

## Health Care Oversight Committee Thursday, September 18, 2014 Committee on Child Protection

- The tragic deaths of two Vermont children has been a call to action for the Agency of Human Services
  - It has generated important and profound conversations with community members, service providers, our partners across state government, DCF staff and the legislature
  - It prompted the Governor to request that the AHS submit a plan to restructure the Department for Children and Families (DCF) to improve the DCF Commissioner's ability to focus on the welfare and protection of children
- DCF received an enormous amount of feedback and input on what needs to be done to improve the safety of children in this state. DCF anticipates receiving even more feedback from:
  - Health Care Oversight Committee
  - The Governor's Poverty Council,
  - The Vermont Citizens Advisory Board (VCAB),
  - Casey Family Programs
  - The National Center on Child Welfare and Substance Abuse
- The Governor's deadline for a report is October 1<sup>st</sup>; DCF's intention is to submit a set of recommendations, shaped by the input they have received thus far, to begin structuring the required report
- The first set of recommendations is just the first step. DCF will continue to develop the report as the information comes in. DCF is committed to an ongoing process to move towards a robust and resilient system of child protection.
- DCF has already established the need to address policy and practice, structural issues, decision making, community collaboration, and the issues around substance abuse in the provided recommendations.
- Final recommendations won't be fully formed until the end of September but DCF intends to be as transparent in sharing these first steps with all the stakeholders.
- Although the Governor's report isn't due until October 1<sup>st</sup>, the Agency hasn't been wasting time and Family Services has already made some significant changes in policies, practices and staffing in order to enhance DCF's ability to protect Vermont's children.