

The Family Services Division works with families and communities to make sure children and youth are safe, their basic needs are met and they live in supportive, healthy environments.

The work we do requires us to make difficult decisions on a daily basis — decisions that affect people's lives and that not everyone will agree with.

To make sure the decisions we make are in the best interest of the children we serve, we want to hear from you if you have concerns. We'll listen to what you have to say with an open mind.

Sharing Your Concerns

There are two separate procedures for sharing your concerns:

1. Requesting a formal review of a decision that affects the life of a child in state custody
2. Voicing your concerns about:
 - ➔ A decision we've made
 - ➔ An action we've taken
 - ➔ The way you've been treated

We will not review decisions already made by a court or those scheduled to be heard in court within 30 days.

Requesting A Formal Review

You may be able to request a formal review of a decision made, depending on the type of decision and your relationship to the child.

What type of decisions may be formally reviewed?

- ➔ The living arrangements for a child
- ➔ The plan for visits between a child and family members
- ➔ The long-term goal for a child (e.g., reunification or adoption)

Who may request a formal review?

- ➔ The child, the child's parents if parental rights are still intact and the child's legal guardians
- ➔ The child's attorney and Guardian ad Litem
- ➔ The child's foster parents if the child has been living with them for at least the last three months

To appeal a child's move to another family for the purpose of adoption, the foster parents must have already expressed — in writing — their intent to adopt the child.

How do I request a formal review?

Submit your request — in writing — to the district director of the Family Services office that's involved. They must receive your letter no later than five (5) days after you were informed of the decision you disagree with.

Be sure to include the following:

- ➔ The decision you disagree with
- ➔ The person(s) who made the decision
- ➔ The decision you propose instead
- ➔ The efforts you've made to resolve the situation
- ➔ Your relationship to the child
- ➔ Your name, address and daytime phone number

Children and youth may request reviews simply by asking their social workers.

What happens next?

1. The district director will contact you to set up a meeting.
2. Following the meeting, the district director will inform you — in writing — of the decision made, the reason for the decision and any options you have for further review.

Voicing Your Concerns

If you have concerns that may not be formally reviewed, we still want to hear from you!

1. Start by talking to the Family Services employee who is involved.
2. If you don't feel comfortable talking to this person or are not satisfied with the response you get, contact their supervisor.
3. If the issue is not resolved, contact the district director of the Family Services office you're working with.
4. If the issue is still not resolved, call our central office at (802) 241-2131. Someone will hear your concerns and inform you of any next steps you may take.

Working Respectfully

We will treat you with respect and expect the same in return. It is in everyone's best interest for us to work together respectfully. Our goal is to make sure everyone is safe.

There will be ZERO TOLERANCE for any physical violence or verbal threats directed at staff or others.

Family Services Offices

Weekdays from 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Central Office: (802) 241-2131

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

Please let us know if you need an accommodation because of a disability or an interpreter because of limited English.

dcf.vermont.gov/fsd



The Family Services Division

A guide to sharing your concerns with us

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