

**Department Mission Statement:**

The Department for Children and Families, as part of an integrated Agency of Human Services, fosters the healthy development, safety, well-being, and self-sufficiency of Vermonters.

We are passionate about prevention and will:

- Reduce poverty and homelessness;
- Improve the safety and well-being of children and families;
- Create permanent connections for children and youth; and
- Provide timely and accurate financial supports for children, individuals, and families.

**Description of Appropriations, Divisions and Programs**

The Department for Children and Families is comprised of the Administration and Support Office and six divisions as follows:

- Administration and Support Office (Admin)**
- Family Services Division (FSD)**
- Child Development Division (CDD)**
- Office of Child Support (OCS)**
- Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO)**
- Office of Disability Determinations Services (DDS)**
- Economic Services Division (ESD)**

**Administration and Support Office**

The Administration and Support Office includes the Commissioner’s Office, the Business Office, Information Technology and Legal Services. The Commissioner’s Office provides administrative oversight and support to the operating divisions. It is responsible for policy and budget development, operational management of all programs and divisions, human resource development for approximately 1,000 DCF staff, internal and external communication and is charged with maintaining relationships with other state agencies, the legislature and federal officials.

**Family Services Division (FSD)**

**Program Focus/Population Served:** This division provides the following services: child abuse and neglect investigations, child protective services, services to children in the custody of the Commissioner of DCF and youth justice services including supervision of youth on juvenile probation.

## **Major Programs/Services:**

**Centralized Intake Unit:** FSD manages calls from mandated reporters and other citizens who suspect a child is the victim of child abuse or neglect. Unit supervisors decide which cases merit a social work intervention based on law, regulation and policy.

**Child Abuse and Neglect Investigation & Assessment:** FSD responds to reports alleging that children are being abused or neglected. In both investigation and assessment, the primary focus is on a child's immediate safety.

**Ongoing Services to At-risk Families:** FSD provides direct services and coordinates other therapeutic services targeted at risk reduction for families who are at the highest risk of abuse or neglect.

**Substitute care, Treatment and Permanency Planning for Children in Custody:** FSD focuses on providing the most appropriate out-of-home living situation for at-risk youth. Children are placed in their own school districts whenever possible.

**Transition Services:** FSD assists youth in custody as they transition to adulthood. For example it provides training and support services through the Youth Development Program, housing support, extended foster care and financial assistance with post-secondary training.

**Probation and Restorative Justice Services:** FSD provides services to delinquent youth with a focus on balanced and restorative justice. It also manages the Woodside Rehabilitation & Treatment Facility with a central goal to ensure that youth avoid later involvement with the adult correctional system.

**Adoption Subsidy and Post-adoption Supports:** FSD provides financial support to children special needs that are adopted through the foster care system. In addition, it provides post-adoption services to adoptive families of children with special needs.

**Residential Licensing:** FSD promotes the safety of children by licensing foster families, residential facilities and child placement agencies.

## **Child Development Division (CDD)**

**Program Focus/Population Served:** The Child Development Division (CDD) works in partnership with families, communities, schools, and providers to improve the well-being of Vermont's children by increasing access to a continuum of high quality comprehensive child development and family support services. These services promote health and well-being, school readiness and foundations for life long success. Investing in prevention in the early childhood years reduces the likelihood of having to fund more costly interventions in social services, special education, and corrections later in life.

## **Major Programs and Services:**

**Child Care Licensing:** CDD is responsible for regulating and monitoring 1500 – 1600 child care programs in Vermont. These include school-based and center-based early childhood and afterschool programs as well as registered and licensed family child care homes.

**Child Care Financial Assistance:** CDD helps families pay for child care so parents can increase their economic stability through work and training or education while their children participate in developmentally beneficial early childhood and after school programs.

**Quality Improvement and Workforce Development:** CDD develops standards and funds state wide systems of support for development of early childhood and afterschool professionals. It also supports continuous quality improvement of early childhood and afterschool programs with specific focus on STep Ahead Recognition System – STARS.

**Children’s Integrated Services:** CDD provides a range of early intervention, home visiting, mental health, and inclusion services for children and their families experiencing significant challenges,

**State-wide Systems and Community Partnerships:** CDD works with community, state and federal partners to establish, sustain and enhance infrastructure and direct service capacity for a coordinated early learning and development system in Vermont.

## **Office of Child Support (OCS)**

**Program Focus/Population Served:** The Office of Child Support (OCS) manages Vermont’s child support program under Title IV-D of the Social Security Act by enforcing court-ordered child support obligations, establishing child support, medical support, parentage orders and locating missing non-custodial parents. OCS is the sole organization in Vermont responsible for the child support program - one mission, one program.

## **Major Programs/Services:**

**Child Support Collections:** OCS serves custodial families with child support collections services, which is its most critical outcome. Receiving child support often makes the difference between needing state financial assistance and remaining financially independent.

## **Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO)**

**Program Focus/Population Served:** The Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) connects communities to resources within government and the private sector in order to eliminate poverty. OEO provides program and grants management, resource

identification and development, training and technical assistance and advocacy for community-based organizations in a manner that fosters creativity and innovation.

### **Major Programs/Services:**

**Community Services:** OEO works to alleviate poverty and provide crisis assistance through emergency food, shelter and other services. The Community Services Block Grant provides basic funding for five Community Action Agencies (CAA) and has been in existence since 1964. The CAA's provide direct services that include emergency food shelves, employment, health, nutrition, housing and other assistance.

**Homelessness Services:** OEO provides grants and technical support to community non-profits engaged in sheltering the homeless, homelessness prevention and moving families and individuals towards permanent housing. In addition, it provides funding to Vermont homeless shelters and providers of services to the precariously housed to meet the needs of persons who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

**Asset Development Programs:** OEO provides a statewide Micro Business Development Program through Community Action Agencies to promote self-employment and business opportunities for low income Vermonters via Job Start loans, business planning and technical assistance. For example, the Job Start Revolving Loan Fund provides capital to low to moderate income Vermonters starting or expanding micro businesses. It also provides technical assistance to borrowers who do not meet the requirements for traditional bank financing.

**Home Weatherization Program:** OEO seeks to reduce energy costs for low-income families by improving the energy efficiency and comfort of their homes while ensuring their health and safety. The Weatherization Trust Fund provides state funding for weatherization through a one-half percent gross receipts tax on all non-transportation fuels sold in the state. Services to income-eligible people include: 1) comprehensive "whole house" assessment of energy related problems; 2) state-of-the-art building diagnostics including blower door testing, carbon monoxide and heating system testing and infrared scans; and 3) full-service energy retrofits including dense-pack sidewall insulation, air sealing and attic insulation, heating system upgrade or replacement.

### **Office of Disability Determination Services (DDS)**

**Program Focus/Population Served:** Disability Determination Services (DDS) serves the public by making prompt, regulation-compliant decisions of medical eligibility for disability benefits under Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). All funds expended by DDS to process Social Security and SSI disability claims, including staff salaries and benefits, are 100% federally reimbursed, including the indirect cost for administrative overhead as determined by the cost allocation plan. A small part of the DDS workload involves disability determinations for Medicaid, as governed by the Memorandum of Agreement between SSA and DCF.

## **Economic Services Division (ESD)**

**Program Focus/Population Served:** The Economic Services Division (ESD) administers a variety of state, federal/state, and federal programs that address the basic needs of low and moderate income Vermonters. Factors that contribute to need include unemployment, part-time or low-wage employment, family breakup, single parenthood, age, temporary or permanent disability, death of a family member, or other catastrophic event. ESD programs and services are more fully described below, but it is important to note that more than one in five Vermonters receive benefits or services from ESD.

### **Major Programs/Services:**

**Reach Up Program:** ESD serves families with children who are unable to provide for themselves as a result of family breakup, single parenthood, temporary or permanent disability, unemployment, or low-wage employment. Families receive cash assistance, case management and other help to achieve self-sufficiency including Medicaid coverage and federal supplemental nutrition assistance benefits (3SquaresVT).

**Postsecondary Education Program:** ESD provides financial assistance and support services to families while an adult member works toward an associate or bachelor degree.

**Reach First Program:** ESD provides short-term help to families who financially qualify for Reach Up but do not need ongoing financial assistance by providing them with a limited financial benefit and services.

**Reach Ahead Program:** ESD provides additional support to families who are transitioning from Reach Up and the Postsecondary Education Program in the form of a monthly food subsidy for up to 12 months.

**Creative Workforce Solutions:** ESD and DAIL's Vocational Rehabilitation Division have combined efforts to help Reach Up families find employment using a consolidated and coordinated approach entitled Creative Workforce Solutions (CWS).

**Child Care Subsidy:** ESD provides financial aid to eligible families to assist with the cost of child care. Eligibility is based on income, family size and familial risk factors.

**Aid to the Aged, Blind, & Disabled (AABD):** ESD provides a state supplement to the federal government's Supplemental Security Income (SSI) cash benefit. It also funds the Essential Person Program by providing cash assistance to household members whose care and/or services are essential to an aged or disabled person remaining in their home.

**General Assistance (GA):** ESD provides emergency financial assistance and services to eligible individuals and families. It also provides emergency help to low income people who are homeless or likely to lose their housing. Finally, it pays for emergency dental, medical and prescription services, and burial services if necessary.

**3SquaresVT:** ESD manages the USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which is a federally regulated entitlement program that is 100 percent federally funded. Its mission is to provide low-income households better access to a healthy diet while supporting American agriculture. In Vermont, SNAP is known as 3SquaresVT.

**Farm to Family:** ESD provides Farm to Family coupons to help Vermonters buy locally-grown fresh vegetables and fruits. They can be used at over 60 participating farmers' markets throughout Vermont.

**Home Heating Fuel Assistance (LIHEAP):** ESD's fuel assistance program has two components. Seasonal fuel assistance is operated state-wide by ESD's Office of Home Heating Fuel Assistance and crisis fuel assistance is operated through grant agreements with the state's five community action agencies.

**Health Care Eligibility Determination Services:** ESD determines and maintains eligibility for Vermonters who are eligible for health care coverage. The division processes applications from applicants seeking coverage. The complexity of eligibility determinations results from the combination of Vermont's broad range of health care programs and the use of an antiquated computer system.

All key budget issues facing DCF are provided in the FY16 Budget Development Worksheet (Ups and Downs).