

1 TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

2 The Committee on Appropriations to which was referred Senate Bill No. 9  
3 entitled “An act relating to improving Vermont’s system for protecting  
4 children from abuse and neglect” respectfully reports that it has considered the  
5 same and recommends that the House propose to the Senate that the bill be  
6 amended as follows:

7 First: By striking Sec. 22 in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof the  
8 following:

9 Sec. 22. THE DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES;  
10 POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND PRACTICES

11 (a) The Commissioner for Children and Families shall:

12 (1) ensure that Family Services Division policies, procedures, and  
13 practices are consistent with the best interests of the child and are consistent  
14 with statute;

15 (2) ensure that Family Services Division policies, procedures, and  
16 practices are consistent with each other and are applied in a consistent manner,  
17 in all Department offices and in all regions of the State;

18 (3) develop metrics as to:

19 (A) the appropriate case load for social workers in the Family  
20 Services Division that take into account the experience and training of a social

1 worker, the number of families and the total number of children a social  
2 worker is responsible for, and the acuity or difficulty of cases;

3 (B) the appropriate number of required face-to-face meetings  
4 between Family Services Division social workers and children;

5 (C) the appropriate number of required home visits and unannounced  
6 home visits by Family Services Division social workers;

7 (D) assessing criminal history and potential safety risks on all  
8 persons living in a household, or that will have child care responsibilities  
9 whenever a child who has been removed from a home is returned to that home;

10 and

11 (E) requiring all employees assigned to carry out investigations of  
12 child abuse and neglect to have training or experience in conducting  
13 investigations and have a master's degree in social work or an equivalent  
14 degree, or relevant experience.

15 (4) ensure that all Family Services Division employees receive  
16 training on:

17 (A) relevant policies, procedures, and practices; and

18 (B) the employees' legal responsibilities and obligations;

19 (5) develop policies, procedures, and practices to:

1           (A) ensure the consistent sharing of information, in a manner that  
2           complies with statute, treatment providers, courts, State’s Attorneys, guardians  
3           ad litem, law enforcement, and other relevant parties;

4           (B) encourage treatment providers and all agencies, departments, and  
5           other persons that support recovery to provide regular treatment progress  
6           updates to the Commissioner;

7           (C) ensure that courts have all relevant information in a timely  
8           fashion, and that Department employees file paperwork and reports in a timely  
9           manner;

10          (D) require that the Family Services Division assess a child’s  
11          safety if:

12                (i) the child remains in a home from which other children have  
13                been removed; or

14                (ii) the child remains in the custody of a parent or guardian whose  
15                parental rights as to another child have been terminated;

16           (E) improve information sharing with mandatory reporters who have  
17           an ongoing relationship with a child;

18           (F) ensure that mandatory reporters are informed that any  
19           confidential information they may receive cannot be disclosed to a person who  
20           is not authorized to receive that information;

1           (G) ensure all parties authorized to receive confidential information  
2           are informed of their right to receive that information; and

3           (H) apply results-based accountability or other data-based quality  
4           measures to determine if children who receive services from the Family  
5           Services Division in different areas of the State have different outcomes and  
6           the reasons for those differences; and

7           (6) by September 30, 2015, develop and implement a Family Services  
8           Division policy requiring a six-month supervision period by the Department  
9           after a child is returned to the home from which he or she was removed due to  
10          abuse or neglect.

11          (b) On or before September 30, 2015, the Commissioner shall submit a  
12          written response to the House Committees on Human Services and on  
13          Judiciary and to the Senate Committees on Health and Welfare and on  
14          Judiciary with the Commissioner's response to the issues in subsection (a) of  
15          this section, including the language of any new or amended policies and  
16          procedures.

17          Second: In Sec. 23, subsection (b), by striking the word “eight” and  
18          inserting in lieu thereof the word six

19          Third: In Sec. 23, subsection (b)(3), by striking the words “In addition to  
20          one member-at-large appointed from each chamber, one” and inserting in lieu  
21          thereof the word One

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7 (Committee vote: \_\_\_\_\_)

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\_\_\_\_\_

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Representative \_\_\_\_\_

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FOR THE COMMITTEE