

## **DCF Testimony in response to H.74**

DCF fully supports the concept of violence prevention for employees working directly with clients. However, the mandates in H.74 require substantial resources and technology that are not available to DCF. DCF does not have a training unit or training budget, although one of the larger divisions has training resources. There is no technology in place to adequately track and maintain incident records. To include all programs providing direct services to clients that are administered, licensed, certified or funded in part by the AHS or a department of the Agency would create enormous financial and workload issues that include foster parents, child care providers, community partners and more.

It is important to note that DCF does have a system in place to provide safety provisions for employees working directly with clients. When there is a threat to an employee, the DCF protocol includes:

1. Completing an incident report using the BGS website;
2. A conference (in person or by telephone) is held when there is a serious threat. This consultation includes the employee, the employee's supervisor, the DCF Operations Director, BGS security, and the unit or division head;
3. A safety plan is developed and implemented;
4. The plan is reviewed every few days until the situation has been resolved or modified;

There are times when law enforcement intervenes and situations are resolved quickly when there is a probation or parole violation. Other times a security detail is required for a brief and sometimes extensive period of time, although those situations are infrequent.

### **Child Development Division**

Child Development Division provides regular training for the Child Care Licensors. Examples include personal safety training from the Vermont State Police in April of 2012 and an AHS field staff safety training from a DOC trainer in October of 2014. New employee orientation includes standard safety measures such as:

- Providing supervisors with afterhours contact information in the event that a licensor did not return home;
- Maintaining current data in Outlook calendars;
- Having licensors routinely call home at the end of the workday so family members know the estimated arrival time and the travel route.



### Family Services Division

This division experiences a higher level of threats than any other division in DCF, especially when children come into custody or parental rights are going to be terminated. All new social workers receive safety training as part of their three weeks of intensive new worker training. The division follows a protocol when threats are made. Standard operating procedure includes filling out a staff safety incident form (FS 110) as well as completing the BGS incident report. In situations deemed serious, safety planning begins with a conference call that includes BGS security, the DCF Operations Director, Family Services central office staff such as the Operations Manager, the social worker, the social work supervisor and the district director. The result of this consultation could mean filing a NTO (No Trespass Order), contacting Vermont State Police or local PD, and other safety measures such as having an escort, having a security detail provided by BGS, working out of a different district office, and hiring a sheriff to cover the office until the situation is resolved or modified. FSD has a draft written protocol that is currently being reviewed and may potentially be adopted for all DCF.

### The Commissioner's Office and Other Divisions

Although less frequent, there are times when threats are made to employees in the Commissioner's Office, the Office of Child Support, Disability Determination Services, and Economic Services Division, specifically to Benefits Program Specialists and Reach Up case Managers. The same protocol used by Family Services Division is followed throughout the department.

