



Department for Children and Families
Family Services Division

Child and Family Services Reviews

Round 4

A Home for Every Child Pilot: Program Improvement Plan

June 2026

Introduction

The Vermont Department for Children and Families (DCF), Family Services Division (FSD) submitted the Round 4 Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) Statewide Assessment in 2023, completed the Onsite Review in 2024, and had been working closely with the Children’s Bureau to develop a traditional Program Improvement Plan (PIP). A final PIP draft was submitted to the Children’s Bureau and was under review shortly before A Home for Every Child (AH4EC) was announced. In spring 2026, Vermont opted into the AH4EC pilot program, and a new PIP was created to reflect the requirements laid out in Technical Bulletin #14.

Vermont has outlined our goals, strategies, implementations, and measures below, all of which relate to the two main goals of A Home for Every Child: *increasing the availability of safe homes through diligent recruitment, prioritizing kin, and improving retention of existing caregivers while reducing entries into foster care through effective prevention and faster pathways to permanency.*

While AH4EC is new, Vermont’s commitment to reducing the number of foster care entries and improving our systems is not. Over the last 3 years and through a variety of strategies, Vermont FSD has successfully reduced the number of children and youth in custody and are currently experiencing the lowest custody population in over two decades. Figure 1 provides quarterly custody counts for the past 3 years to illustrate the impact of this commitment.

Figure 1: Entries per Quarter, Vermont, Statewide, Q1 2023 – Q1 2026

Q1 2023	Q2 2023	Q3 2023	Q4 2023	Q1 2024	Q2 2024	Q3 2024	Q4 2024	Q1 2025	Q2 2025	Q3 2025	Q4 2025	Q1 2026
1044	1035	968	921	916	904	884	861	831	838	826	768	726

Data Source: Quarterly Management Trend Report, April 2026.

When developing the AH4EC PIP, Vermont identified two overarching goals to target during the CFSR process and beyond:

- **Goal A:** Vermont will reduce the number of children in foster care by preventing unnecessary custody entries and supporting timely, safe exits from foster care.
- **Goal B:** Vermont will strengthen family-type placement availability by recruiting and retaining the homes needed for Vermont children and youth.

These goals align with A Home for Every Child as well as FSD’s vision, mission, and overall approach to engaging, supporting, and strengthening the children, youth, and families we serve. As referenced above, much work is already underway in Vermont and conversations about continuous improvement in these areas are occurring, in some capacity, across all units and departments within FSD. The four main strategies we’ll focus on in the AH4EC PIP are just one facet of the complex work we are

moving forward on a daily basis, and Vermont is excited to partner with the Children's Bureau to continue improving outcomes.

PIP Strategies, Implementations, and Lead Measures

In our Round 4 AH4EC PIP, we will focus on:

- increasing safe kinship placements and reducing barriers to kin licensure to ensure children maintain family and community connections;
- improving permanency outcomes through relational case practice and family engagement;
- reducing foster care entries through front-end decision making and prevention; and
- foster care recruitment and retention activities.

The table below outlines Vermont FSD's strategies, related implementations, and identified measures of focus for the duration of the PIP (and beyond). Per Technical Bulletin #14, Lead and Chaser measures will be reported monthly and contain data from the prior month.

Strategy	Implementation	Lead Measures	Impact to Goal A	Impact to Goal B
Increase safe kinship placements and reduce barriers to kin licensure to ensure children maintain family and community connections	• Create and implement separate licensing standards for relative/kin caregivers • Implement the Washington Kinship Navigation Program • Focus on strategies to strengthen relative/kin search and engagement • Explore and implement policy for hard stops related to non-kinship placements	1. Percent of children entering care whose first placement is with a relative 2. Length of time (in months) from application to license of relative foster family homes	☐	☒
Improve Permanency Outcomes Through Relational Case Practice and Family Engagement	• Ensure the agency maintains the best practice caseload ratio for family Services Workers • Increase Family Services Workers	3. Percent of met face to face contact with children in custody 4. Percent of children who	☒	☐

	face to face contact with children and youth in custody Continue statewide Focused Indicator work in the areas of length of stay/timely case closure, face to face contact with children and caregivers, and case planning	discharge to permanency (reunification, adoption, guardianship)		
Reduce Entries Through Front-End Decision Making and Prevention	- Develop and implement a Family Group Conference (FGC) model - Increase focus on active efforts to prevent removal and other prevention strategies - Implement the use of the SDM Case Read Tools - Provide initial and ongoing training to staff on the SDM assessment tools (Safety Assessment, Risk Assessment, Risk Reassessment, and Reunification Assessment)	5. Number of entries into foster care 6. Number of re-entries into foster care	☒	☐
Foster Care Recruitment & Retention	- Adjust and refine tracking program to monitor recruitment efforts - Launch 2 statewide recruitment campaigns - Host a Foster Parent conference - Explore pathways to increasing the foster	7. Number of new applicants per month 8. Number of new licenses per month 9. Number of licenses closed per month	☐	☒

	care recruitment and retention budget annually • Explore proactive ways to increase the foster parent reimbursement stipend through the budgeting process • Operations, System of Care, and the Quality Assurance team coordinate with Diligent Recruitment Pilot Districts to create goals, tracking, and measurement plans related to their specific interventions			
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Federal Chaser Measures

In addition to the 9 identified Lead Measures, Vermont will also report the following federally required Chaser Measures on a monthly basis:

- **Maintaining Family Connections** – the percent of children in care at the end of the month who are placed with relatives or kin
- **Congregate Care** – the percent of days children are placed in group homes/settings instead of living with a family
- **Recent Maltreatment History** – the percent of children harmed after child welfare has already confirmed abuse or neglect
- **Home Disruption** – the percent of homes where foster placement ends unexpectedly and children must move

Vermont will also report data on the number of children in foster care and the number of foster homes, for the purpose of calculating and reporting this ratio.

Conclusion

Through the strategies, implementations, and measures outlined in this PIP, as well as activities occurring outside of the PIP, Vermont FSD aims to continue growing our practices to improve outcomes for children, youth, families, and staff. Vermont anticipates a PIP effective date of August 1, 2026.