

Child Protection Registry Reform

From Data and Research to Legislative Action and Implementation

Department for Children and Families
Family Services Division

Agenda

Introductions

Background and Orientation:

Child Protection Registry 101

History & Pre-Act 154 Work

Why Reform?

Act 154 Overview

Our Accomplishments

The Findings Framework:

Feedback, Discussion, and Guidance for Ongoing Input

Looking Ahead and Next Steps

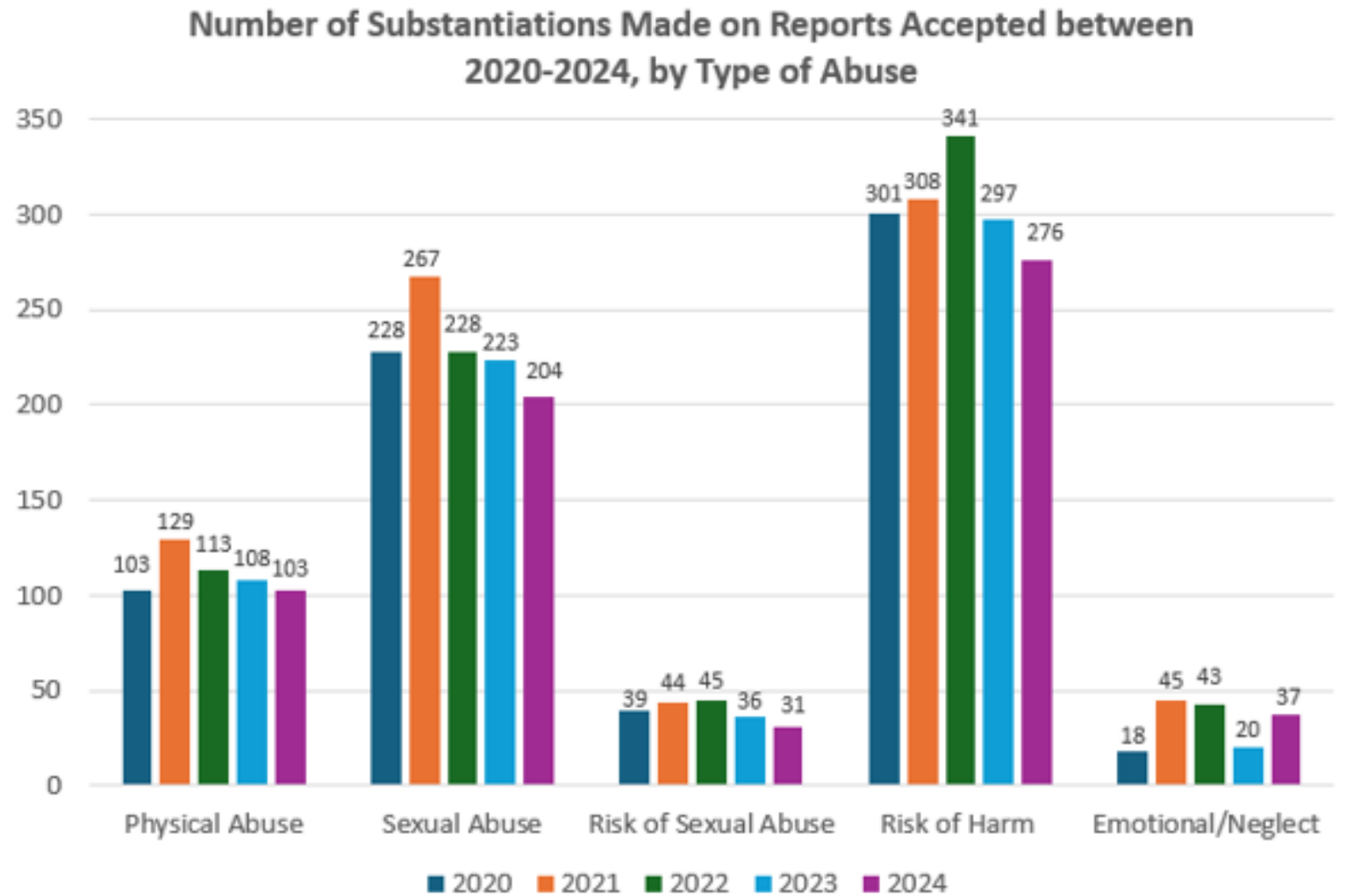
First, Some Data...



2024 Reporting Data: Acceptances



Substantiation Data by Type of Abuse 2020



Data Source: 2024 Child Protection Report

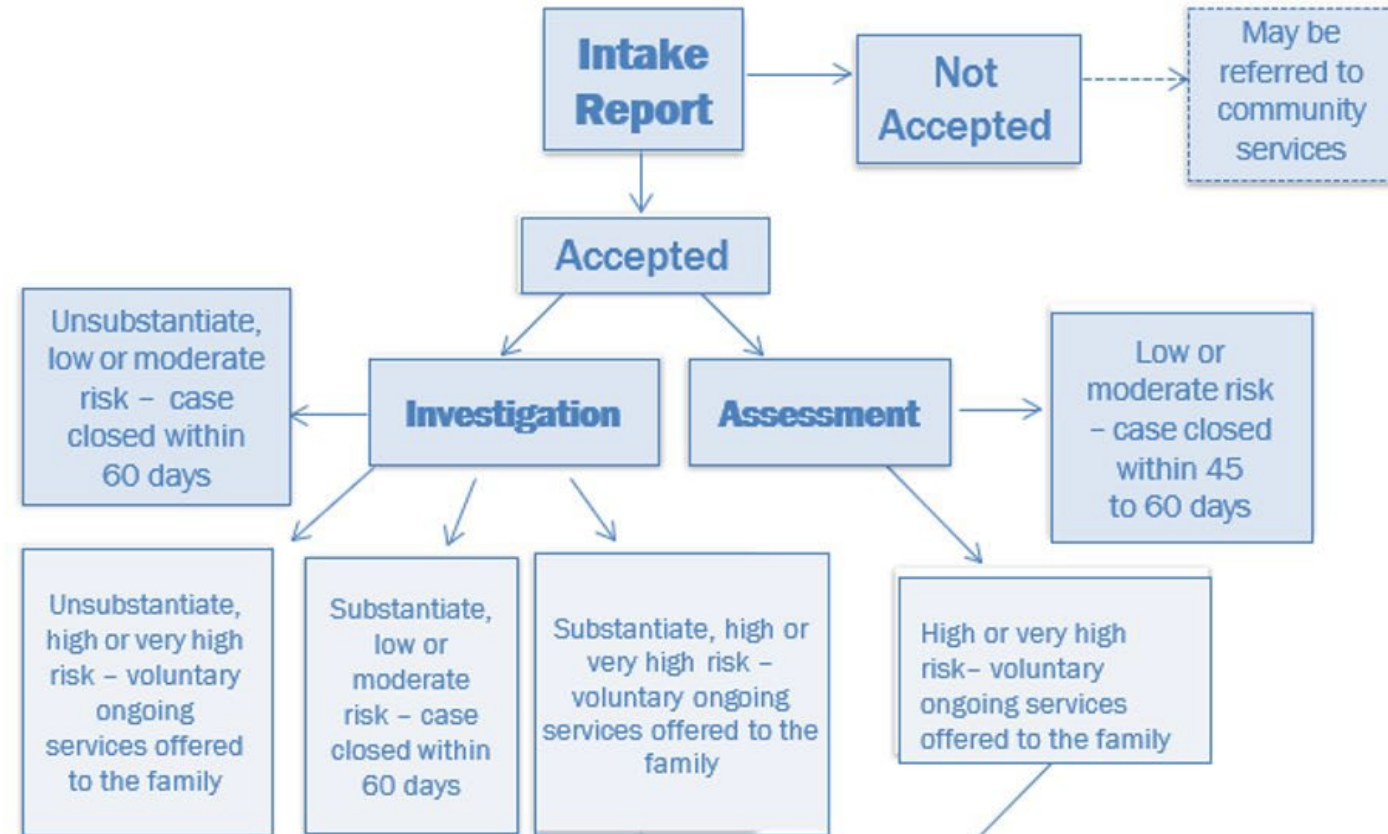
Where to Access Additional Data?

Family Services Division Data:

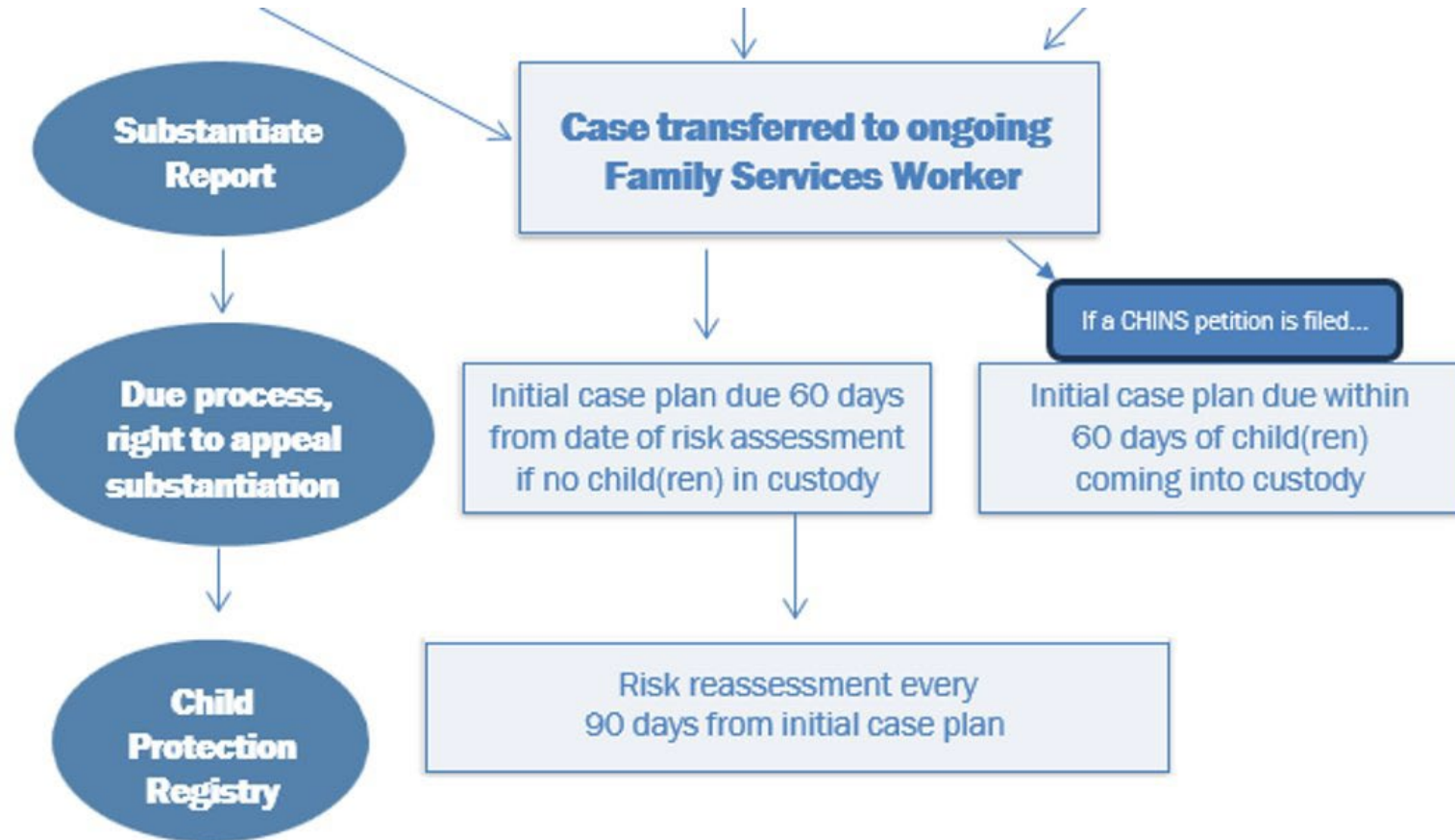
<https://dcf.vermont.gov/fsd/resources/data>

Reporting Flowchart

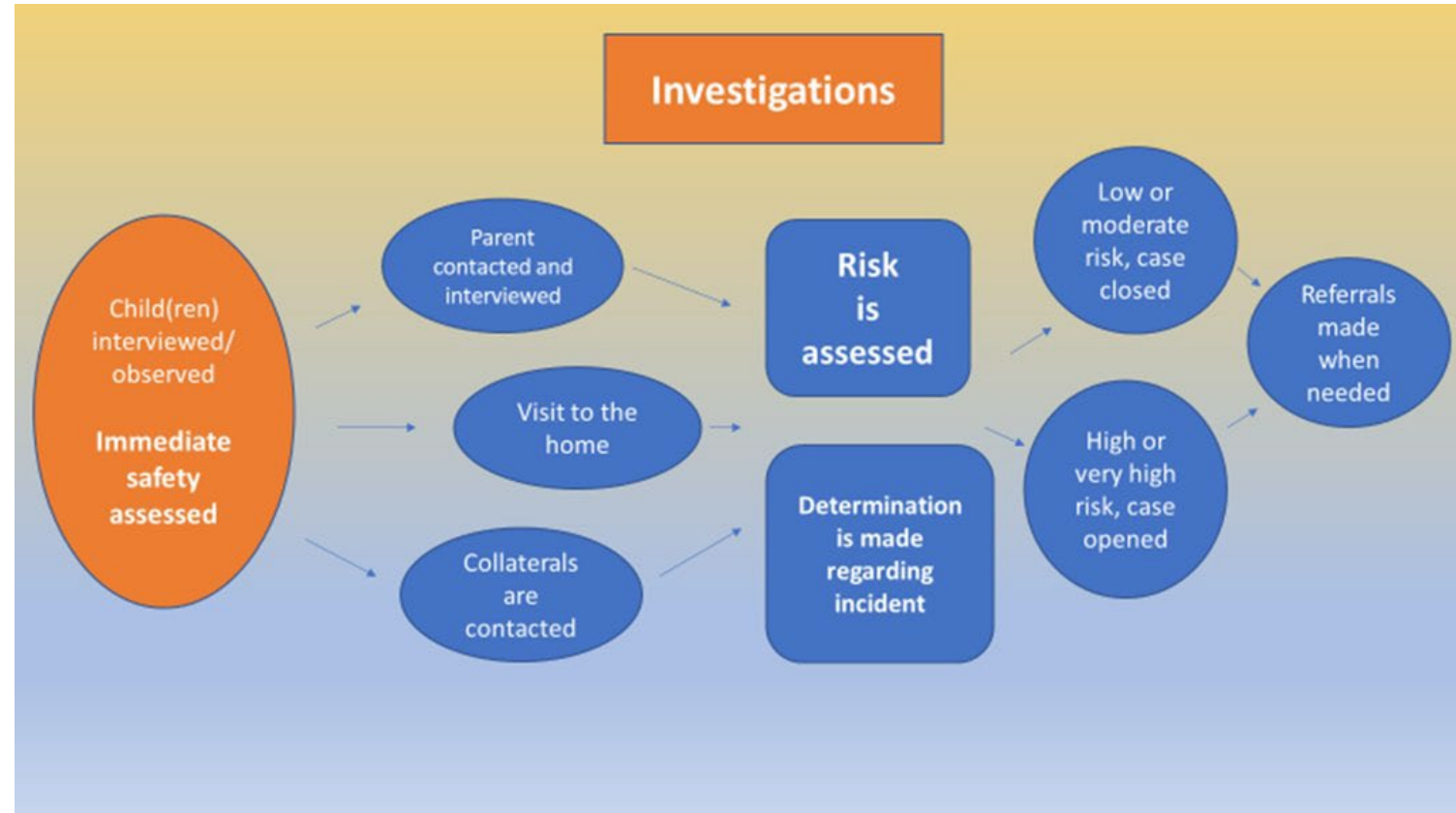
FLOWCHART SHOWING WHAT HAPPENS TO REPORTS



Ongoing Procedure Flowchart



Investigation Processes



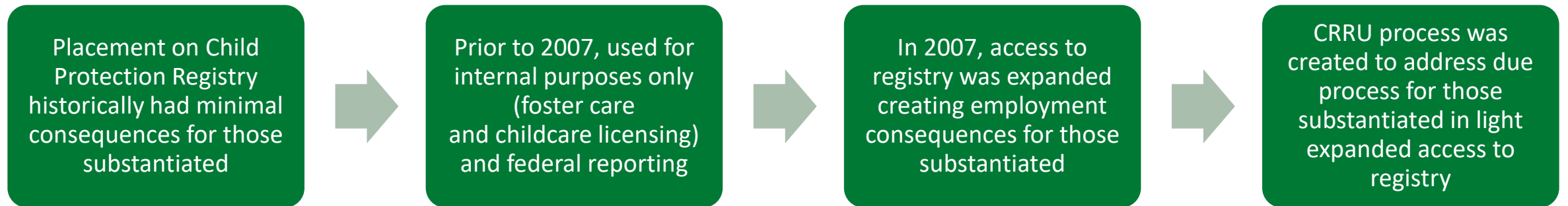
The Purpose of Substantiation

Substantiating someone for abuse/neglect has little to no impact on the immediate safety of the child in question



The only function served by substantiation is related to future child safety and ensuring those who should not have access to vulnerable individuals are prevented from having those opportunities

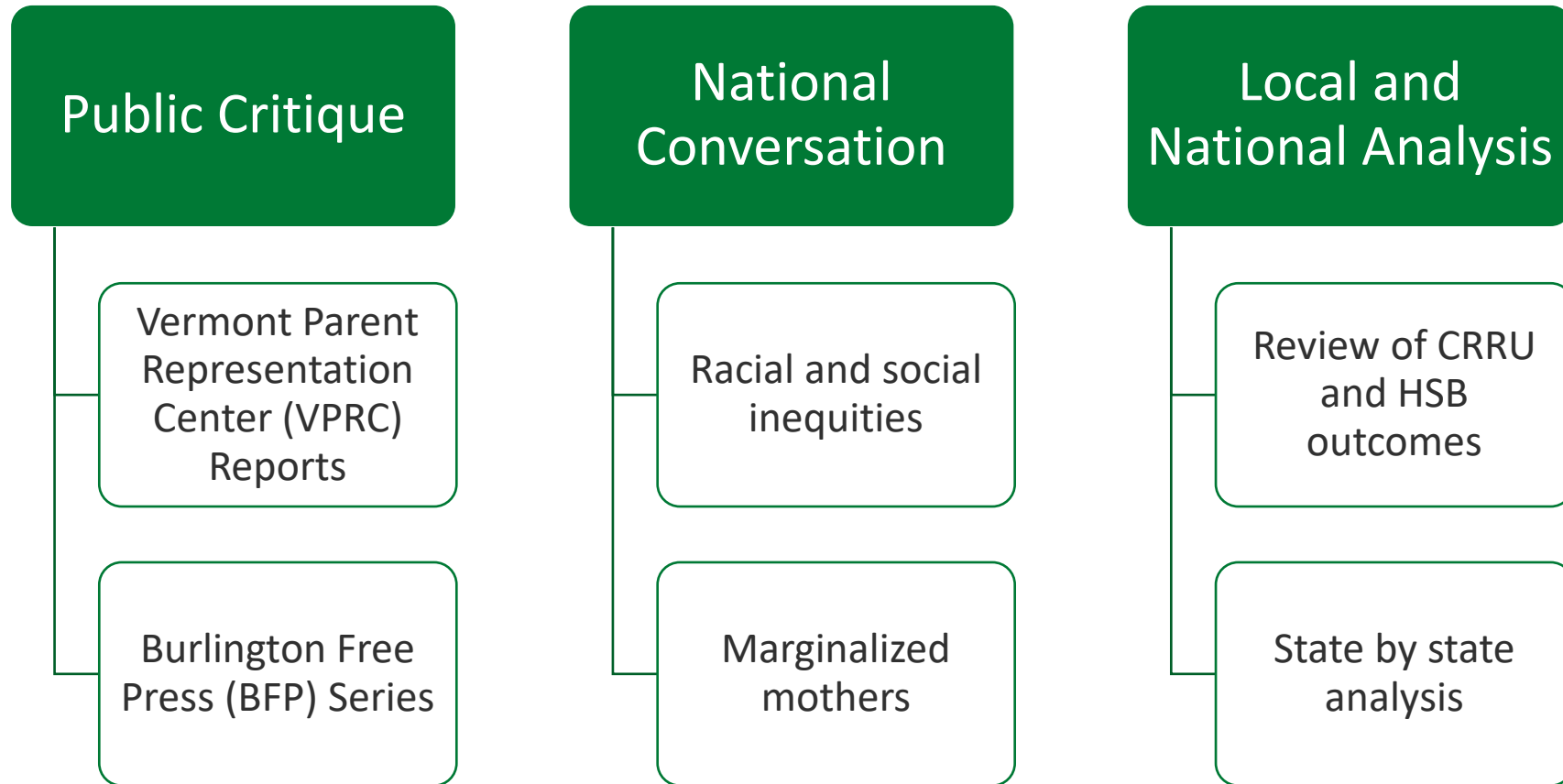
How Did We Get Here?



The Scope of the Impact

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Online	50,845	47,299	53,602	56,465	55,921	55,829	57,538	62,103	52,160	58,073	56,541	64,897	68,494
Paper Forms	Not avail.	Not avail.	Apx. 699	838	971	1,214	1,217	1,295	1,378	1,020	1,181	1,108	1,333
Total	N/A	N/A	54,301	57,303	56,892	57,043	58,755	63,398	53,538	59,093	57,722	65,987	69,827

Foundation for the Changes



The Purpose

Are the future means served by placement on the registry so great that they warrant the impact that placement will have on the individual (and often, their children)

And what is the right balance?

The North Star

We value child safety. We believe that most children are best protected and cared for **by their family**.

We value opportunity for the children and families we serve. We strive **not** to limit opportunity and carefully consider the impacts of our involvement.

We want those we serve, children and their families, **to be better off** because we were involved in their lives.

Passage of Act 154: Shared Commitment to Reform

The Family Services Division (FSD) and community stakeholders shared a common goal: improving fairness, consistency, and child safety.

Following extensive analysis, FSD developed key reform recommendations that were incorporated into Act 154, passed by the Legislature in 2024. These reforms include:

- Creating “internal findings” as an alternative to substantiation that results in name placement on the Child Protection Registry.
- Establishing a centralized substantiation review process to promote consistency and reduce bias.
- Expanding timeframes for Commissioner’s Registry Review to ensure thorough, high-quality decisions.

Key Stakeholders & Legislative Requirements

On or before October 1, 2025*, DCF-FSD in consultation with: The Secretary of Human Services, The Agency of Education, The Department of Mental Health, The Vermont Parent Representation Center and Voices for Vermont's Children shall submit a written report to the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare and the House Committee on Human Services on the progress towards:

- Establishing a centralized internal substantiation determination process (including rules creating procedures for how substantiation recommendations are made by the Department district offices and how substantiation determinations are made by the Department's Central Office)
- Rules establishing substantiation categories that require entry onto the Registry and alternatives to substantiation that do not require entry onto the Registry
- By April of 2026, DCF must file rules on the above, and rules addressing standards for determining a child protection level designations

*granted a one-month extension

Accomplishments to Date

- The use of the preponderance of the evidence standard
- The creation of a draft policy regarding recordings
- Expanded time frames for reviews
- Notification of substantiation decisions
- Investigative findings framework proposal