

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>133</h1>
Chapter:	Special Casework Issues	
Subject:	Death of a Child Serviced by the Division	Page 1 of 2
Approved:	Fredrick M. Ober, Division Director	Effective: 10/16/98 FINAL
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Purpose

On rare occasions, a child who is in custody or whom we serve dies. When this happens, we must closely follow procedures below not only because of possible liability but so we can learn and, hopefully, avoid or minimize similar occurrences.

Policy

When a child receiving services (or who has received services within the last six months) dies, there will be an internal review of the child's overall case plan and the events leading to the child's death. At the discretion of the Commissioner, the case may also be reviewed by the Child Fatality Review Team. The internal review includes:

- Immediate review by the operations manager. To facilitate this, on the first working day following child's death, a complete copy of the child's case record will be hand carried to central office.
- A complete review by the district director or unit supervisor of the circumstances leading to the child's death, the case plan, interventions made by the division, the quality of casework, any areas where the division may be liable, and recommendations for action.

These two reviews will result in a recommendation to the DCF Commissioner and the FS Deputy Commissioner regarding any appropriate and necessary action to be taken.

Funeral Arrangements for a Child in Custody

The responsibility for arranging for the funeral of a child in custody is shared with the child's primary family (even if parental rights have been terminated), any substitute care providers appropriate to involve, and other people who have had a significant relationship with the child. Unless the child's family would prefer to handle these responsibilities, the child's social worker will contact a funeral home to request assistance with obtaining a burial lot, contacting a clergy person, securing the release of the child's body from the hospital, etc.

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Division staff will apply for burial benefits under General Assistance from the Economic Services Division if the child did not have sufficient financial resources to cover the costs of the burial. The Economic Services Division will make recommendations of appropriate funeral homes, and how to arrange payment.

Support for Staff Following the Death of a Child

If the district director or unit supervisor feels that an individual or group could benefit from grief counseling, he or she may contact the operations manager to discuss payment for that service.