

The Vermont Citizens' Advisory Board (VCAB):

- VCAB was established in 1995 pursuant to a federal law requiring an independent panel to review child protection cases and procedures.
- The board serves to “examine policies, practices, and procedures of the state’s child protection agency, and where appropriate, review specific cases to evaluate the extent to which the agency is discharging its responsibilities, and provide for public outreach and comment in order to assess the impact of current procedures and practices upon children and families throughout Vermont.”

Justice for Children Task Force:

- The Task Force is a committee convened by the judiciary with members including supreme court justices, superior and probate court judges, court administrators, DCF officials, public defenders, prosecutors, assistant attorneys general, doctors, private attorneys, and independent policy experts.
- The Task Force is “a collaborative, interdisciplinary effort that brings together those who are in charge of decisions that can improve outcomes for children in foster care. Focusing on the perspective of the children, the Task Force will improve outcomes for these children by: (1) Identifying systemic barriers which contribute to a child remaining in care for a longer period than is necessary given the child’s circumstances. (2) Developing solutions designed to reduce the impact of such barriers in a manner which ensures that due process and legal rights of all parties are respected and protected. (3) Measuring the effectiveness of such changes once implemented. (4) Reporting back to the Supreme Court with recommendations.”

Vermont Children’s Alliance (Child Advocacy Centers):

- The Children’s Alliance is an umbrella organization for Vermont’s Child Advocacy Centers which provides multidisciplinary collaboration on individual cases to investigate, treat, manage, and prosecute child abuse cases.
- Each CAC includes representatives from law enforcement, child protection, prosecution, mental health, medical services, and victim advocacy.
- The CACs focus on investigation and prosecution of individual cases, but also provides training services, systemic advocacy, and technical assistance.

Children and Family Council for Prevention Programs (CFCPP):

- “The mission of the Children and Family Council for Prevention Programs is to advocate for and promote healthy children, families, and communities, and to eradicate child abuse, delinquency, and other forms of violence.”
- The CFCPP is a 21-member advisory group appointed by the governor to “provide advice to the Governor and the Legislature about juveniles, the juvenile justice system, and the prevention of such problem behaviors as juvenile delinquency, dropping out of school,

teenage pregnancy, substance abuse and child abuse among children and their families. Duties involve administering the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Formula Grant for Vermont and the Vermont State Children's Trust Fund (CTF). Administering the Children's Trust Fund includes raising money for it. Work is performed with the assistance of the Vermont State Agency of Human Services (AHS).”

The Department’s internal procedures:

- The Department has a policy in place for resolving complaints (DCF Policy 265). That policy provides a mechanism where the department can receive complaints, resolve complaints, and escalate complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved to supervisory staff.
- For department decisions that impact the most important things that families in the system deal with (custody goals, placement of children, visitation) DCF has a more comprehensive system of complaint resolution (DCF Policy 123) that allows any party to formally appeal the decisions made by social workers to the district director, and to appeal an unfavorable decision of the district director all the way to the commissioner.

The Juvenile Defender Office:

- The office of the juvenile defender regularly fields complaints regarding the actions of DCF, the courts, and attorneys assigned in abuse and neglect cases. Where pursuing a complaint does not undermine either an ongoing proceeding or ongoing representation by counsel, the office routinely follows up on complaints and seeks resolution.

Human Services Board:

- The Human Services Board hears appeals brought by individuals who are aggrieved by decisions or policies of departments and programs within the Agency of Human Services (including DCF).
- The HSB can review any “claim for assistance, benefits, or services” that is denied or any action “affecting [an individual’s] receipt of assistance, benefits, or services, or license application.”
- The HSB can also review cases where an “individual is aggrieved by agency policy as it affects his or her situation.”
- The HSB is quasi-judicial, and its decisions may be appealed to the Vermont Supreme Court.