



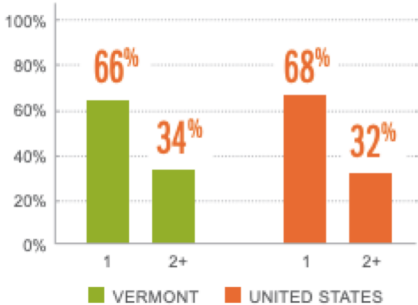
Seeking radical results - we can meet the needs of the children and youth in Vermont's care.

How are we doing?



Data

Episodes in the Foster Care System



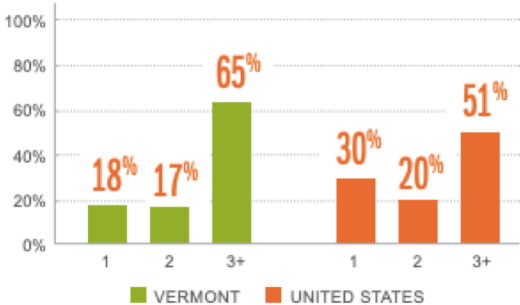
VERMONT 2+ Foster Care Episodes



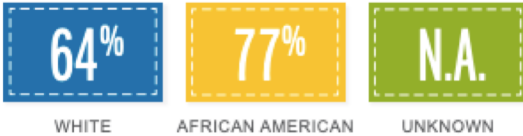
UNITED STATES 2+ Foster Care Episodes



Number of Placements During Most Recent Foster Care Episode



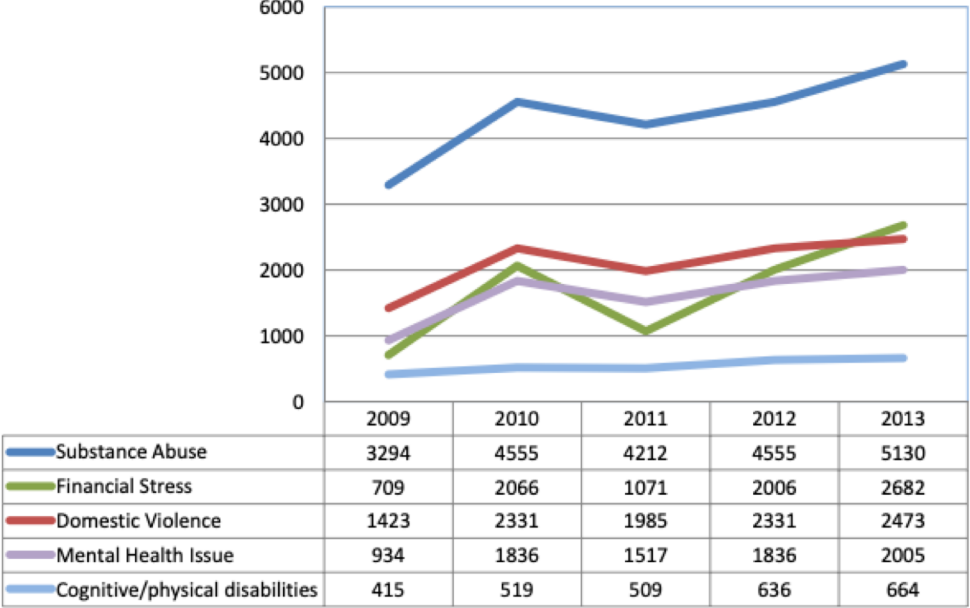
VERMONT 3+ Foster Care Placements



UNITED STATES 3+ Foster Care Placements



Family Factors Identified by Reporters, 2009-2013



Stories – Qualitative Data



Even at its very best, the interventions we impose are traumatic.

National



Mom furious after DCF worker picks up wrong child from day care: 'How does this even happen?'

"I'm getting a call saying, 'Don't freak out, but your daughter was mistaken for another Aria,'" McCullough said.

Although KinderCare said McCullough's daughter was returned within the hour, the child's grandmother, Lana Leonard, said the damage had already been done.

"I said, 'What did you do?' [Aria] said, 'They took me and gave me toys to play with,'" Leonard said. "I said, 'Were you scared? You didn't know this lady!' She said, 'Yeah, Nana. I was very scared.'"

Leonard said the whole situation was "unacceptable" and was left looking for answers.

"There's no excuse," Leonard said. "There's no excuse at all."

>> On Boston25News.com: Missing & Forgotten: DCF head shares changes, pilot program to protect kids

KinderCare said it is taking the matter seriously, and is working with the DCF to prevent any further misunderstandings in the future.

"I don't want to see another kid go through what she had to go through," McCullough said.

The Department of Children and Families said it "received a report and is investigating."

The cost of inaction is high....



“We start out recognizing them as victims; then fail to help them heal; and eventually punish them for expressing their pain.”

~ Citizens for Juvenile Justice

Are we at our best?

“

**BE YOUR
BEST
SELF.**

2ND GRADER

Do we know what it will take to improve?



Human Services



Do we know if we need different policies, different practice, more funding, or a combination of all three?



Why has the current Office of Child Advocate structure been so effective in NH?

Ombuds –

- Responds to complaints with a credible review process
- Builds collaborative relationships for reform
- Maintains independence and impartiality
- **Listens and informs**



Child Advocate –

- Turns complaints into building blocks for better outcomes
- Performs random and targeting case review to better understand trends
- Makes recommendations to DCF, policy makers, and the public

Voices from the field

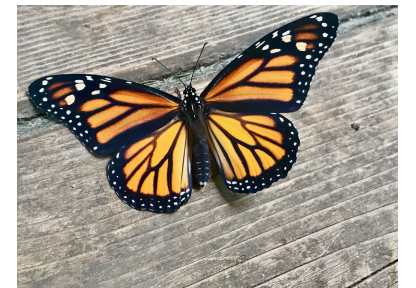
“In my opinion, the OCA has brought a much needed spotlight to the work of the Division that has been missing for some time. While there are individuals within the Division that struggle with the “oversight” piece the OCA provides, I find the additional eyes and attention on the welfare of NH’s children only to be a positive change. Within my role I have been working to drive various initiatives forward and the OCA has provided some much needed support. Initiatives such as focusing on substance exposed infants and our policies regarding our work with them and their families, revamping how we conduct our critical incident reviews to reflect what modern safety science tells us about negative outcomes, and educating the legislature on the need for additional funding of not just positions within DCYF, but additional community services to support our work as well.

I recently had the privilege to be part of the OCA’s first SLR (Systems Learning Review), which was a review of two child deaths that occurred last year (two separate reviews were conducted). I was very impressed with the work that the OCA has done with Collaborative Safety in not just learning about modern safety science and applying it to the work of child welfare, but also following through in implementing and conducting their own review process which I believe will only strengthen the work of the Division. I am hoping to assist in bringing that same lens to how the Division conducts reviews, as the feedback from Division staff that participated in the SLR reviews was very positive.

I encourage you to continue the work you are doing on behalf of the children of VT and I believe VT would reap the same benefits that we have seen in NH with having the dedicated staff of our OCA. ”

Kate LeBell

Safety Program Specialist, Division for Children, Youth & Families, NH



*"I'm a family service worker, meaning I generally get a case from Assessment once the court has made a finding against parents and I try to help them correct the conditions which led to removal before the clock runs out. I was transferred one case that was *not* court-involved which was just horrific. It was in-home but the kids really should have been removed. As in, there had been additional unexplained injuries after the person we thought was the perp had left the home. My first thought was that I would be the next CPSW in the headlines for having a child die on my caseload. After all, without the court involved it's essentially all on my own shoulders. The decision not to remove the kids was made because an attorney thought our judge would be too sympathetic to mom, who was also a victim. He thought it would be better to attempt to help the family with a non-court case than lose when we filed and no longer have any ability to work with them. There was a lot of disagreement in the administration about what should be done. Literally as soon as I got back to my desk from the case transfer, I emailed Moira and asked her to look into it. She was able to ensure that the case was regularly reviewed and to shift some of the responsibility elsewhere. (Luckily it turned out that I was wrong and the case is going swimmingly. But that's another story.)*

I love having the OCA because it can cut straight through the politics and administrative BS that keep us from serving kids. If I know I have no power in the situation, and no resources to help, I go to them... I feel safe reporting to them because of the anonymity, and because I know their agenda.

Lastly, they're one more voice fighting for what we need. When I go to the capitol to testify to the legislature to get us funding, Moira is there, too, backing us up. The OCA doesn't do things because of power or connections or politics. They want to fix the system and get workers what they need to help kids. A lot of the time, supporting kids also means supporting field staff."



“ State child advocates or ombudsmen may currently be the fastest growing sector of government, reflecting the widespread recognition that children’s rights are limited and their voices unheard. “

Moira O’Neill, Director
New Hampshire Office of the Child Advocate

An OCA is a critical component of a functioning system. If designed properly, it will:

- instill trust when the system is operating as intended;
- catch individual transgressions before they cause permanent harm;
- give the state an independent view of where to invest its time and resources.



Useful resources:

