

Lund

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Testimony to Committee on Child Protection

Vermont Legislature

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Thank you for the opportunity to address this committee and for your diligence in looking at Vermont Child Protection System. I have been the director of treatment services at Lund for the last nineteen years. As you have heard a number of times now, in order to truly improve the well being of Vermont's children, it is essential that see this as a community wide issue and not only a DCF issue. The additional funding to increase the social work staff within DCF was a start. By increasing those staff and decreasing caseloads, we increase accountability and oversight, however it is just as important to ensure that we adequately fund the system of services that are providing the direct services to families. Having a case plan and regular visits is not enough to help families move from being at risk to safe and healthy. The systems that deliver these services directly to families have struggled to stay in business after years of level funding. The Vermont Parent Child Center Network serves as a hub of early childhood services in each Vermont community and yet they have not received an increase in their base grant for twenty years. The announcement yesterday of further cuts in proposed Medicaid increases but these agencies at further jeopardy and yet these are the services that we rely on to build families. DCF workers need community providers to deliver and implement the services that families need.

If we are going to break generational cycles of poverty, child abuse and neglect, we to stand ready to truly implement family centered practice. We need to understand that providing the best possible treatment to a patient will not be effective if we don't address the underlying issues that are impacting that family. I believe that in order to achieve safety and well-being for Vermont's children we should:

*Address the chronic underfunding of non-profits agencies that are delivering critical services to families

*Ensure that communication is clear and effective by dealing head on with privacy issues and technology problems that impede this process

*Build on the strengths and what we know works. Families need services in their homes, over time these services have been depleted or restricted to very specific target populations

*A focus on prevention is key, prevention of child abuse starts with ensuring that parents have what they need to be the best parents they can be. Treatment programs like Lund that address prevention and treatment simultaneously are most effective.