

JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN TASK FORCE
AMENDED CHARGE
June 2015

“All children need safe, permanent families that love, nurture, protect and guide them.”¹

When courts are asked to make decisions about a child’s life because of allegations of abuse or neglect, the courts are responsible for ensuring that children’s rights to safety, permanence, and well-being are met in a timely and complete manner. It is only through the collaboration of the Judicial system, the Agency of Human Services, State’s Attorneys, the Defender General’s Office, the Attorney General’s Office, schools, and other community partners that these needs can be met.

A. Charge

The Vermont Justice for Children Task Force is a collaborative, interdisciplinary effort that brings together those who are in charge of decisions that can improve outcomes for children in foster care. The Task Force approaches its work mindful of children’s developmental needs and unique sense of time. To improve outcomes for these children, the Task Force will:

- (1) **Identify systemic barriers** which contribute to children remaining in care longer than necessary;
- (2) **Develop solutions** designed to reduce the impact of such barriers in a manner which ensures that due process and legal rights of all parties are respected and protected;
- (3) **Measure the effect** of reforms once implemented;
- (4) **Report progress to the Vermont Supreme Court**, with recommendations as appropriate.

The Task Force works closely with the Vermont Court Improvement Program to develop and implement its strategic plan, and to monitor progress toward objectives of child safety, permanency, and well-being.

The Task Force consists of one or more justices, the Chief Superior Court Judge, a superior court judge, a probate judge, the State Court Administrator, the Agency of Human Services Secretary, DCF Commissioner, DCF Family Services Deputy Commissioner, Department of Health Deputy Commissioner, Department of Mental Health Deputy Commissioner, Agency of Education Secretary, Defender General, Deputy Defender General, a State’s Attorney, an Assistant Attorney General, an attorney practicing in the field of juvenile law, two legislators, and a youth member from the Vermont DCF Youth Development Program.

¹ The Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care, *Fostering the Future: Safety, Permanence and Well Being for Children in Foster Care*, 2004.

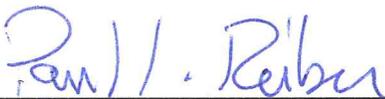
The office of the Court Administrator shall provide the Task Force with necessary administrative assistance from its staff.

B. Expenses

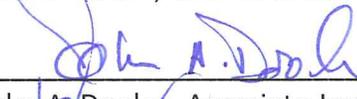
In the performance of their duties, non-Judicial branch Task Force members shall be reimbursed for reasonable and necessary expenses. Judicial branch members shall be reimbursed the normal state employee expenses. The Court Administrator's Office shall pay reasonable expenses of this Task Force when claims are submitted on proper vouchers approved by the Court Administrator or designee.

This Charge is effective through June 2017 unless further extended by the Court.

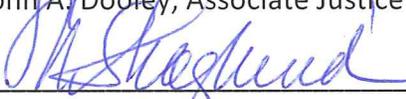
Signed in Chambers at Montpelier, Vermont this 8th day of June, 2015.



Paul L. Reiber, Chief Justice



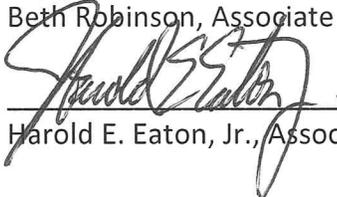
John A. Dooley, Associate Justice



Marilyn S. Skoglund, Associate Justice



Beth Robinson, Associate Justice



Harold E. Eaton, Jr., Associate Justice

Vermont Justice for Children Task Force
Designated Members
June 2015

The Vermont Supreme Court hereby appoints the following persons to the Vermont Justice for Children Task Force:

Paul L. Reiber, Chief Justice
Marilyn S. Skoglund, Associate Justice
Brian J. Grearson, Chief Superior Judge
Thomas J. Devine, Superior Court Judge, Family Division
Eleanor W. Smith, Superior Court Judge, Probate Division
Patricia Gabel, State Court Administrator
Hal Cohen, Secretary, Agency of Human Services
Kenneth Schatz, Commissioner, Department for Children and Families (DCF)
Cynthia Walcott, Deputy Commissioner, DCF Family Services Division
Dana H. Lawrence, Director, Youth in Transition Services, DCF
Amy Fowler, Deputy Secretary, Agency of Education
Barbara Cimaglio, Deputy Commissioner, Dept. of Health, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs
Patricia Singer, M.D., Director of Direct Service Utilization, Department of Mental Health
Matthew F. Valerio, Defender General
Anna Saxman, Deputy Defender General
Robert Sheil, Juvenile Defender
Pamela A. Marsh, Juvenile Public Defender
Leslie Hanafin, Assigned Counsel
Andrew R. Strauss, Deputy State's Attorney
Jody Racht, Assistant Attorney General
Jane Kitchel, State Senator
Sarah E. Buxton, State Representative
Ridmi Coe, Youth Representative