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**STATE OF VERMONT
DEPARTMENT OF STATE'S ATTORNEYS & SHERIFFS**

SAS DISCUSSION MEMORANDUM

FROM: Tim Lueders-Dumont, Esq., SAS Executive Director

DATE: February 9, 2026

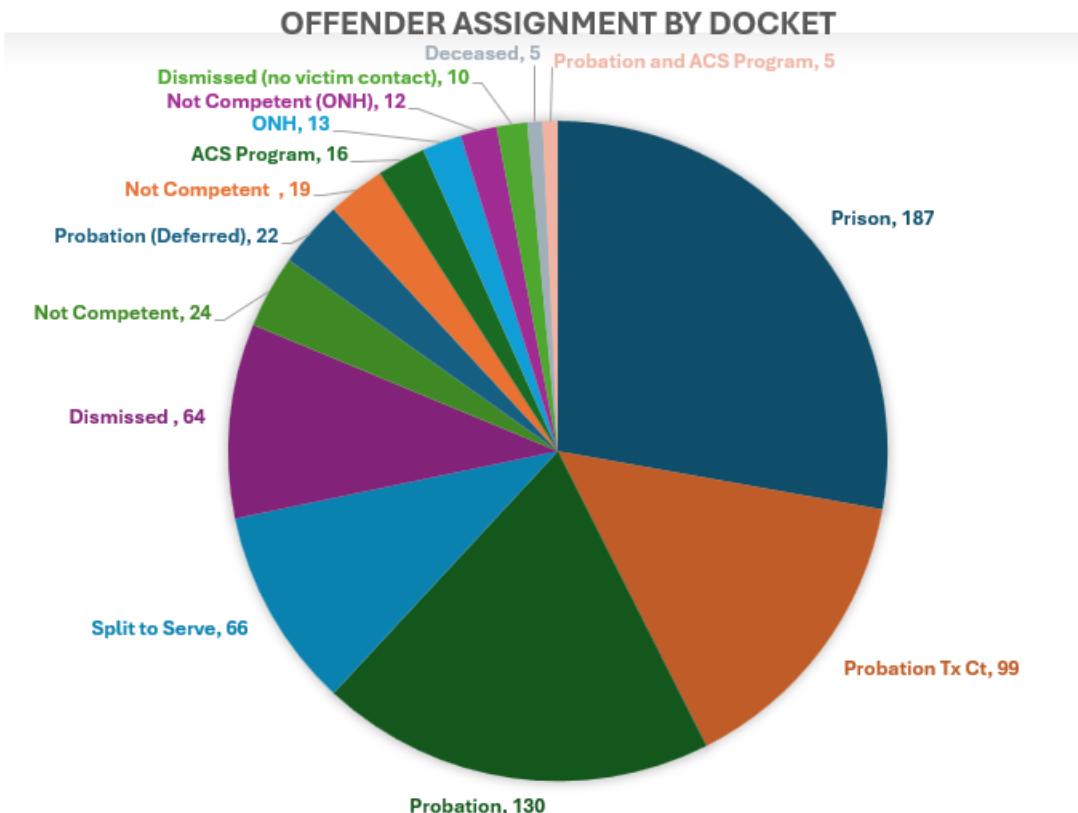
SUBJECT: Discussion Memo, SAS Executive Director's Recommendations for Judicial Accountability and Systemic Efficiency in light of Chittenden County Pilot Docket (Oct. 2025-Feb. 2026)

I. Executive Overview

The Vermont justice system is navigating a period of unprecedented strain. While the system has achieved a 14.53% reduction in total pending dockets since 2023, the courts remain burdened by high-volume defendants with multiple pending criminal cases. Although the system maintains a healthy average clearance rate, ranging between 104% to 107%, the backlog remains significant due to the complexity of the remaining inventory.

To protect victims' rights and ensure due process for defendants, SAS proposes a transition toward accountability-centric metrics and the statewide expansion of dedicated high-volume dockets, modeled after the high-impact results observed in Chittenden County.

AC TOTAL DOCKET DATA			
DATE	TOTAL ACTIVE DOCKETS	TOTAL RESOLVED DOCKETS	TOTAL DOCKETS
DOCKETS 10/20/25	878	0	878
DOCKETS 11/25/25	685	174	859
DOCKETS 12/02/25	646	218	864
DOCKETS 12/09/25	556	290	846
DOCKETS 12/16/25	500	328	828
DOCKETS 12/23/25	528	375	903
DOCKETS 01/14/26	385	529	914
DOCKETS 01/21/26	377	561	930
DOCKETS 01/27/26	363	572	935
DOCKETS 02/05/26	296	674	970

Chittenden Pilot Accountability Docket Data (10/20/25 – 2/5/26)Chittenden Pilot Accountability Docket Data (10/20/25 – 2/5/26)**II. Data Analysis: The "Repeat-Defendant, High-Volume" Challenge**

Data, as of December 2025, confirms that high-volume defendants drive a disproportionate share of the total system workload:

- The 3+ Group: 43.82% of all pending dockets involve individuals with three or more cases.
- The 5+ Group: Only 665 individuals (approx. 6% of people in the system) are responsible for 26.16% of the entire system's capacity.

III. Strategic Recommendations

To scale this success statewide, SAS recommends the following:

1. Dedicated Courtroom Space and Time: Utilize under-utilized criminal, civil and family courtrooms on low-use days to establish specialized "Accountability Dockets" for defendants with 5+ pending filings. Transition away from 30/60/90-day waiting periods for persons with multiple pending criminal cases. Cases should be set for a next event, and even a proposed trial-date-target, immediately following an accepted charging and arraignment (in the 3+ and 5+ groups) to ensure swift accountability and speedier justice for victims.

2. Integrating Service-Providers, AHS and Designated Agencies: Stakeholders have expressed strong support for ensuring that Service Providers, Agency of Human Services (AHS)¹, and Designated Agencies are physically or virtually present in the courtroom. Centrally locating these partners and facilitating the free flow of information through a unified release form has been a significant benefit to the Chittenden Pilot; maintaining this integrated approach would be essential for any future expansion.
3. Improved Metrics: Shift from simple "clearance" metrics to tracking five key success factors:
 - i. Re-charge rates (*given that current statutory definition of "recidivism" is extremely problematic, best metric for system impact may be instances of persons re-charged by the State where PC is found by a judge and a docket number assigned*)
 - ii. Resolution time
 - iii. Service completion and Disposition/Sentence Tracking
 - iv. Qualitative feedback
 - v. Specific docket reduction within the high-volume population

IV. Discussion: Staffing and Resources for Statewide Expansion

Current SAS caseloads—averaging 300–350 cases per Attorney, 600 per Victim Advocate, and 800 per Administrative Professional—are unsustainable for the intensive management required for accountability dockets to expand. In the Chittenden Pilot Docket SAS provided Deputy State’s Attorney Zach Weight to serve as the Governor’s Special Counsel – serving in an embedded role in the Office of the Chittenden County State’s Attorney.² Further SAS provided both administrative and victim advocate support to the docket – however, long-term docket support would have required additional staff and resources. And, SAS supported detainee transportation through SAS Transport Deputies. To support statewide expansion, the following resources and staffing needs would greatly assist in ensuring long-term success and sustainability:

<u>Role</u>	<u>Proposed Expansion Needs</u>
<i>Docket Accountability Team</i>	To build a robust infrastructure for data integrity and deployment, the SAS-EDO proposes a (3) three-person specialist team—consisting of two attorney/paralegals and one administrator. This team could manage deployment models, serve as dedicated data experts, and act as primary coordinators with service providers and community stakeholders. Even a single (1) full-time equivalent dedicated to this role would provide helpful statewide coordination to identify high-volume dockets, maintain essential rollout metrics, and facilitate the implementation of accountability dockets. Furthermore, this position would serve as a vital link to community stakeholders while providing data-driven support to individual State’s Attorneys in their daily operations.
<i>Support Block</i>	(6) Admin/Paralegals and (4) Victim Advocates to ensure statutory compliance. To ensure ongoing statutory compliance, any long-term expansion must include increased staffing for administrative, paralegal, and victim advocate roles. The faster pace of the Accountability Pilot model demands

¹ Including DOC.

² DSA Weight was dually sworn as a DSA by Chittenden County State’s Attorney Sarah Geroge and by Governor Scott, as a “Special Prosecutor.”

Role	<u>Proposed Expansion Needs</u>
	quicker turnarounds for victim notices and defendant-mandated discovery, creating a workload that exceeds the capacity of current staff. ³
Transport Deputies	(6–10) SAS Transport Deputies to eliminate scheduling and logistical delays. OR, an agreement from other law enforcement agencies and DOC to fill the gaps in transportation (e.g., <i>using the Chittenden Pilot VEM model</i>). Note, Title 24 provides that all Vermont LEAs and DOC may also transport prisoners to and from court. ⁴

SAS is evaluating two potential pathways for scaling statewide docket accountability efforts: a centralized specialist team that could be deployed *or* a decentralized regional model. A dedicated team of 1–3 specialists—including attorneys and paralegals—could target high-volume defendants and resolve aging cases. Alternatively, even a single FTE with data-management expertise could assist statewide with deployment coordination:⁵

- A mobile centralized specialist team could address "hot-spots" and provide statewide support – the deployment model.
- Decentralized: Leveraging regional DSAs/Admins/Paralegals with specific mandates for docket accountability. These staff could be moved or positioned as hot spots develop within a region.

Note on Transport Logistics: While this proposal includes 6–10 additional Transport Deputies to eliminate scheduling delays and increase capacity to facilitate more frequent court hearings for detained persons, there is a path to achieving these results through inter-agency synergy rather than new hires:

- i. The Unified Transport Solution: If all Vermont Law Enforcement Agencies—including the Vermont State Police (VSP), DMV Police, and all municipal agencies, plus the Department of Corrections (DOC)—collaboratively assisted with transport duties, the need for new dedicated SAS Transport Deputies would be mitigated.

Operational Requirements: Should SAS maintain existing, *or similar to current status quo*, staffing levels, the system would instead require:

- i. Increased Overtime (OT) Funding: To cover the expanded hours for current staff (admins, paralegals, VAs, and Transport Deputies). With respect to Transport Deputies, additional OT capacity is an existing need even without the expansion of accountability dockets.
- ii. Optimized Court Scheduling: Aggressive "date-certain" and "time-certain" practices to ensure transport resources are never wasted. This can be addressed through block-scheduling for detainees between the hours of 10am-2pm (in most cases).

V. Conclusion

Chittenden County's progress provides a clear roadmap: concentrating resources on high-volume defendants yields the greatest return on public safety and accountability. By integrating dedicated courtroom time with service-provider

³ For costs estimates from FY26 testimony, see [here](#).

⁴ For costs estimates from FY26 testimony, see [here](#).

⁵ Capacity Constraints: With current caseloads averaging 350 per Attorney and 800 per Administrative Professional, existing staff lack the bandwidth for the intensive management these dockets require.

support, Vermont can transform the 'revolving door' into a system of measurable accountability—ensuring that treatment-related dockets are resolved both swiftly and fairly.⁶

⁶ Judge Maley, presiding over the Chittenden Pilot, has referred to the pilot as "Treatment Court *Lite*."