



VERMONT

Department for Children and Families

**Child Welfare and
Youth Justice:
Child and Family Services Plan**

July 1, 2004 – June 30, 2009

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Child Welfare and Youth Justice Plan

MISSION STATEMENT

We are committed to protect children and strengthen families, in partnership with families and communities.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- ✦ We will carry out our responsibility to serve the best interests of children who are abused, neglected, delinquent or beyond the control of their parents.
 - ✦ Children deserve to be safe and secure.
 - ✦ Children belong in families who are committed to them into adulthood.
 - ✦ We will focus our services on the child in his or her family, culture and community.
 - ✦ We will involve individuals we serve in the planning and evaluation of services.
 - ✦ We will collaborate with communities to create public policy and services to support children and their families.
 - ✦ We will deliver services within the available budgets.
 - ✦ Our decisions, policies and internal organization will support and reflect our mission.
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DIVISION OUTCOMES

Children served by the division are safe from abuse

- ✦ Children living with their own families are safe from re-abuse.
- ✦ Children in custody, on adoption subsidy and/or living in settings regulated by the division are safe from abuse.

Children served by the division have enduring relationships with healthy, nurturing families.

- ✦ The division achieves permanence for children in custody within a reasonable amount of time.
- ✦ Children’s placements are stable.
- ⊖ Children discharged from SRS custody do not return to custody.

Children served by the division are successful in family, school and community.

- ⊖ School-aged children in custody regularly attend an approved school program.
- ✦ Children in custody are healthy.
- ✦ Children in custody are free from substance abuse.
- ✦ Children in custody are free from pregnancy.
- ✦ Youth are employed, if appropriate.

Youth adjudicated delinquent are free from criminal behavior.

- ✦ Delinquent youth in custody and on probation abide by the conditions of their probation certificate.
- ✦ Delinquent youth in custody and on probation do not commit further delinquencies or adult crimes.

GOALS OF FIVE-YEAR PLAN

The goals and objectives of this plan address the following areas:

- ✦ the well-being of children and families;
- ✦ the needs of children and families; and
- ✦ the nature, scope, and adequacy of existing child and family and related social services.

Principles of child and family services, as articulated in 45 CFR 1355.25 continue to guide us in developing, operating, and improving the continuum of child and family services.

- a) The safety and well-being of children and of all family members is paramount. When safety can be assured, strengthening and preserving families is seen as the best way to promote the healthy development of children. One important way to keep children safe is to stop violence in the family including violence against their mothers.
- b) Services are focused on the family as a whole; service providers work with families as partners in identifying and meeting individual and family needs; family strengths are identified, enhanced,

respected, and mobilized to help families solve the problems which compromise their functioning and well-being.

- c) Services promote the healthy development of children and youth, promote permanency for all children and help prepare youth emancipating from the foster care system for self-sufficiency and independent living.
- d) Services may focus on prevention, protection or other short or long-term interventions to meet the needs of the family and the best interests and need of the individual(s) who may be placed in out-of-home care.
- e) Services are timely, flexible, coordinated, and accessible to families and individuals, principally delivered in the home or the community, and are delivered in a manner that is respectful of and builds on the strengths of the community and cultural groups.
- f) Services are organized as a continuum, designed to achieve measurable outcomes, and are linked to a wide variety of supports and services which can be crucial to meeting families' and children's needs, for example, housing, substance abuse treatment, mental health, health, education, job training, child care, and informal support networks.
- g) Most child and family services are community-based, involve community organizations, parents and residents in their design and delivery and are accountable to the community and the client's needs.
- h) Services are intensive enough and of sufficient duration to keep children safe and meet family needs. The actual level of intensity and length of time needed to ensure safety and assist the family may vary greatly between preventive (family support) and crisis intervention services (family preservation), based on the changing needs of children and families at various times in their lives. A family or an individual does not need to be in crisis in order to receive services.

AVAILABILITY OF PLAN TO PUBLIC

This plan will be made available to any member of the public on request and will be posted on our public web page at: <http://www.state.vt.us/srs/>

AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES RE-ORGANIZATION

The Agency of Human Services (AHS) is currently undergoing a re-organization that will significantly impact the department. The plan for re-organization was submitted to the General Assembly in January 2004 and gained final approval in May 2004. The plan will be implemented over the next two years. Detailed information about the re-organization is available at: <https://www.ahsnet.ahs.state.vt.us/council/>

Under the direction of AHS secretary Charles Smith, the agency is pursuing the following goal:

The Goal of The Agency of Human Services is to improve the conditions of well-being of Vermonters today and tomorrow and protect those who cannot protect themselves.

The plan for re-organization was driven by eleven areas of focus identified during an exhaustive inquiry process that focused on what is working and what is not. In planning for re-organization, AHS is striving to address those areas:

- ✦ Respectful service, valuing the assets and strengths of clients
- ✦ Access to services
- ✦ Prevention
- ✦ Effective service coordination
- ✦ Flexible funding to address gaps in services
- ✦ Providing services before a crisis
- ✦ Collaboration with key partners
- ✦ People are supported through transition
- ✦ Continuous improvement and accountability
- ✦ Information systems – communication
- ✦ Preserve What Works

The plan for re-organization will result in AHS's present six departments and 2 offices being transformed to four departments and 1 office. The new entities are:

- ✦ Children and Families (includes present SRS)
- ✦ Health (includes developmental, mental health and substance abuse services)
- ✦ Aging and Independent Living
- ✦ Corrections
- ✦ Health Access (overseeing administration of the Medicaid programs)

SRS will not exist as a freestanding department, but will be part of the Department for Children and Families (DCF). DCF will be responsible for:

- ✦ Child Development Services, including programs focused on early childhood currently administered by AHS, the Vermont Department of Health and the Department of Developmental and Health Services;
- ✦ Child Protection, including centralized intake and centralized management of child maltreatment assessments, and central registry services;
- ✦ Child Welfare, including ongoing CPS, foster care, adoption, independent living, permanency services;
- ✦ Community Services, including support of foster care, adoption, residential care and contracted community services;
- ✦ Youth Justice.
- ✦ Economic Services, including TANF;
- ✦ Child Support; and
- ✦ Economic Opportunity.

Key to the reorganization is the creation of 12 Field Services Directors, who in turn report to a Deputy Commissioner for Field Services. The Field Services Director will be responsible for all services delivered in an AHS district, with direct line authority over all functions in the new department and soft line authority over functions in other AHS departments. Three other deputies, overseeing (1) economic services; (2) child development services and (3) child welfare and Youth justice services will collaborate closely with the Deputy for Field Services to ensure the delivery of quality services that are consistent with state and federal requirements. The Child Welfare and Youth Justice Division will oversee the implementation of this plan, in conjunction with the Field Services Division.

The AHS re-organization will continue to focus on these important indicators of social well-being:

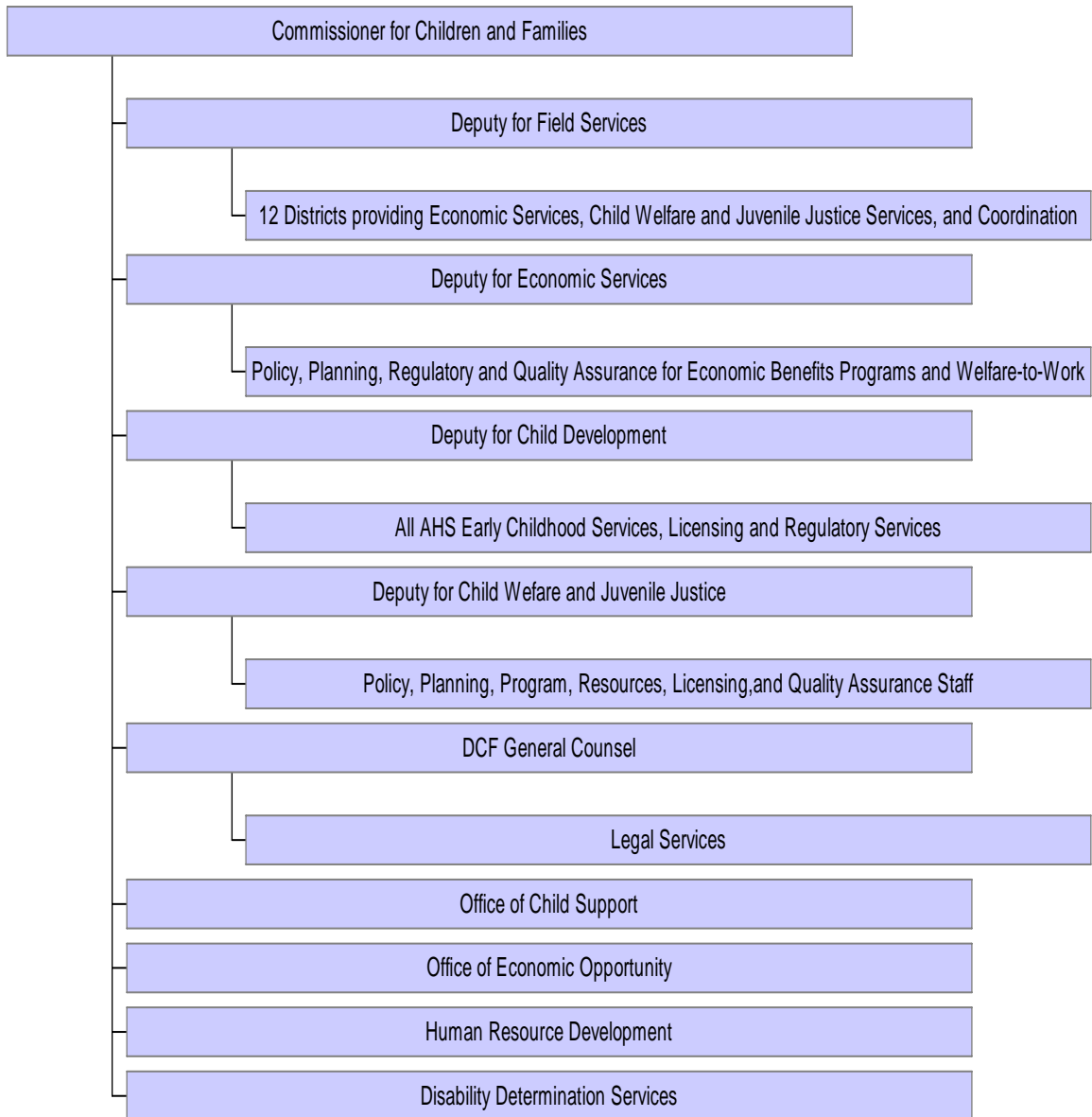
- ⊖ Families, youth and citizens are engaged in their community's decisions and activities;
- ⊖ Pregnant women and young children thrive;
- ⊖ Children are ready for school;
- ⊖ Children succeed in school;
- ⊖ Children live in stable, supported families;
- ⊖ Youth choose healthy behaviors;
- ⊖ Youth successfully transition to adulthood;
- ⊖ Adults lead healthy and productive lives;
- ⊖ Elders and people with disabilities live with dignity and independence in the settings they prefer;
- ⊖ Communities provide safety and support for families and children.

The AHS evaluates our state on these indicators annually, in publications entitled *The Social Well-being of Vermonters* and in community-specific profiles. See <http://www.ahs.state.vt.us/pubs/searchpubs.cfm>.

ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTION OF THE TITLE IV-B AGENCY

As this plan is being written, we are on the brink of re-organization. As of July 1, 2004, the new Department for Children and Families (DCF) will be formed. Although not all details of the organization are worked out, the organization is expected to be as described in the chart below. When this plan is updated in 2005, this section will be comprehensively updated to reflect the organization as it evolves.

Department for Children and Families



The **Commissioner's Office** provides general policy direction for the department operating programs as well as a focus on legislative and political advocacy. The department's General Counsel, will assist the commissioner in these arenas.

- The **Field Services Division** will be responsible for overseeing district operations. Although there will continue to be local district directors overseeing on the one hand Economic Services, and on the other, Child Welfare and Youth Justice Services, local task forces are now working on models for closer integration of services. A key concept to be implemented is *navigation*. Consumers will be greeted first by a navigator, who will help to assess their needs, assist them to get connected with appropriate service providers, and inform them about needed documentation for application for benefits, across all AHS programs.
- The **Economic Services Division** will be responsible for overall policy, planning and regulatory services for economic and health benefits, including TANF, Food Stamps, Emergency Assistance, Fuel Assistance and Medicaid. In addition, the division will oversee all welfare-to-work supports delivered through the district offices.
- Similarly, the **Child Welfare and Youth Justice Services** will oversee policy, planning, community services, program and practice initiatives, licensing, and in some cases, direct services. This unit will be responsible for implementation of this plan, in collaboration with the **Field Services Division**. Four functional units will be created:
 - Community Resources will be responsible for:
 - Foster Care
 - Residential Care
 - Adoption Services, including direct delivery of adoption social work, adoption subsidy and post-adoption services
 - Youth Development services, including Chafee Foster Care Independence Services
 - Community Services, including Intensive Family-based Services, Parent Educators and other community grants and contracts.
 - Child Welfare will be responsible for:
 - Overall planning and policy development for the division.
 - Quality assurance across all division programs, including CFSR activities.
 - ICPC/ICJ
 - Residential and Foster Care Licensing
 - Permanency Planning Services

- Child Safety will be responsible for:
 - Child Protection Intake, which will be centralized
 - Emergency Services
 - Child Maltreatment Assessments, which will be conducted and supervised locally, but be managed centrally;
 - Special Investigations;
 - Central Registry
- Youth Justice will be responsible for: providing policy, planning and programs supports for districts and contracted youth justice services, based on Balanced and Restorative Justice principles.
- ***The Child Development Division*** will oversee all early childhood services formerly scattered across various AHS departments. This will include the child care subsidy program, child care referral, child care licensing, child care workforce development, Headstart, Family Infant and Toddler Program; CUPS program, etc.
- ***Disability Determination*** handles eligibility determination for Vermont applicants for Supplemental Security Income (SSI).
- The ***Human Resource Development Unit*** plans and carries out the department's training programs, manages the department's Title IV-E partnership with the University of Vermont, and coordinates the department's employee reward and recognition program. Over time, HRD functions across the various divisions may undergo some consolidation.
- The ***Office for Child Support*** oversees all aspects of child support, including the child support registry and child support enforcement.
- The ***Office of Economic Opportunity***, through contract with local Community Action Agencies provides supports to Vermonters to be financially independent.

The ***Business Office*** assists in budget development, pays all bills, completes cost allocation, submits federal claims, manages space and telecommunications, etc. The various divisions' Business Offices may undergo some consolidation over the next year.

Planning and Evaluation is responsible for managing the department's management information system, office automation, and producing data to support the department's functions.

CONTINUUM OF SERVICES

The Child Welfare and Youth Justice Division, through the Field Services Division's local office, delivers child protection, child welfare (including independent living) and Youth justice services to

Vermonters. These services are fully coordinated, delivered from the same sites, by the same staff, and administered by a single administrative structure.

Over the last ten years, the Vermont Agency of Human Services, with its partner the Vermont Department of Education (DOE), has devoted considerable time and energy to building partnerships to improve the coordination of services to children and their families. Linkages have been built not only among state departments, but also with community service providers, parents and consumers of services. The primary objective of the AHS/DOE partnership has been to improve outcomes for all children and their families in Vermont by developing a system of community supports and services that:

- ⊖ Help prepare all children for successful participation in school;
- ⊖ Strengthen family capacities to contribute to and support their children's educational progress; and,
- ⊖ Ensure the effective functioning and continued evaluation of the services and supports needed by children, families and schools to improve children's educational outcomes.

This context obviously supports and encourages service integration and coordination in Vermont and in our own department. In addition, the structure of our department, housing child protection, child welfare and Youth justice services "under one roof" also supports and encourages integration.

Child Protective Services (CAPTA Services)

Prevention

Much of Vermont's prevention agenda is carried out through a cluster of programs and initiatives known as *Success by Six*. Success by Six is focused on three of the AHS Outcomes:

- ⊕ Families, youth and individuals are part of their community's planning, decision-making and evaluation and families and individuals live in safe and supportive communities;
- ⊕ Pregnant women and young children thrive; and
- ⊖ Children are ready for school.

The core programs in the Success by Six cluster are:

- ⊖ ***Healthy Babies Program*** provides critical early support and health promotion for pregnant women and infants;
- ⊕ ***Family, Infant and Toddler Program*** provides early intervention services including evaluation and family services planning and coordination;
- ⊕ ***Essential Early Education Program*** provides services to children age three to six who need specialized services for school readiness;
- ⊕ ***Parent Child Centers*** in 16 communities, provides comprehensive supports to families with young children including parent education, playgroups, home visiting, and early childhood services;

✦ **Headstart** in 7 communities, provides services focused on health, mental health, nutrition, early education and parent education.

⊕ **ReachUp** provides case management, education and specialized supports for families receiving TANF payments;

✦ **Welcome Baby** for families with newborns and newly adopted children;

✦ **Community-specific initiatives** focused on the wellbeing of young children and their families.

In 2003, 36,024 children and 42,181 parents were served by Success by Six programs throughout Vermont at an average cost of \$38.85 per child. Success by Six is funded by the Vermont taxpayers, and in some cases is matched by federal Medicaid dollars.

Child Abuse Reporting

The department accepts reports alleging child abuse or neglect, including reports of sexual abuse by any person. This reality makes Vermont look different from other states when types of abuse are compared.

Intake is a de-centralized function. In most districts, intake duties are rotated among all social work staff. After hours, a centralized Emergency Services Programs takes calls from community members regarding alleged abuse and/or neglect. A supervisor screens all intakes to determine if they meet statutory criteria for investigation. If the supervisor does not accept the report, the written intake is reviewed by a second person at or above the supervisory level. The second person may decide to accept the intake for investigation. As part of the AHS re-organization, the intake function will be centralized.

Following a legislative request, the department has developed a comprehensive plan for the training of mandated reporters. The plan was submitted to the legislature in January 2004 and will be implemented in 2004. New training materials were developed in collaboration with KidSafe, a Burlington-based collaborative focused on the prevention and treatment of child abuse. Children's Justice Act funds supported this project.

Child Maltreatment Assessment

Once a report is accepted, the alleged victim is seen and/or interviewed within seventy-two hours. The district director may waive the seventy-two hour requirement, but only for limited reasons. The investigating social worker completes the assessment within thirty days, whenever possible. The decision to substantiate is made by a supervisor. Only substantiated cases may be opened for ongoing CPS services.

Allegations of child abuse or neglect in regulated facilities (foster homes, residential facilities, child care facilities and schools), are handled by a central Specialized Investigation Unit under the supervision of the Commissioner's office.

In April 2003, we implemented a set of Structured Decision-Making Tools to guide assessment and decision-making in the intake and investigation phase of our work with families. The tools guides:

- Report Acceptance
- Response Priority
- Safety Assessment
- Risk Assessment
- Case Determination
- Report Disposition

Our goals are to improve our assessments and to promote consistency of practice – and ultimately to reduce subsequent harm to children. Development of these tools was a pivotal part of our Child and Family Services Review Program Improvement Plan (CFSR PIP), which ended in March 2004.

As part of the AHS re-organization, some centralization of the management and supervision of child maltreatment assessments is planned.

Child Protection Teams

There are currently 37 local child protection teams in Vermont, including Sexual Abuse Response Teams. These teams, empaneled as multi-disciplinary teams by the SRS commissioner, focus primarily on coordinating services to families who are at-risk, whose problems do not necessitate formal child protective response from the department. Increasingly, child protection teams are involving parents in their meetings.

Child Abuse Registry

In 2002 and 2003, the Vermont General Assembly greatly expanded the use of the state's Child Abuse Registry. Formerly, use of the registry for employment purposes was prohibited. Now, employers may use the Child Abuse Registry to screen employees and volunteers who provide care or supervision for children or vulnerable adults. Employers may also access the Adult Abuse Registry and the Vermont Crime Information Center's system for criminal background checks. We are presently evaluating the feasibility of a single portal for all three checks, under the auspices of the Vermont Crime Information Center. However, in the meantime, SRS is informing all schools and human services agencies of the opportunity for Child Abuse Registry checks.

Three levels of appeals of substantiation decisions are available. The first level is done by the district director. The second is handled centrally by the Operations Review Specialist. The third level is the Human Services Board.

Family Preservation and Support, and Family Reunification Services

The division contracts with a variety of community agencies to provide services that supplement casework services. These services comprise a statewide network of family support and preservation services; they are available in all districts. Vermont has always used this service system not only for family preservation and support, but also for reunification.

Agencies are selected through a competitive bidding process that specifies best practice principles, targets outcomes related to child safety/well being, and maximizes fiscal resources. In cases where an individual or agency has specialized knowledge and/or skills not otherwise available in that community, they may be awarded the contract/grant based on being the "sole source" in the area

without a competitive process.

- ***Parent Educators*** provide home-based support and parenting education, focusing on family support, family preservation and reunification.
- ***Intensive Family Based Services*** provide time-limited, intensive in-home therapeutic services, focusing on family preservation and reunification.
- Trained therapists authorized to provide treatment under a special SRS Medicaid program provide ***Sexual Abuse Victim and Offender Treatment Services***.
- ***Supervised Visiting Programs*** are operated locally. In most instances, districts hire one or more paraprofessionals to supervise visits for children in foster care with their family members.
- ***Other district-specific services*** purchased with IV-B, Subpart II and other funds, such as case management, mentoring programs, after-school programs, and family-tailored individual services.

In addition, child care services provides important services that keep families with young children together:

- ***Subsidized Child Care*** is provided to income-eligible parents who are working or in education or job-training programs.
- ***Family Support Child Care*** provides time-limited, free part-time child care for families who are experiencing stress that may place their child at risk;
- ***Protective Services Child Care*** provides child care by specially trained child care providers for children who have been abused or neglected. Services are provided to children living with their families and children in foster care who will be reunified with their families.

Vermont is particularly proud about the evolution of a comprehensive system of family support and preservation services designed to assist all families, not just families who come to the attention of the child welfare agency. Family support services in Vermont are primarily planned, funded and coordinated through a system of partnerships.

Youth Justice Services

In addition to child protection and child welfare services, the department also delivers Youth justice services. Youth in custody as delinquents are placed in the Commissioner's custody. In addition, youth on juvenile probation are supervised by SRS social workers. Child protection, child welfare and Youth justice services are consolidated and integrated in the state. In general, the same staff, the same service providers and the same placement resources serve all of our populations. This is a strength of our system, but also creates special challenges.

SRS continues to enhance and improve services to youth adjudicated delinquent and those at risk of delinquency. The federally funded Juvenile Accountability Block Grant (JABG) provided new

money to support restorative programming to youth and their victims. With JABG funds, we were able to establish a number of programs statewide:

- Restitution programs;
- Restorative panels;
- Intensive probation supervision (“street checkers”) and
- Competency classes.

The anticipated loss of JABG funds in FY ’05 is of concern.

We continue to work closely with the Department of Corrections to coordinate our approach to services to young offenders over the age of sixteen.

Last year, the Vermont Legislature established a Juvenile Justice Commission with representatives from various departments and from legislators. Our Commissioner serves on this commission. The goal of the Commission is to improve the quality and coordination of Youth justice services in the state. The Commission submitted a report to the legislature in Winter 2004.

Indian Child Welfare Act

Vermont does not have a federally recognized Indian Tribe within its borders. The department promulgated policy regarding compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act on 9/8/98.

Vermont's adoption statute also supports compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act. Adoptive parents must disclose a child's membership in a tribe when they file a petition to adopt.

In partnership with the University of Vermont, SRS has embarked on a child welfare project with the Abenaki tribe, a non-federally recognized tribe based in northwestern Vermont. Project staff are working closely with the Abenaki nation to increase the cultural competence of SRS social workers and foster parents and other service providers who work with tribal members. In particular, the project strives to ensure that Abenaki children in state’s custody retain their ties to their tribe and native traditions. In addition, the project seeks to increase the number of Abenaki families available to foster children of the tribe. Through the project communication and collaboration has increased through a variety of vehicles, including training.

Permanency Planning, ASFA and Capacity to File TPR Petitions

As of 3/31/04, there were 849 children who had been in SRS custody for fifteen or more months.

Age 2	Data	No TPR or Petition Date or Compelling Reason Documented	TPR Petition Date or Compelling Reason Documented	Total
0-5	Number	17	100	117
	Percent	14.53%	85.47%	100.00%
6-11	Number	21	152	173
	Percent	12.14%	87.86%	100.00%
12-17	Number	72	434	506
	Percent	14.23%	85.77%	100.00%
Total Number		110	686	796
Total Percent		13.82%	86.18%	100.00%

SRS does not track the specific compelling reason documented in the case plan in its automated systems. For young children, anecdotal information indicates that the compelling reason is usually related to the imminence of reunification. For adolescents, the reason is usually related to other case plan goals being more supportive of the youth's best interest.

We have not experienced significant problems related to capacity of the social work staff, SRS Attorneys General or the court to meet ASFA requirements for the filing of TPR petitions. We have had some localized problems with timeliness of permanency planning hearings.

Between 1/1/2003 and 3/31/2004, 115 petitions to TPR were filed. Of those, 65 (56.52%) were filed within 15 months. For those 55 children whose TPR petitions were filed after the 15 month mark, nearly half (22) of them had a compelling reason date recorded with the 15 months, indicating that although adoption was not thought appropriate at first, in the end it did become the child's permanency plan.

On 3/31/04, 144 children were in custody whose TPRs occurred between 1/1/2003 and 3/31/2004. This does not include children who were TPRd during the period whose adoptions were already finalized by 3/31/04.

Age		Time from Entry to TPR						Total
		0-12 mos	13-18 mos	18-24 mos	25-30 mos	31-36 mos	>36 mos	
0-5	Number	7	30	25	10		1	73
	Percent	9.59%	41.10%	34.25%	13.70%	0.00%	1.37%	100.00%
6-11	Number	3	18	11	13	5	1	51
	Percent	5.88%	35.29%	21.57%	25.49%	9.80%	1.96%	100.00%
12-17	Number	3	3	5	3		6	20
	Percent	15.00%	15.00%	25.00%	15.00%	0.00%	30.00%	100.00%
Total Number		13	51	41	26	5	8	144
Total Percent		9.03%	35.42%	28.47%	18.06%	3.47%	5.56%	100.00%

Over half of all TPRs were of young children. However, one-third were school age and a substantial number were adolescent.

About 44 % of all TPRs occurred within 18 months. For the youngest children, about 50% occurred within 18 months. This should result in a healthy rate of adoptions within 24 months.

Out of Home Care

A full range of substitute care settings is available to meet the needs of children and youth in custody. For children who cannot remain at home, the division focuses on out of home placement in the most family-like setting that can meet the child’s needs. Whenever possible, placements are close to home and community. Placement options include kinship foster care, foster care, specialized foster care, group residential care, intensive residential care and individualized wraparound care. As of 12/31/03, children in custody were living in the following settings:

		Age Group				
	Setting	0-5	6-11	12-17	18+	Grand Total
Number	Adoptive Home	63	30	20		113
	Foster Home	136	115	432	29	712
	Group Home	1	5	154	4	164
	Indep Living			10	11	21
	Institution			26	1	27
	Intensive Residential		8	57	1	66
	Parent	28	38	144	4	214
	Runaway			7	1	8
	Relative	52	39	70		161
Percent	Adoptive Home	22.50%	12.77%	2.17%	0.00%	7.60%
	Foster Home	48.57%	48.94%	46.96%	56.86%	47.91%
	Group Home	0.36%	2.13%	16.74%	7.84%	11.04%
	Indep Living	0.00%	0.00%	1.09%	21.57%	1.41%
	Institution	0.00%	0.00%	2.83%	1.96%	1.82%
	Intensive Residential	0.00%	3.40%	6.20%	1.96%	4.44%
	Parent	10.00%	16.17%	15.65%	7.84%	14.40%
	Runaway	0.00%	0.00%	0.76%	1.96%	0.54%
	Relative	18.57%	16.60%	7.61%	0.00%	10.83%
	Total Number	280	235	920	51	1486
	Total Percent	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Nearly half of children in all age groups were living in foster homes. About 82% of children were living in some kind of family care.

About 10% of children were living with relatives. Use of relatives for placement is higher for young children; about 18% of pre-school children live with relatives.

Over one-fifth of young children were placed with adoptive families.

✦ Only about 15% of children were in residential settings (group homes and intensive residential settings). The vast majority of these children are adolescent. SRS rarely places young children in residential settings, except for the unusually challenged young child who may need short-term mental health evaluation in a residential setting.

✦ Placement in institutional care is limited to our 30-bed Woodside Juvenile Facility and some short-term psychiatric hospitalizations.

Placement services are supported locally by the Resource Coordinators, who provide recruitment, training (pre-service and in-service), matching and retention services. The Field Management Team provides central coordination and support as well.

The Vermont Foster and Adoptive Families Association (VFAFA) is the statewide professional association. The primary focus of the association is advocacy, networking and training. VFAFA holds training conferences in the spring and fall of each year. Group care providers belong to the Vermont Coalition of Residential Programs (VCORP). VCORP has collaborated with the department in setting standards for group residential care.

The department's IV-E partnership with the University of Vermont (UVM) includes foster and adoptive parent training. UVM trainers provide a 10-week foundation training in regions around the state. Specialized adoptive parent training is now being developed. Local district offices plan and coordinate most advanced training for resource families.

Cross-jurisdictional Adoption Resources and Diligent Recruitment of Foster and Adoptive Homes

Our Child and Family Services Review, completed in Summer 2001, identified the need for improvement in ongoing recruitment of foster and adoptive families, including the use of cross-jurisdictional adoption resources. We have devoted considerable resources in the past two years to developing a statewide strategy for recruitment of both foster families and adoptive families.

Recruiting Foster Families

In 2003, we were fortunate to be chosen as a scholarship team for the Breakthrough Series Collaborative (BSC) on Recruitment of Resource Families sponsored by the Casey Foundation. The BSC brings together teams from around the country with experts in the field, with the intent of engaging in a rapid change process. The Barre district was chosen as a pilot district. Using Breakthrough methodology to focus on both recruitment and retention, the Barre team achieved a 25% increase in the number of foster homes in the district.

In February of 2004, the remaining 11 districts, enthusiastic about the success experienced by the Barre district, signed on for statewide implementation. In February, teams of people were trained in two separate sessions. We have developed evaluation methods to help us understand what methods generate the best success.

Recruiting Adoptive Families For Children in Foster Care

About 95% of legally freed children in Vermont are adopted by their foster parents. This means that we actively recruit adoptive families for the 5% of children whose foster parents have chosen not to adopt; these children are generally the most difficult-to-place because they are older and/or they have particularly high special needs. The resources of Project Family, described on page 22, enabled us to embark on a fresh and creative approach to recruitment of families for these children. Under the auspices of Project Family, we worked with a marketing firm to develop a strategic marketing plan for the program. Our ongoing marketing efforts are guided by our marketing strategy and, in particular, by the target audiences we identified: older couples/empty nesters, farm/small town families, families who have already adopted children in foster care, gay and lesbian couples, and single men and women. We have developed, and will continue to develop, working relationships with specific media who reach our target audiences.

Vermont was fortunate to be awarded a new Adoption Opportunities Grant in Fall 2003 that focuses on recruitment of adoptive families in rural areas. This new project focuses on the development of an integrated recruitment method for foster care and adoption that will give the public a simplified, effective message to help children in need of permanence. In addition, the project strives to develop ways to present information to families that will ensure the best match between a family and a child. The project also focuses on training and coordinated support services to ensure permanence.

Adoption Promotion and Support

Casework and Finalization Services

Adoption services focus on children in custody. For many years, Vermont has had a very high rate of foster parent adoption, with most of the children adopted being adopted by their foster parents. Regional adoption social workers are centrally supervised, but based in six of the twelve district offices. Services provided include:

- preparing foster adoptive parents as they exit the foster care system and enter the post adoption system;
- preparing children for the transition to permanence;
- facilitating and supervising the placement of children in permanent homes; and,
- finalizing adoptions.

With the availability of the resources of Project Family, DCF adoption social workers are shifting emphasis towards working with children to prepare them for permanence, and towards increasing early consultation on permanency issues.

The main office adoption manager provides overall program management and policy development for the adoption program, manages the adoption subsidy program, and the adoption registry.

Finalization numbers over the last several years are as follows:

Year	Finalizations
1997	111
1998	99
1999	123
2000	126
2001	111
2002	142
2003	167

The 2002 and 2003 figures reflect the impact of Project Family, a project funded from 10/1/00 – 9/30/03 by an Adoptions Opportunities grant. The project has been funded for at least another year by the Vermont General Assembly. Project Family, a collaborative effort between SRS and the Lund Family Center, has been successful in its goals to:

- ✦ Increase the number of Vermont children placed from foster care into permanent homes through adoption.
- ✦ Reduce the length of time to achieve permanent homes for children in Vermont.
- ✦ Increase the number of adoptive homes for children.
- ✦ Improve systems policies, procedures and practices to achieve timely permanent placements.

Project Family brought additional staff and other resources to special needs adoption in Vermont. Funds were also used to implement marketing strategies to recruit potential adoptive families to adopt children with special needs; and conduct home studies for families as required by Vermont adoption law. (See section on diligent recruitment.)

The project has been highly successful in locating families for children who were free for adoption who had no adoptive families. From any perspective, this project has been a resounding success.

Adoption Incentive Payment

In the event we qualify for an adoption incentive payment we will use it for adoption promotion and support.

Adoption Subsidy

The adoption subsidy program, administered centrally, currently serves approximately 1300 children. This program has grown dramatically, both in numbers served and average cost per subsidy.

The needs of children being adopted have grown more complex. Parents are unwilling to adopt unless they can continue the kinds of supports they receive as foster parents, including therapeutic and case management supports and respite care. The number and complexity of requests for post

adoption supports led the department toward contracting with a variety of agencies to provide these supports.

Post Adoption Supports

For a number of years, we have used IV-B Subpart II funds to provide post-adoption services, contracting with agencies around the state. We currently have contracts with six agencies. Consistent with the Intercountry Adoption Act of 2000, Post-Adoption Services are available to any family needing them, not just children adopted through SRS. Post-adoption services for children formerly in custody are funded primarily by Medicaid under the Rehabilitation Option.

Post-Adoption Services have also benefited from an Adoption Opportunities grant. With funds awarded starting in 1998, SRS and Casey Family Services formed a post-adoption consortium. The consortium continues its work after the conclusion of the grant. The Vermont Post Adoption Consortium is a collaborative project of the department, five private agencies, one community mental health center, Vermont Parent to Parent (a public health agency), a private foundation and two parent support organizations. The consortium provides post-legal adoption services to families in Vermont.

In addition, the consortium has focused on a number of other initiatives:

- A curriculum for school personnel has been developed to assist them with meeting the needs of adopted children in their classroom. This has been offered in a number of schools around the state. In addition, the consortium published a booklet of readings entitled *Building the Relationship Capacity of Adopted and Foster Children. Background Readings for Educators, Mental Health Professionals and Parents.*
- A conference on transracial adoption was held in September 2003.
- The consortium continues to sponsor two one-week day camp sessions for adopted children. In addition, they offer a variety of creative respite options for adopted children who otherwise have difficulty with normal socialization – a winter camping weekend with one-on-one supervision, family camping weekends, etc.
- Two therapists’ groups continue with active participation in Burlington and White River Jct.
- The consortium is working with the Title IV-E UVM Foster and Adoptive Parent Training Project to update the pre-adoption training curriculum.

Intercountry Adoptions

In November 2003, the Residential Licensing Chief attended meetings about the accreditation requirements of the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption. The department has expressed interest in becoming the accrediting entity for the state and is waiting for response from the U. S. Department of State.

In June 2004, we surveyed district offices to determine the number of children in custody who were adopted internationally. Eleven of our twelve districts have none. The Burlington district has 17, 16 of which were adopted by the same family. Their situations are as follows:

Agency	Reason for Custody	Plan for Child
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Agency	Reason for Custody	Plan for Child
Bluegrass Christian Adoption Services	Sexual abuse	Concurrent plan
Bluegrass Christian Adoption Services	Sexual abuse	Adoption
Bluegrass Christian Adoption Services	Sexual abuse	Long term substitute care
Bluegrass Christian Adoption Services	Sexual abuse	Adoption
Bluegrass Christian Adoption Services	Sexual abuse	Adoption
Bluegrass Christian Adoption Services	Sexual abuse	Adoption
Lund Family Center	Sexual abuse	Concurrent plan
Lund Family Center	Sexual abuse	Adoption
Lund Family Center	Sexual abuse	Adoption
Lund Family Center	Sexual abuse	Adoption
Lund Family Center	Sexual abuse	Adoption
Lund Family Center	Sexual abuse	Adoption
Lund Family Center	Sexual abuse	Adoption
Lund Family Center	Sexual abuse	Adoption
Lund Family Center	Sexual abuse	Adoption
Lund Family Center	Sexual abuse	Adoption
Lund Family Center	Sexual abuse	Adoption
SRS	Severe behavioral issues	Long term substitute care

VERMONT CHAFEE FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENCE PROGRAM

Vermont administers the Chafee Foster Care Independence Program, called the Youth Development Program through the Child Welfare and Youth Justice Division in collaboration with the Field Services Division under that structure, the state Youth Development Coordinator will continue to be responsible for all administrative activities of the program.

Out of 1,200 youth in custody over 12 years of age, approximately 600 received some form of direct services from the Youth Development Program. Not all eligible received the service, due to a combination of staff vacancies and low referral rates by some district offices. To increase utilization, Youth Development Coordinators are aggressively reaching out to targeted districts. In addition, new foster parents and new staff receive information about the program in early service training sessions. The state Youth Development Coordinator will continue to monitor monthly data reporting of referrals, program admissions and youth served.

The Youth Development Program has used the current year to consolidate efforts and expand services to former foster youth ages 16-18. Foster parent and state agency staff training opportunities have been used to inform adults in the system of the shift of emphasis to serving older, former foster youth. The program's new motto ***The Door is Always Open*** emphasizes the continued availability to services of youth aging out of custody and the full range of services available in the program for youth 18 or younger.

We have chosen to prioritize services to youth invested in working towards independence. Reluctant youth are offered services, assessed, and meet with the Transitional Services Coordinators at least twice.

If still unwilling to commit to participation, they will be provided with contact information and encouraged to contact the coordinator should they change their mind up to their 21st birthday.

The Youth Development Program has traditionally provided services to youth in custody ages 16-18. Consistent with the new federal mandate, the program made the provision of services to older youth a priority. This has put pressure on our capacity to serve both populations but is yielding better long-term results. The Youth Development Program is implementing a youth development worker competency training program that seeks to build skills in working with adolescence toward independence. This was developed with support from the University of Southern Maine, Edmund S. Muskie School of Public Service.

Goals

The Youth Development Program has the following general goals:

- ◊ Youth build and maintain connections with their families and communities.
- ✦ Youth participate in planning their future.
- ✦ Youth participate in activities to learn new skills to gain independence.
- ✦ Communities are involved in supporting their youth.
- ✦ Youth enter adulthood with positive supportive relationships with caring adults.

The Youth Development Program is continuing to refine the services to increase opportunities to partner with youth and to assist them in learning skills to be on their own and to develop the personal and community connections we all need. To help achieve this goal and foster resiliency in youth, we are reviewing services provided in Youth justice, group residential treatment, youth development, foster care, and contracted health and mental health services to emphasize activities that help youth in care develop the assets and connections to help them succeed.

Services

The Youth Development provides both direct and indirect services through contracted Youth Development Workers in each district, as follows:

Screening

Youth Development Coordinators screen all youth in custody at age 16, to determine their transition needs. The screening is used to prepare a written transition plan including services designed to prepare youth for adulthood. Over 950 youth received this screening during the report year. Screenings for youth in custody are being coordinated with related assessments conducted by Vermont schools for youth on Individual Educational Plans (IEPs) under IDEA. The Department is currently exploring changing the timing of the Transition Assessment to age 14, consistent with the provisions of IDEA. This would allow more time for coordinated planning and allow youth to access more services to which they may be entitled under IDEA. These services may also support high school graduation, increasingly recognized as a critical goal for all youth.

Transitional Services

Youth are referred to the Youth Development Program by their SRS caseworker. Youth referred to the program receive a formal assessment of their transition needs, current level of preparation for independent adulthood, and recommendations for needed services. The Daniel Memorial Independent Living Skills Assessment or comparable instruments are administered to participants referred for ongoing service. Based on the assessment, youth receive training and support designed to increase their knowledge and skills for independence. Activities are designed to increase youth skills in the following areas:

- ✦ **Tangible Skills** including budgeting, housing, employment, career planning; and
- ✦ **Intangible Skills** which include relationships, problem solving, and learning to cope with leaving state custody.

Youth Development Coordinators provide youth with opportunities to learn tangible skills during this report period, through a combination of direct instruction (either in groups or individually) and case management targeted to assist youth in accessing independent living services through agencies and schools at the local level. Activities vary according to the needs and goals of individual youth but often include accessing health care, housing, and employment through schools, agencies, private individuals and businesses.

In an effort to maximize the number of youth accessing tangible skills training, several of the SRS district youth development coordinators hold classes either individually or in coordination with other contracting agency youth programs. These combined efforts have resulted in increased numbers of youth in custody receiving this kind of preparation. We plan to expand these services in the coming year.

The skills class gatherings held by transitional services coordinators also incorporate youth development and community participation activities for youth. This has resulted in the development of youth governance groups in at least three district areas. The groups have been designing activities for themselves and others that create opportunities for learning new skills, contributing to the communities, and establishing positive connections with other youth and adults.

The Youth Development Program also recognizes the importance of helping youth to develop decision-making and relationship skills along with establishing connections with their communities and community service activities. These efforts have been expanded during the report year through vocational exploration and community service activities conducted both individually and in groups. The impact of expanded group activity is also discussed in the previous section.

Case Management

A critical role for Youth Development Coordinators is to act as a bridge for youth transitioning to independent living. Our program emphasizes the youth development coordinator's role in working with youth to advocate with schools and other agencies providing these types of services. To better prepare them to perform this role, youth development coordinators are encouraged to attend local Interagency Core Transition Teams composed of personnel from schools, the Department of Employment and Training, Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, and SRS. The purpose of these meetings is to identify individual and collective needs of youth preparing to transition to adulthood and to find

collaborative ways to meet those needs. Participants offer both technical assistance and resources to each other. As a small state with small programs and resources, no agency can offer the full spectrum of what youth need. This kind of relationship-based, collaboration is the only way youth may access a full range of services.

Statewide Youth Conference

The Statewide Youth Conference was held this year on March 30, 2004. Over 150 youth attended, an increase from last year's attendance. The conference was held for the second time at Castleton State College, part of the Vermont State College system. The college was very welcoming offering both its excellent facilities and a chance to see what a small college is like. Youth attended workshops centering on this year's theme "Positive Directions":

- employment;
- housing;
- vocational training;
- healthy sexuality and relationships;
- youth-led workshop on youth governance;
- youth-led workshop on the experience of aging out of the system.

The guest of honor for this year's conference was Emily Lester, a youth who was single handedly responsible (after four years of determined advocacy) for passage of a bill providing college tuition assistance to former foster and adoptive youth in Vermont. In honor of her efforts, we have established the "Emily Lester, Making a Difference Scholarship Award" to be given annually to a current or former foster or adopted youth who makes a contribution to others. Emily will be this year's recipient.

After a "youth friendly" lunch, the afternoon was filled with recreation and music.

Youth Development Coordinators Network

The Youth Development Coordinator (YDC) Network has continued to meet monthly during the reporting period. The Network consists of District Youth Development Coordinators from all of the regions of the state, and the State Youth Development Coordinator. The YDC Network has made significant gains during the current year and has evolved to the point where the group is promoting best practice youth development activities at the local and state level. The group has organized to provide orientation to new members, support to the Youth Advocacy Council, legislative initiatives and training for staff and foster parents. Members of the group have taken part in the planning of regional and national conferences.

The group is aggressively pursuing efforts to evolve and refine the program including initiatives to:

- ✦ Establish links to other state agencies to support youth (Department of Employment and Training, Vocational Rehabilitation, Vermont Community College, Vermont Student Assistance Corporation).
- ✦ Develop training curriculums for new SRS staff, foster parents and contracted agency staff.
- ✦ Incorporate the principles of resiliency by developing activities for youth to increase developmental assets, including the new volunteer mentor programs.

- ✦ Continuation of youth advocacy through support of quarterly regional (within Vermont) youth governance meetings.
- ✦ YDC Network is working in collaboration with VFAPA (Vermont Foster and Adoptive Family Association) to spread “the good news” of successful foster youth through targeted media contacts.

Contract Administration

The Statewide Independent Living Coordinator is responsible for the development and monitoring of all contracts supporting the program. As administrator of this program, he develops and monitors the central office and district budgets for the program, prepares reports to the division director, prepares the current year funding application, and this program report.

Pursuant to State contracting requirements, the twelve district transitional services contracts were put out for bid in July 2002. In preparation for this process and to further clarify the activities of the program in each of the contracting districts, the State Independent Living Coordinator met with district contracting agencies and SRS district offices to establish a program description defining:

- Specific population to be served;
- Relationships and responsibilities of the parties; and
- Services to be delivered.

The review process was helpful in establishing essential elements of the program in each district as well as statewide activities existing across all the districts. It formed a basis for the crafting of provisions for the contracts eventually awarded. This process also helped us to achieve another of our goals for this year, specific program descriptions and number of youth to be served for each district.

Specifications for the bidders and subsequent contracts generated by the process contain a stronger emphasis on youth involvement in planning for services. Programs will be delivered and evaluated on how effectively they:

- Increase the life skills of youth.
- Assist youth in establishing connections to formal and informal systems in their communities.
- Provide youth opportunities to meaningfully participate in and contribute to the activities of their communities.
- Maximize the youth attendance and completion of high school.
- Create opportunities for youth to acquire pre-vocational and vocational skills and obtain a job.

These broad categories of activity are recognized as critical to youth moving from foster care into self-sufficient adulthood.

New Initiatives for Youth Development

Integration with other Services for Youth

Statewide interagency transition planning efforts have been in place in Vermont for several years. In 1996, these efforts resulted in the publication of guidelines explaining how each agency at the state level provides services to youth to prepare them for adulthood.

Since that time, the members of the State Core Transition Team, including the Departments of Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, Social and Rehabilitation Services, Developmental and Mental Health Services, and Employment and Training have been working together to translate their efforts at the local level to improve services for youth in transition.

Vermont's Human Services Agency is currently being reorganized with TANF programs now under the same department as child protection and Youth justice. The State Youth Development Coordinator is attending statewide provider meetings of the Youth justice provider agencies and the Youth Development providers. Many of these programs are operating under the same local agencies and have been combining and coordinating activities for several years. Regional meetings are being held in areas where the activities are in separate agencies to explore pooling resources combining activities and expanding effective practices.

A partnership between SRS, PATH (our TANF agency) and the Vermont Coalition of Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs (VCRHYP our TLP program) resulted last year in a successful effort to expand Medicaid services to youth through age 21 for foster and at risk/homeless youth. This has significantly expanded services for youth in this critical age range for former foster youth and others.

Another interagency effort underway is designed to assist current and former foster youth in accessing the vocational orientation and employability development from our PATH "Ticket to Work" and Reach Up programs. The proposal being discussed would be for eligible youth to participate directly in programming and for our department to purchase this training for ineligible youth. There have been preliminary discussions on this, but further planning will need to wait for some of the Agency reorganization efforts to be completed over the next few months.

Vocational Exploration and Preparation

Vermont schools are required to have vocational preparation as part of their regular curriculums. The issue for many foster youth is accessing it. Most of the vocational preparation occurs at regional vocational/technical centers providing very attractive programs. The result is that admission is competitive and there are more applicants than slots. Waiting lists are established and those with better qualifications (coursework, grades, years in the same school system) receive priority. Youth with behavioral issues, on IEPs, with lots of moves, are often not considered. Youth with these characteristics are over-represented in the foster care system and so many foster youth have limited access to vocational programming.

This dynamic exists for youth on IEPs in general. There is statewide recognition of this and the Department of Aging, Disabilities and Independent Livings' Voc Rehab Unit has sponsored a federal grant program to address the lack of vocational opportunities for youth on IEPs. The "Career Start Program" will provide three regions of the state with funds to identify best practices for addressing the need for vocational exploration and preparation for this group and replicate in within the region. Programs demonstrated to be successful, will be replicated throughout the state. The State Youth Development Coordinator has been participating in the regional planning group in the northwest corner of the state where our only Native American population exists. This group is working to identify or develop a comprehensive vocational exploration program for the lower grades, vocational exploration and job shadowing in the middle school and further training and supported employment

for youth at the high school level. Youth Development Coordinators from other parts of the state are participating in the planning efforts in those regions.

One of the members of the Youth Development Network found a promising vocational exploration curriculum developed by a designer in Newfoundland in coordination with a woman from Vermont's Department of Employment and Training called "the Real Game". It provides vocational and career planning activities at four different levels from elementary school through adulthood. Curriculum materials and training in providing the program are free. All of the Youth Development Coordinators received the training and will be implementing it as part of their programming over the coming year.

The Youth Development Program will also be working with the State Department of Education on an information sharing agreement to begin tracking educational data and outcomes for youth in custody for analysis and program improvement in vocational training opportunities and general achievement and graduation.

Permanency for Youth

As a part of its Federal Program Improvement Plan, SRS Social Services has been conducting an analysis of outcomes for children, youth, and families served by our agency. Results of that analysis and plans are covered in other sections of this document, but there are a couple of critical elements of that data that have implications for the Youth Development Program and its relationship with the overall services received by all children and youth in custody. The primary purpose of the study is to identify the relationships between various demographic groups within the custody population, the services they receive and their placement stability.

As noted, Vermont has made progress in placement stability and permanency, especially with younger children (under 12). For children who enter the system and remain into adolescence or those who enter as youth and remain over 12 months, the permanency picture is much poorer. For many of these youth, permanency means not returning home, not being adopted, and aging out of the system with little or no lasting connections to caring adults or a community.

The outcomes for these youth, regardless of their level of technical preparation, are poor. This recognition has resulted in a multi-disciplinary effort across our agency spearheaded by members of our adoptions unit, and including staff from our policy unit, training unit, district offices, foster parents, and Youth justice unit, to find a way to make this different.

Community Involvement

The Vermont Youth Development Program recognizes the importance of community involvement in the development of resilient, self-sufficient youth. As part of the contracts executed after 10/1/02, all programs are responsible for creating and supporting local community based youth participation and community service activities. Examples of youth contributions include a youth sponsored trust fund which administers grants to other youth through fund raising, a community dinner put on by youth and foster parents, youth traveling to Central America to work in a orphanage, and a peer mentoring program for youth leaving custody.

Youth Housing

The State Youth Development Coordinator is working with SRS Licensing Unit to provide a regulatory and funding structure supporting development of independent living options for youth in custody.

Innovative youth living arrangements are being developed by local districts under the oversight of the State Youth Development Coordinator administering this program. A re-write of licensing regulations to cover this kind of innovation has not taken place as soon as anticipated but development of this kind of living arrangement continues to be developed on an individual case basis pending completion of the larger review.

Statewide Independent Living Housing Support Project

As part of the Chaffee Bill (FFY 99), SRS received some additional funds in its overall grant to support room and board costs for former foster youth, aged 18-21. After adjustments to cover costs of the existing program and commitments of state funds, the annual amount available to allocate to this use is approximately \$96,000. Vermont administers both housing room and board stipends and education and training stipends in a coordinated application and approval process. Youth participating in post-secondary education are eligible to apply for education and training stipends to address “unmet need” in their combined education, training, and living expenses. This is consistent with standard college funding determinations utilized by the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC), the non-profit entity responsible for college funding determinations. All of the applicants for Chafee ETV funding, must first apply for and exhaust funds available from VSAC and the “Emily’s Bill” Trust Fund set aside for current and former foster youth. (Note: administration of the program is covered in detail in the FFY 2003 State Plan Amendment and Application for Funds under the Education and Training Vouchers Program)

SRS and VSAC have implemented an information sharing agreement to identify and track access by current and former foster and adoptive youth to VSAC services including career orientation, outreach services, as well as financial aid assistance. Patterns of use and access are being identified and will be used to identify barriers and means to address them. VSAC Statewide and local staff have met with the State Youth Development Coordinator and the YD Coordinator Network to increase program awareness and increase the number of youth accessing VSAC resources.

VSAC and SRS (DCF) are working to develop a protocol that will maximize timely access of current and former foster and adoptive youth to VSAC. It is anticipated that this work will be completed in the fall of 2004.

Funds are held centrally. The State Youth Development Coordinator approves all housing stipends. For consideration youth must have:

- A recent history of success in some form of living situation (group care, foster care, other form of independent living);
- A commitment to taking an active role in planning for their life; and
- A track record of following through on their commitments.

The youth, his or her social worker, and youth development coordinator put together a transition team of paid and unpaid individuals identified by the youth. The group, led by the youth, designs a proposal including a budget, employment, health care, housing, transportation, education or training and a request for a housing subsidy based on their income and unmet needs. All subsidies have the

expectation that the youth will cover at least some of the costs in the beginning and will assume an increasing portion on a schedule set out in the proposal made by the youth.

These proposals may be made by youth who are still open cases with SRS with the SRS caseworker taking an active role with a blend of these funds and substitute care funds. Some youth leave SRS custody wanting no more to do with us, but discover shortly after that life is more difficult than they envisioned. These youth, if motivated and committed, may continue to receive support services from the Transitional Services Coordinator including filing an application for a housing subsidy. They will be considered under the same rules as other youth.

The program began taking referrals in February 2001 and has grown exponentially. Since the beginning approximately 100 different youth have received education, training or housing stipends. Most of these youth are participating in some form of post-secondary education and training. Based on the feedback of participants, this program has an incentive without which they would not have gone on.

Vermont provides room and board stipends to youth for room and board expenses. Room and board is defined as costs incurred by, or for youth ages 17-21 associated with housing or meals. These can include rent, utilities, furnishings, meals and the means to prepare them. The group for which we provide strictly room and board support is a small minority of the total because we strongly encourage youth to make further education or training a part of their plan. Without increased training or skills, they will be poorly equipped to achieve full self-sufficiency in a competitive job and housing market.

Structure for Youth Input

In an effort to access more youth from different parts of the state, structured regional focus groups will be held with youth in the coming year to provide on-going input to practice, programs, policy, the program improvement plan and other youth related issues. In preparation for the current plan, regional youth focus groups were convened to provide input to the plan. One of the consistent messages was the desire of youth to have a more active and directive role in their case planning process.

State Match Description

On July 1, 1997, a new Vermont statute went into effect that prohibits 16 and 17 year old youth beyond the control of their parents from coming into SRS custody. In response to this law, SRS this year provided \$746,400 in State dollars to community agencies in the Runaway Youth Coalition. \$100,000 of this amount is being used as match for this grant application. These agencies provide a range of services to youth 16 - 21, both in and out of SRS custody including family mediation and drug and alcohol counseling. Many of these community-based agencies also provide the transitional services program funded through this grant.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING PLAN

The Department's Human Resources Development Unit (HRD) is responsible for the development and delivery of comprehensive training and education programs for agency staff and foster/adoptive parents. This may be accomplished in collaboration with the University of Vermont (UVM) Department of Social Work.

As has been discussed above, SRS is going through a major reorganization and becoming the Department for Children and Families. Formerly, HRD was responsible for in-service training for a department of 400 delivering Youth Justice, Child Protection and Child Welfare, Child Care, and Disability Determination services. Now, HRD will now be responsible for a much broader training package for a department of approximately 900 employees. Some of the training functions will be moved to the Agency of Human Services, some will be done centrally for the new Department for Children and Families and some will be embedded in the various sub-divisions of the Department. The details of how training will be planned and delivered are still not clear.

Concurrently, we are in negotiations with the UVM for our FY '05 contract for the Child Welfare Training Partnership. For a number of reasons, these negotiations have been difficult. We anticipate a smaller contract that will incorporate a number of funding sources not have been previously used by the Department for its training program. This will included IV-E, Title XIX Medicaid and State General Fund contributed by both DCF and the University. By August 1, 2004 we hope to have a new contract in place.

For these reasons, our training plans for the next year are not definite.

Plan:

- By August 1, 2004 complete a contract with the University of Vermont.
- By January 2, 2005, complete an assessment of the training needs of the new Department
- By March 1, 2005, develop an appropriate plan for cost allocation planned for those trainings.

If the contract with the University of Vermont is successfully negotiated, we expect that our planning package at least for the Child Welfare and Youth Justice Division of DCF will be carried out in the context of the Child Welfare Training Partnership.

Training for Department Staff

The in-service training program consists of 155 hours of CORE training for child welfare social worker trainees, and 250 hours of specialized training for child welfare social workers and other staff. The CORE training provides information about Title IV-E statute and regulations, state policies and procedures, and the knowledge and skills necessary to perform casework functions during the 18 months that new child welfare social workers are in their initial training status. Specialized training builds these skills and develops knowledge in more depth. While in trainee

status, new workers receive intensive supervision and on the job training in one of twelve district offices in addition to the classroom training detailed below.

<p>Required CORE Training (187 Hours)</p>
<p>New Employee Service Training (NEST):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation to SRS • Child Abuse and Neglect • Case Planning with Families • Casework Skills • Facilitating Placement • Sexual Abuse of Children and Adolescents • Juvenile Delinquency and Probation • Youth, Families and Juvenile Services <p>Art of Intake Assessment of Healthy Development of Children Assessment of Healthy Development of Adolescents Core Substance Abuse Court and Legal Skills/ Witnessing Education: Advocating in Schools HIV/Aids and other Blood Born Pathogens Investigation Skills Mental Health Issues and Families Responding to Domestic Violence in CPS/Case Planning Sexual Harassment Staff Safety Working with Sexually Offending Youth and Their Families</p>
<p>Specialized Training (278 Hours)</p>
<p>Adolescent Brain and High Risk Behaviors Advanced Seminar in Accepting and Substantiating Reports Annual Child Sexual Abuse Conference Assessment of the Healthy Development of Children Assessment of the Healthy Development of Adolescents Casework Consultation and Training Groups Compassion Fatigue: Direct & Vicarious Stress Dealing with Grief, Loss and Separation HIV/AIDS Performance Evaluations Self Harm & Adolescents Shaken Baby Syndrome Solution-Focused Training Substance Abuse Certificate Program:</p>

Core Substance Abuse: Alcohol & Drugs
Screening, Assessment and Treatment
Family Violence and Substance Abuse
Trauma and Self Care
Self-Harm and Eating Disorders
Psycho-educational Groups
Nicotine Addiction

Supervisor Consultation and Training Groups

Support Staff Conference

Urban Myths & Other Legends That Delay Permanency: Concurrent Permanency Planning

Technical Assistance

We have not identified any technical assistance needs at this time.

Training for IV-E System of Care Service Providers

All of the above trainings are also available to foster parents, adoptive parents, workers in group homes, case managers, state employees in other departments, and other community practitioners providing services to children in custody. Our training calendar is mailed annually to programs and practitioners who provide services to abused and neglected children around the state.

Title IV-E Child Welfare Training Partnerships

The Title IV-E Training Partnership with the University of Vermont School of Social Work is divided into four sub-parts developed over the ten years of the partnership. This year they are combined into one contract and cover the areas of staff education and training, foster and adoptive parent training, and cultural competency described below.

Staff Training and Education

The Title IV-E Child Welfare Training Partnership supports up to five child welfare workers and up to five potential employees to obtain a Master or Bachelor of Social Work degree from the University of Vermont each year. Employees are selected on the basis of experience in public child welfare, job performance and commitment to children and families. They contract to work for the Department for 2 – 4 years following graduation, depending on level of support provided. Potential employees are selected from a pool of applicants accepted into the MSW program based on their work experience, and suitability for and commitment to public child welfare work. They contract to work for the Department for three years following graduation. In addition, this partnership provides:

- three FTE Training Coordinators to develop, coordinate and present courses in the employee in-service program;
- child welfare related courses to employees in non-matriculated status; and

- a field placement for Title IV-E students focused on child welfare practice and located in a SRS district office

Foster/Adoptive parent Training Partnership (FAPTP)

In September 1999, the SRS and the Department of Social Work at UVM entered into an additional partnership to develop and deliver a comprehensive foster and adoptive parent training program. During the first year, the project completed an extensive review of current foster/adoptive parent training in the state and of national training curricula. Currently, six regional training specialists, in partnership with SRS staff and foster parent co-trainers, deliver CWLA's PRIDE pre-service to prospective foster and adoptive parents around the state. The partnership also provides funding to support foster and adoptive parents to attend the two annual Vermont Foster and Adoptive Families Association (VFafa) conferences, and specialized training on a variety of topics around the state.

Annually, FAPTP offers PRIDE Pre-service training 22 times around the state, in addition to five PRIDE in-service programs:

- Foundation for Meeting the Developmental Needs of Children at Risk
- Using Discipline to Protect, Nurture and Meet Developmental Needs
- Addressing Developmental Issues Related to Sexuality
- Responding to Signs and Symptoms of Sexual abuse
- Promoting Permanency outcomes.

We are planning for this same level of service in 2004. Also, during 2004 a curriculum for pre-adoptive parents was developed. This will be offered to all parents adopting through the Department.

Child Welfare Training Collaborative

This collaborative works to promote trainings with our partner departments on issues of mutual interest and need for child welfare, Youth justice, mental health, special education, adult corrections, and public assistance (currently PATH).

Abenaki Partnership

SRS's third Title IV-E partnership is focused in the northwest part of the state (Franklin County), where the Abenaki cultural center is located. The contract provides an unusual opportunity for a state child welfare agency to work collaboratively with a tribe that is not federally recognized. This project is described more fully on page 17.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

As parts of our Program Improvement Plan, the department has developed a formalized internal quality assurance program. In addition, the department has engaged in program improvement in Title IV-E compliance. Both PIPs were completed in March 2004. The following components are now in place:

- ⊕ Outcomes and management reports are produced quarterly, allowing analysis of both case level and aggregate data.
- ⊕ Training on use of these reports to improve practice and outcomes is available to managers and supervisors.
- ⊕ We have developed a district review process that parallels the Child and Family Review Process, with district self-assessment, on-site review involving SRS staff and community partners, and the development of a 2-year district plan focused on improving outcomes. Seven reviews were conducted during FY '04. Five are planned for FY '05, with a tailored approach planned for the Burlington district.
- ⊕ We have centralized Title IV-E eligibility determination and review, and have successfully worked with the courts to substantially improve compliance with the required findings.
- ⊕ We completed a 100% review of the Title IV-E foster care caseload, in accordance with our Title IV-E program improvement plan. We anticipate a secondary audit of the foster care program in spring of 2005.
- ⊕ A complete review of the adoption subsidy caseload will be conducted in FY '05 – FY '06.
- ⊕ We regularly audit Medicaid-funded programs for compliance with required practices and procedures. Our Medicaid auditor regularly collaborates with our Residential Licensing Unit in appraising the quality of residential care in the state.

TRENDS IN CHILD WELFARE AND YOUTH JUSTICE

Demographic Trends

The United States Census Bureau¹ provides the following Quick Facts about Vermont's population, based on the 2000 census.

People Quick Facts	Vermont	USA
Population, 2002 estimate	616,592	288,368,698
Population, percent change, April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2002	1.3%	2.5%
Population, percent change, 1990 to 2000	8.2%	13.1%
Persons under 5 years old, percent, 2000	5.6%	6.8%
Persons under 18 years old, percent, 2000	24.2%	25.7%
White persons, percent, 2000 (a)	96.8%	75.1%
Black or African American persons, percent, 2000 (a)	0.5%	12.3%
American Indian and Alaska Native persons, percent, 2000 (a)	0.4%	0.9%
Asian persons, percent, 2000 (a)	0.9%	3.6%

¹ <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/50000.html>

People Quick Facts	Vermont	USA
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, percent, 2000 (a)	less than .1%	0.1%
Persons reporting some other race, percent, 2000 (a)	0.2%	5.5%
Persons reporting two or more races, percent, 2000	1.2%	2.4%
Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin, percent, 2000 (b)	0.9%	12.5%
White persons, not of Hispanic/Latino origin, percent, 2000	96.2%	69.1%
Language other than English spoken at home, pct age 5+, 2000	5.9%	17.9%
Median household income, 1999	\$40,856	\$41,994
Per capita money income, 1999	\$20,625	\$21,587
Persons below poverty, percent, 1999	9.4%	12.4%
Persons per square mile, 2000	65.8	79.6

- ⊖ Vermont’s population is growing more slowly than the nation.
- ⊖ Vermont is substantially less racially diverse than the nation.
- ⊖ Vermonters are far more likely to speak English at home.
- ⊖ Median income is slightly low, but the percent living in poverty is lower.
- ⊖ Vermont’s population is less dense – essentially, we are a rural state.

The Agency of Human Services publishes an annual report entitled *The Social Well-Being of Vermonters*. The 2004 edition compiles data from a number of sources.

	Vermont	Nation
Births to women who received first trimester prenatal care	89.1%	83.7%
Births to women who received late or no prenatal care	1.6%	3.6%
Women smoking during pregnancy	20.1%	11.4%
Low birth weight babies	6.4%	7.8%
Families receiving “new baby” visits	100%	Not avail.
Two year olds fully immunized	87%	Not avail.
Pupil-teacher ratio	12.1 to 1	16.0 to 1
Children living in poverty	12%	16%

	Vermont	Nation
Births to single mothers	31.8%	34.0%
Child support enforcement cases with collections	64.7%	48.7%
Parentage established for out-of-wedlock child support	94%	64%
Children with health insurance	95%	87%
Children abused per 10,000 children	240	419
Children in out-of-home care per 10,000 children	93.5	70.7
Teen (age 15-19) births per 1000 young women	23.6	43.0
New families at risk (1 st births to unmarried women under 20 with less than a high school education)	7.8%	11.0%
Violent crimes per 100,000 people	1106	495
Incarcerations per 100,000 people	214	476
Average monthly TANF benefit per family	\$524	\$357
Percent of population with health insurance	91.6%	86.0%

For most, but not all indicators, Vermont is fortunately to be faring better than the nation generally.

In addition, information from the United States Census Bureau's web page at <http://www.census.gov/main/www/cen2000.html> provides the following additional information about Vermont as compared to the nation:

	VT	US
Percent of population age 30 and older who are grandparents residing with grandchildren.	1.5%	3.6%
Percent of these grandparents who are responsible for the care of their grandchildren	36.3%	42%
% of all children who are adopted	3.0%	2.5%
% of all children who are stepchildren	4.7%	5.1%
Percent of "coupled households"	60.0%	56.9%
Percent of "coupled households with unmarried couples (with or without children)	12.5%	9.1%
Percent of "couples households" with unmarried couples of same gender	1.3%	1.0%
Percent of children who are the son or daughter of the householder	94.7%	90%
Percent of children who are the grandchild of the householder	2.6%	6.1%
Percent of children who are another relative of the householder	.6%	2.0%
Percent of children who are the foster child of the householder	.6%	.4%
Percent of children living in poverty	12.5%	17.5%
Percent receiving state or local assistance	8.3%	7.4%

Trends in Child Abuse and Neglect

Trends in child abuse reporting and substantiated are so follows:

	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	2001	2002	2003
Total Accepted Reports	2750	2386	2259	1883	2604	2931	3189	2779
Total Substantiated Reports	1430	1098	1007	815	998	957	1152	941
Percent Substantiated	52%	46%	45%	43%	38%	33%	36%	34%

For the first time in several years, the number of overall accepted reports was down, as were the number of substantiated reports. The substantiation rate continues to be substantially lower than it was in the 1990s.

The following chart shows trends for different types of abuse and neglect. The percent of victims in each sub-category has remained stable for the last several years. The Risk of Harm category remains the highest, showing the continued impact of a 1999 policy change that expanded our role in preventing abuse to children at high risk due to parental substance abuse and other factors. This is closely followed by sexual abuse, no doubt due to the department's role in investigating sexual abuse by out of home, as well as in home perpetrators.

		1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	2001	2002	2003
Physical	Number Victims	426	327	282	235	258	229	274	226
	Percent of All Victims	28%	28%	27%	26%	23%	19%	19%	20%
Sexual	Number Victims	811	583	538	371	471	424	508	411
	Percent of All Victims	54%	50%	51%	42%	43%	36%	36%	36%
Risk of Harm	Number Victims	326	257	240	286	396	415	531	427
	Percent of All Victims	22%	22%	23%	32%	36%	37%	37%	37%
Neglect	Number Victims	110	108	95	86	85	93	112	86
	Percent of All Victims	7%	9%	9%	10%	8%	8%	8%	7%

Changes in Custody Caseload

The following tables present trend information for children in custody, and for young adults formerly in custody who are over 18, but still completing their secondary education.

12/31/01		Age Group				
Type		0-5	6-11	12-17	18+	Total
Abuse/Neglect	Number	236	208	380	80	904
	Percent	24.86%	23.40%	42.74%	9.00%	100.00%
Delinquent	Number		53	274	47	374
	Percent	0.00%	13.80%	71.35%	12.24%	100.00%
Child Behavior CHINS(C)	Number		30	197	14	241
	Percent	0.00%	12.20%	80.08%	5.69%	100.00%
Total Number		236	291	851	141	1519
Total Percent		15.54%	19.16%	56.02%	9.28%	100.00%

12/31/02		Age Group				
Type		0-5	6-11	12-17	18+	Total
Abuse/Neglect	Number	304	289	348	28	969
	Percent	31.37%	29.82%	35.91%	2.89%	100.00%
Delinquent	Number		2	319	33	354
	Percent	0.00%	0.56%	90.11%	9.32%	100.00%
Child Behavior CHINS(C)	Number		17	213	7	237
	Percent	0.00%	7.17%	89.87%	2.95%	100.00%
Total Number		304	308	880	68	1560
Total Percent		19.49%	19.74%	56.41%	4.36%	100.00%

12/31/03		Age Group				
Type		0-5	6-11	12-17	18+	Total
Abuse/Neglect	Number	280	227	378	21	906
	Percent	30.91%	25.06%	41.72%	2.32%	100.00%
Delinquent	Number			332	19	351
	Percent	0.00%	0.00%	94.59%	5.41%	100.00%
Child Behavior CHINS(C)	Number		6	215	11	232
	Percent	0.00%	2.59%	92.67%	4.74%	100.00%
Voluntary	Number	1	2			3
	Percent	33.33%	66.67%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Total Number		281	235	925	51	1492
Total Percent		18.83%	15.75%	62.00%	3.42%	100.00%

Closer examination of the trends and patterns reveals:

- ✦ SRS experienced a temporary growth in the number of children in custody in 2002. The growth was most dramatic for abused and neglected children under the age of 12.
- ✦ In the three years, pre-school children represented an average of 18% of the population. In contrast, the population of children and youth at least 12 years old represented an average of 63% of the total custody population. The remainder, 42% are between the ages of 6 and 11.
- ✦ Of abused and neglected children in custody, the greatest percent are age 12 or older (42%). Adolescents are more likely to be in custody due to abuse/neglect than any other reason. Delinquency is the second most common entry reason, at 35%. Less than 25 % of adolescents are in custody for reasons related to child behavior (CHINS(C)).

Trends in Social Worker Workload

Social Worker caseload has remained remarkably stable over several years, with an average of 18 cases per social worker. However, workers' perception of their workload has not remained the same. The change in the nature of the caseload, as discussed above, along with a shortage of placement resources available to meet the needs of these troubled youth, means that the demands of the total caseload exceeds social workers' ability to comfortably manage it.

An additional challenge we face is the variation of caseload from district to district, from a high of 22 cases per social worker to a low of 13 cases. In a system with low social worker turnover, it is difficult to move positions where needed to meet workload demands. We have not been successful for some years in obtaining additional staff resources.

Outcome Trends

Safety

Following our on-site Child and Family Review in May 2001, we began to track achievement of outcome data on a quarterly basis, using definitions and methodologies consistent with the federal definitions and methodologies for computing the national standards. We did make one change by calculating a rate of *safety* rather than a rate of *repeat maltreatment*, as safety is what we strive to achieve. Safety is defined as the percent of children with substantiated abuse/neglect safe from another report resulting in substantiation in the following 183 days. In our Program Improvement Plan, we set the goal of continuing to meet the national standard of 93.9%. We have been successful in achieving that goal for all but one of the 10 available quarters, with an average for all quarters of 94.7% of children safe.

Vermont has been tracking the safety outcome quarterly for the last two years, as a way to measure progress towards the goals of our Program Improvement Plan. The quarterly rate of safety for 2002 and 2003, as compared to the national standard as revised in 2001, is as follows:

	Safety	Nat'l Std Met (93.9%)
Jul-Sep 01	93.8%	No
Oct-Dec 01	94.6%	Yes
Jan-Mar 02	95.6%	Yes
Apr-Jun 02	93.9%	Yes
Jul-Sep 02	96.3%	Yes
Oct-Dec 02	93.0%	Yes
Jan-Mar 03	94.8%	Yes
Apr-Jun 03	96.4%	Yes
Jul-Sep 03	94.4%	Yes
Oct-Dec 03	94.6%	Yes
Jan-Mar 04	92.4%	No

Generally, over the last two years, we have been successful over time in meeting the national standard for safety.

In 2003, safety for maltreated children varied by the type of first maltreatment incident, as follows:

Type of Abuse	Rate of Safety
Risk of Sexual Abuse	97.67%
Physical	96.38%
Sexual	95.83%
Risk of Harm	93.66%
Neglect	92.73%
Emotional Maltreatment	92.31%

For 2003, we have taken a closer look at the 66 children who experienced a second incident of substantiated maltreatment within 6 months of the first substantiated report, to determine the nature of the second maltreatment.

		Type of Repeat Maltreatment					
1 st Substantiated Report		Neglect	Physical	Risk of Harm	Risk of Sexual Abuse	Sexual Abuse	Total
Emotional Maltreatment	Number					1	
	Percent	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Neglect	Number		1	2		1	4
	Percent	0.00%	25.00%	50.00%	0.00%	25.00%	100.00%
Physical Abuse	Number	1	5	2		3	11
	Percent	9.09%	45.45%	18.18%	0.00%	27.27%	100.00%
Risk of Harm	Number	1	2	23		3	29
	Percent	3.45%	6.90%	79.31%	0.00%	10.34%	100.00%
Risk of Sexual Abuse	Number					1	
	Percent	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Sexual Abuse	Number	3	3	2	2	10	20
	Percent	15.00%	15.00%	10.00%	10.00%	50.00%	100.00%
Total Number		5	11	29	2	19	66
Total Percent		7.58%	16.67%	43.94%	3.03%	28.79%	100.00%

✦ As noted above, the most likely children to experience repeat maltreatment are children who are at “risk of harm”. This category of maltreatment is used when parents’ behavior or judgment placed children at substantial risk of physical harm, but no harm has actually occurred. Substantiated risk of harm has continued to rise over the last several years, as shown on page 41, particularly as the use of heroin and others drugs has risen in the state. 43% of children experiencing repeat maltreatment had a first maltreatment that was risk of harm.

✦ Of the children initially at risk of harm, nearly 80% of the repeat maltreatment was also risk of harm.

⊖ 30% of children with repeat maltreatment were initial victims of sexual abuse.

✦ Children who were sexually abused are as likely to experience repeat maltreatment of another type as they are to experience a second incident of sexual abuse.

All age groups are represented among children who experience repeat maltreatment:

Age Grp		Type of Repeat Maltreatment					Total
		Neglect	Physical	Risk of Harm	Risk of Sexual Abuse	Sexual	
0-5	Number		2	12	1	10	25
	Percent	0.00%	8.00%	48.00%	4.00%	40.00%	100.00%
6-11	Number	4	5	10		7	26
	Percent	15.38%	19.23%	38.46%	0.00%	26.92%	100.00%
12-17	Number	1	4	7	1	2	15
	Percent	6.67%	26.67%	46.67%	6.67%	13.33%	100.00%
Total Number		5	11	29	2	19	66
Total Percent		7.58%	16.67%	43.94%	3.03%	28.79%	100.00%

Safety of Children in Out-of-Home Care

The incidence of abuse or neglect of children in custody by their substitute care provider is very low in Vermont. In 2000, we experienced several substantiations of different children by a single provider, which made our rate high for that year.

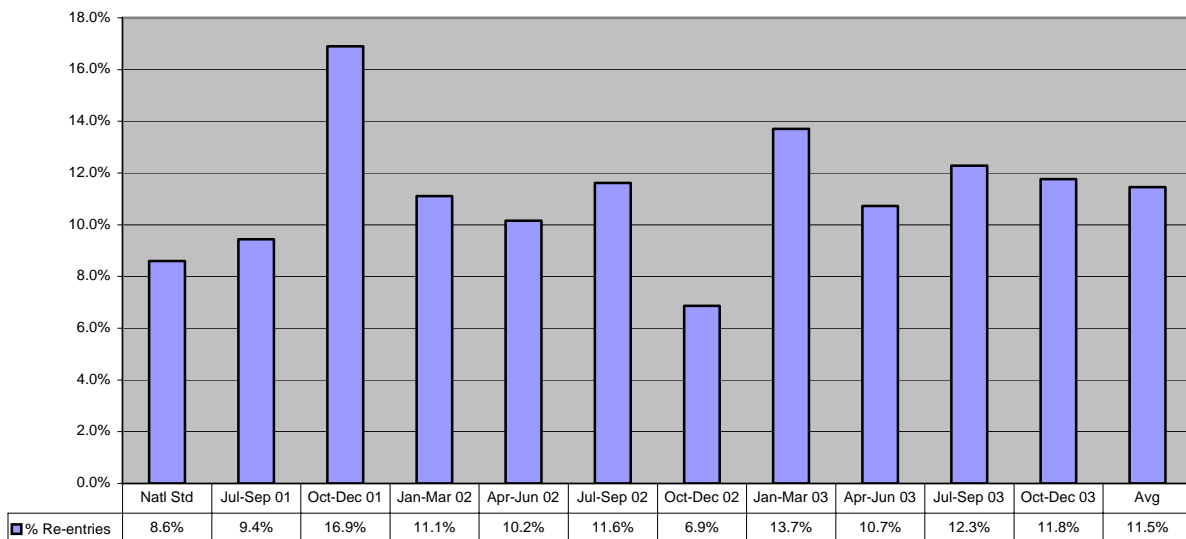
Year	Rate	National Std
		.57%
2000	.58%	No
2001	.33%	Yes
2002	.05%	Yes
2003	.13%	Yes

Re-entry of Children and Youth to Out-of-Home Care

At the time of our last Child and Family Services Review, the year for evaluating Vermont's performance against the national standard was 1999. At that time, we did meet the national standard. Thus, we did not engage in program improvement in this area.

During the ten quarters we have been tracking performance in this area, we have not performed well in relation to the national standard of 8.6% of less. As shown on the next page, we have achieved the national standard for only one quarter, with an average performance of 11.5%. Performance from quarter to quarter has been quite volatile, most likely due to the small numbers involved.

% of Entering Children and Youth Who Exited Substitute Care Within Previous 12 Months
National Standard = <8.6%



On an annual basis, Vermont's performance against the national standard is as follows:

Year	Rate	Rate of Re-entries National Std <8.6%
2000	10.7%	No
2001	12.8%	Yes
2002	10.0%	Yes
2003	12.6%	Yes

We have analyzed our re-entry rate further for Calendar Year 2003, and found that the rate of re-entry varies significantly by age group, with the rate for children entering in the pre-school years being much closer to the national standard, at 9.9%.

Age at Entry	2003 Re-entrants	New Entrant	Re-entrant	Grand Total
0-5	Number	182	20	202
	Percent	90.10%	9.90%	100.00%
6-11	Number	160	22	182
	Percent	87.91%	12.09%	100.00%
12-17	Number	365	55	420
	Percent	86.90%	13.10%	100.00%
Total Number		707	97	804
Total Percent		87.94%	12.06%	100.00%

Looking more closely at the children who re-entered during the pre-school years, we find the following:

Age at Re-entry 0-5	2003	Type of Re-entry		
Previous Entry Type		Abuse/Neglect (court-ordered)	Voluntary Agreement	Total
Abuse/Neglect (court-ordered)	Number	15		15
	Percent	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Voluntary	Number	3	2	5
	Percent	60.00%	40.00%	100.00%
Total Number		18	2	20
Total Percent		90.00%	10.00%	100.00%

Analysis of case-level data for the 15 preschool children who experience two-court ordered entries, 5 of those children's cases were dismissed by the court against SRS recommendation. These 5 cases were covered by four different districts and four different courts.

The following chart shows the same information for children whose age at re-entry was between the age of 6 and 11 years.

Age at Re-entry 6-11	2003	Type of Re-entry			
Previous Entry Type		Abuse/Neglect	Child Behavior	Voluntary Agreement	Total
Abuse/Neglect	Number	17			17
	Percent	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Child Behavior	Number		4		4
	Percent	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Voluntary	Number			1	1
	Percent	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Total Number		17	4	1	22
Total Percent		77.27%	18.18%	4.55%	100.00%

And lastly, the following shows re-entries of youth age 12 and older.

Age at Re-entry 12-17	2003	Type of Re-entry			
Previous Entry Type		Abuse/Neglect	Delinquency	Child Behavior	Total
Abuse/Neglect	Number	6		3	9
	Percent	66.67%	0.00%	33.33%	100.00%
Delinquency	Number	1	26		27
	Percent	3.70%	96.30%	0.00%	100.00%
Child Behavior	Number	4	6	9	19
	Percent	21.05%	31.58%	47.37%	100.00%
Total Number		11	32	12	55
Total Percent		20.00%	58.18%	21.82%	100.00%

Of the 55 re-entrants, over half (33) would not be classified as a re-entrants in a system that did not serve juvenile delinquents. These include youth whose first entry, or their second entry was due to delinquent behavior. Eliminating these children from the rate calculation yields a re-entry rate for adolescents of 5.6%, well below the national standard.

Nevertheless, SRS is certainly responsible for putting a plan in place that maximizes the likelihood of a successful and lasting reunification, no matter what brought the family to our attention.

Placement Stability

As part of our Program Improvement Plan, we conducted a detailed analysis of placement stability. This report was submitted to the Regional Office in May 2004. The conclusions of that analysis were:

- ⊖ In spite of substantial progress made on placement stability during the period of our Program Improvement Plan (4/1/2002 – 3/31/2004), children still move too much.
- ⊖ Presently, the lack of a consistent and comprehensive approach to assessment of parents and children hampers analysis of factors that lead to stability and instability. Several initiatives planned will be helpful in this regard:
 - A Risk Assessment Tool was implemented in April 2003. With a year's worth of data, we will be able to aggregate information about the risks that parental characteristics and behaviors that are associated with repeat maltreatment. A data extract has been submitted to our contractors and that report will be available Summer 2004.
 - In Phase II of our Structured Decision-making project, we will implement a Child Functional Survey that will provide consistent information about the functioning of children in placement. This is planned for implementation by 10/1/2004.
 - A committee has been working on an approach to assessment of all children who enter custody; that group will present its recommendations in Summer 2004.
- ⊖ More detailed analysis of moves caused by Provider Issues and Provider Request will be included as part of our Child and Family Services Plan. In particular, we are interested in training and support approaches that may reduce the number of moves caused for these reasons.

Our data analysis over the last two years has focused on the PIP measure of stability during the first year of placement. To further our understanding of placement stability data, we have aggregated data for 2003. Clearly, as shown in the following chart, placement stability is highly correlated with the total length of time spent in out of home care:

		# Placements - 2003				
Yrs in Care		1-2	3-5	6-10	11+	Total
<1	Number	623	181	23		827
	Percent	5.33%	21.89%	2.78%	0.00%	100.00%
1-2	Number	258	221	72	6	557
	Percent	46.32%	39.68%	12.93%	1.08%	100.00%
2-3	Number	130	122	88	12	352
	Percent	36.93%	34.66%	25.00%	3.41%	100.00%
3+	Number	88	127	147	112	474
	Percent	18.57%	26.79%	31.01%	23.63%	100.00%
Total Number		1099	651	330	130	2210
Total Percent		49.73%	29.46%	14.93%	5.88%	100.00%

Looking at just the most stable children, with 1-2 placements, the correlation between time in care and placement stability holds for all age groups. Age of child is also a very influential factor in placement stability.

		Children with 1-2 Placements: 2003		
Yrs in Care		Age 0-5	Age 6-11	Age 12-11
<1	Number	169	142	312
	Percent	85.35%	78.02%	69.80%
1-2	Number	106	63	89
	Percent	64.24%	53.39%	32.48%
2-3	Number	72	34	24
	Percent	61.02%	39.53%	16.22%
3+	Number	34	33	21
	Percent	40.00%	15.35%	12.07%
Total Number	381	272	272	446
Total Percent	67.31%	45.26%	45.26%	42.76%

Vermont's performance against the national standard for placement stability for the last several years is as follows:

Children with 1-2 Placements in the First 12 Months of Out-of-Home Placement		
Year	Rate	National Std 86.7%
2000	58.9%	Not met
2001	68.9	Not met
2002	63.8%	Not met
2003	75.3% ²	Not met

We hope to be able to sustain the level of improvement shown in 2003.

² Department staff worked closely in early 2004 with John Hargrove of the ACF data team on a close comparison of the department's outcome data with AFCARS data. 2003 AFCARS files were re-submitted as a result. 2003 placement stability was computed on the basis of these revised files.

Timely Reunification

Vermont's performance against the national standard for the past several years is as follows:

Percent of Reunified Children Who are Reunified in 12 Months		
Year	Rate	National Std 76.2%
2000	62.5%	Not met
2001	62.6%	Not met
2002	65.6%	Not met
2003	72.4%	Not met

Again, although we have show improvement, we are not yet meeting the national standard. Performance varies with age group. For preschool children, we are in fact meeting the national standard, with 80% of those reunified children in that age group achieving reunification within 12 months. The level of performance for school age children and teens is quite similar, at 71% and 70%.

		Months to Reunification - 2003					
Age at Entry		0-12	12-24	24-26	24-36	36+	Total
0-5	Number	56	12		2		70
	Percent	80.00%	17.14%	0.00%	2.86%	0.00%	100.00%
6-11	Number	49	11	2		7	69
	Percent	71.01%	15.94%	2.90%	0.00%	10.14%	100.00%
12-17	Number	150	37	8	11	7	213
	Percent	70.42%	17.37%	3.76%	5.16%	3.29%	100.00%
Total Number		255	60	10	13	14	352
Total Percent		72.44%	17.05%	2.84%	3.69%	3.98%	100.00%

Taking a closer look at the teens in custody reveals that we do meet the national standard for abuse and neglected teens. Teens that enter out of home placement due to their own behavior, which may include delinquency, achieve reunification in a less timely fashion. In particular, non-delinquent child behavior problems are associated with the longest lengths of stays with nearly 17% staying two or more years.

Age 12-17		Months to Reunification - 2003					
Reason for Custody		0-12	12-24	24-26	24-36	36+	Total
Abuse/Neglect	Number	30	5	1		1	37
	Percent	81.08%	13.51%	2.70%	0.00%	2.70%	100.00%
Delinquency	Number	80	24	4	4	3	115
	Percent	69.57%	20.87%	3.48%	3.48%	2.61%	100.00%
Child Behavior	Number	38	8	3	7	3	59
	Percent	64.41%	13.56%	5.08%	11.86%	5.08%	100.00%
Voluntary	Number	2					2
	Percent	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Total Number		150	37	8	11	7	213
Total Percent		70.42%	17.37%	3.76%	5.16%	3.29%	100.00%

Looking at all of the data on this outcome indicates that although we do not meet the national standard, the vast majority of reunifications do occur within 2 years.

Timely Adoption

Vermont's rate of finalizing adoptions within two years of entry for the last several years is as follows:

Adoption Finalizations Occurring within Two Years of Entry		
Year	Rate	National Std 32.0%
2000	16.5%	Not met
2001	16.5%	Not met
2002	22.7%	Not met
2003	19.76%	Not met

An important context for this information is that with the assistance of Project Family, we are finalizing more adoptions than ever before (see page 22).

		Months from Entry to Finalized Adoption - 2003						
Age at Entry		0-12	12-24	24+	24-26	24-36	36+	Total
0-5	Number	3	25	31	31	6	22	118
	Percent	2.54%	21.19%	26.27%	26.27%	5.08%	18.64%	100.00%
6-11	Number		2	12	11	6	7	38
	Percent	0.00%	5.26%	31.58%	28.95%	15.79%	18.42%	100.00%
12-17	Number		3	3	2		3	11
	Percent	0.00%	27.27%	27.27%	18.18%	0.00%	27.27%	100.00%
Total Number		3	30	46	44	12	32	167
Total Percent		1.80%	17.96%	27.54%	26.35%	7.19%	19.16%	100.00%

PLANNING PROCESS

The process for developing this Child and Family Services plan has involved a number of different activities, in three phases:

Phase 1 took place early in 2004 and consisted of the following activities:

- ⊕ Compilation of demographic and outcome data.
- ⊕ Review of district review findings and themes.
- ⊕ Review of PIP status
- ⊕ Design of input process for staff and stakeholders.

Phase 2 was the input process, taking place in April and May 2004. We solicited input specifically on strategies that might work to improve practice in areas of need identified in Phase 1. We gathered input from the following groups.

- ⊕ Field staff, in four regional and one central office meetings;
- ⊕ Adoption consortium, through focus group;
- ⊕ Youth in custody, through surveys;
- ⊕ Foster and adoptive parents, at a Vermont Foster and Adoptive Parent Network meeting;
- ⊕ Permanency Planning Implementation Committee (court improvement project steering committee) at their quarterly meeting;
- ⊕ SRS investigative social workers through a survey;
- ⊕ Chittenden county Consumer Advisory Board at their regular meeting;
- ⊕ SRS Contracted Case Reviewers, in individual phone conversations.

Phase 3, occurring in late May and June 2004 focused on review of input and final formulation of goals and strategies. This was done through meetings with:

- ✦ All division managers at their late May meeting;
- ✦ The Division Systems Team (central office managers) at their 6/8/04 meeting.
- ⊕ CAPTA Advisory Board meeting held on 6/16/04.

The goals and strategies presented in this plan are the result of activities in these three phases.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND BENCHMARKS

The following pages summarize our goals and objectives for our five-year plan, including our CAPTA plan. Benchmarks are established primarily for the first two years of the plan, as we anticipate that we will be writing another CFSR Program Improvement Plan at the end of two years. Progress towards goals will be evaluated yearly, and new benchmarks established as appropriate.

Outcome: Safety

Other issues – timeliness of investigations

Goal: Promote excellence of practice by centralizing management of child maltreatment assessments.			S1
Action Step	Person/Unit Responsible	By When	Completion Date
Designate Child Safety Manager to oversee planning and implementation.	Commissioner	April 2004	April 2004
Develop work plan.	Child Safety Manager	December 2004	
Implement plan.	Child Safety Manager	July 2005	

Goal: Promote excellence of practice by centralizing the child abuse and neglect intake function.			S2
Action Step	Person/Unit Responsible	By When	Completion Date
Designate Child Safety Manager to oversee planning and implementation.	Commissioner	April 2004	April 2004
Form Advisory Committee to ensure participation of a variety of stakeholders in the planning process.	Child Safety Manager	June 2004	
Develop work plan.	Child Safety Manager	December 2004	
Implement plan.	Child Safety Manager	October 2005	

Goal: Advocate for an updated state child protection statute.			S3
Action Step	Person/Unit Responsible	By When	Completion Date
Meet with stakeholder groups to obtain feedback on draft, address concerns, and build consensus	General Counsel	October 2004	
Obtain sponsors	General Counsel	November 2004	
Submit draft bill to Legislative Counsel for formatting as legislative bill	General Counsel	December 2004	
Advocate for passage of bill	Les Birnbaum	Legislative Session 2004-5	

Goal: Ensure effective protocols for reporting of suspected child abuse by school personnel who are mandated reporters.

S4

Action Step	Person/Unit Responsible	By When	Completion Date
Assign Title IV-E MSW student a summer project focused on review of reporting protocols for all school supervisory unions.	Special Investigations (SIU) Chief	May 2004	May 2004
In collaboration with Department of Education, collect and review reporting protocols from the 60 supervisory unions around the state	MSW Student	July 2004	
Work with supervisory unions to revise protocols as necessary, using model protocol developed by KidSafe Collaborative as a guide.	SIU Chief/MSW Intern	September 2005	

Goal: Carry out plan, as presented to General Assembly in January 2004, to provide update and ongoing training for mandated reporters using curriculum developed in 2003 by SRS and the KidSafe Collaborative.			S5
Action Step	Person/Unit Responsible	By When	Completion Date
Continue to identify and train SRS staff to provide training locally. (18 staff have already been trained as of June 2004.)	SIU Chief	Ongoing	
Widely distribute training materials to schools and other mandated reporter groups	SIU Chief	Ongoing	
Develop system to log training activities locally and centrally to ensure that mandated reporter groups receive training at recommended intervals.	SIU Chief	October 2004	

Goal: Conduct review of Risk of Harm substantiations to identify contributing factors.			S6
Action Step	Person/Unit Responsible	By When	Completion Date
Assign Quality Assurance Unit to conduct review of a sample of cases to identify the specific risks that contributed to substantiations for the most recent 12-month period.	Policy and Planning Chief	June 2004	
Develop protocol for review of cases.	Quality Assurance Unit	July 2004	
Conduct review.	Quality Assurance Unit	October 2004	
Compile report.	Quality Assurance Unit	November 2004	
Convene practice forum(s) to discuss findings and the implications for investigative practice.	Quality Assurance Unit	May 2005	

Goal: Design approach to Quality Assurance reviews for intake and investigations.			S7
Action Step	Person/Unit Responsible	By When	Completion Date
Assign Quality Assurance Unit to work with Child Safety Manager on a plan to promote continuous quality improvement for intake and investigation staff.	Policy and Planning Chief	July 2005	
Develop recommendations	Quality Assurance Unit and Child Safety Manager	November 2005	
Implement Plan	Quality Assurance Unit and Child Safety Unit	January 2006 and ongoing	

Outcome: Permanency

Goal: Promote practice that will result in all youth leaving SRS custody in late adolescence having a meaningful, ongoing relationships with one or more adults who will provide personal support into adulthood.			P1-A
Action Step	Person/Unit Responsible	By When	Completion Date
Craft new contract for Chafee Foster Care Independence Program to: (1) Change the name of Transitional Services Coordinators to Youth Development Coordinators to emphasize building of developmental assets for youth in program.	State Youth Development Coordinator	July 2004	
Provide training for Youth Development Coordinators on permanent connections methodology.	State Youth Development Coordinator	December 2004	
Implement permanent connections project in several districts	Adoption Supervisor	June 2005	
Conduct youth development training developed by the Edmund S. Muskie School for youth development coordinators.	State Youth Development Coordinator	January 2005	
Maximize youth participation in Youth Development Transition Programs by tracking utilization and targeting low number districts.	State Youth Development Coordinator	June 2006- June 2007	
Amend referral lists to include children age 15 and older, to promote earlier involvement of youth in custody with Youth Development Workers.	DP&E	August 2004	
Amend case plan to begin transitioning planning at age 15.	State Youth Development Coordinator /Quality Assurance Coordinator	March 2005	

Goal: Promote practice that will result in all youth leaving SRS custody in late adolescence having a meaningful, ongoing relationships with one or more adults who will provide personal support into adulthood.

P1-B

Action Step	Person/Unit Responsible	By When	Completion Date
Identify at least social workers in at least 50% of the districts to work on an innovative practice project to develop permanent connections for youth in care.	Adoption Supervisor	Done	
Provide training	Adoption Supervisor	June 2004	
Implement project in several districts	Adoption Supervisor	June 2004- June 2005	
Evaluate pilot and plan for expansion of successful strategies	Adoption Supervisor	June 2005- June 2006	

Goal: Promote practice that will result in all youth leaving SRS custody in late adolescence having a meaningful, ongoing relationships with one or more adults who will provide personal support into adulthood.			P1-C
Action Step	Person/Unit Responsible	By When	Completion Date
Collaborate with Partners in Service Coordinator on a strategy to engage church and synagogue members in mentoring adolescents in care.	State Youth Development Coordinator	October 2004	
Partner in all Lifelong Family project efforts.	State Youth Development Coordinator/PINS Coordinator	June 2005	

Goal: Increase the number of resource families available to care for children in custody (foster and adoptive families) through improved recruitment and retention.			P2A
Action Step	Person/Unit Responsible	By When	Completion Date
Design process that allows therapeutic foster care agencies to become involved in cases at the time parents' rights are terminated.	Adoption Chief	September 2004	
Implement process.	Adoption Chief	October 2004	
Design and implement a process that ensures permanency needs are assessed and addressed for all children in the first 90 days of custody.	Adoption Chief & Deputy Commissioner for Child Welfare and Youth Justice	July 2005	

Goal: Increase the number of resource families available to care for children in custody (foster and adoptive families) through improved recruitment and retention.			P2B
Action Step	Person/Unit Responsible	By When	Completion Date
Hold Learning Session 3 for Breakthrough Series focused on resource family recruitment and retention.	Foster Care Liaison	October 2004	
Identify successful strategies tested in districts and spread statewide.	Foster Care Liaison	Ongoing	
Hold Learning Session 4 for Breakthrough Series focused on resource family recruitment and retention.	Foster Care Liaison	February 2005	
Develop a unified plan to coordinate foster care and adoption recruitment.	Foster Care Liaison and Adoption Recruitment Specialist	September 2005	

Goal: Ensure that families who have adopted children from SRS receive a timely, respectful response when they need post-adoption assistance			P3
Action Step	Person/Unit Responsible	By When	Completion Date
Work with Act 264 Advisory Board to develop protocols to hold Act 264 Team meetings for all children in SRS custody before they are adopted, to ensure a safety net for the child and family.	Adoption Chief	June 2005	
Develop policy and protocols with SRS district offices and the adoption unit that will ensure that this agency gives adoptive parents a consistent, positive and helpful message when they come back to us for assistance.	Adoption Chief & Deputy Commissioner for Child Welfare and Youth Justice	July 2005	
Develop informational materials for adoptive parents with regular distribution <i>before</i> families hit trouble spots.	Adoption Chief	September 2005	

Goal: Promote practice that will ensure the early identification and location of fathers and father's families as possible resources for children in custody.			P4
Action Step	Person/Unit Responsible	By When	Completion Date
Expand the role of the Child Benefits Unit to include review of all cases in which two parents are not identified in SSMIS.	Child Benefits Unit Supervisor	July 2004	
Ensure that the Child Benefits Unit receives and acts on regular reports about status of parent identification and location	Child Benefits Unit Supervisor	September 2004	
Heighten awareness of policy requiring focus on parent identification and location, and the benefits of involving fathers in the lives of their children.	Child Welfare Director	January 2005	

Goal: Promote practice and training that will increase placement stability			P5
Action Step	Person/Unit Responsible	By When	Completion Date
Identify cases where children/youth moved due to provider issues and provider reasons.	Quality Assurance Coordinator	January 2005	
Conduct cases review and/or necessary interviews to gain an understanding of the issues leading to these moves.	Quality Assurance Coordinator	March 2005	
Design training and/or support approaches to address identified move issues.	Quality Assurance Coordinator/Foster Care Specialist	June 2005	
Implement training and/or support approaches.	System of Care Manager	September 2005	
Continue to track these moves to see if strategies are successful.	Quality Assurance Coordinator	Ongoing	
Make necessary adjustments if needed.	Quality Assurance Coordinator	March 2006	

Outcome: Well-being

Goal: Improve assessment capacity for children in custody and their families by implementing Stage II of Structured Decision-making Tools – Family Strengths and Needs Assessment, Risk Re-Assessment, Child Functional Survey and Reunification Assessment.			WB1
Action Step	Person/Unit Responsible	By When	Completion Date
Complete automation of family strengths and need survey.	Information Technology (IT) Manager/Policy and Planning Chief	September 2004	
Complete automation of child functional survey.	Information Technology (IT) Manager/Policy and Planning Chief	September 2004	
Complete automation of risk re-assessment.	Information Technology (IT) Manager/Policy and Planning Chief	October 2004	
Complete automation of reunification assessment.	Information Technology (IT) Manager/Policy and Planning Chief	October 2004	
Complete staff training.	Policy and Planning Chief	December 2004	
Implement Tools	Information Technology (IT) Manager/Policy and Planning Chief	January 2005	

Goal: Improve the timeliness of the completion of initial case plans.			WB2
Action Step	Person/Unit Responsible	By When	Completion Date
Designate Quality Assurance Unit to work with district staff to review and revise format of initial case plans for custody and non-custody cases.	Policy and Planning Chief	July 2004	
Identify federal requirements that must be taken into consideration.	Quality Assurance Coordinator	July 2004	
Convene work group.	Quality Assurance Coordinator	July 2004	
Complete draft plans for review by others.	Quality Assurance Coordinator	October 2004	
Solicit comments by staff and stakeholders	Quality Assurance Coordinator	January 2005	
Implement new format(s).	Policy and Planning Chief	March 2005	

Goal: Ensure the meaningful involvement of children, mothers, fathers and resource families in development of initial and ongoing case plans and in case plan reviews.

WB3

Action Step	Person/Unit Responsible	By When	Completion Date
Meet with Case Reviewers to determine appropriate level of training and support.	Quality Assurance Coordinator	July 2004	
Develop training opportunities	Quality Assurance Coordinator	September 2004	
Develop support network.	Quality Assurance Coordinator	September 2004	
Evaluate the Case Review Process	Quality Assurance Coordinator	November 2004	
Convene workgroup to develop recommendations to make the Case Review Process a valuable tool to support safety, permanency and well-being.	Quality Assurance Coordinator/Work Group	January 2005	
Develop recommendations	Quality Assurance Coordinator/Work Group	March 2005	
Collect feedback on recommendations from staff and partners	Quality Assurance Coordinator	May 2005	
Make necessary adjustments	Quality Assurance Coordinator/Work Group	July 2005	
Implement recommendations	Case Reviewers	September 2005	
Evaluate	Quality Assurance Coordinator/Work Group	January 2006	

Goal: Ensure a timely response to the physical health and dental needs of children and youth entering custody for the first time.

WB4

Action Step	Person/Unit Responsible	By When	Completion Date
With the Health Department, complete design of a medical intake questionnaire (MIQ) for use in four districts.	Deputy Commissioner for Child Welfare and Youth Justice	July 2004	
Design a training session for the first four districts, local protocols with key stakeholders and an evaluation tool.	Deputy Commissioner for Child Welfare and Youth Justice	August 2004	
Implement the MIQ in four districts.	Deputy Commissioner for Child Welfare and Youth Justice	September 2004	
Evaluate utility of MIQ and make adjustments as needed.	Deputy Commissioner for Child Welfare and Youth Justice	July 2005	
With the Health Department and under the auspices of a Robert Wood Johnson grant, design and implement a plan to increase the access, availability and quality of oral health care to children and youth in the custody.	Deputy Commissioner for Child Welfare and Youth Justice	July 2005	

Goal: Promote the importance of regular contact between social workers and the children and families they serve.			WB5
Action Step	Person/Unit Responsible	By When	Completion Date
Distribute results from the federal CFSRs that emphasizes the importance of social worker contact in achieving positive outcomes for children.	Policy and Planning Chief	July 2004	
Solicit comments on draft guidelines for Social Worker Contact	Policy and Planning Chief	July 2004	
Issue final policy on guidelines for Social Worker Contact	Policy and Planning Chief	August 2004	
Implement newly designed report on social worker contact	IT Manager	July 2004	
Revise and refine report on social worker contact.	IT Manager	September 2004	
Add requirement to assess social worker contact to district assessment protocol.	Quality Assurance Coordinator	September 2004	
Add item on social worker contact with children, mothers, fathers and resource families to district review instrument.	Quality Assurance Coordinator	September 2004	

Outcome: Law Abidance

Goal: Develop approach to assessment of risk and service needs for Youth justice clients that is integrated with other structured decision-making tools for children and families served by the department.			LA1
Action Step	Person/Unit Responsible	By When	Completion Date
Review previous, unimplemented work by staff on Youth justice assessment	Youth Justice Director	March 2005	
Decide on approach to assessment that is consistent with the work of the Juvenile Justice Commission. Include consideration of contracting with the Children's Research Division of the NCCD or other organization with expertise,	Youth Justice Director	March 2005	
If needed, contract with appropriate resource for assistance with development of instruments	Youth Justice Director	September 2005	
Work with staff and stakeholders (and possibly contractors) to fully develop recommended approach	Youth Justice Director	March 2006	
Complete any needed automation.	IT Manager	October 2006	
Train staff and implement approach	Youth Justice Director	March 2007	

Systemic Issues

Goal: Highlight importance of continuous quality improvement by completing implementation of district reviews.			SF1
Action Step	Person/Unit Responsible	By When	Completion Date
Complete revision of indicator list and district review instruments, as recommended by stakeholders in Winter 2004	Quality Assurance Coordinator	September 2004	
Complete design of approach to district review of Burlington district (largest urban area), that incorporates targeted, quarterly targeted case reviews.	Quality Assurance Coordinator	July 2004	
Design better methodology to track results of case reviews and other district review results	Quality Assurance Coordinator/Policy and Planning Chief	October 2004	
Implement approach to Burlington district	Quality Assurance Coordinator	November 2004	
Collaborate with new Field Services Division to determine what adjustments to make to district review in the short term.	Quality Assurance Coordinator	November 2004	
As indicated, apply lesson learned in Burlington to reviews in other districts	Quality Assurance Coordinator	July 2005	
Complete district reviews in the remaining four districts.	Quality Assurance Coordinator	December 2005	

Goal: Engage consumers in a feedback mechanism designed to solicit regular information to help us to improve our services.			SF2
Action Step	Person/Unit Responsible	By When	Completion Date
Fully support efforts of AHS re-organization to engage consumers in the process to re-design agency services	District Directors	Ongoing	
Design simple feedback instrument for participants in case plan reviews.	Quality Assurance Coordinator	September 2004	
Use breakthrough process to design ways to solicit input from foster parents on issues related to retention.	Foster Parent Liaison	February 2005	
Experiment with telephone surveys of consumers as an alternative to written surveys.	Quality Assurance Coordinator	February 2005	

Goal: Re-design component of district reviews that focuses on office environment and staff morale.			SF3
Action Step	Person/Unit Responsible	By When	Completion Date
Design Office Environment Survey and process.	Quality Assurance Coordinator/Workgroup	July 2004	
Conduct Office Environment Study in the Barre, Brattleboro and Burlington Districts	Quality Assurance Coordinator/UVM Trainers	August 2004	
Continue to conduct OES for remaining districts as part of the District Review Process.	Quality Assurance Coordinator/UVM Trainers	2005	

Goal: Create and Implement a Supervisory and Management Training for the Department for Children & Families by June 30, 2006.

SF4

Action Step	Person/Unit Responsible	By When	Completion Date
Select workgroup members to develop curriculum for supervisor/management training (SMT).	Child Welfare Training Partnership (CWTP)	July 2005	
Schedule monthly meetings for workgroup	CWTP	August 2004	
Review feedback from L.E.A.D., Performance Evaluations, and other training that supervisors and managers have been offered over the past 5 years to identify content for future training.	SMT workgroup & CWTP	October 2004	
Review curriculum content from various curriculums that will be added to the training for supervisors and managers.	SMT Workgroup & CWTP	January 2005	
Generate a content list and prioritize these for the curriculum.	SMT Workgroup and CWTP	March 2005	
Integrate the content priorities into a draft of curriculum and generate a list of potential trainers for the content & contact them regarding their interest and availability.	SMT Workgroup & CWTP	May 2005	April 15, 2005
Offer a two-day conference to supervisors and managers for the purpose of previewing the curriculum content, providing feedback to the content and bringing in a speaker to provide motivation and commitment to the process.	SMT Workgroup & CWTP	June 2005	
Review conference evaluations and small group feedback and integrate this feedback into the curriculum.	SMT Workgroup & CWTP	August 2005	
Finalize curriculum content and structure; confirm trainers and implement pilot of the curriculum to Supervisors and Managers in the Department for Children & Families.	SMT Workgroup & CWTP	April 2006	March 30, 2006

Review feedback from the pilot, make adjustments to the training content, structure and trainers, and schedule next round.

SMT Workgroup & CWTP

July 2006

June 30, 2006

CAPTA PROGRAM EMPHASIS

The state has selected the following areas of emphasis for its CAPTA program, consistent with the activities outline in the section on goals and activities.

- ✦ improvement of intake, assessment, screening, and investigation of reports of abuse and neglect;
- ✦ developing, strengthening, and facilitating training regarding CAPTA issues;
- ✦ improving the skills, qualifications, and availability of individuals providing services to children and families, and the supervisors of such individuals, through the child protection system, including improvements in the recruitment and retention of caseworkers;
- ✦ developing and facilitating training protocols for individuals mandated to report child abuse or neglect;
- ✦ developing and delivering information to improve public education relating to the role and responsibilities of the child protection system and the nature and basis for reporting suspected incidents of child abuse and neglect.

See also our sections on Training for training to be delivered on CAPTA issues, and the section on Goal, Activities and Benchmarks for planned activities to ensure the safety of children we serve.

CHANGES IN STATE STATUTE RELATED TO CAPTA

No changes affecting eligibility for CAPTA were made in state statute.

SPECIFIC PERCENTAGES OF IV-B FUNDS TO BE SPENT

For the coming fiscal year, the department intends to spend its IV-B, Subpart II funds in the following manner:

Program Area	%
Adoption Promotion and Support	20%
Time-Limited Family Reunification	20%
Family Support	20%
Family Preservation	35%
Planning	5%

The Department intends to spend IV-B service dollars for the following purposes:

	Time-Limited Family Reunification	Family Support	Family Preservation	Adoption Promotion and Support
Post-Adoption Services				X
Contract for Adoption Finalizations				X
Staffing for PINS (Church Partnerships)		X		
District Flexible Funds	X	X	X	

BUDGET FOR CHAFEE FOSTER CARE INDEPENDENCE – FFY '05

Item to be Funded	Amount
12 Regional (District) contracts for transitional independent living services	\$642,790
Youth Activities (Teen Advisory Board, youth conference, local youth projects)	\$12,000
Central Administrative support (training, program evaluation, youth assessment)	\$24,000
Chafee Educational and Training Vouchers	101,649
Total	\$780,439.00

MAINTENANCE OF EFFORT

In FY '92, the family preservation and support line items were known as “placement prevention”. Vermont spent \$29,671 on placement prevention in FY '92. In FY '05, the state share in the comparable line items and corresponding expenditures were:

Family Preservation	\$51,416
Family Support	\$53,157

ATTACHMENTS

Department Documents

CFS-101 Parts I and II