

Journal of the House

Wednesday, April 22, 2026

At one o'clock in the afternoon, the Speaker called the House to order.

Devotional Exercises

Devotional exercises were conducted by Rep. Brian Cina of Burlington.

Bill Referred to Committee on Appropriations

S. 173

Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to vocational rehabilitation

Appearing on the Notice Calendar, and pursuant to House Rule 35(a), carrying an appropriation, was referred to the Committee on Appropriations.

Bill Referred to Committee on Ways and Means

S. 232

Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to public libraries and the Department of Libraries

Appearing on the Notice Calendar, and pursuant to House Rule 35(a), materially affecting the revenue of one or more municipalities, was referred to the Committee on Ways and Means.

Bill Referred to Committee on Ways and Means

S. 327

Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to economic development

Appearing on the Notice Calendar, and pursuant to House Rule 35(a), affecting the revenue of the State, and materially affecting the revenue of one or more municipalities, was referred to the Committee on Ways and Means.

Joint Senate Resolution Adopted in Concurrence

J.R.S. 50

By Senator Baruth,

J.R.S. 50. Joint resolution relating to weekend adjournment on April 24, 2026.

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That when the two Houses adjourn on Friday, April 24, 2026, it be to meet again no later than Tuesday, April 28, 2026.

Was taken up, read, and adopted in concurrence.

**Third Reading;
Bill Passed in Concurrence with Proposal of Amendment**

S. 89

Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to expanding survivor benefits

Was taken up, read the third time, and passed in concurrence with proposal of amendment.

**Second Reading; Proposal of Amendment Agreed to;
Third Reading Ordered**

S. 157

Rep. Bishop of Colchester, for the Committee on Human Services, to which had been referred Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to recovery residence certification

Reported in favor of its passage in concurrence with proposal of amendment by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 1. 18 V.S.A. § 4802 is amended to read:

§ 4802. DEFINITIONS

As used in this chapter:

* * *

(5) “Designated substance abuse counselor” means a person approved by the Secretary to evaluate and treat ~~substance abusers~~ individuals with substance use disorder, pursuant to the provisions of this chapter.

* * *

(12) “Recovery residence” means a shared living residence supporting residents recovering from a substance use disorder that provides residents with peer support, assistance accessing support services, and other community resources related to substance use disorder.

(13) “Secretary” means the Secretary of Human Services or designee.

~~(13)~~(14) “Substance abuse crisis team” means an organization approved by the Secretary to provide emergency treatment and transportation services to ~~substance abusers~~ individuals with substance use disorder pursuant to the provisions of this chapter.

~~(14)~~(15) “~~Substance abuser~~” “Individual with substance use disorder” means anyone who drinks alcohol or consumes other drugs to an extent or with a frequency that impairs or endangers ~~his or her~~ the individual’s health or the health and welfare of others.

~~(15)~~(16) “Treatment” means the broad range of medical, detoxification, residential, outpatient, aftercare, and follow-up services ~~which~~ that are needed by ~~substance abusers~~ individuals with substance use disorder and may include a variety of other medical, social, vocational, and educational services relevant to the rehabilitation of these persons.

Sec. 2. 18 V.S.A. § 4806 is amended to read:

§ 4806. DIVISION OF SUBSTANCE USE PROGRAMS

(a) The Division of Substance Use Programs shall plan, operate, and evaluate a consistent, effective program of substance use programs. All duties, responsibilities, and authority of the Division shall be carried out and exercised by and within the Department of Health.

(b) The Division shall be responsible for the following services:

- (1) prevention and intervention;
- (2) [Repealed.]
- (3) project CRASH schools; ~~and~~
- (4) alcohol and drug treatment; and
- (5) recovery residences.

* * *

Sec. 3. 9 V.S.A. § 4452 is amended to read:

§ 4452. EXCLUSIONS

(a) Unless created to avoid the application of this chapter, this chapter does not apply to any of the following:

* * *

(b)(1) Notwithstanding subsections 4463(b) and 4467(b) and section 4468 of this chapter only, a recovery residence may immediately exit or transfer a resident if all of the following conditions are met:

(A) the recovery residence has developed and adopted a residential agreement:

(i) containing a written exit and transfer policy approved by the Vermont Alliance for Recovery Residences or another certifying organization approved by the Department of Health that:

(I) addresses the length of time that a bed will be held in the event of a temporary removal;

(II) establishes the criteria by which a resident can return to the recovery residence in the event of a temporary removal; and

(III) ensures a resident's possessions will be held not less than 60 days in the event of permanent removal;

(ii) explaining the recovery residence's program rules and social standards;

(iii) designating alternative housing arrangements for the resident in the event of an exit or transfer, including contingency plans when alternative housing arrangements are not available;

~~(iii)~~(iv) describing the recovery residence's substance use policy, which shall exempt the use of a resident's valid prescription medication when used as prescribed; and

~~(iv)~~(v) indicating that by signing a residential agreement, a resident acknowledges that the recovery residence may cause the resident to be immediately exited or transferred to alternative housing if for behaving in a manner that impacts the health or safety of other individuals residing, working, or volunteering at the recovery residence, such as the resident violates violating the recovery residence's substance use policy, repeatedly refusing to engage in services or programming, being charged with a criminal offense, engaging in theft, materially interfering with the recovery of other residents, or engages engaging in acts of violence that threaten the health or safety of other residents, recovery residence staff, or volunteers;

(B) the recovery residence has obtained the resident's written consent to its residential agreement, reaffirmed after seven days;

(C) the resident ~~violated~~ behaved in a manner that impacted the health or safety of other individuals residing, working, or volunteering at the recovery residence, such as violating the recovery residence's substance use

~~policy in the residential agreement, repeatedly refusing to engage in services or programming, being charged with a criminal offense, engaging in theft, materially interfering with the recovery of other residents, or engaged engaging in acts of violence that threatened threaten the health or safety of other residents, recovery residence staff, or volunteers; and~~

(D) ~~the recovery residence has provided or arranged for a stabilization re-engagement bed or other alternative temporary housing;~~

(E) ~~the recovery residence has provided written or electronic notice to the resident containing the date and rationale for the temporary removal or transfer and options for returning to the recovery residence; and~~

(F) ~~the recovery residence has established a grievance process approved by the Vermont Alliance for Recovery Residences or another certifying organization approved by the Department of Health.~~

(2) ~~Relapse of a substance use disorder resulting in exiting a recovery residence shall not be deemed a cause of the resident's own homelessness for purposes of obtaining emergency housing.~~

(3) ~~Notwithstanding section 4460 of this chapter, a recovery residence employee may enter the recovery residence at reasonable times as necessary to carry out functions related to the operation of the recovery residence.~~

(4) ~~As used in this subsection, "recovery residence" means a shared living residence supporting persons recovering from a substance use disorder. This subsection shall only apply to a recovery residence that:~~

(A) ~~provides tenants with peer support and assistance accessing support services and community resources available to persons recovering from substance use disorders meets the definition of "recovery residence" in 18 V.S.A. § 4802; and~~

(B) ~~is certified by an organization approved by the Department of Health and that is either a Vermont affiliate of the National Alliance for Recovery Residences or another approved organization.~~

Sec. 4. 2024 Acts and Resolves No. 163, Sec. 5 is amended to read:

Sec. 5. SUNSET; RECOVERY RESIDENCES; RESIDENTIAL AGREEMENT; REPORTING

(a) ~~9 V.S.A. § 4452(b) is repealed on July 1, 2026. [Repealed.]~~

(b) ~~Sec. 4 (report; recovery residences' exit and transfer data) is repealed on July 1, 2026.~~

Sec. 5. RULEMAKING; RECOVERY RESIDENCE CERTIFICATION

(a) On or before September 1, 2027, the Department of Health shall file an initial proposed rule with the Secretary of State pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 836(a)(2) for the purposes of establishing a voluntary recovery residence certification program. At a minimum, the rule shall:

(1) require that a recovery residence seeking certification from the State comply with the certification standards of the Vermont Alliance for Recovery Residences or another organization approved by the Department; and

(2) set forth data collection standards and reporting requirements for certified recovery residences, including data elements and frequency, exit and transfer data, and requirements for annual reporting from the Department to the General Assembly that measure the program's effectiveness.

(b) The Department shall complete the rulemaking process and adopt a permanent rule pursuant to 3 V.S.A. chapter 25 on or before December 1, 2028.

(c) If the Department identifies the need for a fee to support the voluntary recovery residence certification program described in this section, the Department shall first propose the fee to the General Assembly and, if the General Assembly chooses to enact it into law, may incorporate the fee into the required rule.

Sec. 6. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2026.

Rep. Holcombe of Norwich, for the Committee on Ways and Means, recommended that the bill pass in concurrence with the proposal of amendment recommended by the Committee on Human Services.

The bill, having appeared on the Notice Calendar, was taken up, read the second time, the report of the Committee on Human Services agreed to, and third reading ordered.

**Second Reading; Proposal of Amendment Agreed to;
Third Reading Ordered**

S. 239

Rep. Cole of Hartford, for the Committee on Human Services, to which had been referred Senate bill, entitled

An act relating to the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Working Group

Reported in favor of its passage in concurrence with proposal of amendment by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

Sec. 1. CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT REPORTING WORKING
GROUP; REPORT

(a) The General Assembly finds:

(1) According to Child Trends, a research organization focused on improving the lives of children, youth, and families, data shows that from 2022 through 2024 Vermont had a rate of referrals to child welfare services that was over three times higher than the national level, with a rate of referral of 166 per 1,000 children in Vermont compared to 50 per 1,000 children nationally. Additionally, only 17 percent of such referrals in Vermont met the criteria for further action via an assessment or investigation compared to 54 percent nationally.

(2) While the General Assembly recently reviewed and revised child abuse and neglect substantiation procedures that occur after a referral has been accepted by the Department for Children and Families, there has not been a similar review of the training and requirements for mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect to ensure they employ best practices and provide sufficient guidance and resources for mandatory reporters.

(3) Data from Child Trends further shows that post-response services such as mental health services, substance misuse treatment, family therapy, child care, parenting education, and resources to assist families living in poverty were provided to only 28 percent of victims in Vermont compared with the national average of 57 percent.

(4) The provision of services to children and families prior to, during, and after a report of suspected child abuse or neglect is an essential element in a comprehensive child protection system.

(b) There is created the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Working Group for the purpose of examining the existing statutes and the Department for Children and Families' rules and policies regarding mandatory reporting of abuse and neglect of a child and recommending changes to modernize them and reflect current best practices. During its examination of mandatory reporting, the Working Group shall consider what services and strategies may be employed prior to any report of suspected abuse or neglect for the purpose of providing assistance to families before a situation rises to the level of requiring a report.

(c) The Working Group shall be composed of the following members:

(1) a member with lived experience as an abused or neglected child, appointed by the Vermont Child, Youth, and Family Advisory Council;

(2) a member with lived experience as an individual who was reported for suspected child abuse or neglect and an investigation found the report to be unsubstantiated, appointed by the Vermont Parent Representation Center;

(3) the Vermont Child, Youth, and Family Advocate or Deputy Advocate;

(4) the Executive Director of the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services or designee;

(5) a co-executive director of the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence or designee;

(6) a member from the Department for Children and Families' Family Services Division, appointed by the Deputy Commissioner of the Division;

(7) the Executive Director of Prevent Child Abuse Vermont or designee;

(8) the Director of the Vermont Parent Child Center Network or designee;

(9) a certified law enforcement officer who has served on a special investigative unit, appointed by the Vermont Law Enforcement Advisory Board;

(10) a physician co-chair of the Vermont Citizen's Advisory Board;

(11) a principal, appointed by the Vermont Principals' Association;

(12) a representative of a designated agency that works in children's mental health, appointed by Vermont Care Partners; and

(13) the Vermont Office of Racial Equity.

(d) In conducting its work, the Working Group shall consult with stakeholders, including:

(1) the Vermont Children's Alliance and representation from Child Advocacy Centers;

(2) the Department of State's Attorneys and Sheriffs;

(3) the Juvenile Division of the Office of the Defender General;

(4) KidSafe Collaborative;

(5) Voices for Vermont's Children;

- (6) the Vermont Parent Representation Center;
- (7) Disability Rights Vermont;
- (8) medical partners, such as the University of Vermont's Child Safe Program;
- (9) the Office of the Attorney General; and
- (10) a school counselor, appointed by the Vermont School Counselor Association.

(e) On or before April 1, 2027, the Working Group shall provide an interim presentation to the House Committee on Human Services, the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare, and the House and Senate Committees on Judiciary on its work to date. On or before October 1, 2027, the Working Group shall provide a final report detailing its findings and any recommended legislative proposals to the House Committee on Human Services, the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare, and the House and Senate Committees on Judiciary.

(f)(1) In developing its recommendations, the Working Group shall prioritize issues related to:

(A) providing clarity regarding statutory definitions applicable to mandatory reporters;

(B) establishing consistency between statutory requirements and Department for Children and Families rules, guidance, and training materials;

(C) identifying practical implementation challenges faced by mandatory reporters in complying with existing law;

(D) assessing the appropriateness and efficacy of provisions in 33 V.S.A. §§ 4912 and 4913 regarding the definitions applicable to mandatory reporters, who should be a mandatory reporter, the process for mandatory reporting, the penalties for failure to report, and any exemptions from the reporting requirement; and

(E) identifying alternatives to reporting suspected child abuse or neglect when such alternatives are in the best interests of the child.

(2) The Working Group shall avoid expanding its review into matters unrelated to mandatory reporting obligations, thresholds, or processes unless necessary to resolve an identified reporting issue.

(3) Any recommendations shall remain consistent with federal requirements under the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), which establishes minimum standards related to state definitions of abuse and

neglect, including physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse or exploitation, and emotional maltreatment.

(4) To promote efficiency and avoid duplicative work, the Working Group shall leverage the work of the Children’s Justice Act Task Force and the Vermont Citizen’s Advisory Board (VCAB), which serves as Vermont’s CAPTA citizen review panel.

(5) The Working Group shall consider best practices from other states in the development of its recommendations.

(g) The Working Group shall have the administrative, technical, and legal assistance of the Department for Children and Families.

(1) The Working Group shall convene its first meeting on or before August 15, 2026.

(2) The Working Group shall elect a chair at its first meeting.

(3) Members of the Working Group who are not otherwise compensated for their attendance at meetings shall be entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted under 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than 12 meetings. These payments shall be made from monies appropriated to the Department for Children and Families.

(4) The Department for Children and Families shall post information about the Working Group’s efforts on its website, including meeting notices, agendas, procedures for public comment, and minutes of meetings.

Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.

Rep. Mrowicki of Putney, for the Committee on Appropriations, recommended that the report of the Committee on Human Services be amended in Sec. 1, Child Abuse and Neglect Working Group, in subsection (d), by striking subdivisions (9) and (10) and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

(9) the Office of the Attorney General;

(10) the Vermont School Counselor’s Association; and

(11) the Agency of Education.

The bill, having appeared on the Notice Calendar, was taken up, read the second time, and the report of the Committee on Human Services was amended as recommended by the Committee on Appropriations. Thereupon, the report of the Committee on Human Services, as amended, was agreed to and third reading was ordered.

Message from the Senate No. 46

A message was received from the Senate by Ms. Gradel, its Assistant Secretary, as follows:

Madam Speaker:

I am directed to inform the House that:

The Senate has considered a bill originating in the House of the following title:

H. 723. An act relating to posting of land.

And has passed the same in concurrence.

Adjournment

At one o'clock and fifty minutes in the afternoon, on motion of **Rep. McCoy of Poultney**, the House adjourned until tomorrow at one o'clock in the afternoon.