



STATE OF VERMONT

MEMORANDUM

To: Rep. Mary Hooper, Chair, on behalf of the House Committee on Appropriations
Sen. Jane Kitchel, Chair, on behalf of the Senate Committee on Appropriations
Rep. Kate Webb, Chair, on behalf of the House Committee on Education
Sen. Brian Campion, Chair, on behalf of the Senate Committee on Education
Rep. Pugh, Chair, on behalf of the House Committee on Human Services
Sen. Virginia Lyons, Chair, on behalf of the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare
Rep. Maxine Grad, Chair, on behalf of the House Committee on Judiciary
Sen. Dick Sears, Chair, on behalf of the Senate Committee on Judiciary

From: Sen. Virginia Lyons, Chair, Joint Legislative Child Protection Oversight Committee
Rep. Ann Pugh, Vice Chair, Joint Legislative Child Protection Oversight Committee

Date: December 1, 2021

Subject: Recommendations of the Joint Legislative Child Protection Oversight Committee

Cc: Rep. Jill Krowinski, Speaker of the House
Sen. Becca Balint, President Pro Tempore

The Joint Legislative Child Protection Oversight Committee (Committee) met numerous times during the summer and fall of 2021 to discuss an array of issues pertaining to children and families, including those involved in Vermont's child protection system, juveniles involved in the criminal justice system, compliance with the federal Families First Prevention Services Act, and the regulation of the noneducational components of residential programs. This memorandum details the recommendations of the Committee. As multiple recommendations cross jurisdictional lines, the Committee emphasizes the need for coordination among the committees of jurisdiction to develop and implement holistic policies.

Information Technology

The Committee recommends tracking the cost and timelines associated with the Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) pursuant to the written testimony provided by the [Vermont Citizen's Advisory Board](#). It further recommends unraveling legislative silos by bringing multiple committees together in each chamber to understand the scope, challenges, and costs of bringing the CCWIS to Vermont.

Noneducational Components of Residential Programs

It became clear to the Committee as it heard testimony relating to the State's oversight of Kurn Hattin that the regulation and oversight of the noneducational components of residential programs are not covered under current law. The Committee recommends that the committees of jurisdiction evaluate how the Agency of Education and Department for Children and Families might coordinate to improve oversight of noneducational components of residential programs or whether one point of responsibility would be most effective. Members of the Committee also suggest that the Office of the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate (proposed in [H.265](#)) might play a role in providing oversight where there is currently a gap. If the current regulatory void persists, there is no reason to believe that another Kurn Hattin could not happen.

In relation to the regulation and oversight of noneducational components of residential programs, the Committee further recommends that the committees of jurisdiction review methods for improving and updating Vermont's existing mandatory reporting statute.

Families First Prevention Services Act

The Committee heard a great deal of testimony from the Department for Children and Families about the [plan](#) it developed pursuant to the federal Families First Prevention Services Act. The Committee recommends that committees of jurisdiction request regular updates from the Department describing its progress implementing Vermont's plan.

Child Placement

The Committee recommends that the committees of jurisdiction review the University of Vermont's report entitled "[Drivers of Child Custody in Vermont](#)." In particular, the committees of jurisdiction should consider the geographic distribution data regarding where children are most likely to be removed from home as well as whether placements are made to State custody or kinship care.

Covered Bridge Juvenile Detention Facility

The Commissioner for Children and Families testified that the town of Newbury's Development Review Board denied a permit filed by the State and Becket Family of Services for the Covered Bridge Juvenile Detention Facility. The Committee recommends that the committees of jurisdiction take testimony from the Department to better understand the back-up plan if a permit cannot be obtained. Committees of jurisdiction are further encouraged to understand where and how the youth who would have previously been treated at the Woodside Juvenile Facility are being housed and treated. The Committee recommends that the committees of jurisdiction continue to focus on providing appropriate treatments to youth in need of services who have not been involved in the judicial system.

Traveling Staff

At the Committee's final meeting, the Commissioner for Children and Families mentioned that traveling staff were used by some programs to manage the pressures of an ongoing workforce crisis. Committees

of jurisdiction are recommended to take testimony to better understand how traveling staff are being used and the financial consequences of using traveling staff.

Legislation for Consideration

The Committee recommends that the committees of jurisdiction consider the following bills:

- [S.91](#), an act relating to the Parent Child Center Network, because the Committee believes a coordinated Parent Child Center Network is essential to the successful implementation of the Families First Prevention Services Act in Vermont
- [H.265](#), an act relating the Office of the Child, Youth, and Family Advocate (as Passed House)