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Chapter:	Coordinating with Others	
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Approved:	Fredrick M. Ober, Division Director	Effective: 7/16/01 FINAL
Supersedes:		Dated:

## Purpose

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

## Memorandum of Understanding


The Vermont Department for Children and Families (DCF) and the Department of Corrections (DOC) have entered into an agreement to share case information. (See appendix to this policy for the full text of the agreement.) This agreement is designed to assist the two departments in protecting children and in promoting and supporting the positive, essential and ongoing relationships between children and their families. The agreement promotes and encourages communication and collaboration between the two departments. As a result of the agreement:

- Designated FS employees can have login access to the DOC database after appropriate training and signing the FS Computer Users Agreement (FS-111). The database contains information about all clients currently served by DOC. (Note: Cases opened and closed since DOC automated case files are also included. Different districts were automated at different times.)
- To facilitate communication between the two departments about mutually-served families, the names of parents and children being served by FS and/or closed within the last three years and foster homes and child care providers are sent to DOC daily. The last assigned worker and the district office telephone number is included. (Note: as of 7/1/01, this option is not yet operational.)

## Purpose

### Use of DOC Database by FS Employees

FS employees' access to the DOC database is limited to purposes directly related to assessment of risk and delivery of services to children and families served by FS, including

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

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

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

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

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


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

**Informing DOC of FS Involvement**

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

**Sharing Information about FS Clients with DOC Employees**

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


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**Sharing of Information about FS Clients with DOC Employees**

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

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

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


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## Appendix A

**The Vermont Department of Corrections**  
**The Vermont Department for Children and Families**  
**Agreement About Exchange of Case Information, including Automated Information**

The Vermont Department for Children and Families agrees to:

- Comply with all policies, directives and procedures of the Department of Corrections regarding access to and use of case information.
- Consult with appropriate Department of Corrections central office managers when it appears that a Family Services employee has misused Department of Corrections case information and may be disciplined;
- Consult with the Department of Corrections before using any case notes in a fact finding or judicial process. If the Department of Corrections does not agree to use of the case notes, they will be used only if subpoenaed.
- Provide, through the Emergency Services Program, information about the custody status and responsible district office for a juvenile that has been apprehended after hours.
- For each Intensive Domestic Abuse Program, information about the custody and victim status of children living in the home of a furlougee.
- For each case in which Corrections is considering furloughing an inmate to a home in which children reside, information about the custody and victim status of children living in the home.
- Invite Department of Corrections staff to attend case plan reviews (and treatment team meetings, as appropriate) for children when the Department of Corrections staff are supervising a family member.
- Provide ongoing training to Department of Corrections staff about child abuse and neglect issues.
- Manage FS staff login access to Department of Corrections' databases.
- Inform the Department of Corrections about the status of upgrades to Family Services' computer record-keeping systems.
- Work with Department of Corrections computer staff to provide access to Family Services' client index, so that staff may collaborate on child safety issues. Information from the State Central Child Abuse Registry will not be included in the index.

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The Department of Corrections agrees to:

- Comply with all policies, directives and procedures of Family Services regarding access to and use of case information.
- Consult with appropriate Family Services central office managers when it appears that a Family Services employee has misused Department of Corrections case information and may be disciplined;
- Provide Family Services with a regularly updated list of Department of Corrections staff on call.
- Provide training on the local level about accessing and using Department of Corrections case information from the Department of Corrections database. This training will include information about Department of Corrections directives regarding access to information.
- Explore allowing FS staff some access to Pre-Sentence Investigation Reports.

The Vermont Department for Children and Families and the Department of Corrections agree to:

- Ensure that the other department is informed of any changes in policy requirements related to access to case information.
- When Department of Corrections staff have made a report of suspected child abuse or neglect, Family Services and Department of Corrections staff will collaborate to ensure child safety.
- Develop local protocols to promote regular and efficient communication and collaboration between the departments.
- Determine jointly what classes of employees should have access to the other department's database.
- Require staff to sign an acknowledgement of confidentiality requirements before being given login access to the other department's databases.

This Memorandum of Understanding was signed by John Gorczyk, Commissioner of the Department of Corrections and William Young, Commissioner of the Vermont Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (now the Vermont Department for Children and Families) on 6/6/2000.