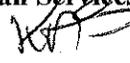


Memorandum

To: Members of the House Human Services Committee
From: Ken Schatz, Commissioner 
Date: January 12, 2016
Subject: Questions regarding FY16 Family Services Division BAA request

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you last week regarding the Budget Adjustment Act request the Department for Children & Families put forward. We have reviewed the questions asked during the discussion and have provided answers below in italics following the question posed by the committee. Please feel free to follow up with Karen Vastine or me if you have additional questions.

1. We will want to hear from someone from Lund to hear what they've done and what has been the result.

We've reached out to Kim Coe from Lund Family Center. She let us know that she will be in touch with the committee directly.

2. What is the change in the rules for temps?

We reached out to Maribeth Spellman, Commissioner of the Department of Human Resources. She would be glad to walk the committee through the rules and recent rule change where temp workers are concerned. Her contact information is: Maribeth.Spellman@vermont.gov.

3. How many positions do we need to add to achieve 12 families/social worker?

Based on current caseloads it would take 52 additional social workers to reduce caseloads to an average of 12 families per social worker. An additional 5 supervisors would also be required in order to maintain appropriate supervisory ratios (1:6). Please note that this does not include administrative staff or case aides.

4. What is the connection between poverty and child maltreatment?

Poverty and child maltreatment, especially child neglect, are intricately intertwined. Researchers have been considering this complex relationship for decades. While poverty is unlikely to be a stated reason in a court document for a finding of neglect, poverty can be a major factor in many conditions that exacerbate risks to child safety such as parental stress, inadequate housing and homelessness, lack of basic needs, inadequate supervision, substance abuse, and domestic violence.

Despite the relationship between poverty and child neglect, most poor families do not come into contact with the child welfare system. Protective factors can act as a buffer to the risks exacerbated by poverty. Some of these protective factors include maternal employment, parents who were competently parented themselves, a strong informal social support network, and availability of supportive family members.





Child welfare systems can protect children by supporting and strengthening their families by developing strategies that strengthen protective factors and reduce poverty-related safety risks,. An article that might be of interest is entitled: "Addressing Poverty as a Major Risk Factor in Child Neglect: Promising Policy and Practice." <http://www.clcny.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/addressing-poverty-as-a-major-risk-factor-in-child.pdf>

5. Please explain the role of Law Enforcement and Social Workers?

Social workers work regularly with law enforcement during the removal of a child and during joint investigations into child abuse and neglect. Social Workers are also supported by law enforcement in other aspects of their jobs such as home visits in situations where there is known risk and locating a child on runaway status. In a recent query of FSD District Directors we learned that, by and large, social workers get support from law enforcement for the emergent aspects of their work (removals and investigations) readily. Districts struggle around less emergent aspects of the work such as locating runaways and having law enforcement do checks after hours to see if families are complying with safety plans. The prevailing sentiment is that law enforcement needs to prioritize their work and don't have the resources to devote to social worker aid.

The work that we ask of law enforcement is work they also share some responsibility in doing. They are not paid by DCF because this is part of the role that they play in the community.

