

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>156</h1>
Chapter:	Coordinating with Others	
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Approved:	Cynthia K. Walcott, Deputy Commissioner	Effective: 2/27/14 FINAL
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Purpose

To inform staff about the provisions of the agreement between our department and the Department of Corrections on sharing case information. The desired outcome of the agreement is to promote safety of the vulnerable populations the departments serve by increasing the communication and collaboration between the two departments.

Policy

The Vermont Department for Children and Families (DCF) and the Department of Corrections (DOC) have entered into an agreement to share case information Child Protection Measures. This agreement is designed to assist the two departments in protecting children and in promoting and supporting the positive, essential and ongoing relationships between children and their families. The agreement promotes and encourages communication and collaboration between the two departments.

As a result of the agreement:

- Designated Family Services employees can have login access to the DOC database after appropriate training and signing the FS Computer Users Agreement FS-111. The database contains information about all clients currently served by DOC. (Note: Cases opened and closed since DOC automated case files are also included. Different districts were automated at different times.)
- To facilitate communication between the two departments about mutually-served families, the names of parents and children being served by FS and/or closed within the last three years and foster homes and child care providers are sent to DOC daily. The last assigned worker and the district office telephone number is included. (Note: as of 2/27/14, this option is not operational.)

Use of DOC Database by FS Employees

FS employees' access to the DOC database is limited to purposes directly related to assessment of risk and delivery of services to children and families served by FS, including the screening of potential caregivers for children. Because of the confidential and sensitive

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nature the DOC databases, password access to DOC databases for any other reason is prohibited. Staff who violate this rule may be subject to disciplinary action. Names of all staff (DOC, FS and other) who access DOC database records are recorded by the DOC database.

FS employees shall consult the DOC database under the following circumstances:

- When information received in an intake is insufficient to make the decision whether to accept it as a report for investigation.
- During the course of an investigation, if not done previously.
- To assist in the assessment of risk when a CPS case is opened for ongoing service.
- To assist the Residential Licensing Special Investigations Unit in evaluating applicants for licensure and approval.

FS employees may also consult the DOC database when it is appropriate to assess risk to children/youth and the community and/or to determine when coordination between the departments is needed.

Written records from DOC or the DOC database may not be offered into evidence or otherwise filed in a judicial proceeding or a matter pending before the Human Services Board without the consent of the DOC worker. If the DOC worker declines to give such consent, the records must be subpoenaed.

FS staff may not print out information from the DOC database, including case notes. The FS worker may summarize relevant material in his or her own contact notes and/or quote important passages.

Informing DOC of FS Involvement

When a social worker serving a family on an on-going basis (post-investigation) learns an individual in the family is also being served by DOC, the worker will inform the DOC worker of our involvement, via telephone or e-mail.

Sharing Information about FS Clients with DOC Employees

When FS and DOC are both currently serving the same family, the DOC worker will be considered part of the team and should be invited to team meetings and case plan reviews. Information may be shared with the DOC employee that is consistent with carrying out the child/youth’s case plan.

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Sharing of Information about FS Clients with DOC Employees

Under the terms of the agreement, FS employees may receive inquiries from DOC employees related to potential risks to children by:

- offenders being served by the Intensive Domestic Abuse Program;
- an inmate who may be furloughed to a home in which children reside.

When an FS employee receives an inquiry from a DOC employee considering the possible placement of a DOC client in a residence in which minor children reside, the FS employee will share with the DOC employee information relevant to the determination of whether such placement is in the best interests of those minor children. Among other things, the FS employee may disclose the existence of a substantiated report of child abuse or neglect to the DOC worker.