



# Department for Children and Families Family Services Division

*CHINS Background and Overview*

*Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee*

*August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2018*

*Presented by Commissioner Ken Schatz*

# Family Services Division

## Primary Service Areas

- Child Abuse and Neglect Intake/Emergency Services
- Child Safety Interventions – Investigations and Assessments
- Family Support Services to High Risk Families
- Juvenile Probation
- Children in Custody
  - Abuse/neglect
  - Delinquency
  - Child Behavior

**Our  
Primary  
Focus:  
Child  
Safety**



**Strong relationships are a tool to increase child safety.**

# Family Services Division

**Mission:** *We partner with families and the community to promote safety, permanence, well-being and law abidance.*

# Family Services Division

We Achieve Our Mission By:

Safely stabilizing and preserving families;

and if that is not possible;

Safely caring for children/youth and reunifying;

and if that is not possible;

Safely supporting the development of permanency and lifelong connections for children/youth

# Family Services Division



- 12 District Offices
- Central Office
  - Two direct service units – Centralized Intake and Emergency Services and Residential Licensing and Special Investigations
  - Provides support to the field, oversees policy and practice, manages budgets, grants and contracts, maintains communication with federal partners
- Woodside
  - In Feb 2011, enabling legislation was passed to allow the re-purposing of Woodside
  - Woodside is no longer a detention facility; treatment is provided to all residents from the first day

# Central Office

## Operations

- Supervision of District Directors and statewide functions

## System of Care Unit

- Supports quality service delivery through the contracted system of care, including foster care, kinship care, adoption, residential care and community services
- Includes adoption unit: with approx. **2,150** children receiving adoption subsidy, and post-adoption supports through the Vermont Adoption Consortium and the Vermont Adoption Registry.

# Central Office

## Revenue Enhancement Unit

- Focus on revenues, expenditures, grants and contracts

## Policy, Practice and Performance Unit (PPP)

- Planning (state and federal)
- Policy development
- Practice supports
- Continuous quality improvement and assurance
- Child and Family Services Review



# Central Office Direct Services

## Residential Licensing & Special Investigations (RLSI)

Licensing of foster homes and residential programs:

	6/2010-6/2011	6/2017-6/2018
Reports screened	807	1127
Report accepted	197	174
Regulatory interventions	124	159
License applications	472	772
Licenses granted	249	476
License renewals	57	123

# Central Office Direct Services

## Centralized Intake and Emergency Services Program (CIES)

- 24/7 call center handling Child Protection Intake
- After hours telephone response to emergencies concerning children in custody, child abuse, etc.; with responsibility to call out local staff when necessary.
- Child protection registry checks.



**21,201 Reports in 2017**

# Governing Statutes

- Title 33, Chapter 49
  - Child Abuse and Neglect Definitions
  - Child Abuse Investigation and Assessment Requirements
  - Administrative Appeal Processes
  - Disclosure of Information
- Title 33, Chapter 51, 52, and 53
  - Judicial Procedures Related to Children in Need of Care and Supervision (CHINs)
- 15a VSA on Adoption Proceedings

# Decision Point: Is this a valid allegation?

- Allegation validity is a decision made by Centralized Intake or a District Supervisor using existing statute (Title 33, Chapter 49), rule and policy. A report is considered valid when information suggests that:
  - A person responsible for the child's welfare has harmed a child by
    - a. physical injury;
    - b. neglect;
    - c. medical neglect;
    - d. emotional maltreatment; and/or.
    - e. abandonment of the child.
  - The person responsible for the child's welfare has, by acts or omissions, placed the child at significant risk of serious physical harm
  - Any person who, by acts or omissions, placed the child at significant risk of sexual abuse
  - Any person has sexually abused a child.

# Child Abuse and Neglect: Investigations & Assessments

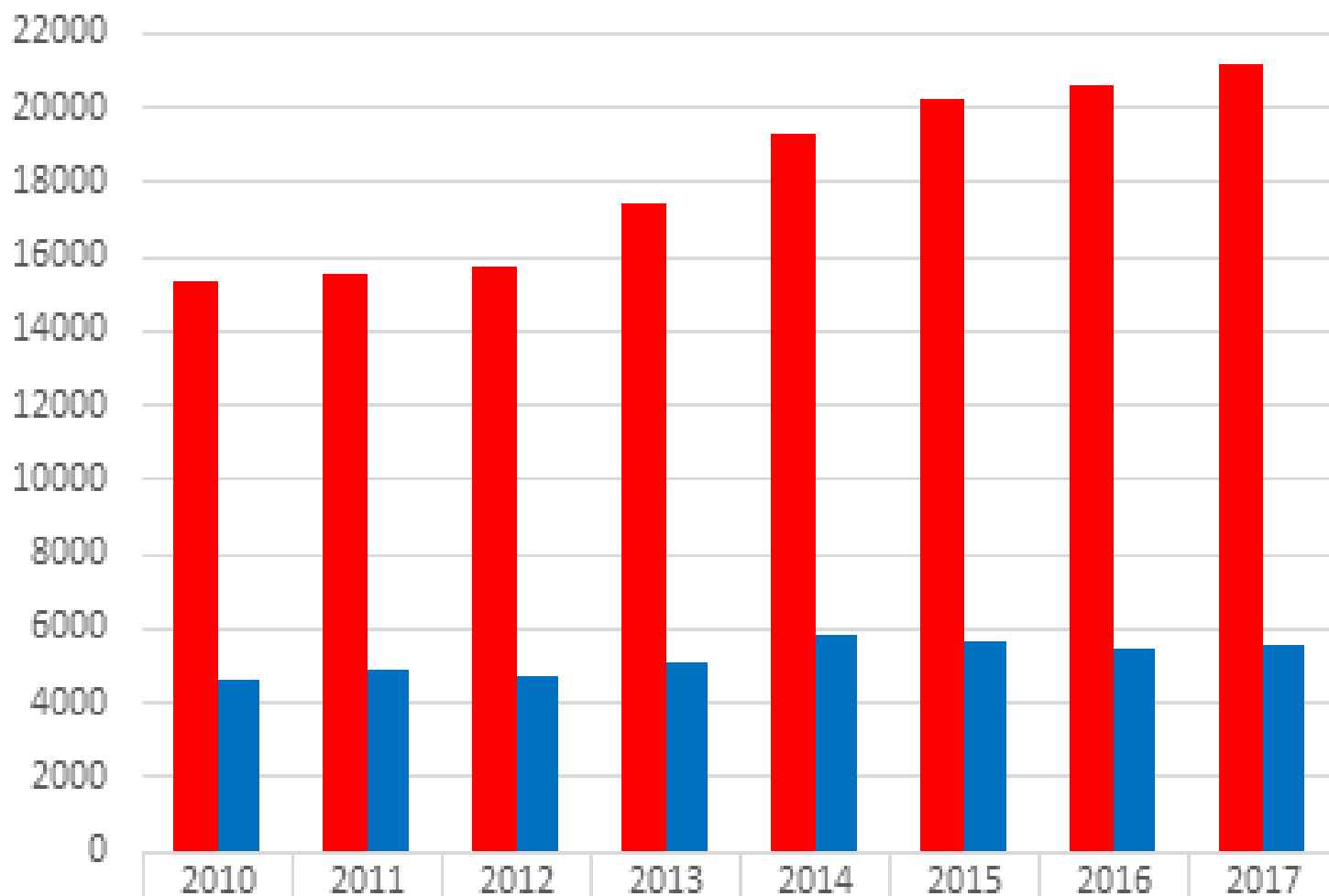
Specialized staff conduct child abuse investigations and assessments (often referred to as child safety interventions), with primary focus on the immediate safety of children.

- Districts conduct most child safety interventions
- DCF Residential Licensing and Special Investigation Unit focuses on regulated facilities and schools.



5,527 in 2017

## Trends - Intakes & Accepted Reports



■ Intakes

15379

15526

15760

17458

19288

20233

20583

21201

■ Accepted Reports

4601

4911

4699

5135

5846

5630

5509

5527

# Powers and Duties of the Commission

- Title 33, Chapter 51 sets forth Powers and Duties of the Commissioner that include:
  - (1) To undertake assessments and make reports and recommendations to the Court as authorized by the juvenile judicial proceedings chapters
  - (2) To investigate complaints and allegations that a child is in need of care or supervision for the purpose of considering the commencement of proceedings under the juvenile judicial proceedings chapters

# CHINS Definition

- "Child in need of care or supervision (CHINS)" means a child who:
  - (A) has been abandoned or abused by the child's parent, guardian, or custodian.
  - (B) is without proper parental care or subsistence, education, medical, or other care necessary for his or her well-being;
  - (C) is without or beyond the control of his or her parent, guardian, or custodian; or
  - (D) is habitually and without justification truant from compulsory school attendance.



# Examples of CHINS B Family Assessments

- A pattern of concerns or a single incident does not meet criteria for acceptance under 33 VSA Chapter 49, but the child may be without proper parental care or subsistence, medical, or other care necessary for his or her well-being.
- A newborn has a positive toxicology screen for illegal substances or prescription medication not prescribed to the patient or administered by a physician.
- A newborn has been deemed by a medical professional to have Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome through NAS scoring as the result of maternal use of illegal substances or non-prescribed prescription medication.

# Examples of CHINS B Assessments

- Information that a parent may have a substance use disorder and/or be experiencing significant mental health issues where there is no info that the child's care has been compromised – age of the child, observation of use and/or impairment, chronic condition where impact on caretaking is likely

# Decision Point: Is the Child Safe?

The first priority of the social worker is to answer the question

**Is the child safe now?**

- If not, what needs to be done to promote safety?
- Is out of home placement necessary?
- If the child must leave home, is a familiar person available to provide short-term care?
- Is DCF custody a necessary element to promote safety?

Structured Decision Making  
Assessment of Danger and Safety  
Is The Child Safe?

# Decision Point: Ongoing Services

The *Family Risk Assessment Tool* estimates the probability of future maltreatment in the household. The higher the risk, the more important it is to engage the family in identifying supports and services to prevent harm.

Structured Decision Making  
Risk Assessment  
What Is The Risk of Future Maltreatment?

# Family Support Cases

- A Family Support Case is opened if:
  - The family is at high or very high risk as indicated by the final risk level on the Family Risk Assessment; or
  - The family has a danger issue that could not be resolved during the child safety intervention, **regardless of risk level**; or
  - The family requires FSD involvement to ensure engagement with services or other support or monitoring.
- District social workers provide services to families who are at high risk for child abuse and neglect. This support is targeted at the reduction of risk and the promotion of protective capacities.

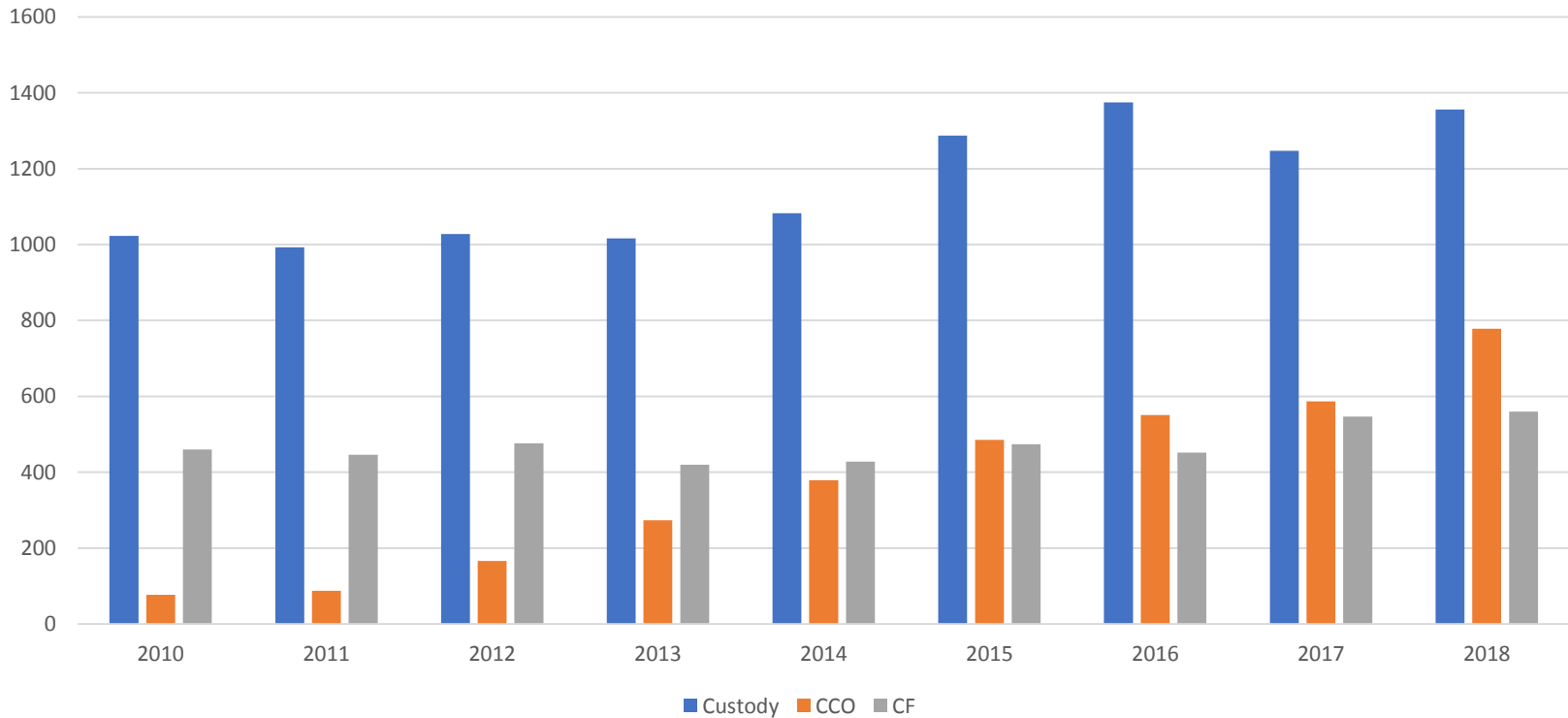
499 families point in time in August 2018

# Working With The Court

- In any type of case, a child can come into DCF custody due to concern for their safety – **AT ANY TIME**. This may happen during the Child Safety Intervention or may occur during an Family Support Case
- Only a police officer may take a child into physical custody.
- The officer must take the child home, or to a designated shelter, or to the court.
- Only a judge may transfer custody to DCF.
- During work hours, DCF usually initiates a court hearing. After hours, the police usually recommends custody; the hearing is usually held by phone.

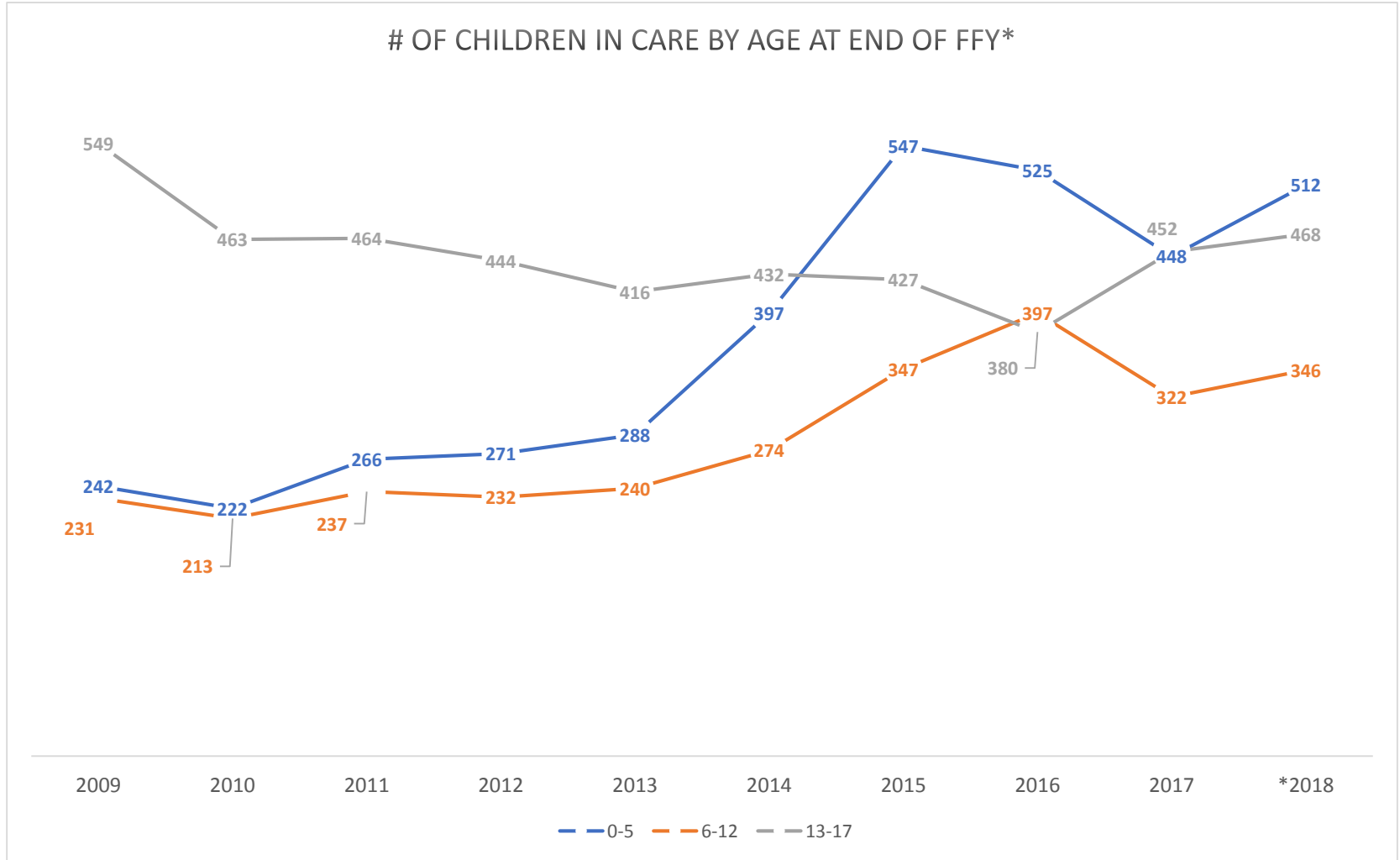
# Caseload Trends

FSD Youth in Custody, Conditional Custody and Family Support Cases  
*point-in-time, Q2*



Data Source: FSD Quarterly Management Reports (2010-2017)-last day of Q2; FSD Report Catalog-Full Caseload & CCO Reports (2018)  
Data note: 2018 is as of 7/2/2018.

# Children in DCF Custody



Data Source: FSD Quarterly Management Reports (2009-2017)-last day of Q3; FSD Report Catalog-All Open Custody Cases with Case Detail (2018)  
 Data note: 2018 is point-in-time as of 8/21/2018.



# Youth Justice

Unlike child protection agencies in most other states, FSD also serves as the state's youth justice agency.

In this role, we:

- Work with youth whose own behaviors put them at risk;
- Supervise youth who are on probation for committing delinquent acts;
- Assess youth to determine their challenges and strengths;
- Place youth in temporary out-of-home care when necessary;
- Work with the youth and parents towards their safe return home; and
- Find permanent homes for youth who cannot safely return home, preferably with extended family members or known connections.

**Social workers are NOT probation officers-rather they are social workers who are tasked by Vermont statute with overseeing probation conditions as set by the court.**

Social workers supervised 138 youth and were involved with 65 youth who are charged with a crime or delinquency but not yet adjudicated in August 2018