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**Report to  
The Vermont Legislature**

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**Report to the Vermont Legislature  
Regarding referral of domestic and sexual violence cases  
to community justice centers**

**In Accordance with [Act 11 \(2023\), Section 4](#)**

**Submitted to: House and Senate Committees on Judiciary**

**Submitted by: Charity R. Clark, Vermont Attorney General**

**Prepared by: Willa Farrell, Court Diversion & Pretrial Services  
Director, Community Justice Unit  
General Counsel and Administrative Law Division**

**Report Date: December 1, 2025**

## Introduction

This report has been prepared in accordance with Section 4 of [Act 11 \(2023\)](#).

*On or before December 1, 2025, the Community Justice Unit, in collaboration with the Vermont Network, and the participating community justice centers shall submit an interim report to the House and Senate Committees on Judiciary regarding the establishment of memorandums of understanding pursuant to 24 V.S.A. § 1968, the status of implementation of programming, referral sources, available data on effectiveness, and the available resources and capacity for such programming.*

## Introduction and Summary of Act 11

Act 11 of 2023 allows cases involving domestic and sexual violence to be referred to Community Justice Centers (CJCs) after they have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with a local Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (Vermont Network) organization, and the MOU has been approved by the Community Justice Unit at the Attorney General's Office (AGO). If a CJC intends to accept case referrals directly from police or prosecutors, the MOU must also include law enforcement and/or the State's Attorney. [Act 11](#) amended [24 V.S.A. § 1967](#), which formerly prohibited CJCs from receiving domestic violence and sexual violence case referrals.

Act 11 requires MOUs to address eight protocols that guide programs to do the following:

1. establish an evidence-based or promising program approach,
2. prioritize victim safety,
3. include voluntary referral and participation of parties,
4. require initial and annual training,
5. establish organizational roles,
6. establish confidentiality standards,
7. establish data collection standards, and
8. establish annual evaluation and quality improvement plans.

Act 11 does not mandate that CJCs begin offering new programming or that jurisdictions refer domestic violence or sexual violence cases to their local CJC.

## Guidance Developed

The Community Justice Unit, the Vermont Network, and the Center for Crime Victim Services collaboratively drafted guidance for the development of MOUs between CJCs, Vermont Network members, and other community-based organizations and stakeholders as they collaborate in the creation of programs to address domestic and sexual violence using restorative justice practices, and approaches.

The [guidance](#) was distributed widely and posted on the AGO website on July 1, 2024.

An advisory group provided feedback on the guidance as it was developed. The group included representation of Vermont restorative justice practitioners, domestic and/or sexual violence service providers, staff at the Department for Children and Families, and other allied professionals, including individuals with lived experience and expertise in anti-racism and anti-discrimination.

## Memorandums of Understanding & Programming Implementation

To date, only one MOU has been approved. The Greater Falls CJC and Women's Freedom Center, located in Windham County, submitted an MOU during the fall of 2024 for a pilot. The restorative process was offered to a couple following one person's completion of DVAP (Domestic Violence Accountability Program), and both partners reported the experience as positive and helpful. Based on this experience, the organizations revised their MOU, which the AGO approved May 2025.

The AGO has received two other MOUs, but neither has been finalized. Review of each MOU led to programmatic and process questions, and the CJC and Network partners have not sent revised agreements. The AGO consulted with the Vermont Network on the review of MOUs and is developing a template to help communities more easily draft MOUs that follow the guidance and Act 11.

## Resources and Capacity for Programming

Around Vermont, many communities are discussing how to bring restorative approaches to people involved in domestic and sexual violence. There is interest in creating opportunities outside the criminal legal system alongside court-mandated pathways. This latter group raises questions about the voluntariness of participation (as required by Act 11) as well as regarding how to ensure processes are truly centered around victims and survivors.

The Vermont Network has provided trainings and hosts a learning collaborative to support these planning efforts. An additional benefit of these resources has been to help CJC staff understand and respond to domestic or sexual violence that may be an element of, if not the basis for, the cases currently referred to CJs.

This thoughtful pace of learning about, developing, and implementing restorative practices for gender-based violence aligns with best practice as defined by many practitioners and technical assistance providers working nationally in this arena.

Community partners report lack of funding as a significant barrier to developing restorative approaches to address domestic and sexual violence. The federal Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) instituted a Restorative Practices Pilot Sites Program in 2024. A Chittenden County collaborative received one of 11 five-year grants awarded around the country and is in the process of designing services. In FY 2025, OVW solicited proposals for the next round of grants, and organizations in the Northeast Kingdom have applied. OVW's grant program includes some restrictions on cases involving criminal cases. There is no state funding to support this work.

## Consulting Partners

- Bobby Blanchard, Director of Post Adjudication Services, Lamoille Restorative Center
- Harmony Bourgeois, Executive Director, Franklin Grand Isle Restorative Justice Center
- Selene Coburn, Vermont Network Against Domestic & Sexual Violence
- Rachel Jolly, Executive Director, Burlington Community Justice Center
- Abby Tassel, WISE
- Jennifer Poehlmann, Executive Director, Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services
- John Ungerleider, Director, Greater Falls Community Justice Center