C* – the child is without or beyond the control of his/her parents, guardian or other custodian.
- ⇒ *CHINS D* – the child is habitually and without justification truant from compulsory school attendance.
- ⇒ *DELINQUENCY* – A child over the age of 10 committed a delinquent act.

If the judge finds a child is in need of care or supervision (CHINS) or a youth is delinquent, they will order Family Services to prepare a Disposition Case Plan for the Disposition Hearing, which should be held within 35 days.

➡ **Disposition Hearing:**

The plan for the child/youth and family will be decided at this hearing. All parties will receive a copy of the Disposition Case Plan before the hearing and have the opportunity to voice their opinions at the hearing. The judge will either accept or reject the case plan and make a final decision about custody at this hearing.

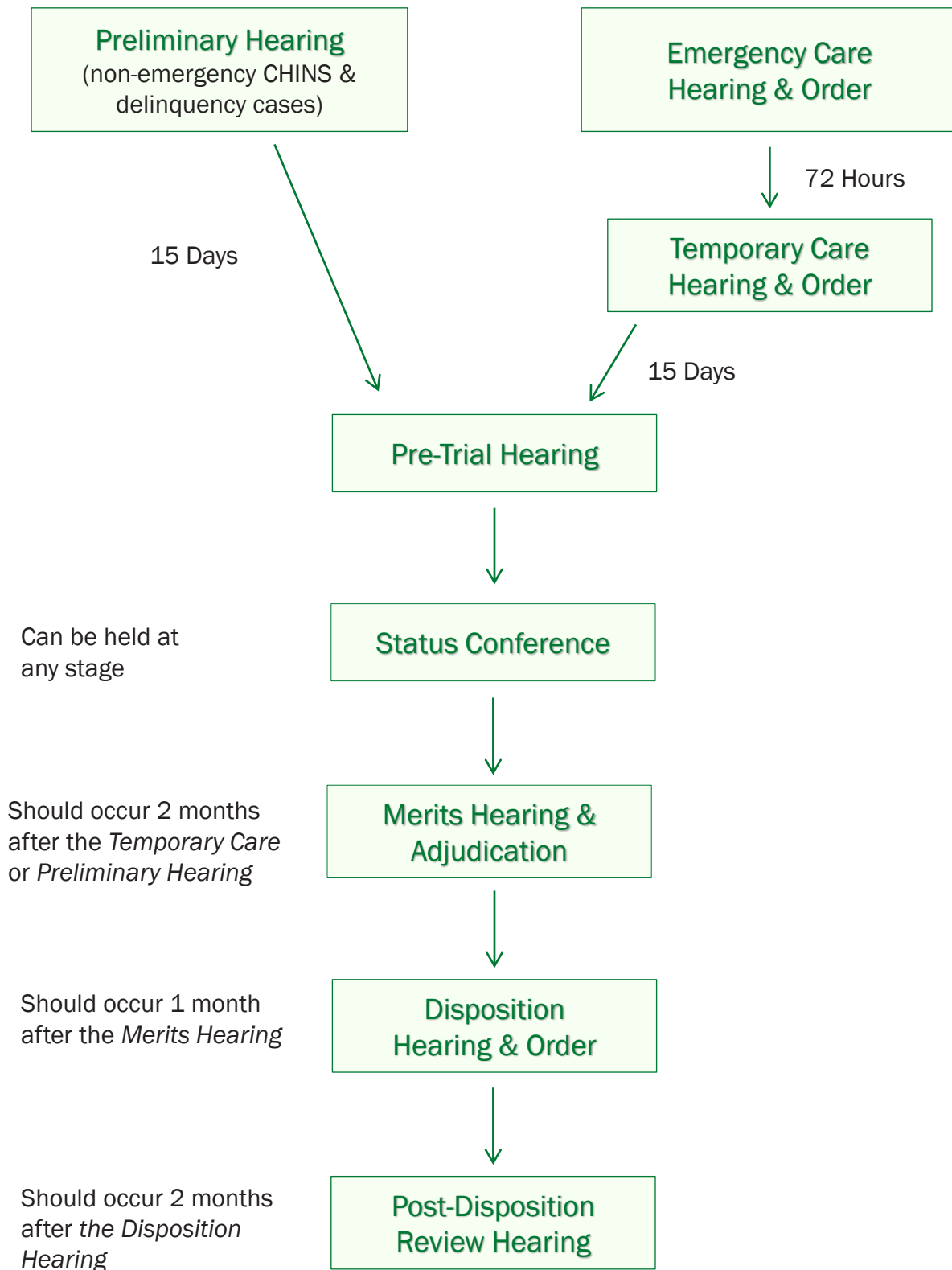
➡ **Post-Disposition Review:**

If your child is in DCF custody, the judge will hold a *Post-Disposition Review* within 60 days to check on the progress that you and your child are making.

Go to <https://www.vermontjudiciary.org/family/juvenile-court> and look for a link to "A Guide for Parents in CHINS Cases" at the bottom of the page.

Juvenile Proceedings Flowchart

(Not all cases will follow this progression)



Frequently-Asked Questions About The Court Process

Who represents my child at court?

The court will appoint a:

- ➡ Lawyer to represent your child at court.
- ➡ Guardian ad Litem to support your child during the court proceedings. Guardian ad Litem are adults trained to work with children in state custody. They attend all court hearings to advocate for what is in the children's best interest.

Do I need my own lawyer?

If your child is in DCF custody because of alleged abuse or neglect on your part, it is advisable (though not required) to have a lawyer. They can speak on your behalf and help you navigate the court process. If you can't afford a private lawyer, you may be entitled to a court-appointed one. Ask the court for an application.

Can I speak freely to my lawyer?

Everything you say to your lawyer is "confidential." This means your lawyer can't tell other people what you say without your permission. There is one important exception, however: Your lawyer may tell other people if he or she believes it's necessary to stop a crime that could lead to someone's death or injury.

Who else will be at the court hearings?

The people listed below are always parties to the case. This means they have the right to present evidence and call witnesses:

- ➡ The judge
- ➡ The State's Attorney (an attorney who represents the state)
- ➡ The Family Services worker
- ➡ The child's Guardian ad Litem
- ➡ The parents and children
- ➡ The attorneys representing the parents and children

The judge may also grant party status to others such as a relative.

Will I be notified about court hearings?

Yes. You will be given advance notice of hearings. Notices are sent to the lawyers and any party to the case who does not have a lawyer. Always let your lawyer, Family Services worker and the court know if your phone number or address changes.

What if I can't make a court hearing?

You or your lawyer may ask the court, in writing, to move the hearing to another date. The judge may grant the request if you have a good reason for not being able to make the original date. If the hearing date is changed, all parties will be notified (in writing if there's enough time).

Section 6: Your Rights & Responsibilities



RELATED TO YOUR INVOLVEMENT WITH DCF

Your Rights	Your Responsibilities
<p>You have the right to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Know why your family is involved with us. ✓ Know the nature of any report made concerning your family. ✓ Know the outcome of any intervention (i.e., assessment or investigation). ✓ Be treated respectfully by FSD staff and contracted service providers. ✓ Not be discriminated against based on disability, age, race, gender, religion, ethnic origin, economic status, or sexual orientation. ✓ Have your phone calls returned in a timely fashion (<i>typically within two working days</i>). ✓ Speak to your Family Services worker right away in an emergency or another employee if your worker is not available. ✓ Share any concerns you have — about decisions we've made, actions we've taken, or the way you've been treated. ✓ The services of an interpreter if English is not your first language and you need help understanding what is going on. ✓ Reasonable accommodations if you have a disability. 	<p>You are expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Inform your Family Services worker right away if your child is of Native American heritage. We need to know up front if the federal Indian Child Welfare Act applies. ✓ Keep all appointments with your Family Services worker. ✓ Return phone calls from your worker and other service providers promptly. ✓ Treat the Family Services worker and everyone else you work with (e.g., foster parents, service providers, and court staff) with courtesy and respect. ✓ Provide your Family Services worker with information about your progress and any changes in your life, including changes to your address, phone number, job, or living situation. ✓ Bring your child to see a doctor, therapist, or other professional if the Family Services worker asks you to. ✓ Let us know if you need special accommodations because of a disability or an interpreter because of limited English proficiency.

RELATED TO PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Your Rights	Your Responsibilities
<p>You have the right to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Be involved in the development of all plans related to your family. ✓ Get written copies of all agreed upon plans and be informed of any changes. ✓ Get the plans in your first language if it is not English. ✓ Be kept informed about what you and/or your child need to do. ✓ Be referred to the services described in the plan and informed of any services your child receives. ✓ Ask your Family Services worker to coordinate all plans your family is involved in. 	<p>You are expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Actively engage in the development of plans related to your family. ✓ Give your worker contact information for relatives, friends, and others you'd like to invite to participate in the development of these plans. ✓ Follow through with your part of the plans (e.g., participating in recommended services). ✓ Keep your worker informed about your progress on action items. ✓ Ask your Family Services worker for help if you're having trouble carrying out your part of the plan.

RELATED TO THE COURT PROCESS

Your Rights	Your Responsibilities
<p>You have the right to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Be present and have your say at all court hearings. ✓ Bring witnesses to court. ✓ Have a lawyer represent you at court. ✓ Be treated in a respectful manner by all parties at court. ✓ Be notified of court hearings related to your case. ✓ Have your questions answered. 	<p>You are expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Attend and participate in all the hearings related to your case, unless your lawyer tells you not to. ✓ Behave respectfully at court. ✓ Let the court and your lawyer know how you can be reached. ✓ Connect with your lawyer before each court hearing. ✓ Cooperate fully with your lawyer.

RELATED TO OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT

Your Rights	Your Responsibilities
<p>You have the right to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Know why your child is in out-of-home placement. ✓ Know exactly what needs to happen for your child to return home. ✓ Meet the people who will be caring for your child (in most cases). ✓ Develop a plan for scheduled contact with your child (<i>Family Time</i>). ✓ Be informed about your child's progress and any issues they have while in state care. ✓ Be informed promptly if your child is moved. ✓ Be consulted about things such as your child's health and education. ✓ Be informed about the people involved with your child (e.g., teacher, coach, doctor, dentist, and therapist). ✓ Be informed about any emergency medical care your child required. ✓ Be referred to the services and supports that are needed to have your child return home. ✓ Have your child return home if/when you successfully meet the goals of your case plan. 	<p>You are expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provide your Family Services worker with information about the child's other parent and any relatives or friends who may be able and willing to safely care for your child. ✓ Tell your Family Services worker about people important to your child. ✓ Share information about your child and family's medical histories so we can provide the best care for your child. ✓ Share important information about your child (e.g., likes, dislikes, and routines) with your child's caregivers. ✓ Attend <i>Family Time</i> as planned, arrive on time, fully participate, and tell your Family Services worker ahead of time if you can't make it. ✓ Inform the Family Services worker about any concerns you have with your child's placement. ✓ Do your part to help your child return home if that's the goal. ✓ Talk with your Family Services worker about your child's needs and progress. ✓ Make child support payments if the court orders you to do so.

RELATED TO AN FSD WORKER VISITING YOUR HOME

Your Rights	Your Responsibilities
<p>You have the right to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ask to see a <i>State Employee Identification Card</i> before letting the worker into your home. ✓ Call the appropriate district office to confirm the worker's identity. ✓ Ask questions if you don't understand what they're doing/asking you to do. ✓ Say no and speak to the worker's supervisor if you are uncomfortable with what you're being asked to do. ✓ Ask for a court order if the worker wants to remove your child from the home. ✓ Call 911 or local police if you suspect the person is not an FSD Family Services worker. ✓ Ask about possible next steps if the worker asks to tour your home and you are not comfortable with this. 	<p>You can expect the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The worker may ask you questions about extended family members, friends, and others who may be able to help and support you. ✓ The worker may ask that a piece of the child's clothing be moved or removed to see a bruise or physical injury on the child. This will be done in the presence of another adult. The worker may ask that you take the child to see a doctor. ✓ The worker may want to talk privately with your child about how things are going. The worker <i>does not</i> have to be alone with your child. They may, for example, sit on the porch or somewhere else where you can see your child while not overhearing the conversation.

Frequently-Asked Question About Your Rights & Responsibilities

What if I have a complaint?

If you have a complaint about a decision we've made, an action we've taken, the lack of action on our part, or the way you've been treated, we want to know about it.

1. Talk to the employee involved. If you don't feel comfortable doing this or are unhappy with their response, contact their supervisor.
2. If it is still not settled, call or write the district director of the Family Services office you are working with.
3. If it is still not resolved, call our central office at (802) 241-2131. A staff person will hear your complaint and inform you of the next steps you can take.

Section 7: Resources That Can Help

This section includes information about resources that can help your family beyond the involvement of the Family Services Division.



Assistance Available Through DCF

CHILD CARE REFERRAL & FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

WEBSITE: <https://dcf.vermont.gov/childcare>

TELEPHONE: 1-800-649-2642

DESCRIPTION:

DCF's Child Development Division has two programs related to child care:

1. The *Child Care Referral Service* can help you find child care in your area.
2. The *Child Care Financial Assistance Program* can help you pay for child care if you have an accepted reason for child care and meet the income guidelines.

Both programs are delivered through Community Child Care Support Agencies throughout the state. Your local agency can tell you about the child care options in your area and help you apply for financial assistance. Find your agency at <https://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/cccsa>.

CHILDREN'S INTEGRATED SERVICES (CIS)

WEBSITE: <https://dcf.vermont.gov/child-development/cis>

TELEPHONE: 1-800-649-2642

DESCRIPTION:

DCF's Child Development Division administers CIS for families who have questions or concerns about their children's development. Early intervention, family support, and prevention services are available to help ensure the healthy development and well-being of children, pre-birth to age 5. Services are family-centered, child-focused, and available at low or no cost to families. To learn more, dial 2-1-1 toll free from anywhere in Vermont. Ask for the name and phone number of your local CIS Coordinator. They can help you access the services you need.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

WEBSITE: <https://dcf.vermont.gov/esd/benefits>

TELEPHONE: 1-800-479-6151

DESCRIPTION:

DCF's Economic Services Division administers several benefit programs to help families meet their basic needs. This includes 3SquaresVT, Emergency/General Assistance, Energy Assistance, Fuel Assistance, and Reach Up. Eligibility for most programs is based on family or household income, plus additional criteria in some cases.

Assistance Available Through Other Organizations

AFFORDABLE INTERNET THROUGH COMCAST

WEBSITE: <https://www.internetessentials.com/>

TELEPHONE: 1-855-846-8376

DESCRIPTION:

You may qualify for affordable Internet service and a low-cost computer if your household:

- ➔ Is in an area where Comcast offers Internet service.
- ➔ Has at least one child eligible to participate in the National School Lunch Program.
- ➔ Has not subscribed to Comcast Internet service within the last 90 days.
- ➔ Does not have an overdue Comcast bill or unreturned equipment.

COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES

DESCRIPTION:

These agencies help Vermonters with lower incomes to meet their basic needs and become self-sufficient. Services may include emergency food help, fuel and utility assistance, Head Start, housing assistance, income tax assistance, information and referral, and training.

- ➔ CAPSTONE COMMUNITY ACTION (CENTRAL VT) - <http://www.capstonevt.org/>
20 Gable Place, Barre, VT 05641, (802) 479-1053 or 1-800-639-1053
- ➔ CHAMPLAIN VALLEY OFFICE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY - <https://www.cvoeo.org/>
255 South Champlain Street, Burlington, VT 05402, (802) 862-2771 or 1-800-287-7971
 - ⇒ [Addison Community Action](#) - 1-800-639-2318, (802) 388-2285
 - ⇒ [Chittenden Community Action](#) - (802) 863-6248
 - ⇒ [Franklin/Grand Isle Community Action](#) - 1-800-300-7392, (802) 527-7392
- ➔ COMMUNITY ACTION IN SOUTHWESTERN VERMONT (BROC) - <https://www.broc.org/>
45 Union Street, Rutland, VT 05701, (802) 775-0878 or 1-800-717-2762
- ➔ NORTHEAST KINGDOM COMMUNITY ACTION (NEKCA) - <https://www.nekcavt.org/>
70 Main Street, Newport, VT 05855-5110, (802) 334-7316
- ➔ SOUTHEASTERN VT COMMUNITY ACTION - <https://www.sevca.org/>
91 Buck Drive, Westminster, VT 05158, (802) 722-4575 or 1-800-464-9951

VERMONT 2-1-1

WEBSITE: <https://www.vermont211.org/>

TELEPHONE: 2-1-1

DESCRIPTION: Dial 2-1-1 toll free from anywhere in Vermont to find out about hundreds of community resources across the state. The full 2-1-1 database can also be accessed on their website.

VERMONT FOODBANK

WEBSITE: <https://www.vtfoodbank.org/>

TELEPHONE: 1-800-585-2265

DESCRIPTION: There are hundreds of food shelves and meal sites across Vermont. Visit the website above or call the toll free number to find a food shelf, connect with Foodbank services, and access community resources.

VERMONT HEALTH CONNECT

WEBSITE: <https://portal.healthconnect.vermont.gov/>

TELEPHONE: 1-855-899-9600

DESCRIPTION:

Vermont Health Connect is the place in Vermont for individuals, families and small businesses to compare health plans and select the ones that best fit their needs and budgets. Every plan offered through the exchange offers basic services such as checkups, emergency care, mental health services and prescriptions.

WIC NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS, & CHILDREN

WEBSITE: <https://www.healthvermont.gov/family/wic>

TELEPHONE: 1-800-649-4357

DESCRIPTION: WIC is a federal USDA supplemental nutrition program for women, infants and children up to age 5. It provides access to healthy foods, nutrition education, and breastfeeding support. If you are pregnant, a caregiver, or a parent with a child under five, WIC may be right for you!

VISIT THE DCF WEBSITE TO LEARN ABOUT ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

➔ RESOURCES BY AUDIENCE:

Including DCF-involved families, kinship caregivers and youth.

<https://dcf.vermont.gov/resources/audience>

➔ RESOURCES BY TOPIC:

Including child development, child trauma, domestic violence, early childhood, economic help, education, health/mental health, legal, LGBTQ, parenting, and pregnancy.

<https://dcf.vermont.gov/resources/topic>

Essential Phone Numbers

	NAME	PHONE	EMAIL
FSD Worker:	_____	_____	_____
Supervisor:	_____	_____	_____
District Director:	_____	_____	_____
Foster Parents:	_____	_____	_____
Family Time Coach:	_____	_____	_____
Attorney:	_____	_____	_____
Attorney:	_____	_____	_____
Guardian ad Litem:	_____	_____	_____
Other:	_____	_____	_____

Emergency Numbers

DCF Emergency Services Program (after office hours): 1-800-649-5285

Local Police:	_____
Local Crisis Program:	_____
Other:	_____

FAMILY SERVICES DIVISION

District Offices

Barre: (802) 479-4260

Bennington: (802) 442-8138

Brattleboro: (802) 257-2888

Burlington: (802) 863-7370

Hartford: (802) 295-8840

Middlebury: (802) 388-4660

Morrisville: (802) 888-4576

Newport: (802) 334-6723

Rutland: (802) 786-5817

Springfield: (802) 289-0648

St. Albans: (802) 527-7741

St. Johnsbury: (802) 748-8374

Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-649-5285

<http://dcf.vt.gov/fsd>