

## Memorandum

**To:** Senate Judiciary Committee  
**From:** Ken Schatz, DCF Commissioner  
**Re:** Budget Presentation  
**Date:** April 10, 2019

Two divisions of DCF are engaged with Family Court: The Family Services Division and the Office of Child Support. Included in this memo is information regarding the administration's proposed \$2M increase to the FSD budget and an overview of the Office of Child Support.

### **Family Services Division (FSD)**

FSD has a total budget of \$121.3M.

Major budget pressures and changes requested for SFY20 are:

- **Caseload Budget Pressures:**
  - Overtime \$262,252 GF, \$189,263 GC
  - Temp Case Aides \$207,887 GF, \$150,029 GC
  - Contract Temp positions \$28,253 GF, \$20,389 GC
- **Family Services Staffing initiative: \$2M GF**
  - FS Case Workers – 13 positions
  - FS Supervisors – 2 positions
  - Resource Coordinators – 3 positions
  - Asst. AG – 1 position
  - Case Aides - contracts
  - Foster Care Rate Increase of \$22/day to \$23.54/day
- **Adoption Caseload Increase: \$757,227 GF**
- **Phasedown of GC Investment for Residential Room and Board: \$3,161,115 GF**
- **Title IV-E Adjustment: \$469,710 GF**
- **Allocation of AHS-wide Grants Reduction Plan: (\$422,274) GF, \$457,700 GC**

### **CHINS Reform Recommendations for FY2020:**

#### Projects

Sustained Home Visiting	\$1.2M
Judicial Master	\$92,384
Alternative Dispute Resolution	\$208,500
Evaluation of Projects	\$125,000
Project Coordination	\$134,000



### **Office of Child Support (OCS)**

OCS is responsible for operating a child support program pursuant to Title IV-D of the Social Security Act. OCS is comprised of 110 employees who work statewide to fulfill the duties and responsibilities of the program. OCS receives federal funding for 66% of its operating program costs. The total 2019 budget is \$14,023,844; \$3,811,164 in general fund, \$9,369,401 in federal funds, \$455,710 in special funds and \$387,600 in inter-departmental transfer.

Child support programs around the country are characterized as either “judicial” or “administrative”. Vermont is a judicial state because most of the child support laws require petitioners to seek relief in Vermont Superior Court. Under Vermont law, qualified non-attorney OCS employees are permitted to present cases before magistrates in the Family Division. The Office of Child Support has 32 child support specialists and 18 paralegals who file motions, pleadings and attend court case manager conferences and magistrate hearings. Additionally, OCS has 8 attorneys who oversee all litigation and routinely appear in the Family Division to handle complex cases before the magistrate and appellate matters before the judge. According to internal statistics, OCS filed approximately 5,713 filings in 2018. In FFY17, OCS had a caseload of 16,443 and collected and disbursed \$42,563,121.00 in child support payments. In FFY18, OCS ranked fifth in the nation out of all child support programs nationwide. This ranking is based on the following four key federal performance measures:

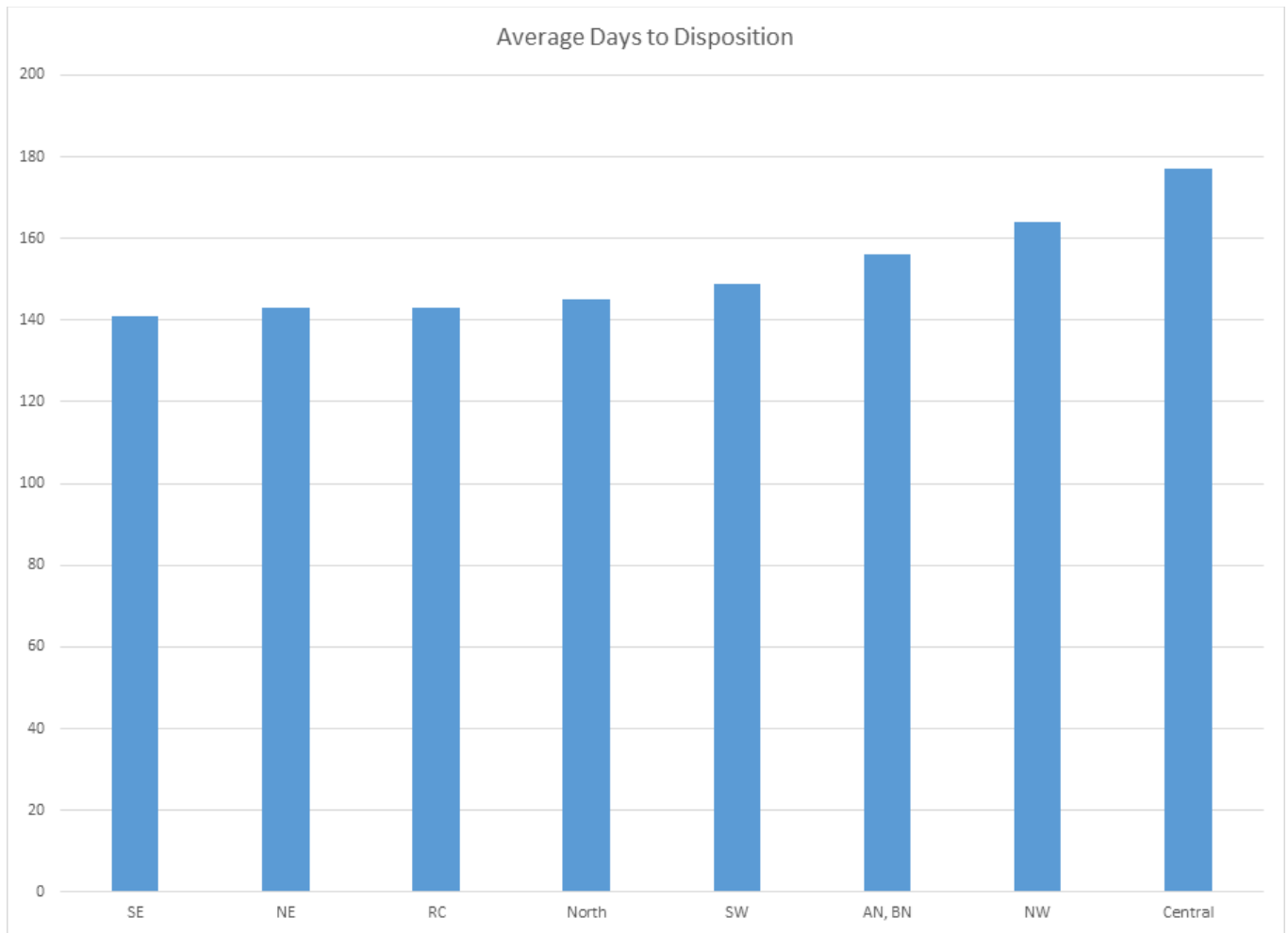
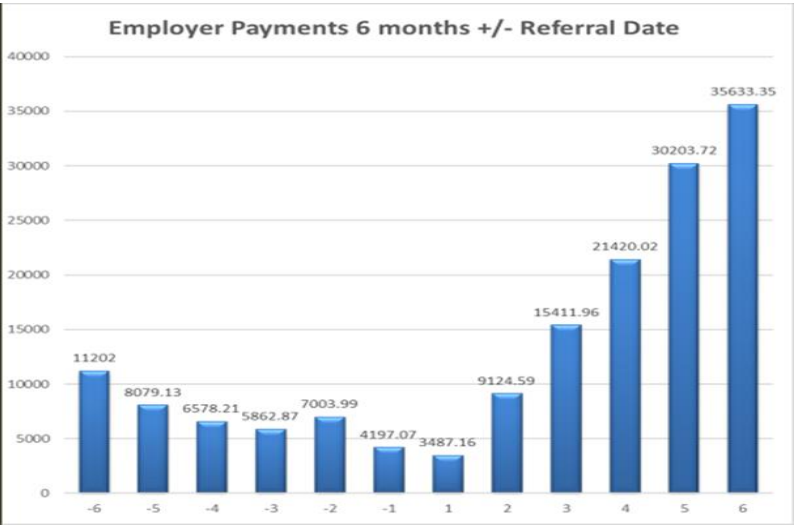
- % of IVD cases that have an obligation for support
- % of children born “Out of Wedlock” that have parentage established
- % of child support collected on cases that have a current child support order
- % of cases that have an arrearage that have received a payment

These same metrics are used to calculate additional incentive dollars for the program. OCS typically receives approximately \$800,000.00 in incentive funds. The linchpin to the success of the program is meeting performance measures that include the swift establishment of orders (including parentage), as well as taking quick action when payments lapse. In order to maintain success, OCS is heavily dependent on the court to timely schedule and resolve child support matters. Any shortage of court staff negatively impacts the federal time-lines that OCS must fulfill, and also delays the financial relief that families seek. *Please see the chart on the last page.*

OCS has partnered with the Vocational Rehabilitation division to establish a non-custodial parent employment program known as Work for Kids. This is a program that assists parents who are struggling to pay child support find employment. The program has been extremely successful and is administered through the court system. *Please see the chart below.*



## Outcomes for Work 4 Kids



SE = Windsor/Windham; NE = Lamoille, Caledonia, Orleans; RC = Rutland; North = St Albans; SW = Rutland, Addison and Bennington combined; AN = Addison; BN = Bennington; NW = Chittenden, Grand Isle; Central = Washington, Orange & Essex;

