

# H.201

Extend length of time a child may remain at a shelter designated by the  
Commissioner of the Department for Children & Families

Karen Vastine  
Senior Advisor to the Commissioner  
Department for Children and Families

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# Background: Services & Supports for Youth who are homeless or have run away from home

DCF and the Vermont Coalition for Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs (VCRHYP)

- ▶ VCRHYP provides a safety net to youth in distress, runaway youth, homeless youth and pregnant teens/teen parents.
- ▶ Services include shelter, crisis response, counseling, family mediation, and substance abuse treatment.
- ▶ DCF is responsible for the annual recertification of Commissioner Designated Shelters that are part of VCRHYP
- ▶ VCRHYP member agencies work with youth and their families.

# Background: Commissioner Designated Shelters

- ▶ 33 VSA § 5512 authorizes the Commissioner of DCF to designate facilities as qualified to house and assist children who have run away from their parents, guardian, or legal custodian for the purpose of reuniting them with their families.
- ▶ Commissioner Designated Shelters are regulated by the Family Services Division/Residential Licensing & Special Investigations Unit.

# Commissioner Designated Shelters (CDS)

How are youth referred?

- ▶ Self referrals
- ▶ Family
- ▶ Partner Agencies
- ▶ DCF
- ▶ Law Enforcement (which by statute can place a child at a CDS when they have reasonable grounds to believe has run away from home)
- ▶ Other

# Commissioner Designated Shelters

- ▶ In current statute, a child may be housed for a period up to 7 days.
- ▶ When a child is referred to the shelter, the program notifies the parents, guardians or custodians within 24 hours and obtains their permission to provide shelter to the youth.
- ▶ The program works to mediate differences between the child and their parents, guardians or custodians.
- ▶ During the time the child is at the shelter, the legal custody of the child shall remain with the parent, unless otherwise designated by the juvenile court.
- ▶ After 7 days, the child is released to his or her parents, guardian or custodian
  - OR the child is brought to Juvenile Court by a law enforcement officer

# H.201 Overview

## Section 1: Amends Title 33, Section 5303 - Procedure for Runaway Children

- ▶ If a law enforcement officer takes a child into custody who meets the definition of a runaway child, they can be brought directly to a Commissioner Designated Shelter.
- ▶ H.201 proposes to amend the statute to allow that youth to remain in shelter up to 21 days (from up to 7 days).

## Section 2: Amends Title 33, Section 5304: Designated Shelters for Runaway Children

- ▶ Allows children housed in a designated shelter to remain in the shelter for up to 21 days.
- ▶ Expands the definition of children who are referred to Commissioner Designated Shelters to include those who are referred by other means as laid out in policy.

# Reason for H.201

- ▶ The federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act sets federal funding guidelines for shelter stays of up to 21 days.

Allowing a longer stay would:

- Align state statute with nationally recognized best practice and policy.
- Give shelters additional time to support and stabilize youth who are presenting more complex needs than when this policy was adopted in 2003.
- Allow the additional time to be used to support the youth's efforts in reunifying with their family.
- Or to provide greater flexibility for an alternative placement to be coordinated with DCF if reunifying proves to be an unsafe option. (If appropriate, the child can be deemed by family court to be in the custody of DCF.)

## H.201 - Budget Implications

- ▶ The services provided by VCRHYP agencies to youth are bundled into one monthly fee for each youth of \$1,700.
- ▶ The VCRHYP contract is capped at \$2,465,702 (\$195K is General Fund, \$2.27M is Medicaid).
- ▶ Regardless of the services being provided, the VCRHYP member agency monthly rate is capped at \$1,700/Youth.
- ▶ The programs utilize their bundled payments to cover each youth's combination of provided services.
- ▶ The monthly rate is not impacted by days in shelter.