

The Vermont Department for Children and Families (DCF) is responsible for protecting children and strengthening families.

Our Family Services Division (FSD) works with families and others to help make sure children and youth:

- Are safe from abuse
- Live in safe & healthy places
- Have adequate food, clothing, shelter and health care

### Why did FSD contact my family?

You most likely came to our attention because we got a call (*report*) from someone who was worried about your child's safety and well-being.

That call could have come from a neighbor, friend, family member or other person who knows your child.

Anyone can call us to voice their concerns about a child. Some people, like doctors, teachers and child care workers, are legally required (*mandated*) to tell us about suspected child abuse or neglect.

**Mandated reporters make about 70% of the calls to our Child Protection Line.**

### What did you do with the report you got about my family?

We are legally required to review all the reports that we get. Here's what happened to yours.

#### A supervisor:

1. Reviewed it.
2. Looked at things such as your child's age and the nature of the concerns raised.
3. Decided that a response (*intervention*) was needed — based on Vermont law and FSD policy.
4. Selected the appropriate intervention: assessment or investigation.  
*In some cases, the law says we must do an investigation. This includes all claims that an adult sexually abused a child.*
5. Assigned a worker to your case.

**Our main goal is to make sure your child is safe and well cared for.**

**We also want to work with you — to make sure you have what you need to keep your child safe and parent them effectively.**

**You deserve help and support!**

**The chosen intervention usually begins within 72 hours. This is typically when you learn about our involvement with your family.**

### How does an intervention begin?

#### For an investigation:

1. A worker will interview the child the report was about. *We may do this without your knowledge or permission.*
2. A neutral party such as a teacher or school nurse will be present during the interview.
3. We'll tell you about the interview and report as soon as possible afterwards.

#### For an assessment:

1. A worker will contact you to discuss the concerns raised.
2. They may ask for your permission to talk to your child. If you say no, we may decide an investigation is needed to ensure your child's safety.

**Our goal is to keep your family safely together and prevent the need for out-of-home care.**

### What happens next?

The following steps may happen for both investigations and assessments.

#### **1. Assess child safety:**

Using the SDM® Safety Assessment, the worker assesses the child's immediate safety and then determines whether the child is *safe*, *safe with a plan* or *unsafe*.

#### **2. Assess family risk:**

Using the SDM® Risk Assessment, the worker assesses the risk of future harm with no intervention and then determines the risk level: *low*, *moderate*, *high* or *very high*.

#### **3. Determine outcome:**

- a. If the risk is *high* or *very high*, we'll open a case for ongoing services that will help make your family stronger. This could include things like counseling, parenting classes and support groups.
- b. If we did an investigation, we must also decide if a reasonable person would believe the abuse/neglect happened. If the answer is yes:
  - The report is substantiated *AND*
  - The substantiated person's name is added to Vermont's Child Protection Registry

## Will you take my child away?

The answer is almost always NO. Most children stay home while we work with the parents on a plan to keep them safe. If we don't think your child is safe, we may ask the court to review the situation. The judge would then decide whether your child was safe at home.

## Will we have a case plan?

If we open a case for ongoing services or a judge decides out-of-home care is needed, you'll be assigned a worker who will develop a case plan with you.

It may spell out:

- The services you'll get to help make your family stronger (e.g., counseling, parenting classes and support groups).
- What you need to do to bring your child home. This could include:
  - Completing drug abuse treatment
  - Maintaining safe housing
  - Showing you can provide your child enough food to eat, clothing to wear and other basic needs

**Your case plan is like a road map. It shows you the changes you need to make to provide your child with safety, permanence and well-being.**

## Where can I find help?

Your worker can connect you to programs that can help your family. You can also find help on your own. A good place to start is on DCF's website.

- Find DCF benefit programs online at [dcf.vermont.gov/benefits](http://dcf.vermont.gov/benefits).
- Find resources by topic (e.g., education, health, legal & parenting) online at [dcf.vermont.gov/resources](http://dcf.vermont.gov/resources).
- Find resources by audience (e.g., parents and relatives) online at [dcf.vermont.gov/resources-audience](http://dcf.vermont.gov/resources-audience).

## Where can I learn more?

Visit our website to:

- Learn about the laws, policies and rules that govern our work: [dcf.vermont.gov/fsd/laws-rules](http://dcf.vermont.gov/fsd/laws-rules)
- Get copies of our publications: [dcf.vermont.gov/fsd/publications](http://dcf.vermont.gov/fsd/publications)
- Get contact information: [dcf.vermont.gov/fsd/contact-us](http://dcf.vermont.gov/fsd/contact-us)

**Our job is to make sure that children are safe and their basic needs are met.**

## DISTRICT OFFICES

**Barre:** (802) 479-4260

**Bennington:** (802) 442-8138

**Brattleboro:** (802) 257-2888

**Burlington:** (802) 863-7370

**Hartford:** (802) 295-8840

**Middlebury:** (802) 388-4660

**Morrisville:** (802) 888-4576

**Newport:** (802) 334-6723

**Rutland:** (802) 786-5817

**Springfield:** (802) 289-0648

**St. Albans:** (802) 527-7741

**St. Johnsbury:** (802) 748-8374

### YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

- Free interpretation services if you or your child has limited English.
- Reasonable accommodations if you or your child has a disability.

Please let us know if you need these services or accommodations.

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## Parent's Guide To Child Safety Interventions

 **VERMONT**  
DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES  
FAMILY SERVICES DIVISION