 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		<h1>264</h1>
Chapter:	Administrative Issues	
Subject:	Responding to Incidents	Page 1 of 4
Approved:	Frederick M. Ober, Division Director	Effective: 2/25/00 FINAL
Supersedes:	Social Service Policy No. 264	Dated: 10/16/98

Purpose

At times, situations arise that may be of a highly sensitive nature and/or are politically volatile. This policy guides staff deciding what incidents should be reported to central office and helps to guide the type of response to any such incident.

Policy


Notifying District or Unit Manager

Family Services employees will immediately notify their district or unit manager about any serious incident involving clients, foster parents, staff or contract agencies. Examples of such incidents are listed below:

- a staff member or his/her family member is threatened with harm or actually harmed by a client of the division;
- the death of a child/youth in an open case, in custody or the subject of an intake.
- a serious accident or critical health status of a child/youth in custody;
- the abduction, rape or serious abuse of a child/youth in custody;
- a contracted service provider is charged with an offense or involved in an incident that suggests the person's judgement and ability to work with children/youth is in question;
- a staff member is accused of behaving illegally or in a grossly unprofessional manner;
- a youth escapes from Woodside;
- a child/youth with an open case commits a serious offense, such as those cited in 33 VSA §5506 (see Appendix A of this policy).

Employees will also promptly notify their district or unit manager (or in their absence the next person in the chain of command) when:

- a staff member is contacted by the media;
- a staff member is contacted by state or federal legislators or officials; or
- a staff member is notified that an attorney is actively exploring lawsuits or other legal action against the Department or its staff.

 VERMONT DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Family Services Policy Manual		264
Chapter:	Administrative Issues	
Subject:	Responding to Incidents	Page 2 of 4
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Notifying Central Office

The district or unit manager will promptly notify central office of these incidents, as follows:

- District directors will notify the administrative assistant in the operations unit;
- Woodside will notify the community resources chief and/or residential licensing who will then inform the operations unit.
- Other non-operations units (e.g. licensing, HRD, etc.) will inform the director of Family Services

In the absence of any of these individuals, staff should inform the next person in the chain of command.

The person notifying central office should be prepared to detail the following:

- the description of the incident and who was involved;
- the current status of involved persons;
- any involvement of police and/or State’s Attorney;
- if incarceration resulted, who, where, and under what basis; and
- requested or required support to be offered to affected staff.

The administrative assistant in the operations unit will log all notifications.

Request for Incident Report and/or Record

At the discretion of the central office manager notified, the caller may be asked to forward a written report on the next working day containing the information listed above, plus other material relevant to the incident. Before forwarding a written report, the parties should discuss the most appropriate method for presenting this information based on confidentiality concerns.

Any staff member harmed or threatened with harm will submit an FS-110 (Staff Safety Incident Form) to the operations administrative assistant within three working days.

Critical Incident Review

The commissioner, division director, operations manager or district director may request a comprehensive review of an incident determined to be a critical incident. The review will begin with:

Chapter:	Administrative Issues	
Subject:	Responding to Incidents	Page 3 of 4
Approved:	Frederick M. Ober, Division Director	Effective: 2/25/00 FINAL
Supersedes:	Social Service Policy No. 264	Dated: 10/16/98

- an initial report, oral or written, describing the incident, forwarded to the administrative assistant for operations;
- dissemination of the report to appropriate central office staff.

Depending upon the nature of the incident, the division director or operations manager may designate a team leader to coordinate the tasks involved. The team leader will set up a meeting of the principal managers and/or the “crisis response team” to discuss:

- the review process and timeframes;
- questions that may need to be addressed ;
- the steps for follow-up, including who will complete each step; and,
- how the commissioner and division director will be regularly updated on progress.

This plan will be shared with the commissioner and the division director, who may choose to be more directly involved in the review of more serious cases.

After the plan is implemented and additional information is gathered, the operations manager or team leader will set up a meeting of the principal managers to consolidate information and review any new or unanswered questions, and to develop the critical incident review summary. Before the critical incident review summary is disseminated to key central office, unit, and district staff, the summary is distributed to the involved managers for comment.

The final critical incident review summary will be kept in the operations unit in Waterbury.

Dissemination of Information

Designated central office staff will offer support to the affected district or unit and share information and communicate with the district or unit regularly. The commissioner will have the final authority to decide what information is appropriate to release to whom and in what manner.

APPENDIX A:

§ 5506 offenses:

1. arson causing death as defined in 13 V.S.A. § 501;
2. assault and robbery with a dangerous weapon as defined in 13 V.S.A. § 608(b);
3. assault and robbery causing bodily injury as defined in 13 V.S.A. § 608(c);
4. aggravated assault as defined in 13 V.S.A. § 1024;

Chapter:	Administrative Issues	
Subject:	Responding to Incidents	Page 4 of 4
Approved:	Frederick M. Ober, Division Director	Effective: 2/25/00 FINAL
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5. murder as defined in 13 V.S.A. § 2301;
6. manslaughter as defined in 13 V.S.A. § 2304;
7. kidnapping as defined in 13 V.S.A. § 2405;
8. unlawful restraint as defined in 13 V.S.A. §§ 2406 and 2407;
9. maiming as defined in 13 V.S.A. § 2701;
10. sexual assault as defined in 13 V.S.A. § 3252(a)(1) or (a)(2);
11. aggravated sexual assault as defined in 13 V.S.A. § 3253;
12. burglary into an occupied dwelling as defined in 13 V.S.A. § 1203(c).