

Department of State's Attorneys & Sheriffs

Annual Report
Vermont SIU Grants Program
~February 2019~

*Progress Report for the establishment and sustainment of Special
Investigation Units established pursuant to 24 VSA§1940.*

Prepared by: Marc Metayer, SIU Grants Program Manager
VT Dept. of State's Attorneys & Sheriffs
2/5/2019

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Current Status: Established SIUs provide a one-stop opportunity for victims and families to receive, or to access, specialized child interviewing techniques, medical and mental health services, and a variety of victim support services. Law enforcement, DCF, and prosecutors are active partners working within the SIUs to provide for the best possible victim support, even if court action is not possible. County-based Special Investigation Units (SIU) are supported in twelve (12) counties; Essex County and Grand Isle County are supported by SIUs in neighboring counties.

Program Support Grants are approved for the SIU administrative and operational expenses to sustain the core structure of the respective units. All the SIUs are co-located with the existing Child Advocacy Centers in their counties. This affiliation allows the SIUs and CACs to minimize duplicative administrative functions while strengthening the ability to provide a coordinated response for Vermont citizens.

Law Enforcement Support Grants are approved for eleven (11) law enforcement investigators around the state. Addison, Bennington, Orange (x2), Orleans, Rutland, Washington, Windham, and Windsor counties receive this supplemental funding resource at the maximum funding level of \$60,000 per grant award. This funding supports the services of a full-time investigator from a municipal or county law enforcement department. Caledonia County receives a reduced award amount (\$54,000) to support a combined investigator resource provided by two local police departments in the county (St. Johnsbury PD – ½ time/Hardwick PD – ¼ time). Lamoille County receives a \$60,000 grant award which is divided among three law enforcement agencies within the county (Lamoille Sheriff's Department/Morristown PD/Stowe PD). When combined with the services of investigators assigned by the Vermont State Police, these positions represent the core of the specialized law enforcement investigators who directly support the SIUs.

Law Enforcement Reimbursement Grants are awarded to Essex County and Grand Isle County, as provided for in 24 VSA§1940. The Essex County Sheriff's Department provides investigative services to support investigations coordinated by the Caledonia SIU and the Orleans SIU, while the Grand Isle Sheriff's Department has established a working partnership with the Northwest Unit for Special Investigations in Franklin County.

Training: NCAC Forensic Interview trainings (Basic & Advanced) were conducted in two sessions during May.

Additionally, three one-day sessions on **Defending the Forensic Interview** were conducted in Bennington, Burlington, and Newport.

A one-day session entitled **The Neurobiology of Trauma and Sexual Assault** was presented at the Annual Conference of the State's Attorneys in Woodstock.

A two-day class entitled **Investigating Medical Child Abuse** was presented in Brattleboro.

A one-day conference entitled **Preventing Child Sexual Abuse: Renewing Vermont's Commitment** was conducted in Montpelier.

SCOPE OF REPORT

This report covers major activity and current operational status for the Special Investigations Units in Vermont during the calendar year 2018.

Statistical reporting reflects activity during the State Fiscal Year 2018, which encompasses the period of July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018.

Grant Awards documented in this report are for FY19 award amounts (current fiscal year).

CURRENT STATUS

Special Investigations Units (SIUs), as authorized by Title 24 VSA § 1940, are operational in all Vermont counties. Each SIU has an executive director responsible for the administrative duties of the respective SIU.

In collaboration with the Vermont Children's Alliance, all SIUs are partnered and co-located with Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) throughout the state.

<http://www.vtchildrensalliance.org/>

The accreditation body for the CACs is the National Children's Alliance (NCA). NCA provides detailed criteria for CAC accreditation and provides the professional standards for multi-disciplinary team operations, as adopted by Vermont SIUs.

<http://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/ncas-standards-for-accredited-members/>

In addition to providing professional performance standards, the affiliation with NCA and the Vermont Children's Alliance has been an excellent conduit for obtaining the specialized training required by the units. This affiliation has also provided access to a records management system (NCATrak) that provides consistent statistical information from each of the operating SIUs. The implementation of NCA's Outcome Measurement System (OMS) is another example of leveraging the resources of partner organizations.

The State of Vermont currently provides Program Support Grant funding to SIUs in twelve counties. For the two remaining counties; Essex County is supported by SIUs in Caledonia and Orleans Counties, while Grand Isle County has an active partnership with the Northwest Unit for Special Investigations located in Franklin County.

Additionally, Law Enforcement Support Grant funding is provided through grant awards to SIUs for support of investigation resources provided by local police departments and Sheriff's departments. Grant funding awards to support law enforcement investigators are currently active in twelve counties (Addison; Bennington; Caledonia; Essex; Grand Isle; Lamoille; Orange; Orleans; Rutland; Washington; Windham; and Windsor). Eleven grant awards support law enforcement investigators by providing supplemental funding to the

respective departments. Essex and Grand Isle Sheriff's Departments are reimbursed on an hourly basis for their services, as provided for by statute.

TRAINING

During 2018, a continued focus of training effort was in the development of forensic interview skills. Turnover for law enforcement and DCF partners working with the SIUs has created the demand for ongoing training offerings in this area.

April 2018: Three, one-day sessions were conducted around the state on the topic of ***Defending the Forensic Interview: An Opportunity to Work Together in Strengthening Investigations, Interviews, and Court Testimony*** presented by Linda Cordisco Steele, M. ED, LPC. Bennington, Burlington, and Newport were host sites for each session. This series was coordinated by the Bennington SIU/CAC.

May 2018: One, three-day session of ***Forensic Interviewing of Children*** was conducted in Rutland. A total of 30 students attended this three-day training session. This course is the baseline training for investigators who conduct interviews with children. Participants were primarily law enforcement and DCF personnel. See link for sample description of course: <http://www.nationalcac.org/forensic-interviewing-of-children-training/>

May 2018: One, three-day session of ***Advanced Forensic Interviewing*** was conducted in South Burlington. A total of 27 students attended this three-day training session. This course is designed as the follow-up instruction for attendees of the initial Forensic Interviewing of Children training that have had the opportunity to use these skills in field practice for at least a year. See link for sample description of course: <http://www.nationalcac.org/advanced-forensic-interviewing-training/>

June 2018: A one-day session entitled ***The Neurobiology of Trauma and Sexual Assault*** was presented at the Annual Conference of the State's Attorneys in Woodstock. The presentation by Jim Hopper, Ph.D., was attended by an audience of nearly ninety prosecutors, investigators, victim advocates, and DCF staff members. See link for topic reference: <https://www.jimhopper.com/sexual-assault-and-the-brain/>

September 2018: A two-day class entitled ***Investigating Medical Child Abuse*** was presented by Criminal Investigator Michael Weber, Tarrant County (TX) District Attorney's Office. A total of 44 attendees representing DCF, law enforcement, and health care professionals participated in the event coordinated by the Windham SIU/CAC. See link for topic reference:

<https://www.checkupnewsroom.com/munchausen-syndrome-by-proxy-when-parents-turn-doctors-into-weapons/>

December 2018: A one-day conference entitled ***Preventing Child Sexual Abuse: Renewing Vermont's Commitment*** was sponsored by Prevent Child Abuse – Vermont and conducted at the State House in Montpelier. A plenary session was conducted in the morning with a variety of separate work sessions conducted in the afternoon. The conference focused on the implementation of Act 1 of 2009. Intended as a reflective check-in for the range of practitioners, the conference provided a forum to appreciate the progress and understand the challenges to date, as well as to propose next steps for continuing improvement in the field. See link for topic reference:

<https://pcavt.org/conference-preventing-child-sexual-abuse-renewing-vermonts-commitment.html>

Grant Award Summary - FY19

County	Program Support	Law Enforcement	Total Grant Awards
Addison	\$71,806	\$60,000	\$131,806
Bennington	\$100,221	\$60,000	\$160,221
Caledonia	\$66,500	\$54,000	\$120,500
Chittenden	\$119,726	n/a	\$119,726
Essex	n/a	\$20,000*	\$20,000
Franklin	\$97,246	n/a	\$97,246
Grand Isle	n/a	\$20,000*	\$20,000
Lamoille	\$100,956	\$60,000	\$160,956
Orange	\$132,052	\$120,000**	\$252,052
Orleans	\$104,455	\$60,000	\$164,455
Rutland	\$124,630	\$60,000	\$184,630
Washington	\$108,991	\$60,000	\$168,991
Windham	\$100,712	\$60,000	\$160,712
Windsor	\$113,383	\$60,000	\$173,383
Total Awards	\$1,240,678	\$694,000	\$1,934,678

Program Support Grants support the local SIU administrative and site operational expenses.

Law Enforcement Grants support the participation of SIU dedicated law enforcement investigators from municipal police departments and/or county sheriff's departments.

Both types of grants limit the amount of salary funding to the 50% of total salary expense for each SIU, as provided in the enabling legislation.

* Essex County Sheriff's Department and Grand Isle County Sheriff's Department are covered by a reimbursement for services process; up to \$20,000 is reserved for each department as outlined in 24 VSA §1940 (c). A 50% matching funds element is included in these grant awards, and the respective counties are paying half of the personnel expense related to providing investigation services.

** Orange County receives two law enforcement support grants to provide for the assignment of two deputies as dedicated SIU investigators in lieu of an assigned VSP investigator.

<u>SIU/CAC by County - 2018</u>		
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Addison County</u> Addison County Unit for Special Investigations Fred Saar Executive Director 35 Court Street Middlebury, VT 05753 802-274-5724 Fred.saar@partner.vermont.gov</p> <p>NCA status: Associate member February 2014</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Bennington County</u> Bennington County Child Advocacy Center/ SIU Joy Kitchell Executive Director P.O. Box 163 129 Elm Street Bennington VT 05201 (802) 442-5107 Joy.Kitchell@partner.vermont.gov</p> <p>NCA status: Fully accredited 2008; reaccredited 2014</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Caledonia and Southern Essex Counties</u> Caledonia Children’s Advocacy Center/SIU Christopher St Cyr Executive Director PO Box 272 Saint Johnsbury, VT 05819-0272 (802) 274-5724 Christopher.StCyr@partner.vermont.gov</p> <p>NCA status: Associate member December 2013</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Chittenden County</u> Chittenden Children’s Advocacy Center/CUSI Veronica Rathgeb Executive Director 50 Cherry Street, Suite 102 Burlington, VT 05401 (802) 652-0991 vrathgeb@bpdvt.org</p> <p>NCA status: Fully accredited 2003; reaccredited 2009; 2014</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Franklin & Grand Isle Counties</u> Northwest Unit for Special Investigations NUSI/CAC Robert White Executive Director 5 Lemnah Drive St. Albans, VT 05478 (802) 524-7961 Robert.White@vermont.gov</p> <p>NCA status: Fully accredited 2000; reaccredited 2005; 2010; 2015</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Lamoille County</u> Lamoille County Special Investigation Unit/CAC Tracy Patnoe Executive Director P.O. Box 16 Hyde Park, VT 05655 (802)-851-8116 tpatnoe@lamoillesiu.org</p> <p>NCA status: Associate member 2016</p>

<p><u>Orange County</u> Orange County SIU/CAC Ferron Wambold Executive Director 354 VT Route 110 PO Box 254 Chelsea, VT 05038 (802) 685-4712 fwambold@orangecountysheriff.com</p> <p>NCA status: Associate member October 2013</p>	<p><u>Orleans and Northern Essex Counties</u> The Orleans County Child Advocacy Center/SIU Dawn Kelly Executive Director PO Box 1133 Newport, VT 05855 (802) 334-6002 Dawn.kelly@partner.vermont.gov</p> <p>NCA status: Associate member June 2017</p>	<p><u>Rutland County</u> Child First Advocacy Center/ Rutland Unit for Special Investigations Wendy Loomis Executive Director P.O. Box 6822 Rutland, VT 05702 (802) 747-0200 wendy.loomis@partner.vermont.gov</p> <p>NCA status: Fully accredited 2004; reaccredited 2010; 2015</p>
<p><u>Washington County</u> OUR House of Central Vermont, Inc. CAC/SIU Rebecca Duranleau Executive Director 38 Summer Street Barre, Vermont 05641 (802) 476-8825 ourhousebarredirector@gmail.com</p> <p>NCA status: Fully Accredited 2016</p>	<p><u>Windham County</u> Windham County Safe Place CAC/ SUSI Alyssa Todd Executive Director 112 Hardwood Way Brattleboro, VT 05301 (802) 579-1358 Alyssa.todd@partner.vermont.gov</p> <p>NCA status: Fully Accredited 2016</p>	<p><u>Windsor County</u> The CACs of the Family Place/ Windsor County SIU Julie Gaudette Director 319 US Route 5, South Norwich, VT 05055 (802) 295-3882 julieg@the-family-place.org</p> <p>NCA status: Fully Accredited 2001; reaccredited 2006 and 2012</p> <p>2 Main Street North Springfield, VT 05150 (802) 295-3882 julieg@the-family-place.org</p> <p>NCA status: Fully Accredited 2016</p>

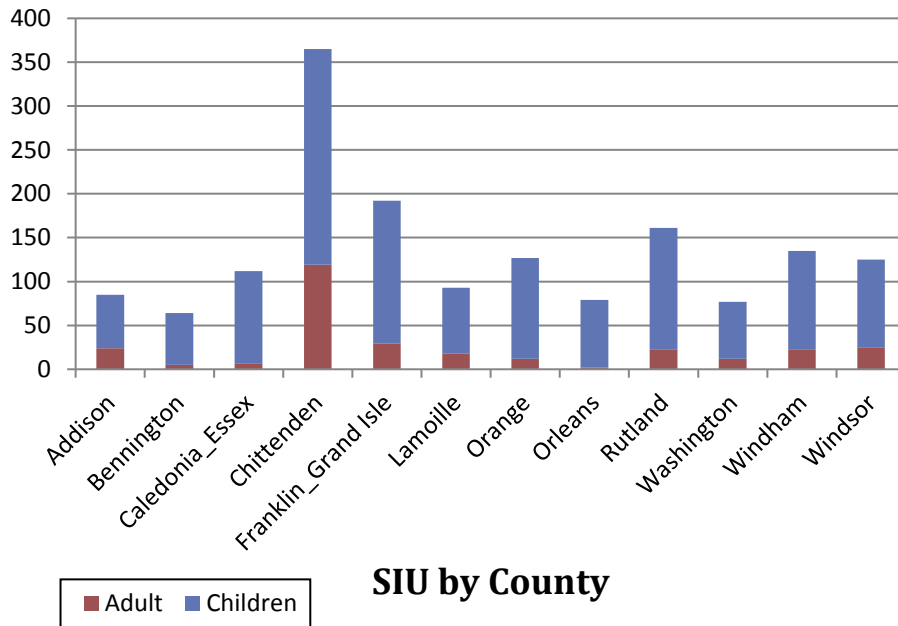
STATISTICAL OVERVIEW - FY18

Program, financial, and statistical reporting from the SIUs are required on a quarterly basis throughout each fiscal year. Beginning in FY13, all SIUs receiving VT SIU Grant Program funding are required to use NCATrak as the standardized statistical reporting system. Although there will be some minor modifications of reporting categories, the basis of reporting will be overall caseload per SIU with breakdown categories to establish age and gender grouping for victims and offenders, as well as victim support services as provided and summary of court action undertaken.

Specialized reports have been created in NCATrak that will provide the SIUs with two types of reports: the first is a statistical count report for the unit, while the second report is designed as a management tool to track case progress. It should be noted that with the combination of SIU/CAC functions, the reporting of clients served (adult/child) is often higher than law enforcement cases with charges or prosecutions reported. Primarily, this is due to the mission of the units to serve all victims when sexual violence or abuse may be suspected. Until a determination can be made concerning allegations, support for victims and non-offending family members is the primary focus with court action undertaken only when merited.

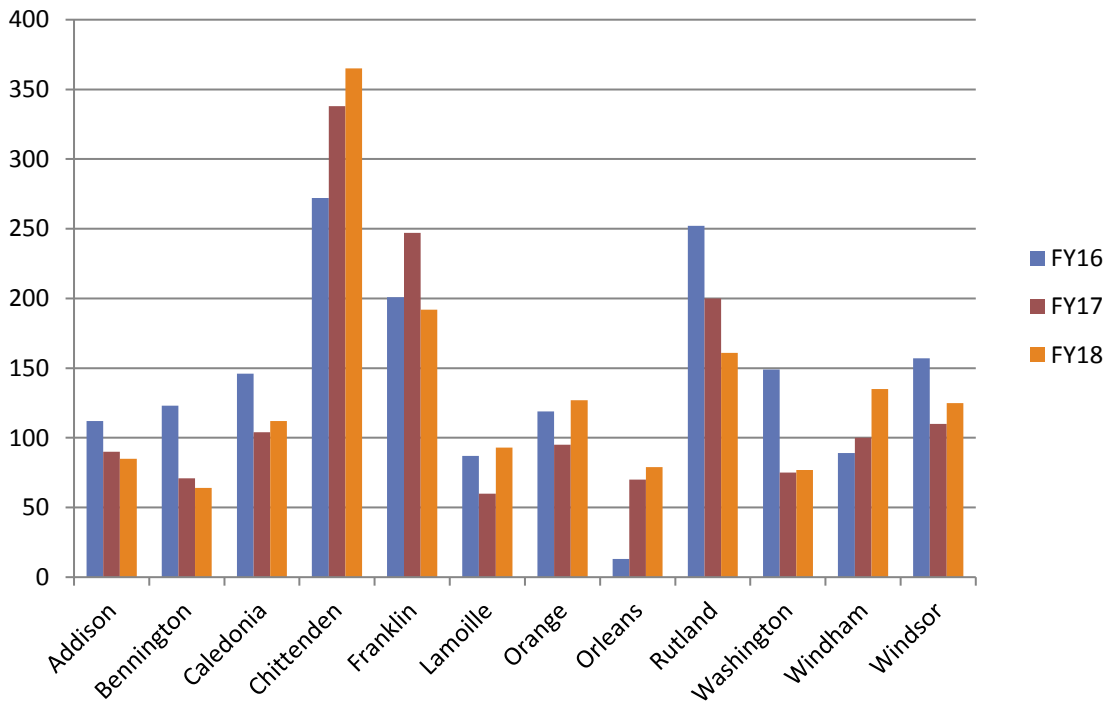
This section contains chart and graph depictions of the caseload and demographic makeup of victims and offenders that comprise the workload of the SIUs. Now, with the compilation of data over multiple years, it is possible to provide a glimpse of workload trend by county. Trend charts for the most recent three-year period are provided to illustrate the client count by county and the relative provision of specialized services for those clients.

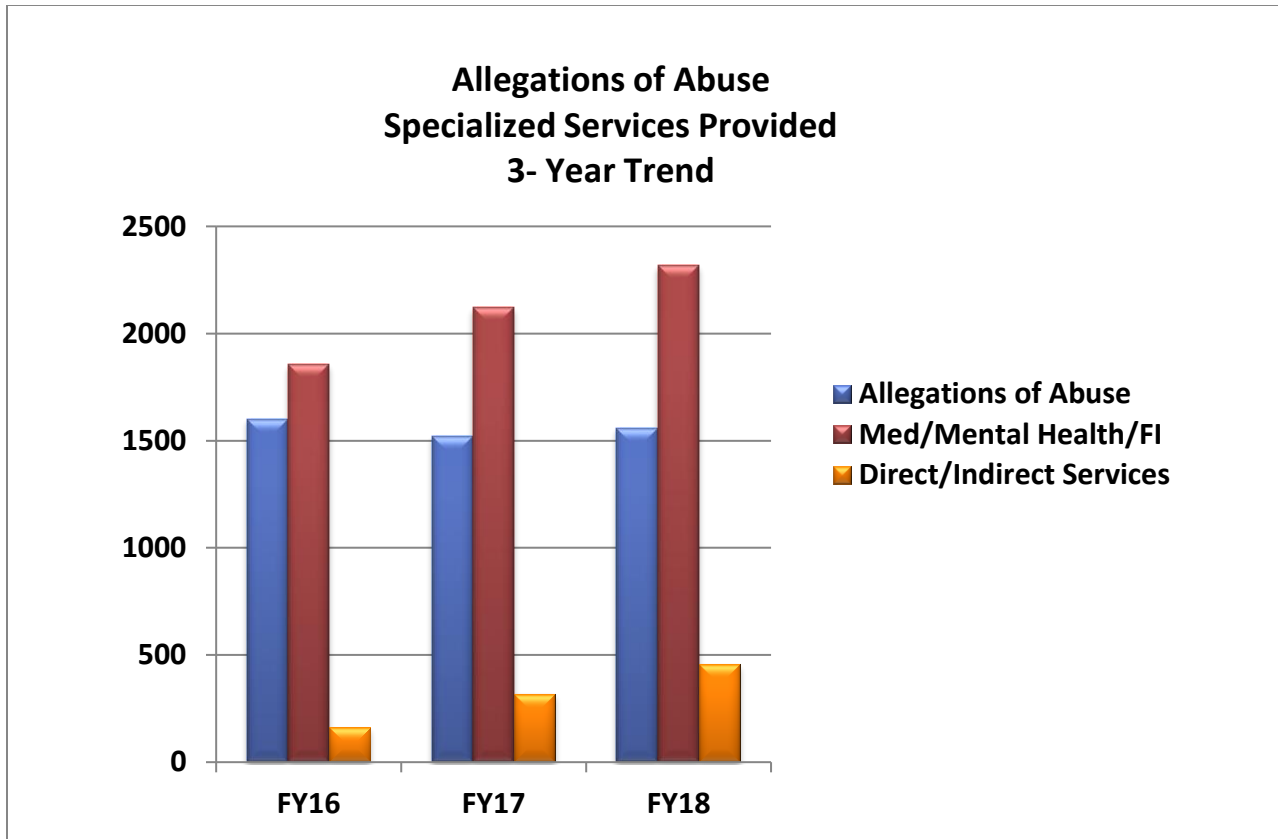
FY18 SIU - New Cases by Victim Age Grouping



SIU by County

SIU Client Count 3 - Year Trend



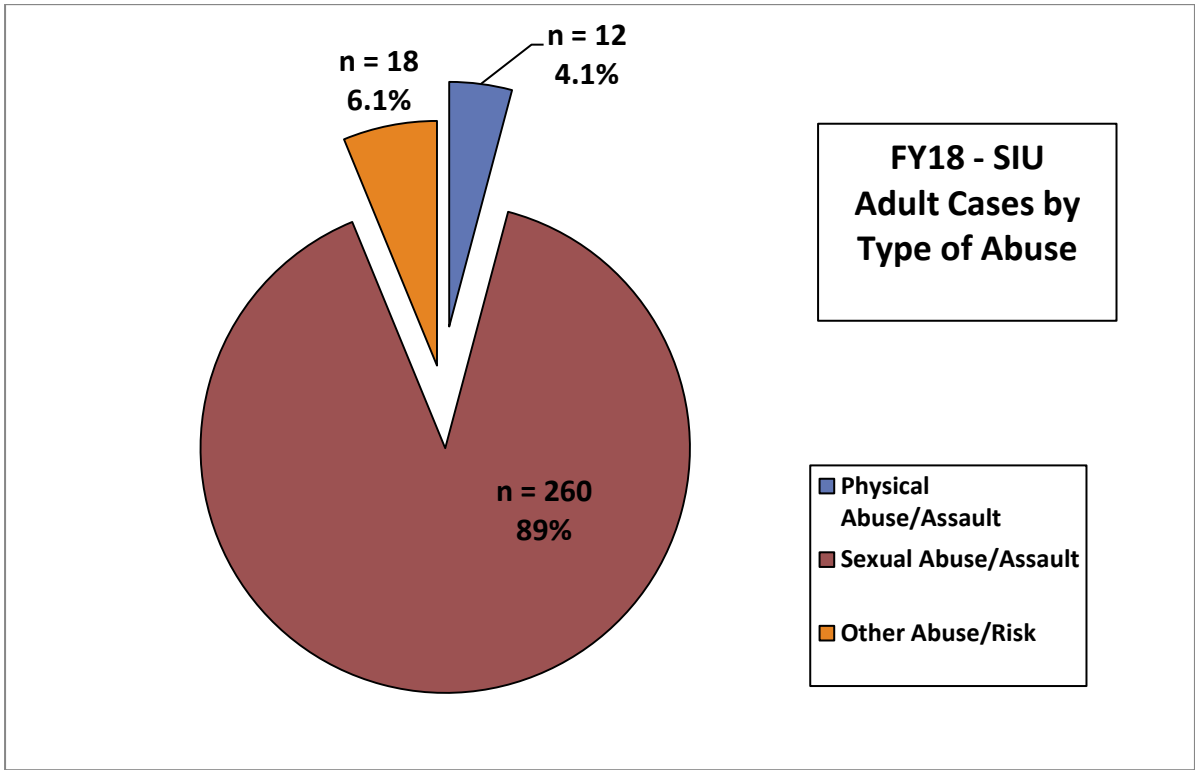
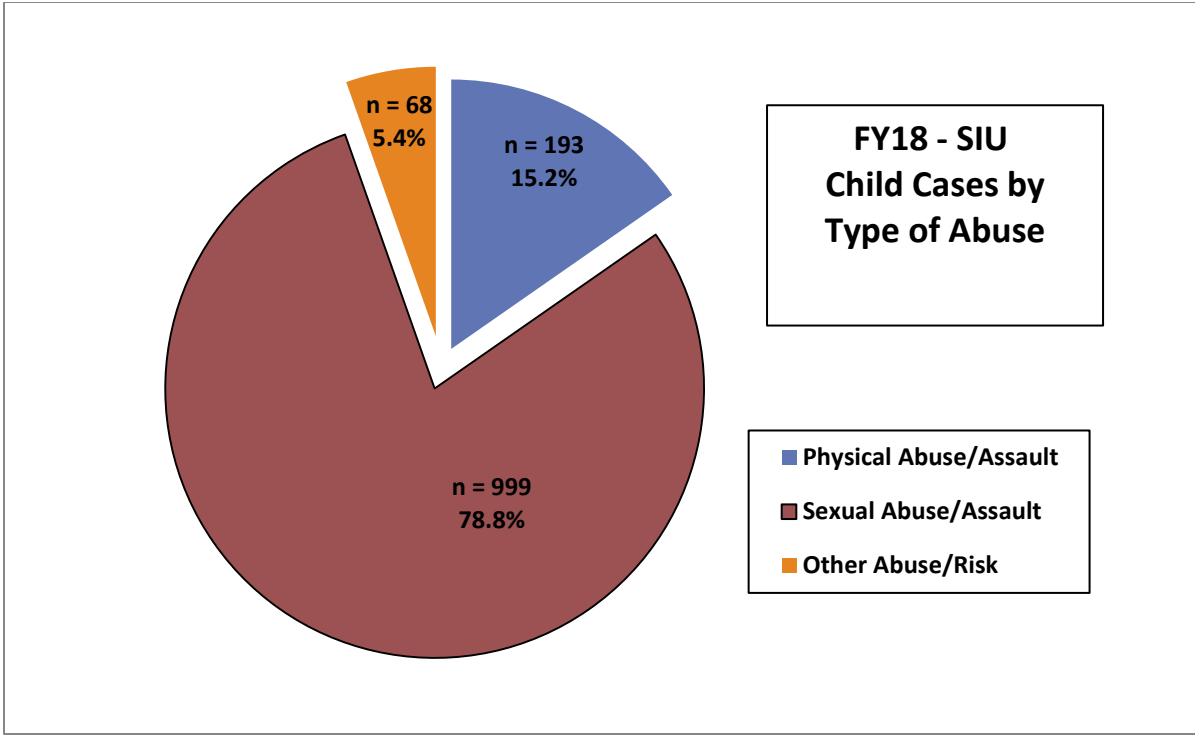


In managing the referred *Allegations of Abuse*, specialized services can vary according to the needs of the individual client(s). The provision and coordination of these specialized services are at the heart of the mission of the SIU model.

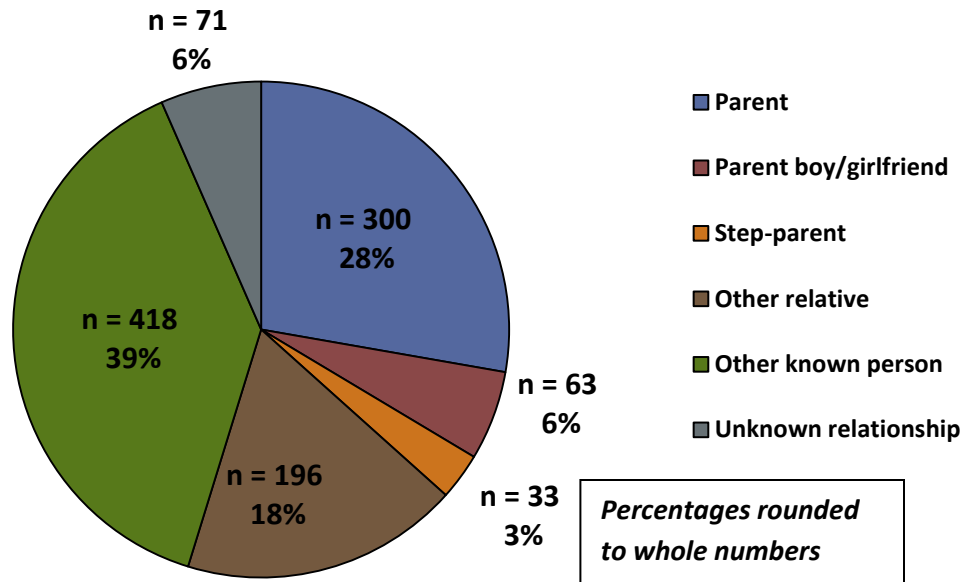
Medical Screening/Examinations; Mental Health Counseling/Referrals; and Forensic Interviews are the specialized services which are provided or coordinated by the SIU/CAC to assist victims and non-offending family members. The need for these services can vary by individual circumstance, but the goal is to provide for the appropriate assistance in a timely and seamless manner.

Direct Services provided include forensic interviews of siblings, courtesy interviews conducted on behalf of other SIUs or agencies, and educational presentations. These are services which may, or may not, be related to an active case of the SIU, but involve direct services provided because of the expertise of SIU staff.

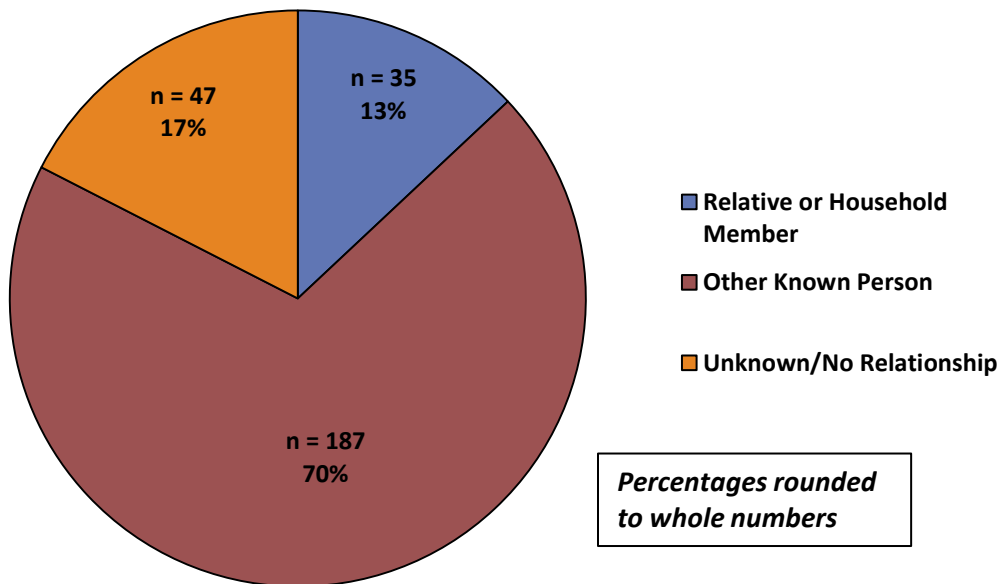
Indirect Services are primarily sex offender registry checks and violations, child pornography cases which do not involve a locally identifiable victim, and review of DCF intakes that are not accepted for further action by DCF. In addition, public information and community awareness presentations fall in this category. A number of SIUs also provide technical support for evidence retrieval from electronic devices, a service shared with neighboring law enforcement agencies.

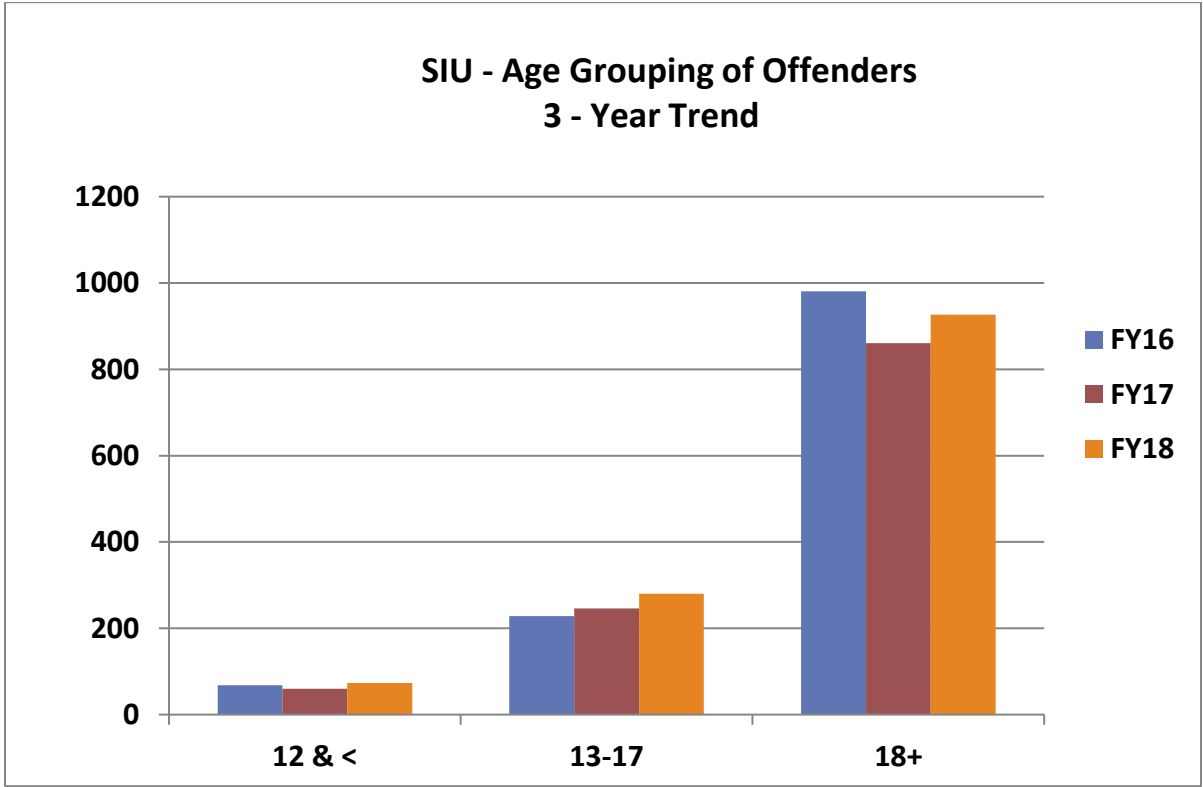
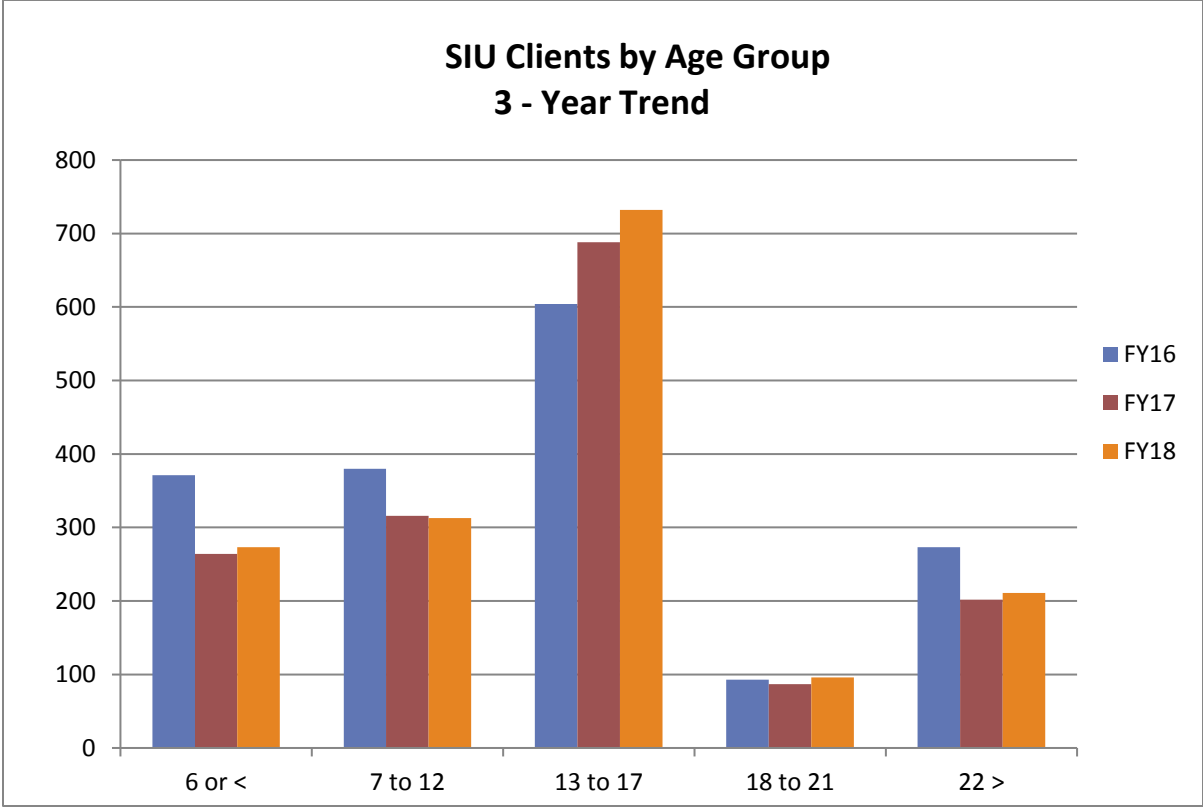


FY18 SIU- Offender Relationship - Child Victims

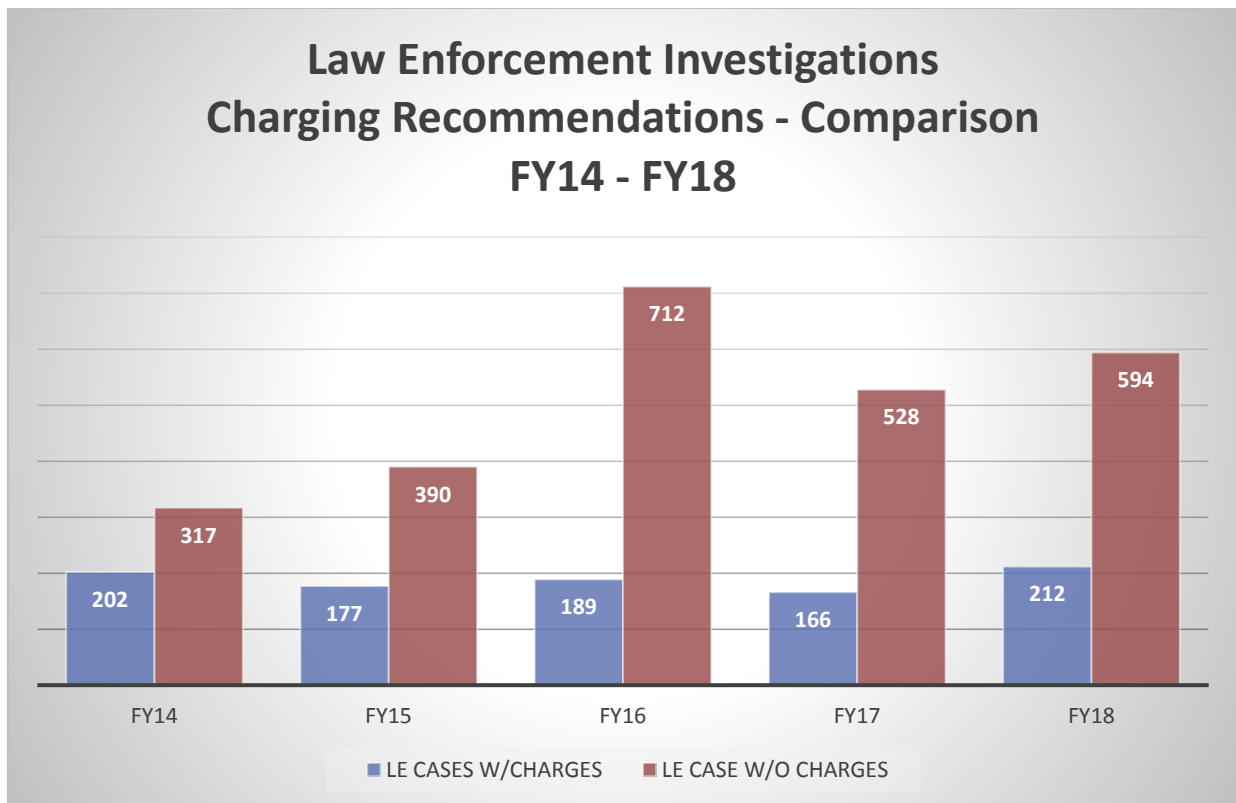


FY18 - Offender Relationship - Adult Victims





During the 2015 session of the Legislature, a number of changes were made to assure improved communications between DCF and the SIUs. More specifically, efforts were intended to improve the review process from the point of intake through completion of the investigative process. The following graph depicts the workload of SIU law enforcement investigators from the two years prior to the institution of the changes (FY14 & FY15) through the three years post change (FY16 – FY18). A noticeable increase in the number of cases being reviewed by law enforcement investigators denotes the improvement of having experienced investigators with “eyes-on” for those more marginal cases. It also reinforces the value of law enforcement investigators dedicated to the SIU case load. This level of investigative scrutiny would not be possible without the staffing commitment of the partner law enforcement agencies.



NOTE: Law enforcement recommendations for court action do not equal actual decisions for prosecution. Multiple factors are weighed in the decision-making process, but cases which have a credible basis for the allegation(s) are the ones noted for charging consideration.

SUMMARY

Although the maturation of each SIU continues to evolve, the citizens of the state have access to the specialized services offered by the SIU model, regardless of geographic location. The goal remains to strengthen the operations of each SIU for consistency throughout the state.

Early on, the SIU Grants Program partnered SIU operations with existing Child Advocacy Centers (CAC) as a means of leveraging mutually beneficial aspects of each endeavor. One of the key aspects of that arrangement has been the CAC accreditation process. The National Children's Alliance (NCA) is a nationwide organization which provides for the objective review of CAC structure and operation. The multi-disciplinary team approach of the CAC organization is the very same model upon which the SIUs are based.

Vermont currently has seven (7) fully accredited CACs (with active SIUs), with another five (5) CACs (with active SIUs) having an associate level status denoting their ongoing efforts to achieve full accreditation. The goal of the accreditation process is to have an independent, objective review of unit operations to ensure appropriate structure and functionality. Access to this feature is possible due to the close working relationship between the SIU Grants Program and the Vermont Children's Alliance (which is the VT chapter sanctioned by the NCA). Accreditation status is one of the performance measures used to assess the functionality of each SIU.

Established SIUs provide a one-stop opportunity for victims and families to receive, or to access, specialized child interviewing techniques, medical and mental health services, and a variety of victim support services. Law enforcement, DCF, and prosecutors are active partners working within the SIUs to provide for the best possible victim support, even if court action is not possible.

Law enforcement participation is still dependent upon continued grant funding to support the presence of a SIU-dedicated investigator from local or county police agencies. Current funding supports eleven grant awards which provide investigators in ten counties. Two additional reimbursement-based awards are provided to Essex County and Grand Isle County for investigative services provided by the Sheriff Departments in those counties (mandated in statute). For now, Chittenden County and Franklin County are the only two counties not reliant upon SIU Grant funding for law enforcement investigators.

The specialized services provided by, or through, the SIUs (CACs) are also another significant performance measure for assessment. A main premise behind the establishment of the SIUs was to provide for a safe, victim-friendly environment that could provide for the needs of victims in a supportive manner. Adoption of the *Outcome Measurement System* (a feature available through NCA membership) provides feedback from clients and SIU/CAC partners to measure this component. The Outcome Measurement System (OMS) was instituted in early 2015 and is now adopted by each of the units.

Training efforts in 2018 focused on continued development of interviewing skills for investigators as well as specialized training for all members of the SIU teams. The SIU Grants Program, in collaboration with the Vermont Children's Alliance, continues to work in close collaboration with other partners to strengthen the response to sexual and physical abuse in Vermont.

The Department of State's Attorneys provides administrative support for the SIU Grants Program. A contracted grants manager provides administrative support to the SIU Grants Board and to the SIU grant recipients, while also providing technical assistance as necessary. The model of administration continues to minimize administrative expense while providing timely guidance and support to program partners.