

1 TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

2 The Committee on Human Services to which was referred Senate Bill No.  
3 239 entitled “An act relating to the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting  
4 Working Group” respectfully reports that it has considered the same and  
5 recommends that the House propose to the Senate that the bill be amended by  
6 striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the  
7 following:

8 Sec. 1. CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT REPORTING WORKING GROUP

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

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

19 (1) the Vermont Child, Youth, and Family Advocate or Deputy  
20 Advocate;

- 1           (2) the Deputy Defender General, Juvenile Defender’s Office, or
- 2           designee;
- 3           (3) the Executive Director of the Vermont Center for Crime Victim
- 4           Services or designee;
- 5           (4) a co-executive director of the Vermont Network Against Domestic
- 6           and Sexual Violence or designee;
- 7           (5) a member from the Department for Children and Families’ Family
- 8           Services Division, appointed by the Deputy Commissioner of the Division;
- 9           (6) the Executive Director of Prevent Child Abuse Vermont or designee;
- 10           (7) the Director of the Vermont Parent Child Center Network or
- 11           designee;
- 12           (8) a certified law enforcement officer who has served on a special
- 13           investigative unit, appointed by the Vermont Law Enforcement Advisory
- 14           Board;
- 15           (9) a physician co-chair of the Vermont Citizen’s Advisory Board;
- 16           (10) a principal, appointed by the Vermont Principal’s Association;
- 17           (11) a representative of a designated agency that works in children’s
- 18           mental health, appointed by Vermont Care Partners;
- 19           (12) a member with lived experience as an abused or neglected child,
- 20           appointed by the Vermont Child, Youth, and Family Council; and

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

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

6           (1) Vermont Children’s Alliance and representation from Child  
7           Advocacy Centers;

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

9           (3) KidSafe Collaborative;

10          (4) Voices for Vermont’s Children;

11          (5) Vermont Parent Representation Center;

12          (6) Disability Rights Vermont;

13          (7) medical partners, such as the University of Vermont’s Child Safe  
14          Program;

15          (8) the Vermont Office of Racial Equity; and

16          (9) the Attorney General’s Office.

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

1 to the House Committee on Human Services, Senate Committee on Health and  
2 Welfare, and Senate and House Committees on Judiciary.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1           (3) Any recommendations should remain consistent with federal  
2           requirements under the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA),  
3           which establishes minimum standards related to state definitions of abuse and  
4           neglect, including physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse or exploitation, and  
5           emotional maltreatment.

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

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

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

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

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

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

1       Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

2           This act shall take effect on passage.

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11           (Committee vote: \_\_\_\_\_)

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Representative \_\_\_\_\_

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FOR THE COMMITTEE