

1 Sec. E.329 DESIGNATED AND SPECIALIZED SERVICE AGENCIES;
2 ENGAGEMENT PROCESS; REPORT

3 (a) Between July 1, 2026 and December 15, 2026, the Agency of Human
4 Services shall convene a stakeholder group to conduct a comprehensive
5 analysis of the designated and specialized service agency system. The
6 stakeholder group shall include individuals with lived experience of receiving
7 services from a designated or specialized service agency, members of relevant
8 standing committees, commissioners from relevant Agency of Human Services
9 departments or their designees, and representatives of Vermont Care Partners.

10 The stakeholder group shall:

11 (1) conduct a comprehensive analysis of the designated and specialized
12 service agency system, including:

13 (A) the scope of State-funded and State-required designated and
14 specialized agency services;

15 (B) applicable statutory, contractual, and administrative
16 requirements;

17 (C) the extent to which evolving community needs, system reforms,
18 and State and federal mandates have expanded the responsibilities of
19 designated and specialized service agencies over time;

20 (D) system sustainability;

21 (E) State and system workforce capacity;

22 (F) sufficiency of State financial resources; and

1 (G) administrative burden on the State and designated and
2 specialized service agencies;

3 (2) identify and define essential services and establish alignment
4 between State and federal requirements, community need, and available
5 resources, and develop a transparent process for adding or expanding State or
6 federally required responsibilities that considers prior agreements on funding,
7 staffing, operational feasibility, and service delivery impact prior to the
8 adoption or enforcement of these responsibilities; and

9 (3) submit findings and recommendations to the House Committees on
10 Appropriations, on Health Care, and on Human Services and to the Senate
11 Committees on Appropriations and on Health and Welfare on or before
12 January 1, 2027.

13 (b) On or before January 15, 2028, the Department of Disabilities, Aging,
14 and Independent Living, in consultation with the Departments of Health and of
15 Mental Health and the Office of Health Care Reform in the Agency of Human
16 Services, shall submit a plan that conforms with the Statewide Health Care
17 Delivery Strategic Plan developed pursuant to 18 V.S.A. § 9403 to the House
18 Committees on Appropriations, on Health Care, and on Human Services and to
19 the Senate Committees on Appropriations and on Health and Welfare for
20 developing and conducting a data-informed, patient-focused, community-
21 inclusive engagement process for Vermont's designated and specialized
22 service agencies that shall include:

1 (1) hearing from and sharing data, information, trends, and insights with
2 communities about the current and future states of the designated and
3 specialized service agencies;

4 (2) providing opportunities for meaningful participation in all stages of
5 the engagement process by current, former, and prospective clients of the
6 designated and specialized service agencies and health care providers,
7 including employees of designated and specialized service agencies, including
8 participation by individuals who reflect Vermont's diversity with regard to
9 race, income, age, and disability status;

10 (3) providing the data, information, and analysis necessary to support
11 the engagement process, including information and trends relating to the
12 current and future states of the designated and specialized service agencies and
13 the workforce challenges encountered by the agencies; and

14 (4) establishing mechanisms to assess the impact of any changes on the
15 designated and specialized service agencies, including on workforce
16 recruitment and retention initiatives.

17 (c) As part of its fiscal year 2027 budget adjustment presentation, the
18 Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living may include a
19 request for an appropriation to hire one or more consultants to support the
20 engagement process recommended pursuant to subsection (b) of this section.

1 Sec. E.316 REPORT; REACH UP

2 On or before January 15, 2027, the Department for Children and Families
3 shall submit a written report to the House Committees on Appropriations and
4 on Human Services and to the Senate Committees on Appropriations and on
5 Health and Welfare evaluating the Reach Up program, including any
6 inefficiencies or gaps in services; an actionable, phased plan that estimates the
7 amount needed to remove the ratable reduction in the Reach Up program; and
8 any recommendations for legislative action.

1 Sec. E.313 18 V.S.A. § 4812 is amended to read:

2 § 4812. SUBSTANCE MISUSE PREVENTION SPECIAL FUND

3 (a) The Substance Misuse Prevention Special Fund is established and
4 managed by the Vermont Department of Health in accordance with 32 V.S.A.
5 chapter 7, subchapter 5 for the purpose of funding substance misuse prevention
6 programming, including school-based prevention programming.

7 (b) Thirty percent of the revenues raised by the cannabis excise tax
8 imposed pursuant to 32 V.S.A. § 7902, not to exceed \$10,000,000.00 per fiscal
9 year, shall be deposited into this fund ~~for substance misuse prevention costs.~~

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1 Sec. X. LEGISLATIVE INTENT; HIREABILITY

2 In fiscal year 2027, the General Assembly intends to fund HireAbility of Vermont
3 through the Opioid Abatement Special Fund. However, in fiscal year 2028 and
4 thereafter, the General Assembly intends to fund HireAbility of Vermont using
5 general funds.