

**Department for Children and Families
Commissioner's Office**
280 State Drive – HC 1 North
Waterbury, VT 05671-1080
www.dcf.vt.gov

[phone] 802-241-0929
[fax] 802-241-0950

Agency of Human Services

Memorandum

To: Rep. Kitty Toll, Chair, House Appropriations Committee
Maria Belliveau, Legislative Fiscal Officer

From: Ken Schatz, DCF Commissioner

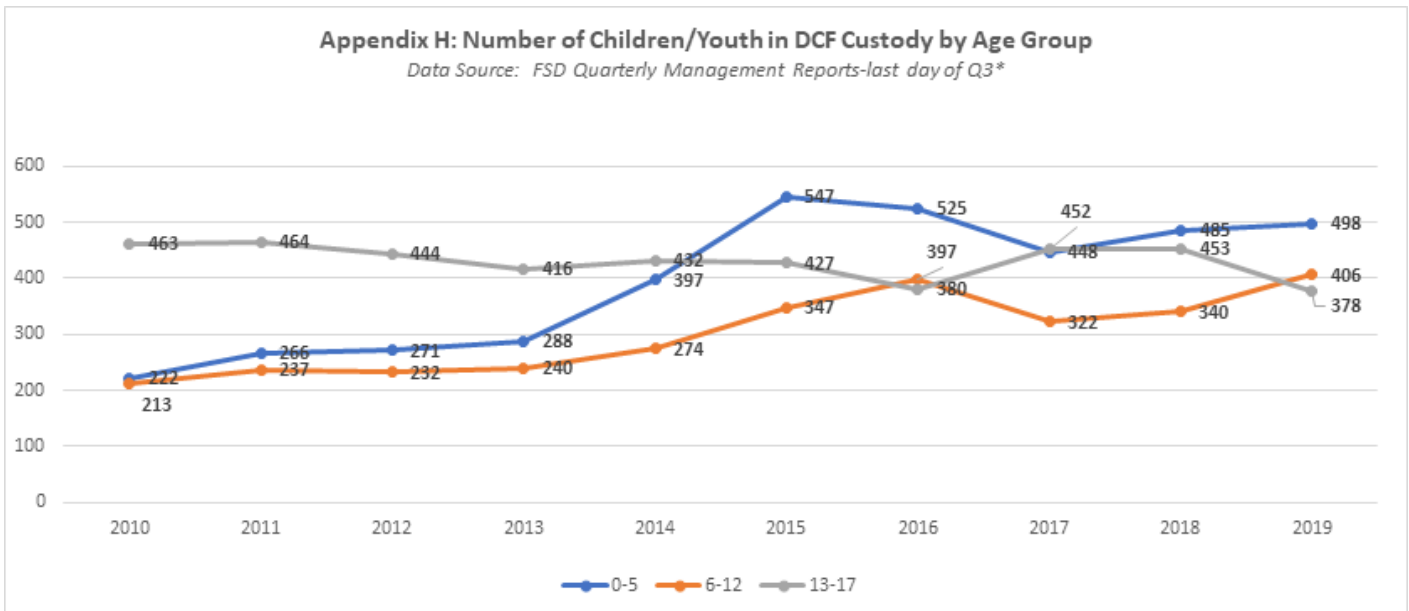
Re: Response to questions, FY20 BAA

Date: January 10, 2020

What is the number of staff associated with the current Economic Services Division (ESD) vacancy saving rate and what is the number of staff associated with the vacancy rate associated with the loss of revenue (Medicaid Admin and SNAP Revenue Adjustments) applied to vacancy savings?

- ESD does not have a separate and distinct Admin ID to calculate vacancy savings specifically for ESD. The Admin DeptID includes ESD, the DCF Business Office, and the DCF Commissioner's Office; it has 374 positions. The budgeted vacancy rate in this Admin DeptID before BAA is 4.36% and after BAA it is 5.54%. Before BAA, the budget was for 16.3 positions, on average, to be held open; after BAA, it is 20.7.

Can DCF provide data on trends for ages of children in custody?



Can DCF provide data on length of stay for children in care/custody until permanency is found?

- Below is a point-in-time report that provides the length of time in custody for all children who were in custody on 12/2/2019:

Custody Case Type	Length of Custody Prior to Permanency						Grand Total
	0-6 Months	7-12 Months	13-18 Months	19-24 Months	25-36 Months	37+ Months	
Abuse/Neglect	260	238	169	149	124	137	1077
Delinquent	21	11	10	8	4	8	62
Unmanageable	34	17	17	7	16	13	104
Voluntary	2						2
Grand Total	317	266	196	164	144	158	1245

- Unmanageable** custody cases are those youth that come into care because they are beyond parental control due to truancy, running away, substance use, mental health, etc.
- Voluntary** are youth that come into custody on a voluntary basis, no court involvement.

Can DCF provide the number of children in in-state residential care?

- 69 (as of 12/19/19)

Can DCF provide the number of children in out-of-state residential care?

- 66 (as of 12/19/19)

Why is the specialized foster care funding decreasing (\$33,163 to \$32,604)?

- Funding for Specialized Foster Care has not decreased, however the cost per case has decreased effectively reducing the overall spend. FSD is proposing an increase in this line item.

How many children were served by Special Accommodation Grants (SAGs) in FY19?

- Special Accommodation Grants (SAGs) provide assistance to child care programs to maintain placements for specified children and families with specialized needs. These grants often fund individual aides to support the safety and inclusion of children with intensive medical or behavioral needs. They also fund supports such as assistive devices for those with disabilities.
- 95 children were served by SAGs in FY19 (61 children were served by grants issued in FY19, an additional 34 were served in FY19 by grants issued in FY18).
- CDD has historically had a degree of flexibility in awarding SAGs due to the availability of child care funds in the budget; approximately \$350k in annual SAG awards were provided historically. As spending in the Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP) has increased in the past year, CDD faced limitations in our ability to continue to support SAGs as a discretionary use of funds in FY20. As a result, we provided approximately \$240K (66%) in SAG awards in FY20, however SAG funding ended early this fiscal year to ensure adequate funds for other CDD expenses including Specialized Child Care Coordination (SCC Coordinators) services. The Department included funding for SAGs in our application for the Pre-school Development (PDG) Implementation Grant, which we did not receive. The separate PDG Planning Grant, which DCF currently holds, includes a needs assessment which will in part examine the landscape and need for SAGs.
- Please also see the **attached** SAG chart that shows FY20 SAG approved grants/distribution.



How many children are served by the specialized child care coordination grants in FY2019?

- The Child Development Division funds Specialized Child Care (SCC) Coordinators in each region of the state. CDD prioritized funding for the SCC Coordinators because they provide on-going consultation and education to specialized child care programs to help them build capacity within their programs to care for children with special needs. They also serve families directly through eligibility determination, assistance in accessing child care placements and supports, and individualized service planning and collaboration with the Family Services Division and the CIS multidisciplinary team. These services are required by federal regulation and fulfill requirements for the federal child care block grant.
- These services are partially funded through the Children’s Integrated Services bundle; the Specialized Child Care Coordination grants provide the additional support needed to ensure these positions are fully funded based on caseload. This replaces funding previously provided under the federal Race to the Top grant that ended in 2018 and expands upon it slightly to ensure equitable funding across regions.
- In SFY19, 2,872 children required specialized child care placements. Specialized Child Care Coordinators serve all children accessing specialized child care through eligibility determination and referral to child care programs, and, when needed, develop individualized service plans, assist with accessing supportive resources such as Special Accommodation Grants, and provide consultation and education to child care providers.
- The SCC approach has been built and fine-tuned over the past 10 years in response to identified needs in the field. It ensures the individualized needs of all children and families with specialized child care needs are met, and that child care programs receive support in serving these families. The funding in the CIS bundle for these services was augmented through the Race to the Top federal grant; the supplemental grants continued that support and expanded it slightly to ensure equitable distribution across regions.
- The chart below shows the regional impact of SAGs and the number of children with specialized service needs served through the Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP). SCC Coordinators serve all children in this specialized CCFAP category, and serve child care programs designated to accept children with specialized needs.

SFY2019 Children with Specialized Child Care Financial Assistance Program Services Need

District	Unduplicated count of children with Specialized CCFAP Service Need	Number of Children awarded SAGs	Percentage of Children with Specialized CCFAP Services Need served by SAGs
Bennington	309	5	2%
Hartford	134	5	4%
Burlington	665	28	4%
Barre	199	0	0%
Morrisville	121	2	2%
Middlebury	260	1	0%
Newport	87	0	0%
Springfield	176	5	3%
St. Albans	191	1	1%
St. Johnsbury	224	5	2%
Rutland	306	3	1%
Brattleboro	200	6	3%
Grand Total	2872	61	2%



- In the chart above, the number of children with Specialized Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP) Service Needs represents an unduplicated count of children with Family Support, Protective Services, or Child With Special Health Needs services that attended a child care program at any point in SFY19. Data was from an attendance extract.
- Data on SAGs is from the application data on the grants.

Is there data on the number of individuals losing their housing from eviction?

- In Vermont, approximately 1,700 eviction cases are filed every year. The number one cause of eviction is falling behind on rent. In most cases, when families lose their housing it leads to increased rates of homelessness, unemployment, mental and physical illness, and financial and housing instability. On January 16, 2019, Vermont Legal Aid released a report examining this problem: [Eviction in Vermont: A Closer Look](#). Please see an excerpt from the report below:

This report marks the most comprehensive attempt to date to study evictions in Vermont. Its key findings are as follows:

1. *One in 44 (2.25%) renting households had an eviction filed against them in 2016.*
2. *In 70% of the cases, unpaid rent was the only issue (as opposed to violating the lease or evicting “without cause”).*
3. *In cases where unpaid rent caused the eviction, the median amount of rent due was \$2,000.*
4. *In three-quarters of the cases, the plaintiff (landlord) had a lawyer, and the defendant (tenant) did not.*
5. *Three-quarters of households that had an eviction filed against them were evicted.*

In the report, the voices of tenants explain how eviction is a kind of accelerant for poverty: it comes out of poverty, and it creates even more. Research has shown that even a year after eviction, parents and children are more likely to suffer from depression, stress, and negative health outcomes than their non-evicted peers. Eviction can significantly damage a tenant’s subsequent employment, housing and credit prospects. For landlords, evictions reflect a loss in rental income, lost time in court, and a financial cost for court and attorney fees. Evictions also cost Vermont taxpayers resources through additional burden on the court system and, when an eviction leads to homelessness, through funds needed for emergency housing and shelters. Taking a more proactive approach to prevent evictions would save money for landlords and taxpayers.

What is the number of nights we have in the base budget for motels? What is the current year utilization vs. projections?

- The General Assistance (GA) program is based on a point-in-time need, and the cost per motel room varies. The budget is therefore based on the overall eligibility and need of the previous year(s), and the state of close out the previous year.
- Please see the Annual General Assistance Legislative Report, September 2019: <https://legislature.vermont.gov/assets/Legislative-Reports/FY19-GA-Legislative-Report-FINAL-8.30.19.pdf>
- Please see the utilization chart from page 4 of the report linked above:



Statewide 3 Year Comparison SFY2017 - SFY2019													
July - June													
Household Grants Unduplicated													
				Catastrophic		Auto Vuln							
July '18 - June '19	# Households Granted	# Adults	# Children	DV	Other	65+	SSI	Under 6	Preg 3rd	Other	AWC	# HP Nights	# Nights
TOTALS	2503	2685	1306	593	389	18	460	211	9	14	809	9411	58803
July '17 - June '18	# Households Granted	# Adults	# Children	DV	Other	65+	SSI	Under 6	Preg 3rd	Other	AWC	# HP Nights	# Nights
TOTALS	2362	2694	1273	510	254	14	435	202	9	20	918	9571	43066
July '16 - June '17	# Households Granted	# Adults	# Children	DV	Other	65+	SSI	Under 6	Preg 3rd	Other	AWC	# HP Nights	# Nights
TOTALS	2280	2526	1182	594	200	12	429	209	8	12	816	10057	38279

Explain how GA closed out last year – i.e. the request this year is consistent with longer-term trend and level funding of GA.

- We interpret your question to mean the GA Emergency Housing (EH)/motel voucher program. Last year we estimated we would return to the 2017 level of emergency housing utilization; however, the numbers have continued to increase. GA’s EH SFY19 budget was approximately \$1.8M, and we needed to request approximately \$2M at closeout.
- The SFY20 motel budget is \$2M; the projection for the SFY20 BAA is that we will spend approximately \$4M on EH motel vouchers. This is based on ESD’s utilization data analysis and on the SFY19 close-out described above.

Can we provide data for homeless rates in parts of the state where Pathways operates vs. where it doesn’t?

- Rates of homelessness implies a comparison of the number of people experiencing homelessness, to the total number of people in an area. The Point-in-Time count could be used in conjunction with county Census data; however, given the relatively small numbers, the validity of calculating “rate of homelessness” at the county-level is questionable.
- DCF does not fund Pathways; DMH and DOC fund Pathways and may be able to provide you more information on Pathways’ operations and performance.
- Pathways is one of the many organizations in Vermont working to address homelessness. DCF works with Pathways the way we work with many similar organizations that we may not be funding directly. We collaborate closely with Pathways through the homeless Continua of Care and to implement Coordinated Entry.
- A core service of Pathways is permanent supportive housing. There is an established need, based on data and significant study, to expand permanent supportive housing statewide – please see the 2016 Homelessness Study linked here: <http://legislature.vermont.gov/assets/Legislative-Reports/Homelessness-Study.pdf>.
- Other organizations provide permanent supportive housing to high needs households in areas of the state where Pathways does not provide this service.



- Our Office of Economic Opportunity and Emergency Housing Program staff continue to work with DMH, DOC and other departments across the Agency to coordinate and align funding to achieve a high impact on homelessness in Vermont.

In the LIHEAP Program, can you provide an explanation as to why an additional \$442,355 SF is being swapped with \$442,355 FF with the Weatherization program? What does this swap represent?

- The federal government increased the State of Vermont's LIHEAP award. This swap takes full advantage of the increase and is still 15% of the federal award which is the normal swap percentage.

