



DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

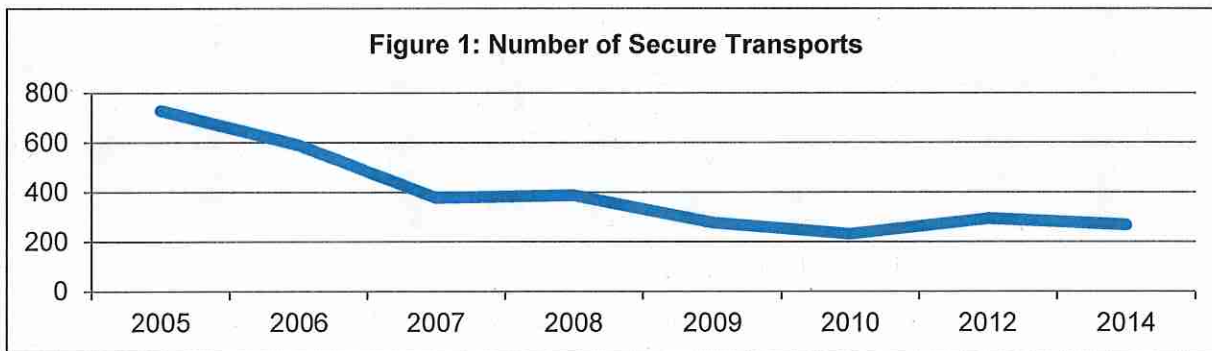
To: Senator Dick Sears, Chair, Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee
From: Ken Schatz, Commissioner, Department for Children and Families
Date: December 11, 2015
Subject: Update on Efforts to Reduce Secure Transports of Youth in DCF Custody

Dear Senator Sears,

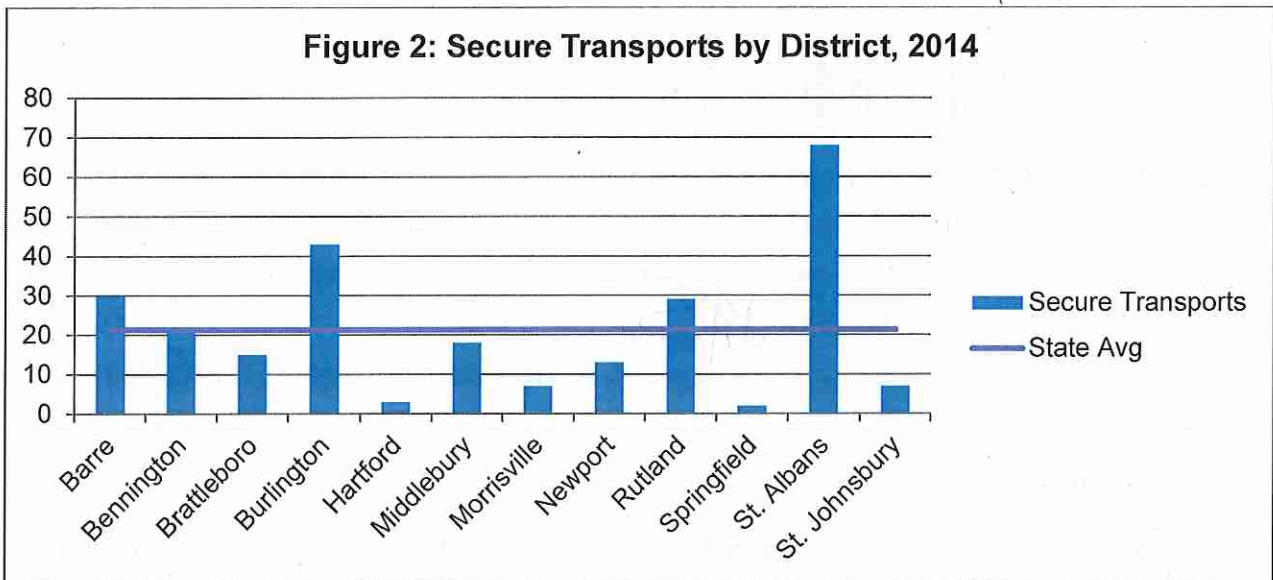
I am writing to provide an update on DCF's efforts to reduce the number securely transported youth in DCF custody.

It is FSD policy that children and youth in custody will be transported using the least secure method that can reasonably assure safety. In 2014, the county Sheriff's Departments completed 267 secure transports of DCF youth. These youth were primarily delinquent and unmanageable cases, but also include a limited number of youth in custody for abuse or neglect that required secure transport to assure their safety or the safety of others. In FY2015, DCF spent \$211,000 securely transporting youth in custody.

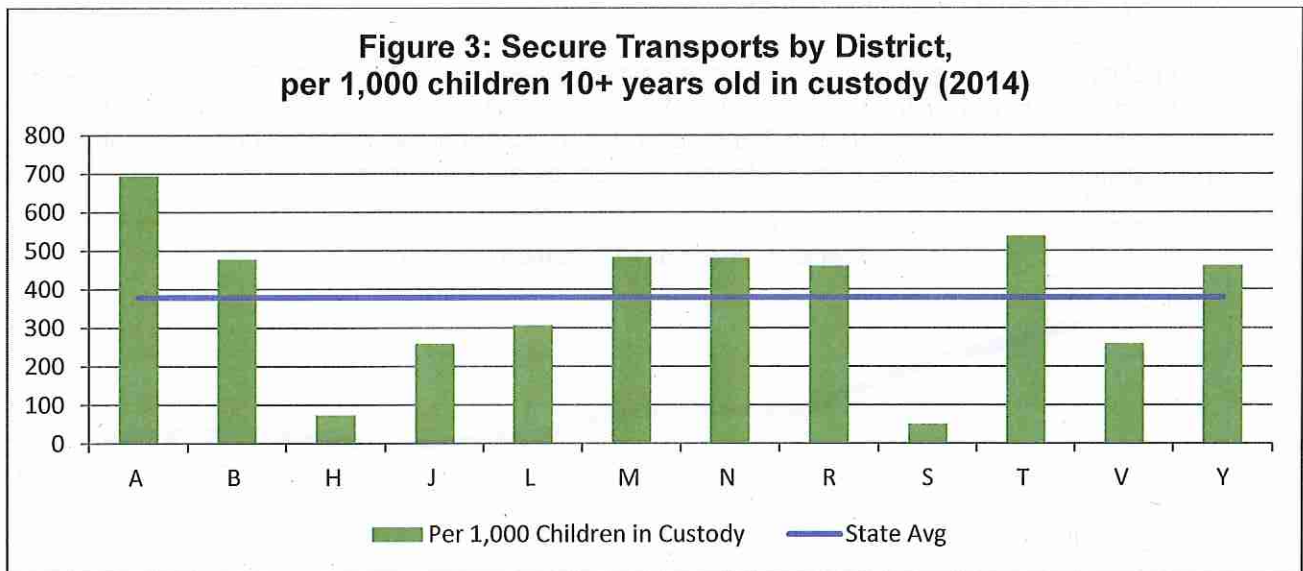
FSD policy changes have resulted in a dramatic reduction in the number of secure transports, from 728 in 2005 to 267 in 2014. However, there has been a plateau in this outcome over the past several years. In addition, the Bennington County Sheriff has recently provided notice to end a statewide non-secure transportation contract as of December 31, 2015.



There are significant geographic disparities in the number of secure transports requested by district. St. Albans accounts for 25% of secure transports due in-part to factors described in a previous memo (dated 10/7/2015), including the large number of delinquent and unmanageable youth and the scarcity of residential placements in the surrounding area. However, five districts (St. Albans, Bennington, Burlington, Barre, and Rutland) requested over 70% of all secure transports in 2014.



These figures hold true even when considering the number of older children in custody (10+ years old). In addition, Newport, Bennington, and Middlebury also are above the state average for secure transports given the number of older children in custody. Based on this analysis, we plan to adopt a statewide approach to reduce the number of children being transported securely.



In addition, we have reviewed the existing secure transports contract and determined that it does not meet the unique needs of youth in DCF custody. These transports often use the highest levels of restraint (handcuffs, waist belt, ankle chains), are very expensive, and difficult to coordinate for DCF staff. We will continue to work with our partners within the Agency of Human Services around training and the use of the least restrictive levels of restraint that can assure the safety of Sheriffs and youth in DCF custody.

To reduce the number of youth being transported securely and to address the need for additional transportation capacity, we plan to issue an RFP in January 2016. This RFP will solicit alternatives to secure transport, allow DCF to require training on trauma and youth developmental needs, and increase capacity for non-secure transports whenever possible.