



**CHILD
PROTECTION
IN VERMONT
REPORT FOR 2019**

**Child Protection Hotline:
1-800-649-5285**

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If you have any questions or comments about this report, please contact Melissa Burt at Melissa.Burt@vermont.gov.

Report Suspected Child Abuse & Neglect

1-800-649-5285

If you suspect a child is being abused or neglected, call Vermont's Child Protection Line to report it — 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If the child is in immediate danger, dial 911 or the local police first. Then, call to make a report.

All Vermonters are encouraged to report their concerns about children's safety. Mandated reporters are legally required to report suspected child abuse and neglect within 24 hours.

To learn more, go to <http://dcf.vermont.gov/protection/reporting>.

ONLINE MANDATED REPORTER TRAINING

Our two-hour training for mandated reporters will teach you about the:

- ➔ Dynamics of child abuse and neglect
- ➔ Responsibilities of mandated reporters in Vermont
- ➔ Role we all play in keeping children safe

Visit our website at the address below to access the training. Once you've successfully completed the final exam, you'll get a *Certificate of Completion*.

<https://dcf.vermont.gov/protection/reporting/mandated>

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MESSAGE FROM FORMER DCF COMMISSIONER KEN SCHATZ



As Vermont's child welfare agency, we work to protect children and support families. The COVID pandemic has made it especially challenging to keep children healthy and safe — while also keeping families connected. This is vital for families who are on track to safely reunite. Our staff has done an incredible job during these difficult times, and I am so grateful for their commitment to the children and families we serve.

After several years of caseloads going up, we are starting to see the numbers go down. This is due to several factors, including:

1. Vermont's sustained efforts to treat the opioid epidemic.
2. Increases in Family Services staffing over the last few years.
3. The work of our community partners.

As a community, we have improved our approach to addressing the needs of families and it shows. As the DCF Commissioner for the last six years, I am proud of our staff, our partners, the work we do together, and our commitment to continuous improvement.

As I prepare for retirement, I look back with pride at the support we've provided the children and families we serve. While there will be challenges ahead, I am confident the department will continue putting forward its best efforts to support children and families during their most vulnerable moments.

It has been an honor to serve the people of Vermont as Commissioner of the Department for Children and Families.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ken Schatz', written in a cursive style.

Ken Schatz, DCF Commissioner

MESSAGE FROM THE FSD DEPUTY COMMISSIONER



This year has been unlike any other in my lifetime. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed much of the world around us, including the way we do our work in the Family Services Division. Our purpose, however, has not changed. Our mission remains the same: To work in partnership with families, advocates, communities, educators, foster and kinship caregivers, law enforcement, service providers, and others to increase safety and law abidance for Vermont children and youth.

The pandemic has taught us valuable lessons that we must now incorporate into our practice. For example, it has clearly shown us how critical our partners are to the work that we do. We must continue strengthening the relationships we have with our partners across the state.

In normal times, we rely on mandated reporters — like child care providers, educators, health care professionals, and others — to have eyes on children and youth and report any concerns to us. The closing of schools and other child and youth-serving programs meant that many reporters were only seeing children remotely. As a result, we are seeing a significant decrease in the number of child abuse and neglect reports we receive from mandated reporters. This decrease will be reflected in next year's report.

I would like to highlight one current initiative: implementation of Act 201 (*Raise the Age*). Starting July 1, 2020, most Vermont youth accused of breaking the law at age 18 will be:

- Prosecuted in the Family Division of Superior Court instead of the Criminal Division.
- Supervised and supported by the Family Services Division instead of the Department of Corrections.

On July 1, 2022, the law will be extended to 19 year olds, bringing the upper age of juvenile jurisdiction in Vermont to a youth's 20th birthday.

We stand ready to provide families and youth with the supports and services they need to be successful. We look forward to working with our partners to support children and families living lives full of love and hope.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christine Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Christine Johnson, FSD Deputy Commissioner

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides child protection data for calendar year 2019 in Vermont.

Here are the highlights:

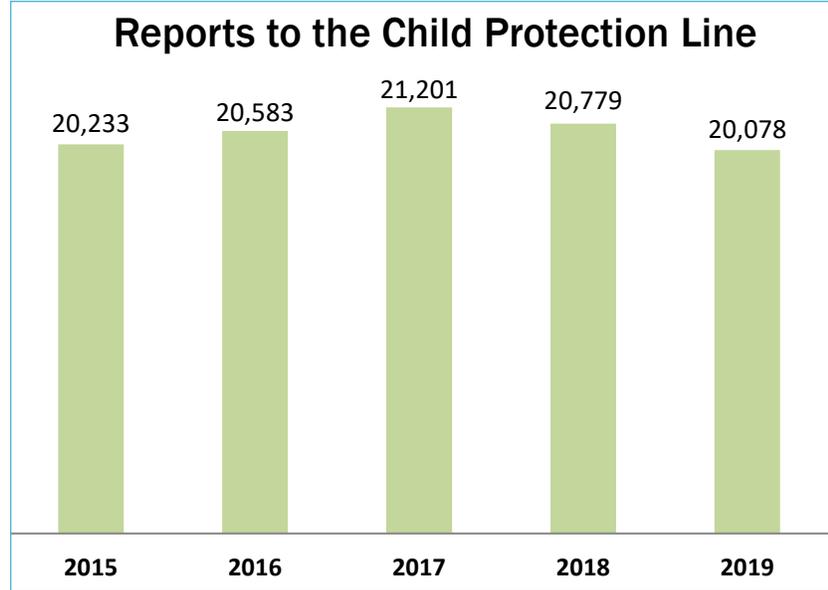
- 20,078 reports were made to the Child Protection Line in 2019, 701 fewer than in 2018.
- At least 78% of the reports made were from mandated reporters; at least 17% were from non-mandated reporters.
- Of the 20,078 reports received , we opened 4,606 child safety interventions:
 - ⇒ 2,640 investigations
 - ⇒ 1,966 assessments
- At the conclusion of the 4,606 child safety interventions:
 - ⇒ 1,047 cases were opened for ongoing services
- At the conclusion of the 2,640 investigations:
 - ⇒ 822 reports were substantiated
- Based on the 822 substantiated reports, there were:
 - ⇒ 1,004 unique child victims
 - ⇒ 149 incidents of physical abuse
 - ⇒ 319 incidents of sexual abuse
 - ⇒ 80 incidents of risk of sexual abuse
 - ⇒ 475 incidents of risk of harm
 - ⇒ 34 incidents of emotional maltreatment/neglect
- During the last quarter of 2019, there were:
 - ⇒ 1,169 children in DCF custody
 - ⇒ 751 children in the conditional custody of a parent, relative or other person known to the child and family
 - ⇒ 413 families getting ongoing services after an investigation or assessment determined there was a high to very high-risk of future maltreatment

REPORTS OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT

We encourage all Vermonters to call our Child Protection Line if they are concerned about a child's safety and well-being— whether or not they are mandated by law to do so. **1-800-649-5285 (24/7)**

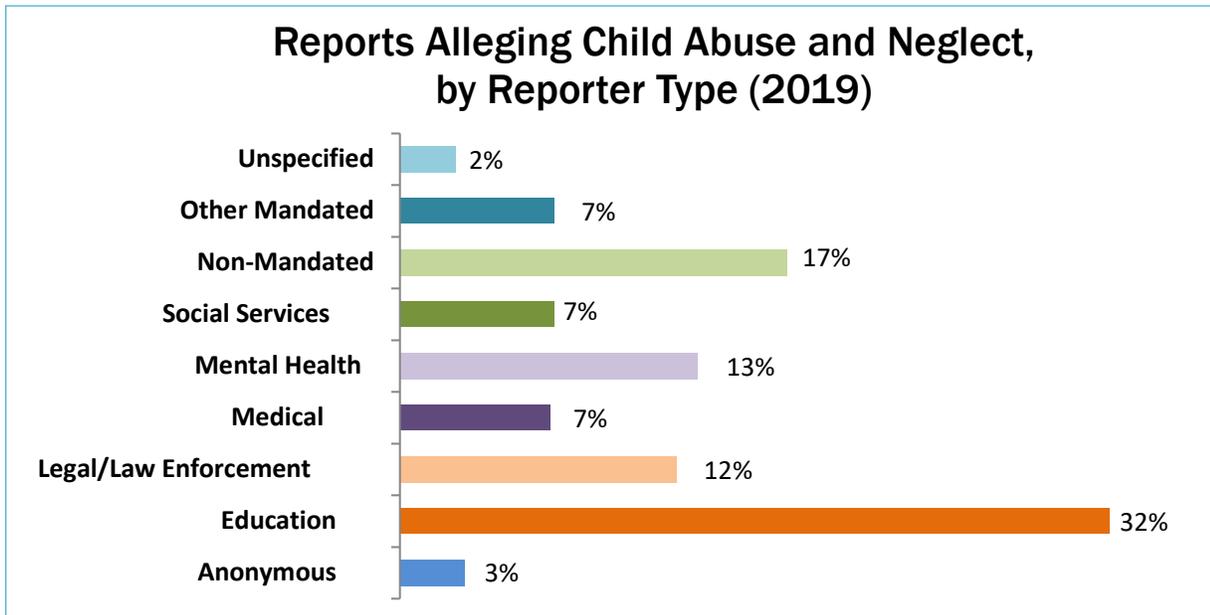
20,078 in 2019

The number of reports made to Vermont's Child Protection Line went down for the second year in a row – from a high of 21,201 in 2017 to 20,078 in 2019.



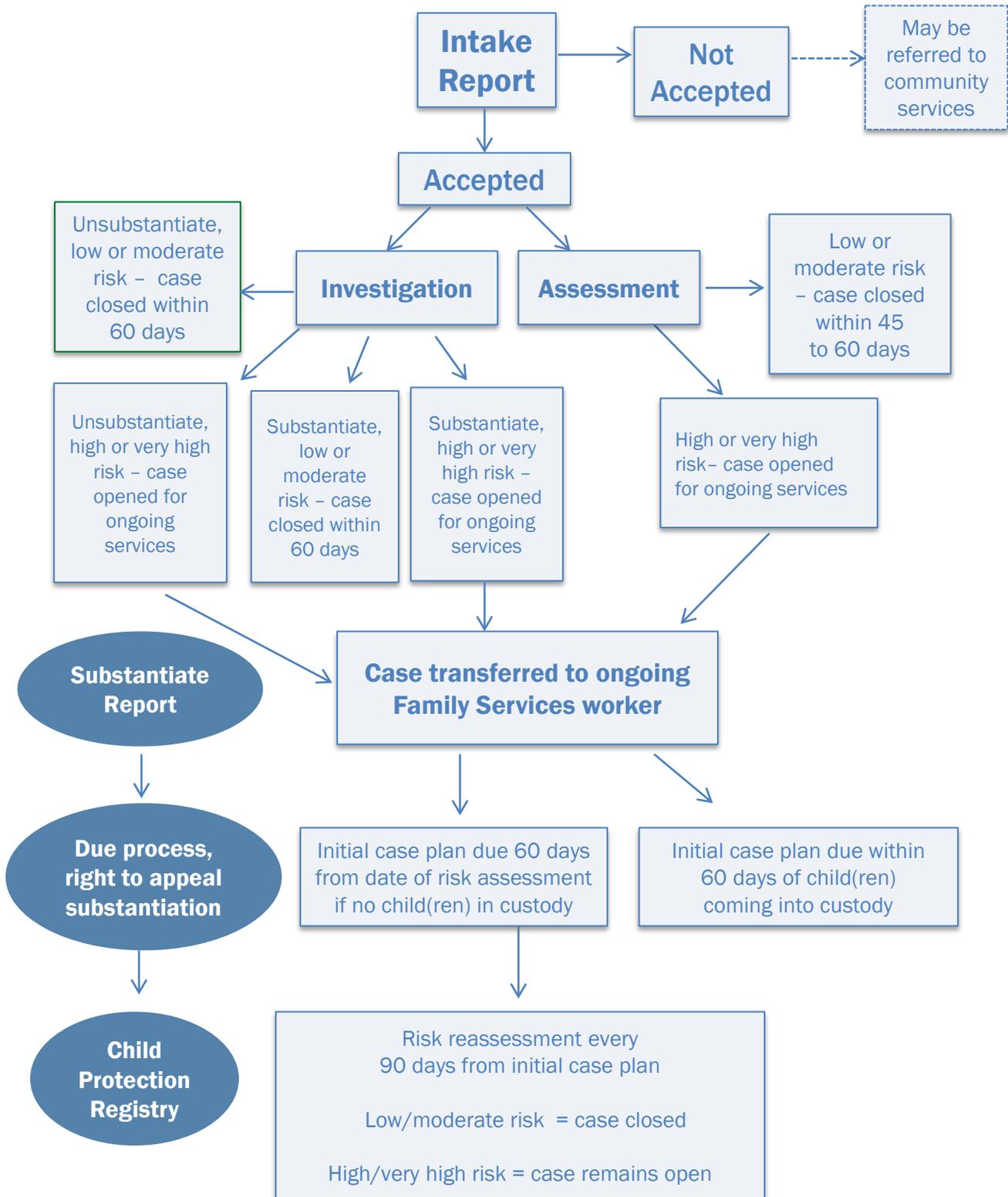
At least 78% of reports came from mandated reporters.

At least 17% of reports came from non-mandated reporters.



Learn more about mandated reporters at <https://dcf.vermont.gov/protection/reporting/mandated>.

FLOWCHART SHOWING WHAT HAPPENS TO REPORTS



To learn more about what happens to the reports we receive, visit our website at <http://dcf.vermont.gov/protection/reporting/mandated/what-happens>.

REPORTS ACCEPTED FOR INTERVENTION

4,606 Child Safety Interventions in 2019

Vermont law authorizes two types of intervention:

1. Assessments
2. Investigations

While the preferred intervention is usually assessment, an investigation is legally required in certain situations. To learn more, read FSD Policy 52 - Child Safety Interventions: Investigations & Assessments online at <https://dcf.vermont.gov/fsd/policies>.



CALENDAR YEAR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Calls to Vermont's Child Protection Line	20,233	20,583	21,201	20,779	20,078
Total reports accepted for intervention	5,630 (28%)	5,509 (27%)	5,527 (26%)	5,326 (25%)	4,606 (22%)
- Investigations	2,634	2,835	3,054	3,173	2,640
- Assessments	2,996	2,674	2,473	2,153	1,966
• Child abuse assessments	1,618	1,421	1,351	1,130	1,117
• Family assessments	1,378	1,253	1,122	1,023	849
Outcomes of interventions:					
- Investigations substantiated ¹	773	737	876	999	822
- Cases opened for services ²	1,050	1,068	1,230	1,281	1,047

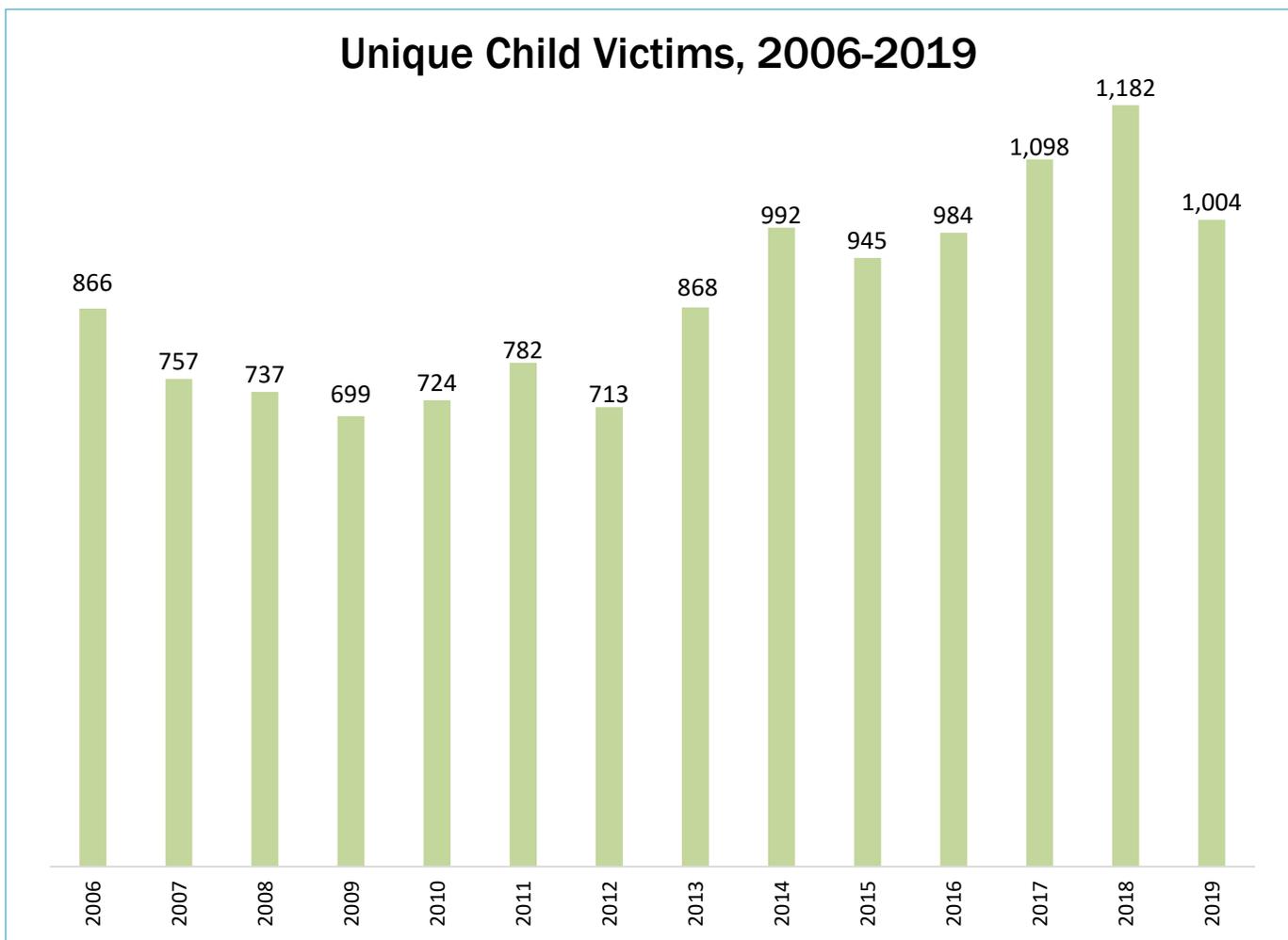
1 INVESTIGATIONS SUBSTANTIATED: A report is substantiated if the evidence found during the investigation would lead a reasonable person to believe the child was abused or neglected.

2 CASES OPENED FOR SERVICES: A case is opened for ongoing services if, during any type of intervention, the assessed risk of future maltreatment is determined to be high or very high.

VICTIMS OF CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT

The data in the table below is based on substantiated reports¹ of child abuse and neglect. The number of unique child victims listed is an unduplicated count. This means that each child victim is counted only once, regardless of the number of times they were found to be victimized during the reporting year.

Unique Child Victims, 2006-2019



¹ When DCF investigates a report of child abuse or neglect, we must decide whether a reasonable person would believe that it happened. If the answer is YES, the report is substantiated and the person's name is added to the Child Protection Registry - a database of all substantiated reports of child abuse and neglect dating back to January 1, 1992.



ONGOING FAMILY SERVICES CASELOAD

Our ongoing caseload includes the following types of cases:

➔ **Kids in DCF custody:**

When a family court judge places a child in the temporary custody of the Department for Children and Families because of concerns about a child’s safety and well-being.



➔ **Kids in conditional custody:**

When a family court judge places a child in the conditional custody of a parent, relative or other person known to the family and orders DCF to stay involved – to supervise, provide services and ensure the child’s safety.



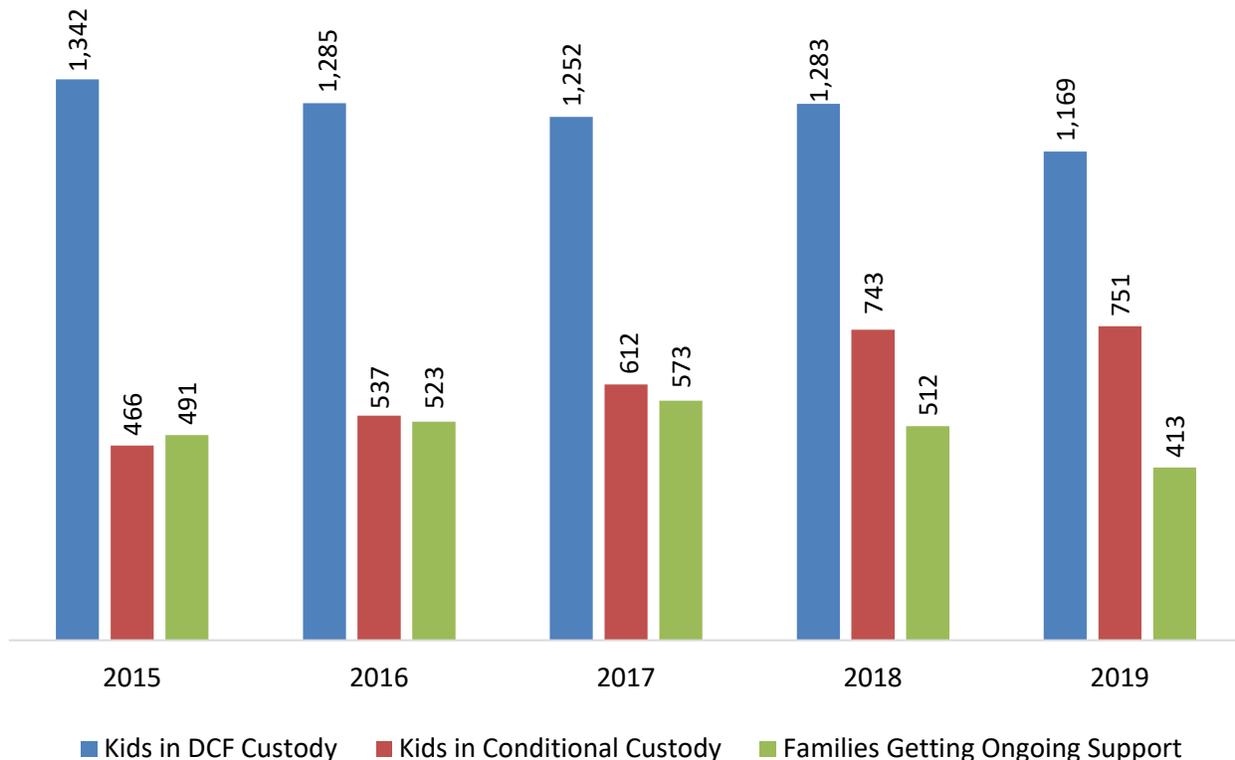
➔ **Families getting ongoing support:**

When an investigation or assessment determines there’s a high to very high risk of future maltreatment and a case is opened for ongoing services.



Family Services Ongoing Caseload

point-in-time, Q4 annually



VERMONT JUVENILE COURT DATA

Vermont court cases include two main categories of juvenile cases:

1. **CH**ildren **I**n **N**eed of care and **S**upervision (CHINS), which includes children who may have been abandoned, abused or neglected; beyond their parent’s control; and truant.
2. Youth who committed a delinquent act.

The data in the table below comes from the Vermont Judiciary’s Annual Statistical Report. To see the full reports, go to <http://www.vermontjudiciary.org/about-vermont-judiciary/court-statistics-and-reports>.

STATE FISCAL YEAR	FY2014	FY2015	FY2016	FY2017	FY2018	FY2019	FY2020
CHINS—abused or neglected	809	1,065	1,066	921	1,100	897	710
CHINS—truant	123	112	137	165	183	130	92
CHINS—beyond parent’s control	93	84	85	65	75	68	55
Delinquency	668	704	738	705	884	708	626
Youthful offender	54	44	43	33	33	504 ¹	390
TOTAL	1,747	2,009	2,069	1,889	2,275	2,307	1,873

1. In 2016, the Vermont legislature changed the law to make youth 21 years of age or younger eligible for youthful offender status when charged with a crime in Vermont.

This was done to:

- ➡ Bring the law more in line with science that shows youth in that age group don’t have fully developed brains and are more amenable to treatment and rehabilitation.
- ➡ Avoid treating juveniles as adults, with the exception of the most serious offenses.
- ➡ Mitigate major consequences for youth charged in adult court (e.g., a public record, exclusion from the military and ineligibility for student loans).

This change expanded the population eligible for youthful offender status, resulting in a significant increase in the number of youthful offender cases starting July 1, 2018.

ADDITIONAL CHILD PROTECTION DATA

Visit the DCF website for additional child protection data, including:

- ➔ Annual child protection reports dating back to 2006
- ➔ Profiles of interventions & outcomes by district, for 2014 to 2019
- ➔ 2019 data on:
 - ➔ Reports substantiated by abuser-child relationship
 - ➔ Reports substantiated by age of abuser
 - ➔ Reports substantiated by gender of abuser
 - ➔ Reports substantiated by gender of victim & type of abuse
 - ➔ Reports substantiated by type of abuse
 - ➔ Reports substantiated by victim's age and type of abuse

<https://dcf.vermont.gov/child-protection-data>

HELP PREVENT CHILD ABUSE IN VERMONT

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being abused or neglected,
call Vermont's Child Protection Line
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