

H.219

Introduced by Representatives Headrick of Burlington, Arsenault of Williston,  
Bos-Lun of Westminster, Burkhardt of South Burlington, Casey  
of Montpelier, Chapin of East Montpelier, Cole of Hartford,  
Greer of Bennington, Gregoire of Fairfield, LaLonde of South  
Burlington, Logan of Burlington, Masland of Thetford, McGill  
of Bridport, Minier of South Burlington, Morrissey of  
Bennington, Sweeney of Shelburne, and Winter of Ludlow

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Corrections; administration of the Department; family support and  
programming

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to establish  
Family Support Pilot Programs at the Chittenden Regional Correctional  
Facility and Northern State Correctional Facility to provide free family support  
services and programming to incarcerated parents and guardians.

~~An act relating to creating a family support pilot program for incarcerated  
parents and guardians~~

*An act relating to establishing the Department of Corrections' Family  
Support Program*

1 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

2 Sec. 1. FINDINGS AND INTENT.

3 (a) Findings. The General Assembly finds that:

4 (1) Approximately 6,000 children in Vermont have an incarcerated  
5 parent or guardian annually, with a significant majority unable to maintain  
6 meaningful family connections due to a lack of correctional facility  
7 programming.

8 (2) Research demonstrates that comprehensive family programs,  
9 including opportunities for child-friendly visitation, assists with reducing  
10 recidivism, enhancing community reintegration, and promoting child well-  
11 being.

12 (3) The Department of Corrections collaborates with a local nonprofit to  
13 provide incarcerated female parents and guardians at the Chittenden Regional  
14 Correctional Center with a trauma-informed, comprehensive approach to  
15 strengthen family connections that minimizes the adverse effects of parental  
16 incarceration and fosters better outcomes for parents and children.

17 (4) While Vermont incarcerates a higher percentage of parents and  
18 guardians compared to the national average and provides family-friendly  
19 support services for incarcerated female parents and guardians, no comparable  
20 program exists for incarcerated males, which leaves a critical gap in family  
21 support services.

1 ~~(5) Expanding family support services and programming to incarcerated~~  
2 men, parents and guardians may yield societal benefits by preserving family  
3 connections and mitigating the trauma of incarceration on parents, guardians,  
4 children alike.

5 (b) Intent.

6 (1) It is the intent of the General Assembly that the Department of  
7 Corrections ensures gender parity in the access to services and programs that  
8 strengthen family connections.

9 (2) It is the further intent of the General Assembly that the Department  
10 of Corrections develop a phased plan to expand the application of 28 V.S.A.  
11 § 128 to all Vermont correctional facilities by 2028.

12 Sec. 2. 28 V.S.A. § 102(c) is amended to read:

13 (c) The Commissioner is charged with the following responsibilities:

14 \* \* \*

15 (24) To include funding to sufficiently provide and sustain trauma-  
16 informed family support services and programming pursuant to section 128 of  
17 this title in the Department's annual proposed budget for the next subsequent  
18 fiscal year for the purposes of developing the State budget required to be  
19 submitted to the General Assembly in accordance with 32 V.S.A. § 500.

1 ~~Sec. 2, 28 V.S.A. § 128 is added to read:~~

2 § 128. DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS; INCARCERATED PARENTS  
3 AND GUARDIANS; FAMILY SUPPORT PILOT PROGRAM

4 (a) Family Support Pilot Program. The Department of Corrections shall  
5 establish pilot programs at the Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility and  
6 Northern State Correctional Facility to provide free parenting and family  
7 support to all incarcerated individuals who are parents and guardians. The  
8 program shall include services and programming to provide:

9 (1) increased knowledge and skill for incarcerated parents and  
10 guardians to address the specific needs of their children;

11 (2) enhanced capacity and resources to incarcerated parents and  
12 guardians to engage in needs-specific planning and communication strategies  
13 with their children and their children's caregivers;

14 (3) child-friendly visitation spaces for in-person and virtual visits  
15 between parents or guardians and their children, including establishing safety  
16 protocol;

17 (4) outreach and coordination with appropriate services for the  
18 children of incarcerated parents and guardians and the children's caregivers;

19 (5) reentry support and preparation for incarcerated parents and  
20 guardians, and

1 ~~(6) improved cross-system coordination and collaboration to deliver~~  
2 necessary services to the families of incarcerated parents and guardians.

3 (b) Program support. The Department may support the operation of the  
4 programs established under subsection (a) of this section through grants of  
5 financial assistance to, or contracts for services with, any nonprofit entity that  
6 meets the Department's requirements.

7 (c) Annual report. Annually, on or before July 1, the Department shall  
8 submit a written report to the House Committees on Corrections and  
9 Institutions and on Judiciary and the Senate Committees on Institutions and on  
10 Judiciary, concerning:

11 (1) the funding, participation, and outcomes of the services and  
12 programming established pursuant to this section; and

13 (2) considerations and any progress towards statewide implementation  
14 and gender parity.

15 Sec. 4. APPROPRIATION

16 The sum of \$400,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the  
17 Department of Corrections in fiscal year 2026 for the purpose of establishing  
18 and supporting the Family Support Pilot Program in accordance with

19 28 V.S.A. § 128.

1 ~~Sec. 5. PROSPECTIVE REPEAL~~

2 ~~28 V.S.A. § 128 (Department of Corrections' family support pilot program)~~  
3 ~~is repealed on July 1, 2028.~~

4 Sec. 6. EFFECTIVE DATE

5 ~~This act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.~~

*Sec. 1. INTENT*

*(a) It is the intent of the General Assembly that the Department of Corrections ensures gender parity in the access to services and programs that strengthen family connections.*

*(b) It is the further intent of the General Assembly that the Department of Corrections develop a phased plan to expand the application of 28 V.S.A. § 128 to all Vermont correctional facilities by 2028.*

*Sec. 2. 28 V.S.A. § 102(c) is amended to read:*

*(c) The Commissioner is charged with the following responsibilities:*

*\* \* \**

*(24) To include funding to sufficiently provide and sustain trauma-informed family support services and programming pursuant to section 128 of this title in the Department's annual proposed budget for the next subsequent fiscal year for the purposes of developing the State budget required to be submitted to the General Assembly in accordance with 32 V.S.A. § 306.*

*Sec. 3. 28 V.S.A. § 128 is added to read:*

§ 128. INCARCERATED PARENTS AND GUARDIANS; FAMILY  
SUPPORT PROGRAM

(a) Family Support Program. The Department of Corrections shall establish the Family Support Program to provide free parenting and family support to all incarcerated individuals who are parents and guardians. The Program shall include individualized services and programming intended to provide:

(1) increased knowledge and skill for incarcerated parents and guardians to address the specific needs of their children;

(2) resources to incarcerated parents and guardians to engage in needs-specific planning and communication strategies with their children and their children's caregivers;

(3) child-friendly visitation spaces, in consultation with the Department, for in-person and virtual visits between parents or guardians and their children, including establishing safety protocol;

(4) outreach and coordination with appropriate services for the children of incarcerated parents and guardians and the children's caregivers;

(5) improved cross-system coordination and collaboration to deliver necessary services to the families of incarcerated parents and guardians; and

(6) reentry support and preparation for incarcerated parents and guardians.

(b) Program support. The Department may support the operation of the Family Support Program established pursuant to this section through grants of financial assistance to, or contracts for services with, any nonprofit entity that meets the Department's requirements.

(c) Contingent on funding. The Family Support Program established pursuant this section shall operate only to the extent funds are appropriated for its operation.

(d) Annual report. Annually, on or before July 1, the Department shall submit a written report to the House Committees on Corrections and Institutions and on Judiciary and the Senate Committees on Institutions and on Judiciary, concerning:

(1) the funding, participation, and outcomes of the services and programming established pursuant to this section; and

(2) considerations and any progress towards sustained statewide programming and gender parity.

*Sec. 4. DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS; FAMILY SUPPORT  
PROGRAM; IMPLEMENTATION*



The Department of Corrections shall first implement the Family Support Program established under 28 V.S.A. § 128 at the Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility and Northern State Correctional Facility.

Sec. 5. APPROPRIATION.

(a) The sum of \$115,424.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Corrections in fiscal year 2026 for the purpose of supporting the Family Support Program at the Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility in accordance with 28 V.S.A. § 128.

(b) The sum of \$268,155.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of Corrections in fiscal year 2026 for the purpose of establishing and supporting the Family Support Program at the Northern State Correctional Facility in accordance with 28 V.S.A. § 128.

Sec. 5. [Deleted.]

Sec. 6. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.