

### The Ask

In addition to the Governor's recommended FY26, the OCYFA requests that the General Assembly fund a five-year Intake Specialist position within the OCYFA.

### The Why

The OCYFA is an independent, non-partisan, ombuds-like entity created to advance and protect the interests of children, youth, and families in Vermont. The Office currently has two employees and receives hundreds of calls for assistance each year. The Intake Specialist would answer calls and organize intakes, manage grants and projects, and perform other administrative duties that will relieve significant pressure on the OCYFA and allow the Advocate and Deputy Advocate to perform their statutory duties.

### Funding for Position

\$ 133,000	Estimated annual cost for Intake Specialist
\$ 70,000	Estimated federal JCAMP grant funds to OCYFA, FY26 – FY30
\$ 63,000	Estimated remaining funds needed per year for Intake Specialist through FY30
<b>\$ 315,000</b>	<b>Total allocation requested, FY26-FY30</b>

### OCYFA Contributions

OCYFA learned last week that Vermont was awarded a five-year federal grant worth over a million dollars. The project was developed by OCYFA in collaboration with DCF, Legal Services Vermont, the Chittenden County State's Attorney, The Family Room, and a PhD data expert. The project will:

- For the first time, provide civil legal wraparound services for VT families with child welfare involvement.
- Generate high quality data regarding the effects of those services on child welfare and legal outcomes.
- Create a pathway for DCF to draw down new federal IV-E legal representation money, **estimated at \$1.75 million each year** and requiring no additional state money (see [OCYFA 2024 Annual Report](#), p. 21).

### Additional OCYFA Budget Development Projects

- Springboard Prize: Pending application for \$400,000, proposal is collaboration with Vermont Office of Racial Equity, seeks to create materials in Vermont's 15 most commonly spoken languages explaining rights and responsibilities in child welfare for families and children.
- FY 2025 Congressionally Directed Spending process: Received letter of support from Sen. Peter Welch for \$ 1.02 million project to amplify youth voice. Hope to be successfully funded this year.

### Sources of Funding

- [Sec. C.106 of Act 11 of 2018](#) set aside \$ 7 million "to make strategic investments to transform the adjudication of CHINS cases in Vermont," that "lead to lasting changes."
- Until last year, when significant appropriations went to DCF and the Judiciary, less than a million dollars of this money had been spent.
- To our knowledge, none of the original \$ 7 million has been spent to directly support children and families. People impacted by DCF have had very little voice in the process.
- While the fund is projected to run a deficit soon, we believe this \$ 315,000 should be a priority.
- If this fund is not a viable option, we ask that this money be found through other sources.