



# LEGISLATIVE BRIEFING SHEET

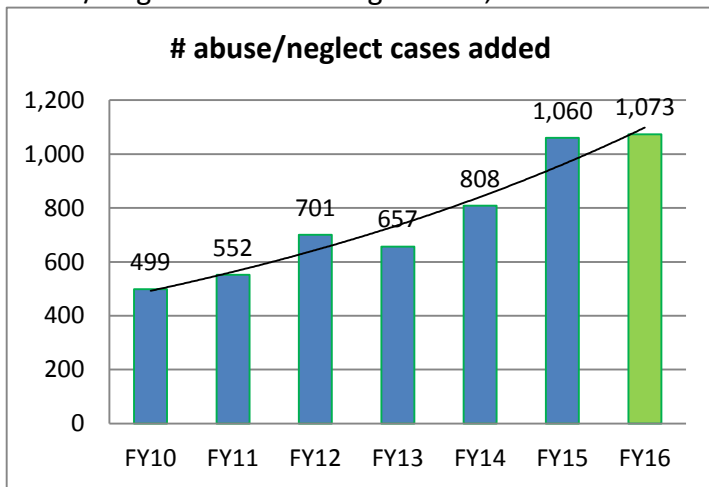


## How Much Did We Do?

### 2,069 new juvenile petitions were filed in FY16

FY10	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15	FY16
1,682	1,653	1,883	1,771	1,746	2,004	2,069

Juvenile petitions include CHINS (abuse/neglect, beyond parent control, truancy) and delinquency case types. FY16 saw a peak in the total number of new juvenile petitions filed (CHINS and delinquency). The increase is driven by a dramatic increase in new abuse/ neglect cases starting in FY14, as shown here:



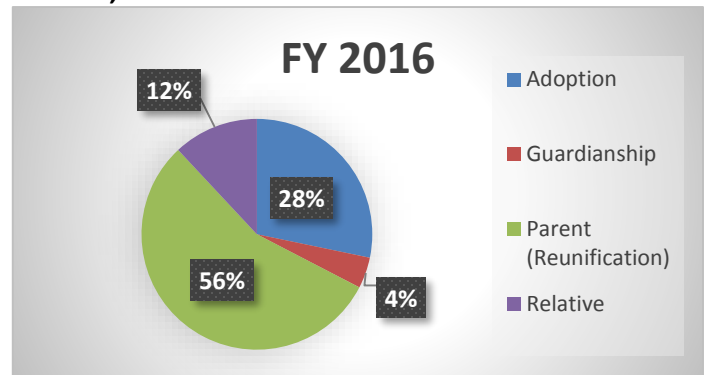
Abuse/neglect cases account for a growing portion of all new juvenile petitions filed: 52% in FY16, compared to 37% in FY12 and FY13. This case type is more likely to involve DCF custody and multiple court hearings, sometimes highly contested. In the past two years, the number of children under age 6 in DCF custody has increased by 65%. Parent opioid addiction continues to be a significant factor, particularly in cases with children under age 3 who came into DCF custody. The dramatic increase in abuse/neglect cases presents a significant challenge for the courts, attorneys, DCF social workers, and volunteer Guardians ad Litem.

## How Well Did We Do?

Since FY14, abuse/neglect cases increased 63% statewide, yet some courts experienced a doubling in the number of abuse/neglect filings. Not surprisingly, the courts are struggling with a backlog of cases. Many courts have added more time for juvenile hearings, at the expense of other dockets. This surge in cases has had a ripple effect through the entire judicial system.

When court intervention is necessary, the courts oversee the process of safe, permanent placements of children. As expected, the timeliness of court proceedings has suffered. The courts had a record number of Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) proceedings filed in FY16.

### In FY16, 774 children exited foster care:



### Time to permanency lengthened (DCF data):

Exits from foster care	FY14 (Avg. Yrs)	FY15 (Avg. Yrs)	FY16 (Avg. Yrs)
Adoption	2.2 yrs	2.3 yrs	2.01 yrs
Guardianship	1.8 yrs	.95 yrs	1.68 yrs
Return to parent(s)	1.1 yrs	.73 yrs	.84 yrs
Relative caregiver	.32 yrs	.49 yrs	.52 yrs
<b>COMBINED</b>	<b>1.35 yrs</b>	<b>1.12 yrs</b>	<b>1.26 yrs</b>



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### Is Anyone Better Off?

**Children in Foster Care:** The Juvenile Proceedings law allows a parent or relative to have legal custody of a child under court-ordered conditions. This has resulted in fewer children entering DCF custody. Despite this “conditional custody” option, the number of children in foster care is at an all-time high, and the number of children under age 6 in care has increased by 65%.

**Safety:** Since 2013, 99% of Vermont children have remained safe from re-abuse and neglect. Vermont exceeds the national standard for repeat maltreatment.

**Kinship Care:** When placed with relatives or close family friends (rather than in foster care with strangers), children have better outcomes regarding placement stability, behavior, and contact with siblings. The rate of Kinship Care has improved in recent years: 34% in CY 2013, 36% in CY 2014, 39% in CY 2015 and 39% first half of CY 2016.

**Placement Stability:** Multiple placement changes have a negative impact on a child’s development. Placement stability for children in foster care improved for five consecutive years.