

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>150</h1>
Chapter:	Coordinating with Others	
Subject:	Transportation of Youth in DCF Custody	Page 1 of 3
Approved:	Cynthia K. Walcott, Deputy Commissioner	Effective: 1/17/06
Supersedes:		Dated: 1/17/2006

Introduction

To establish policy and procedures to ensure that children and youth in DCF custody are transported safely, yet in the least restrictive way.

Policy

Children and youth in DCF custody will be transported using the least secure method that can reasonably assure safety. In evaluating the most appropriate level of security, staff will consider:

- Immediate risk to run away or history of serious behavior on previous runaway;
- Other demonstrated behavior that the child may risk his or her own safety, or the safety of another person.

In most situations, children experiencing significant transitions should be transported by or under the supervision of a person they know and trust. In all cases, reasonable and appropriate efforts will be made to respect the privacy of the child and prevent physical and psychological trauma. Children will not be transported securely unless necessary to protect the child's health and safety, or the safety of another person.

The following are the options for transport:

Basic transportation: Youth rides with one adult in a private, state fleet or transportation service vehicle. Preferably, the adult is known to the child

Supervised transportation: Youth is transported with two adults in a private, state fleet or transportation service vehicle. Preferably, one adult is known to the child. This may include a parent or relative as appropriate.

Secure Transportation: Youth is transported in a Woodside vehicle or law enforcement vehicle using Woodside or law enforcement protocols for secure transportation. Woodside staff or the law enforcement officer is accompanied by a second adult, preferably one known to the child. Use of soft restraints rather than hard restraints is encouraged.

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Secure transport is permitted **only** in the instances specified below.

- Transport for placement at Woodside, or transport for a youth already resident at Woodside (e.g. to and from Court)¹;
- The child or youth poses high risk to him or herself or to another person, as documented on the Transportation Assessment Form (FS-652) and risk cannot be controlled using non-secure transport.

To request approval for secure transport for any transport other than **initial placement** at Woodside, the responsible social worker, Woodside staff or ESP staff must complete a Transportation Assessment Form (FS-652). All secure transport must be approved as follows:

- Transport of children already resident at Woodside – Woodside shift supervisor
- All other daytime transports – supervisor or district director
- All other after hours transports – covering ESP supervisor

If Woodside staff is transporting a youth non-securely, and the youth's behavior becomes risky during transport, staff may employ restraints.

District and ESP Tasks

Planning for Transportation

- Includes plans to meet youth's transportation needs in case plans.
- Schedules future transportation with as much notice as possible.
- Assesses safety risk posed by the child or youth.
- Completes Transportation Assessment Form (FS-652) if secure transportation may be necessary.

¹ Although secure transport for a youth being placed at Woodside, or already resident at Woodside is **permitted**, it is not **required**. It is likely that youth being placed initially at Woodside will be transported securely, due to the degree of risk (see criteria for placement at Woodside in Policy #171). There may be many instances in which youth resident at Woodside do not need to be transported securely, such as when they are interviewing at a residential program. Woodside staff, who supervise youth 24 hours a day, are in the best position to assess current risk. When Woodside staff are transporting a youth non-securely, and during the transport the youth demonstrates behavior that is substantially risky to the youth or others, staff may secure the youth en route.

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Transportation Procedures

- All adults who transport children, except a child's family member, will be subject to child abuse registry, criminal records and motor vehicle checks. (Note: licensed foster parents have already been cleared.)
- All adults and children will use safety belts, or as required by law, child safety restraints (i.e. car seats, approved seats for younger children). Child safety locks should be engaged.
- Any Family Services staff member or designee must maintain appropriate supervision of youth being transported at all times to ensure safety of the child and others. However, if the youth exits the vehicle without permission, the social worker must exercise judgment about whether to go after the youth, or to contact law enforcement. DCF staff or individuals providing contracted non-secure transport are not expected to jeopardize their own safety by attempting to apprehend the youth.
- The youth's personal items, such as bags, handbags, shoulder bags, knapsacks should be locked in the vehicle's trunk if the youth's behavior indicates this will increase safety or reduce risk to run away.
- When transporting a youth, a cell phone should be available for use in case of an emergency.