



# **2011 Report On Child Protection in Vermont**

 **VERMONT**  
AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES  
DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Annual Report for Calendar Year 2011

© 2012, Vermont Department for Children and Families

Information in this report may be reproduced for personal, educational, and non-profit use only. The Vermont Department for Children and Families should be identified as the source of the materials and any reproduction should not be represented as an official version of the materials reproduced.

This report is also available online at [www.dcf.vermont.gov/reports](http://www.dcf.vermont.gov/reports)

If you have any questions or comments about the report, please contact Margo Bryce at [margo.bryce@state.vt.us](mailto:margo.bryce@state.vt.us) or (802) 769-6298.

# Table of Contents

➤ Message from the DCF Commissioner.....	5
➤ Message from the Family Services Deputy Commissioner.....	6
➤ Introduction.....	7

## Reports of Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect

➤ Reports to the Child Protection Line .....	7
➤ Child/Family Factors Identified by Reporters in 2011 .....	8
➤ Mandated Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect .....	9
• Chart - Reports Alleging Child Abuse and Neglect in 2011, by Reporter Type .....	9
➤ How Reports are Made.....	10
➤ What DCF Does With Reports.....	11

## Data Trends

➤ Statewide Trends, 2007 to 2011 .....	15
➤ Reports Accepted in 2010 & 2011 —by Intervention & District.....	16
➤ Outcomes of Investigations in 2010 & 2011 —by District .....	17
• Chart - Unique Child Victims, 2001 to 2011 .....	18
• Chart - Substantiated Reports by Type of Abuse and Neglect, 2008 to 2011 .....	18

## Data From Substantiated Reports in 2011

➤ Reports Substantiated in 2011—by Type of Abuse .....	19
➤ Reports Substantiated in 2011 — by Age & Gender of Victim .....	20
➤ Reports Substantiated in 2011 — by Age & Gender of Abuser .....	21
➤ Reports Substantiated in 2011 — by Relationship of Abuser to Child .....	21
➤ Reports Substantiated for Child Sexual Abuse in 2011.....	22
• Chart -Sexual Abuse, by Relationship of Abuser to Victim .....	22
• Chart - Sexual Abuse, by Gender of Abuser .....	22
• Chart - Sexual Abuse, by Age Group of Abuser.....	23
• Chart - Sexual Abuse, by Age Group of Abusers under 20 .....	23

## Vermont's Child Protection Registry

➤ Vermont's Child Protection Registry .....	24
---	----

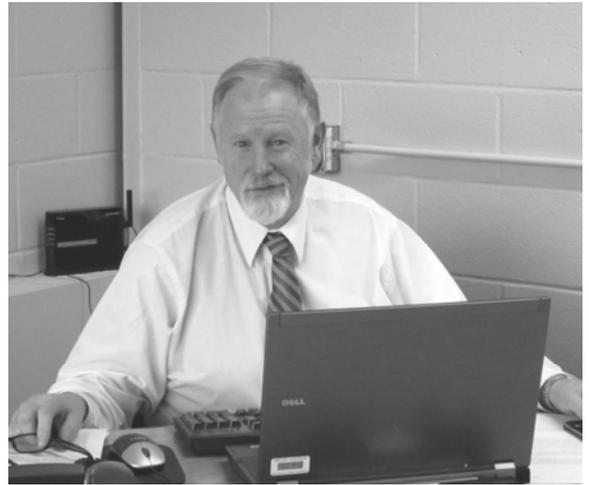
## Definitions

➤ Child Abuse & Neglect Definitions .....	25
---	----

## Message from the Commissioner

While Vermont is one of the safest and healthiest states in the nation for children, child maltreatment remains a serious problem. As you read this report, consider this fact: the Vermont Department for Children and Families (DCF) receives a report of suspected child abuse and neglect, on average, once every 33 minutes.

Behind the numbers found in this report are children who will grow to become adults. What will become of them? How will they deal with the trauma they experienced? What support do they need to succeed?



Research tells us that child abuse and neglect has a serious and long-lasting impact on children—affecting their development, ability to learn, and future. Children who have been abused and neglected are more likely than other children to experience suicide, depression, poverty, illness, incarceration, and unwanted pregnancy. According to Vermont data, 40% of teens who were in state custody during the last decade were incarcerated or on public assistance by the age of 23. The data is sobering. The cost to children and society is staggering.

DCF is committed to preventing and stopping abuse, making sure children are safe, and providing services that strengthen families and address the impact of trauma on children. Our efforts, however, are only part of the solution.

Preventing child abuse and protecting children is a shared community responsibility. Each one of us — as individuals, parents, and community members — has a moral imperative to protect children and do whatever we can to help them succeed as adults.

This report, issued annually, helps focus attention on this important issue. As you read it, ask yourself these fundamental questions: How are the children? What can *I do* to make Vermont a better place for them to grow up?

Remember, it is easier to build a child than it is to repair an adult.

**Dave Yacovone, DCF Commissioner**

# Message from the Family Services Deputy Commissioner

The Family Services Division of the Department for Children and Families is responsible for meeting the needs of children in state care and planning for their future. In 2008, we began a transformation process that has substantially changed the way we do the work. This transformation, which continues today, included implementing a practice model with the goal of continuously improving the quality and effectiveness of the services we deliver.

The practice model includes a set of values that guide us in all of our work we do with Vermont's children and families, including child safety interventions.

## *The core values we bring to our work:*

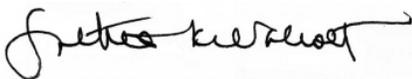
- All children have the right to be safe.
- All families have both risk and safety factors.
- Everyone is capable of growth and change — with support and adequate resources.
- Engaged relationships hold the promise for sustained change.
- Valuing a family's expertise enhances our work together.
- Separating children from their families is traumatic and should be seen as a last resort.
- Early engagement of the larger family network is a key to success.
- Responsibility should be shared and use of authority limited.
- Each family's cultural, ethnic, and spiritual diversity deserves respect.

In the end, children and others are safest when they have a broad circle of support made up of people who will be around them for the long term. We strive to broaden that circle.

You can read the complete Family Services Practice Model online at:

[http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/pdf/fsd/FSD\\_Practice\\_Model.pdf](http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/pdf/fsd/FSD_Practice_Model.pdf)

While the way we work is changing, we remain squarely focused on child safety, well-being, permanency, and law abidance.



**Cindy Walcott, Family Services Deputy Commissioner**

## Introduction

The Family Services Division of the Vermont Department for Children and Families (DCF) responds to reports of child abuse and neglect, provides ongoing services to families at risk, and works with families and community partners to make sure children are safe. The ultimate goal is for children to live in safe, supportive, and healthy environments where they can grow and thrive.

This report provides child protection data for calendar year 2011.

## Reports to the Child Protection Line

The toll-free Child Protection Line (1-800-649-5285) is available statewide—24 hours a day, seven days a week. In 2011, we received 15,526 calls about suspected child abuse and neglect, an increase of 1.0% over 2010. Since 2007, calls about suspected child abuse and neglect have risen by almost 20%.

<b>Reports to the Child Protection Line, 2007 to 2011</b>		
<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Reports<sup>i</sup></b>	<b>Annual Change</b>
2007	12,829	1.5%
2008	13,434	4.7%
2009	14,488	7.9%
2010	15,379	6.1%
2011	15,526	1.0%

<sup>i</sup> One report may involve more than one child. Similarly, we may receive multiple reports about the same child or situation; these may be counted separately.

## Child/Family Factors Identified by Reporters in 2011

The following table identifies factors in both children and families that were identified by reporters when they contacted the Child Protection Line in 2011. While some factors may not have been validated during ensuing interventions, this list helps us better understand the difficult challenges families face.

Knowing about these factors can help supervisors and social workers plan effective intervention strategies. For example, if a language barrier is identified, a worker may arrange for an interpreter. If domestic violence is identified, a worker may consult with our domestic violence coordinator to plan interviews in a way that does not increase the risk to an adult victim.

<b>Family Factors</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Cognitive/Physical Disabilities	509	3.3%
Domestic Violence	1,985	12.8%
Financial Stress	1,071	6.9%
Mental Health Issues	1,516	9.8%
Substance Abuse	4,212	27.2%

<b>Child Factors</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Challenging Behavior	2,560	16.5%
Cognitive/Physical Disabilities	1,160	7.5%
Mental Health Issues	1,832	11.8%
Speech/Language Barriers/Hearing Problems	633	4.1%
Substance Abuse	474	3.1%

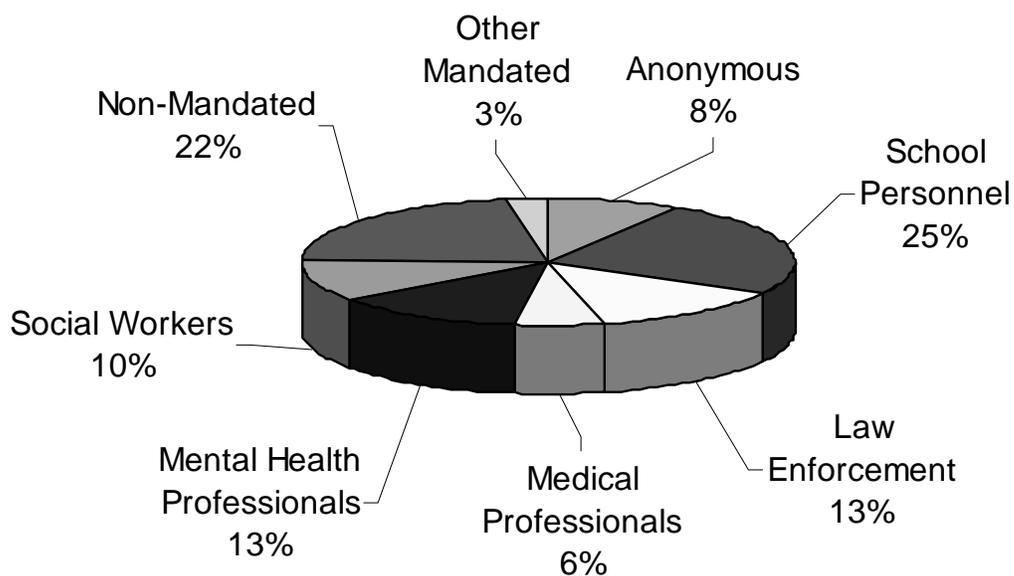
# Mandated Reporters of Child Abuse and Neglect

While anyone can voluntarily report suspected child abuse and neglect, certain people, called mandated reporters, are required by Vermont law to do so (Title 33, Chapter 49). What's more, they must report their suspicions to Family Services *within 24 hours*.

## Mandated Reporters in Vermont

- Chiropractors, dentists, emergency medical personnel, licensed practical nurses, medical examiners, mental health professionals, osteopaths, pharmacists, physicians, physicians' assistants, psychologists, registered nurses, surgeons, and any other health care providers;
- Hospital administrators, interns, and resident physicians in any hospital in the state;
- School superintendents, principals, headmasters (independent schools), teachers, librarians, guidance counselors, and other individuals regularly employed by, or contracted and paid by, school districts or independent schools to provide student services;
- Childcare workers, police officers, probation officers, social workers, and clergy members;
- Residential and non-residential camp administrators, counselors, and owners; and
- Employees, contractors, and grantees of the Agency of Human Services who have contact with clients.

**Reports Alleging Child Abuse and Neglect, by Reporter Type (2011)**



## **How Reports Are Made**

In Vermont, both mandated and non-mandated reporters alike call 1-800-649-5285 to report suspected child abuse and neglect. This 24-hour Child Protection Line makes it easy for people to share their concerns about children with trained social workers.

### **What happens when someone makes a report?**

A social worker:

- Questions the reporter about the nature of his or her concerns;
- Requests any known details about the child (e.g., child's name, date of birth and home address, names of the child's parents or caretakers);
- Requests any known information about the family strengths and challenges;
- Records the information provided; and
- Asks the reporter to complete a written report.

### **Can reporters be sued?**

Vermont law provides reporters with immunity from civil or criminal liability as long as their reports are made in good faith.

### **Are reporters' names kept confidential?**

We will not divulge the identity of a reporter unless:

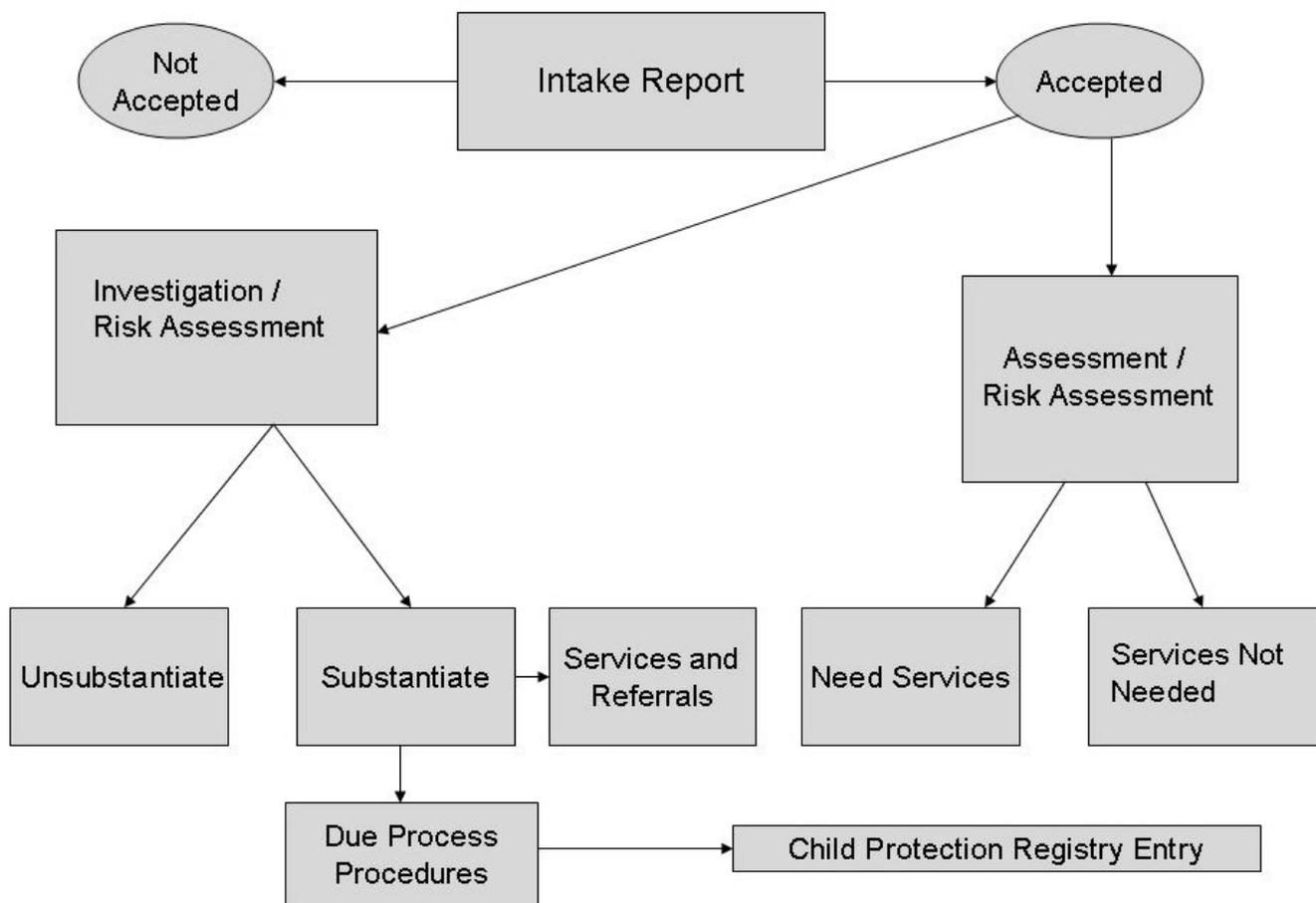
- He or she gives us permission to do so;
- A state's attorney determines that a criminal investigation is necessary;
- A report leads to a court or human services board proceeding;
- A court finds probable cause to believe the report was not made in good faith and orders DCF to divulge the reporter's identity; or
- The person substantiated for abuse requests a review of the decision, and we determine that the reporter's identity can be provided without compromising his or her safety.

While reporters may choose to remain anonymous, we encourage them to disclose their identities and provide their contact information (e.g., name, phone number, and email address). This allows us to contact them again if we need more information.

# What DCF Does With Reports

The diagram below provides a visual reference for the three sequential steps that may be followed for each report.

1. We determine whether a report may be accepted for intervention.
2. If the report is accepted, we determine the appropriate intervention.
3. At the conclusion of the intervention, we determine the outcome.



These steps are described on the following three pages. Please refer to the diagram above for visual reference of the process.

## **1. A supervisor evaluates the report to determine whether it may be accepted for intervention – in accordance with Vermont law and departmental policy.**

To make this determination, the supervisor *must* consider:

### **A. The age of the alleged victim.**

Vermont law allows DCF to intervene when an alleged victim is under age 18. We may also intervene when an alleged victim is over 18 if the alleged abuse happened before the person turned 18 and the alleged perpetrator has access to children.

### **B. The alleged abuser’s relationship to the child.**

If a report alleges sexual abuse or risk of sexual abuse, Vermont law allows DCF to intervene no matter the relationship between abuser and child (e.g., parent, sibling, friend, teacher, or neighbor). For all other types of abuse, the alleged abuser must be “a person responsible for the child’s welfare” (see definitions on page 25).

### **C. The nature of the allegation.**

Vermont law allows DCF to intervene if the report alleges that:

- A child was abused or neglected as defined in Title 33, Chapter 49 of state law (see definitions on page 25); or
- A child is without proper parental care or subsistence, education, medical, or other care necessary for his or her well-being (Title 33, Chapter 51).

## **2. If the report is accepted, a supervisor determines the appropriate intervention.**

### **A. Allegation of Child Abuse and Neglect.**

Vermont law authorizes two types of intervention in response to this type of report: i) a child abuse assessment and ii) a child abuse investigation.

#### **i. Child Abuse Assessment**

The aim of an assessment is to engage and support families so they can keep their children safe. It involves assessing the safety of/risk to the child, the underlying factors interfering with appropriate care of the child, the family’s strengths, and the family’s need for ongoing supports and services. We will conduct an assessment if:

- An accepted report is not required by law or policy to be investigated;
- There is no immediate threat to the child’s safety and well-being; and
- The level of risk in the family needs to be assessed to determine if there is a need for services.

ii. **Child Abuse Investigation**

The aim of an investigation is to determine the safety of/risk to the child, the validity of the allegation, and whether continued DCF involvement is necessary. While we may conduct an investigation for any report, we will conduct one if a report alleges:

- A child was sexually abused.
- The acts or omissions of *a person responsible for a child's welfare* resulted in a child's death.
- A person responsible for a child's welfare:
  - Abandoned a child;
  - Maliciously punished a child;
  - Physically abused a child under the age of three;
  - Physically abused a child of any age who is non-verbal or non-ambulatory; or
  - Allowed a child to be exposed to the production of methamphetamine.

***Assessment to Investigation Track***

A supervisor may approve changing a child abuse assessment to a child abuse investigation if it appears necessary to ensure the child's safety. In 2011, 40 interventions that began as child abuse assessments were later changed to the investigation track.

**B. Allegation of Child Without Proper Parental Care.**

Vermont law authorizes one type of intervention for reports alleging children are without proper parental care: family assessments.

i. **Family Assessment**

The immediate focus of a family assessment is to keep the child safe while we work with the parents to address the issues that are interfering with safe and appropriate parenting. Reports accepted for family assessments could include, for example:

- A pattern of concerns, when evaluated together, call a child's safety into question;
- An allegation that a parent is neglecting a child's education;
- A newborn with a positive toxicology screen for illegal substances; and
- An allegation that there is a serious threat to the health of a child due to a mother's substance use during pregnancy.

### 3. At the conclusion of an intervention, a supervisor determines the outcome.

i. **Assessment -**

Both child abuse and family assessments result in a recommendation about the need for ongoing services, based on an assessment of the risk of future maltreatment. If the assessed risk is high or very high, we offer the family ongoing services (e.g., substance abuse treatment, parenting classes).

ii. **Investigation -**

An investigation results in both:

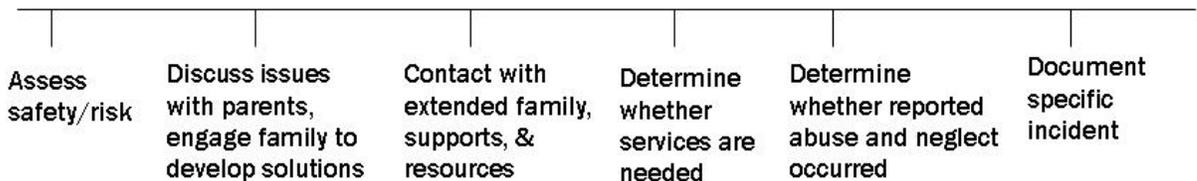
i. A formal determination of whether the reported abuse or neglect occurred

The report is *substantiated* if the evidence would lead a reasonable person to believe the child was abused or neglected. Information about substantiated persons is entered into Vermont’s Child Protection Registry (see page 24 for more details).

ii. A determination of the need for ongoing DCF services, based on an assessment of the risk of future maltreatment

If the assessed risk is high or very high, Family Services opens a case and develops a case plan to address the identified risks.

## Assessments & Investigations



## Statewide Trends, 2007 to 2011

Traditionally, the only available response to an accepted report of child abuse or neglect was a child abuse investigation. In 2008, however, Vermont enacted legislation to implement differential response, which means that beginning on July 1, 2009, a child abuse assessment was available as an alternative response to a report of child maltreatment.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
<b>Reports To Vermont's Child Protection Line</b>	12,829	13,434	14,488	15,379	15,526
<b>Reports Accepted For:</b>					
1. Child Abuse Investigation	2,633	2,896	2,831	2,465	2,591
2. Child Abuse Assessment <sup>1</sup>	-	-	638	1,058	1,192
3. Family Assessment	305	630	1,021	1,078	1,128
<b>Total Reports Accepted For Intervention</b>	<b>2,938</b>	<b>3,526</b>	<b>4,490</b>	<b>4,601</b>	<b>4,911</b>



<sup>1</sup> This intervention was not available prior to July 1, 2009.

## Reports Accepted in 2010 & 2011 – by Intervention<sup>1</sup> & District<sup>2</sup>

District	Child Abuse Investigations		Child Abuse Assessments		Family Assessments		Total Reports Accepted for Intervention	
	2010	2011	2010	2011	2010	2011	2010	2011
Barre	307	319	124	149	108	131	539	599
Bennington	160	151	65	75	70	64	295	290
Brattleboro	108	99	61	71	85	82	254	252
Burlington	407	399	201	248	133	161	741	808
Hartford	186	151	64	65	86	68	336	284
Middlebury	115	154	62	47	57	48	234	249
Morrisville	180	148	46	74	55	47	281	269
Newport	151	147	47	65	45	70	243	282
Rutland	236	276	103	107	135	142	474	525
Springfield	193	214	100	85	146	139	439	438
St. Albans	234	310	119	120	108	126	461	556
St. Johnsbury	118	138	57	67	44	49	219	254
Out of State	70	85	9	19	6	1	85	105
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>2,465</b>	<b>2,591</b>	<b>1,058</b>	<b>1,192</b>	<b>1,078</b>	<b>1,128</b>	<b>4,601</b>	<b>4,911</b>

<sup>1</sup> See pages 12-13 for descriptions of the different types of intervention.

<sup>2</sup> Means the district where the child's caregiver lives.

## Outcomes of Investigations in 2010 & 2011 – by District<sup>1</sup>

In 2011, we conducted 2,631 investigations: 2,591 that began as investigations and another 40 that began as assessments but were later changed to the investigation track. Of the 2,631 investigations conducted, 690 were substantiated<sup>2</sup> and 629 were opened for services<sup>3</sup> based on the assessed risk of future maltreatment.

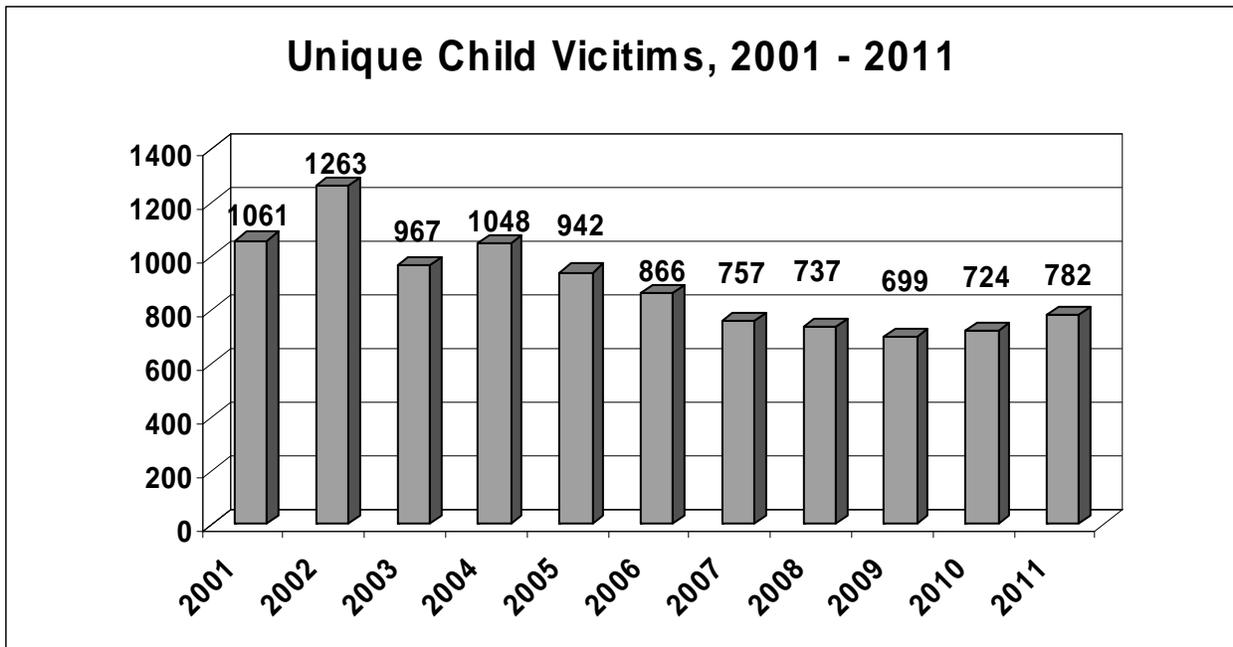
District	Child Abuse Investigations		Substantiated		Case Open for Services	
	2010	2011	2010	2011	2010	2011
Barre	310	324	93	87	84	111
Bennington	160	152	33	35	29	48
Brattleboro	112	101	35	28	12	28
Burlington	411	402	98	79	91	100
Hartford	186	152	35	37	21	22
Middlebury	120	156	48	56	15	31
Morrisville	184	151	45	43	28	40
Newport	153	151	31	43	18	22
Rutland	236	279	37	51	38	63
Springfield	208	221	68	66	32	39
St. Albans	239	317	62	107	37	80
St. Johnsbury	121	140	18	29	16	39
Out of State	70	85	23	29	9	6
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>2,510</b>	<b>2,631</b>	<b>626</b>	<b>690</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>629</b>

<sup>1</sup> Means the district where the child's caregiver lives.

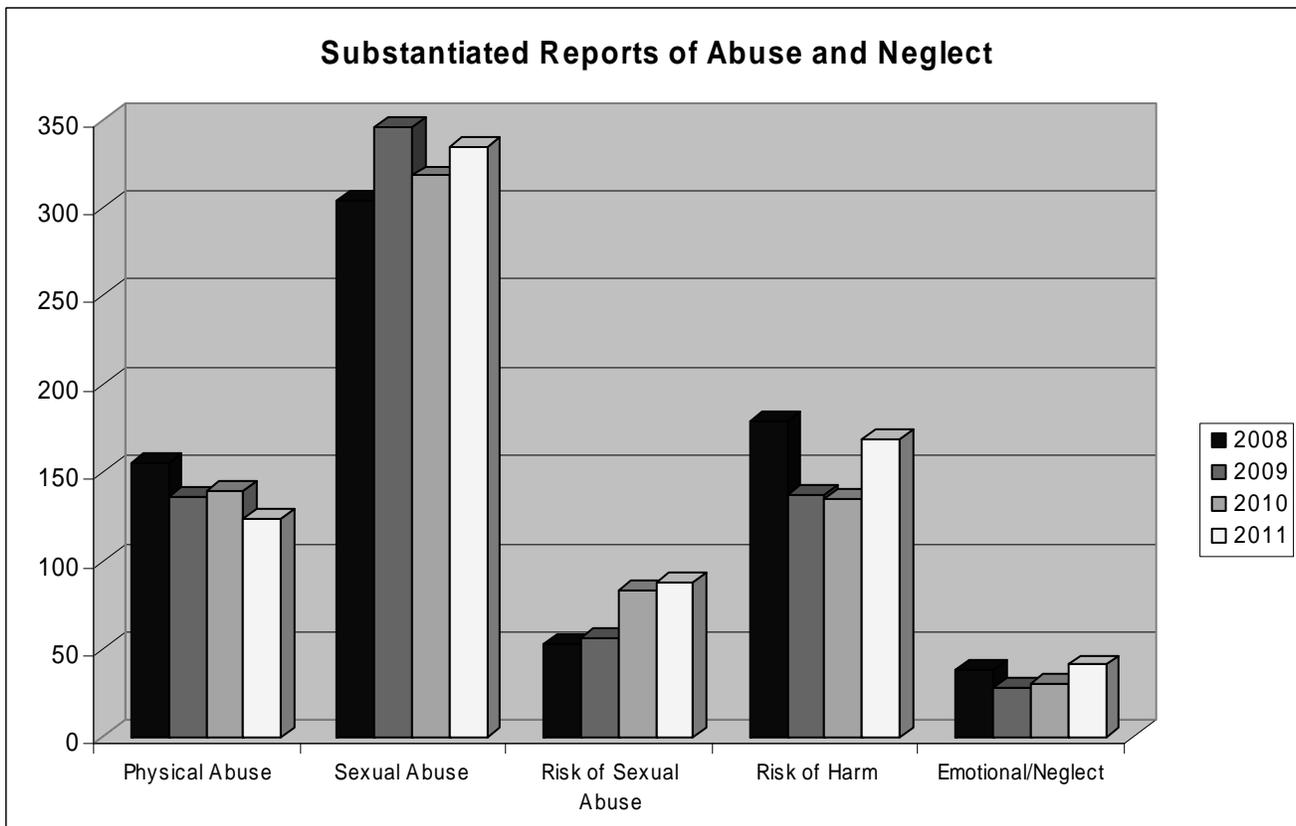
<sup>2</sup> Substantiated means the evidence would lead a reasonable person to believe the child was abused or neglected.

<sup>3</sup> If the assessed risk is high or very high, a case is opened and a case plan developed to address the identified risks.

**Note:** the numbers in the graph below are an unduplicated count of victims of substantiated child abuse and neglect.



**Note:** since a report can be substantiated for more than one type of abuse, the numbers below reflect a total greater than the number of substantiated reports.



## Reports Substantiated in 2011 – by Type of Abuse

Since a report can be substantiated for more than one type of abuse, the numbers below reflect a total greater than 690 – the number of reports substantiated in 2011.

District <sup>1</sup>	Physical Abuse	Sexual <sup>2</sup> Abuse	Risk of Sexual Abuse	Risk of Harm	Emotional/ Neglect
Barre	22	30	12	25	6
Bennington	7	16	9	6	0
Brattleboro	12	7	3	5	2
Burlington	17	42	4	26	3
Hartford	3	25	4	9	1
Middlebury	3	30	14	6	3
Morrisville	7	17	5	14	2
Newport	8	22	7	6	6
Rutland	14	20	6	12	1
Springfield	7	28	4	24	8
St. Albans	19	53	15	26	7
St. Johnsbury	2	19	4	9	2
Out of State	3	24	1	1	0
<b>Total Statewide</b>	<b>124 (16.4%)</b>	<b>334 (44.2%)</b>	<b>88 (11.6%)</b>	<b>169 (22.4%)</b>	<b>41 (5.4%)</b>

<sup>1</sup> Means the district where the child's caregiver lives.

<sup>2</sup> The department investigates all valid allegations of sexual abuse and risk of sexual abuse regardless of the relationship between the alleged abuser and child.

## Reports Substantiated in 2011 – by Age & Gender of Victim

The data below represents the age and gender of the victims of substantiated abuse or neglect. Please note that a child is represented more than once if he or she suffered more than one type of abuse or was involved in more than one substantiated report during the year.

Age	Percent	Physical	Sexual	Risk of Sexual Abuse	Risk of Harm	Neglect/Emotional
< 1	5.1%	6	3	7	27	4
1	6.4%	4	3	14	35	3
2	4.4%	8	4	6	21	2
3	7.3%	11	13	14	23	6
4	6.9%	13	19	13	18	1
5	5.3%	5	14	12	12	6
6	4.8%	9	8	12	15	0
7	5.7%	5	15	18	12	3
8	3.0%	3	11	6	8	0
9	5.3%	11	17	9	10	2
10	4.8%	5	20	3	10	6
11	4.1%	3	17	6	7	5
12	5.9%	13	33	3	4	1
13	7.2%	9	35	6	11	5
14	7.0%	12	39	8	5	1
15	8.6%	12	47	8	7	5
16	5.4%	10	29	3	4	4
17	2.7%	1	18	4	2	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	37.5%	69	72	57	121	26
Female	62.5%	71	273	95	110	28
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>54</b>

## Reports Substantiated in 2011 – by Age & Gender of Abuser

The data below represents the age and gender of substantiated abusers. An abuser may be represented more than once if more than one type of abuse was substantiated.

Age	Physical	Sexual	Risk of Sexual Abuse	Risk of Harm	Neglect/Emotional
<20	1	151	6	7	2
20 - 29	33	67	38	81	13
30 - 39	52	41	38	61	18
40 - 49	27	32	19	23	9
50 - 59	6	25	5	4	7
60+	0	12	2	2	0
Unknown	5	10	0	1	0
<b>Gender</b>					
Male	83	322	68	96	17
Female	37	16	40	83	32
Unspecified	4	0	0	0	0

## Reports Substantiated in 2011 – by Relationship of Abuser to Child

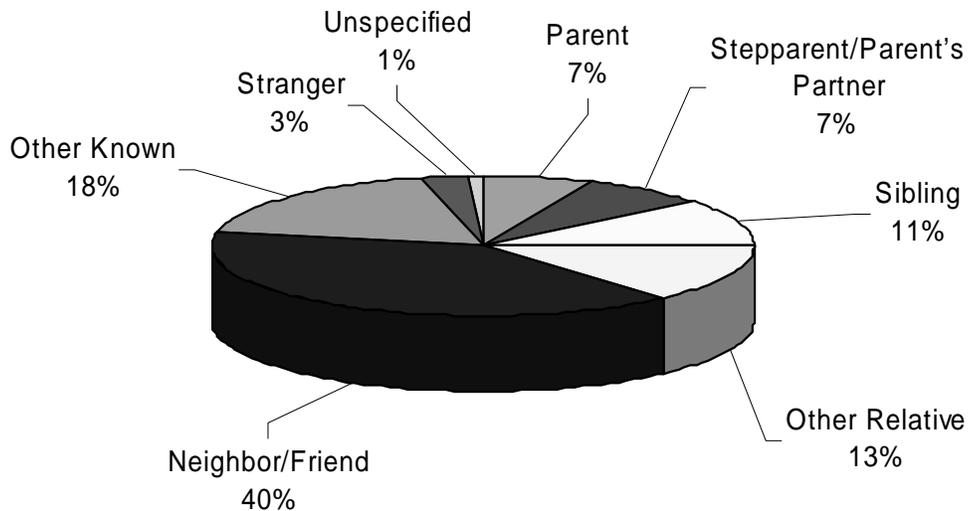
Relationship	Physical	Sexual	Risk of Sexual Abuse	Risk of Harm	Neglect/Emotional
Parent	95	24	93	204	62
Stepparent/Parent's Partner	35	26	31	26	3
Foster Parent	11	4	3	6	9
Sibling	1	39	0	0	0
Other Relative	3	47	25	1	0
Neighbor/Friend	1	142	24	4	0
Other Known	4	61	14	7	0
Stranger	0	10	1	0	0
Unspecified	4	3	0	3	0

# Reports Substantiated for Child Sexual Abuse in 2011

The department investigates all valid allegations of sexual abuse and risk of sexual abuse — regardless of the relationship between the alleged abuser and child. Here’s what the 2011 data tells us about child sexual abuse in Vermont:

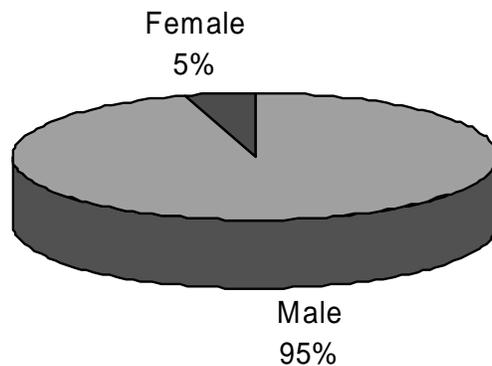
- At least 96% of child sexual abuse was committed by people the children know.

## Sexual Abuse: Relationship of Abuser to Victim

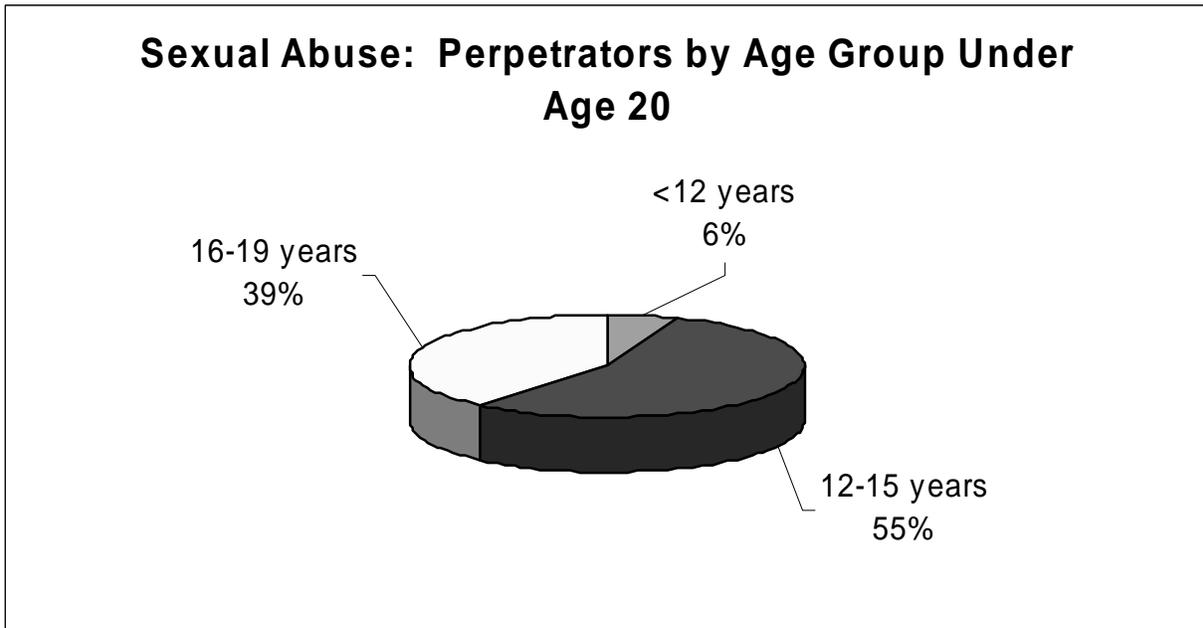
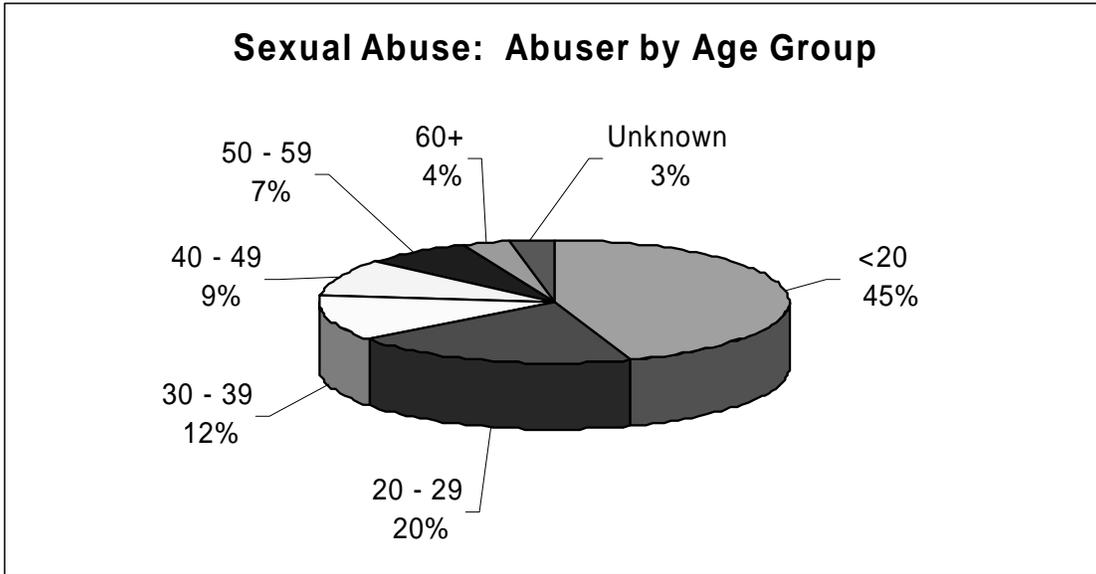


- 95% of the known abusers were male.

## Sexual Abuse: Abuser Gender



- At least 45% of the abusers were under the age of 20. Of these, 94% were between the ages of 12 and 19.



# Vermont's Child Protection Registry

The Child Protection Registry is a database of substantiated reports of child abuse and neglect, dating back to January 1, 1992.

**As of June 22, 2012, there were 15,050 individuals listed in the Registry.**

## What does a registry record include?

- The name of the individual substantiated for child abuse or neglect and at least one other personal identifier (e.g., date of birth, social security number);
- The date and nature of the finding; and
- For individuals placed on the Registry on or after July 1, 2009, it also includes a designated child protection level<sup>1</sup>, related to the risk of future harm to children.

**As of June 22, 2012, 1,393 individuals in the database had a designated child protection level: 1,108 were designated as Level 1<sup>2</sup> and 285 were designated as Level 2<sup>3</sup>.**

## How is the Child Protection Registry used?

To help protect children, Vermont law authorizes DCF staff to search the Registry whenever:

1. Someone applies to become a foster parent, adoptive parent, child care provider, or employee of a residential facility for children or youth in Vermont; and
2. Someone authorized to receive registry information requests a search. This includes:
  - Employers whose staff provide care, custody, treatment, transportation, or supervision of children, youth, or vulnerable adults;
  - Schools (*Act One—AN ACT RELATING TO IMPROVING VERMONT'S SEXUAL ABUSE RESPONSE SYSTEM—signed into law in March 2009, makes it mandatory for schools to request checks of both the child protection and adult abuse registries for certain employees/contractors*);
  - Owners/operators of facilities regulated by DCF;
  - Adult protective services and child protection agencies; and
  - Others as provided for in statute.

**We conducted 55,159 registry searches in 2011 (up from 46,947 conducted in 2010).**

<sup>1</sup> Designated child protection levels related to the risk of future harm to children are assigned to individuals placed on the Registry on or after July 1, 2009. Two levels are assigned: Level 1 or Level 2.

<sup>2</sup> Level 1 is assigned if the substantiation involves substantial child endangerment, there are court adjudications for related conduct, or there is a high risk of future harm.

<sup>3</sup> Level 2 is assigned to all other substantiations.

# Child Abuse and Neglect Definitions

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.*

**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.

---

**Child:** an individual under the age of 18.

**Person Responsible for a Child's Welfare:** includes the child's parent, guardian, foster parent, and any other adult residing in the child’s home who serves 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.

**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, or any lewd and lascivious conduct involving a child. Sexual abuse also includes the 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 a sexual conduct, sexual excitement or sadomasochistic abuse involving a child.

# Child Protection Resources Available From Family Services

- **Child Protection Registry**

This brochure explains what the Child Protection Registry is and how it's used. It includes sections for employers and for persons substantiated for child abuse/neglect.

- **Child Safety Interventions: A Parent's Guide To Investigations and Assessments**

This brochure explains the Family Services Division, why Family Services becomes involved with a family, what our involvement means, and the supports and services that may be available.

- **How to Report Suspected Child Abuse & Neglect**

This brochure explains the process for reporting child abuse and neglect in Vermont (e.g., who must report it, how to make a report, and what happens to reports received).

- **Parent's Guide to Family-Centered Meetings**

This brochure explains two types of family-centered meetings available to families who are involved with Family Services: Family Safety Planning and Family Group Conferencing.

- **Safe Havens for Babies in Vermont**

This brochure answers the most frequently-asked questions about Vermont's Baby Safe Haven Law and how it works.

- **Step Up: Protect Children from Sexual Abuse**

This 36-page guide helps parents and others learn how to prevent, identify, and react responsibly to child sexual abuse.

To order copies of these resources, please call the Family Services Division at (802) 802-769-6399 or email [Diane.Chapin@state.vt.us](mailto:Diane.Chapin@state.vt.us).

You can also download these materials online at [www.dcf.vt.gov/publications](http://www.dcf.vt.gov/publications).

## Child Protection Web Links

- [Baby Safe Havens in Vermont](#)  
Safe places to give up your baby— anonymously and legally.
- [Child Protection Registry](#)  
Request a search of Vermont's Child Protection Registry on current or prospective employees, volunteers, grantees, or contractors who provide care, custody, treatment, transportation, or supervision of children or vulnerable adults
- [Child Protective Services](#)  
The Family Services Division works with families and communities to make sure children and youth are safe, their basic needs are met, and youth are free from delinquent behavior.
- [Prevent Child Sexual Abuse: STEP UP!](#)  
Step up to keep children safe from sexual abuse
- [Safe Sleep for Babies and Infants](#)  
Tips for making sure infants and babies are safe while sleeping
- [Shaken Baby Syndrome](#)  
Learn about Shaken Baby Syndrome and how to prevent it

*protectkidkids.vt.gov*

## **HELP PREVENT CHILD ABUSE**

If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected,  
call Vermont's Child Protection Line to  
report it — 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

**1-800-649-5285**

Preventing child abuse helps  
ensure the safety, health, and  
optimal development of our children.

<http://dcf.vermont.gov>