

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 recommended by the Committee on Judiciary and further amended
7 as follows:

8 First: By striking Sec. 19 in its entirety and inserting in lieu thereof the
9 following:

10 Sec. 19. THE DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES;
11 POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND PRACTICES

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

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

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

19 (3) develop metrics as to the appropriate case load for social workers in
20 the Family Services Division that take into account the experience and training

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

14 (C) ensure that courts have all relevant information in a timely
15 fashion, and that Department employees file paperwork and reports in a timely
16 manner;

17 (D) require that the Family Services Division assess a child's
18 safety if:

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

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

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

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

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

10 (H) apply results-based accountability or other data-based quality
11 measures to determine if children who receive services from the Family
12 Services Division in different areas of the State have different outcomes and
13 the reasons for those differences.

14 (6) ensure that all employees assigned to carry out investigations of
15 child abuse and neglect have training or experience in conducting
16 investigations and have a master's degree in social work or an equivalent
17 degree, or relevant experience; and

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

1 (b) The Commissioner for Children and Families shall, within available
2 resources, develop a plan to implement the following policies, procedures, and
3 practices, including identifying potential costs to:

4 (1) increase the number of required face-to-face meetings between
5 Family Services Division social workers and children;

6 (2) increase the number of required home visits and require
7 unannounced home visits by Family Services Division social workers; and

8 (3) require that all persons living in a household, or that will have child
9 care responsibilities, will be assessed for criminal history and potential safety
10 risks whenever a child who has been removed from a home is returned to that
11 home.

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

18 Second: In Sec. 20, subsection (b), by striking the word “eight” and
19 inserting in lieu thereof the word six

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

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10 (Committee vote: _____)

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Representative _____

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FOR THE COMMITTEE