



FY26 Supervised Visitation Appropriations Request

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Senate Health and Welfare Committee

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Thank you for the invitation to submit testimony regarding the FY26 budget. We are requesting that your committee prioritize **\$123,658 in one-time funds to the Department for Children and families to prevent significant cuts to supervised visitation services in Vermont.**

The Vermont Network is Vermont's leading voice on domestic and sexual violence. Our members are 15 independent, non-profit organizations that provide advocacy and support to survivors of violence across the state. Four of our members provide supervised visitation services to families in their community.

Overview of Supervised Visitation Services

Supervised visitation is used to address situations where contact with a parent needs to occur in an appropriate, safe setting for the protection of the children and non-abusive parent. Families are ordered into supervised visitation by the judiciary as part of a court proceeding or by the Department for Children and Families.

There are 7 separate supervised visitation centers operated by non-profit organizations (see attached). In 2024, they provided safe visits to hundreds of Vermont families.

The Vermont Network provides statewide support to supervised visitation providers. The Vermont Network provides training on best practices for safety, referrals to community and state resources, and coordinates services to promote standardized and professional services across the state.

Funding for Supervised Visitation Services

Supervised visitation programs have historically been funded in part by the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services (VCCVS) and Department for Children and Families. Funding has been flat for many years. Programs are funded by equal grants of approximately \$31,000 from VCCVS and \$8,000 from DCF, resulting in less than \$40,000 annually for each program. Funding does not account for population, number of individuals served, geographic area or other factors.

VCCVS has funded the statewide coordination of supervised visitation providers through a combination of general fund dollars (\$137,500) and funding from the Victim Compensation Special Fund (\$123,658). The Victim Compensation Special Fund faces a significant shortfall in the current fiscal year.



Because of this shortfall, the VCCVS has announced that they cannot provide expected funding from the Victims Compensation Special Fund in FY26 or in the future and would like to transfer their existing General Fund Dollars supporting this program to DCF.

FY26 Budget Request for Supervised Visitation

We are requesting a one-time appropriation of \$123,658 to DCF to replace lost VCCVS funds and prevent significant cuts to supervised visitation services. Without these one-time funds, programs will experience an almost 25% reduction in total funds. This will likely result in several program closures.

We are also requesting to transfer \$137,500 in General Fund dollars for supervised visitation services from VCCVS to DCF.

To continue providing services to families, Vermont's supervised visitation system needs a sustainable funding model. We would be requesting that the following **report language** is included in the budget:

"On or before January 15, 2026, the Commissioner for Children and Families and the Chief Superior Judge shall jointly submit a report to the House Committees on Human Services and on Judiciary and to the Senate Committees on Health and Welfare and on Judiciary containing a proposal for funding supervised visitation programs. The proposal shall address and recommend sustainable funding for statewide coordination, equitable funding among supervised visitation locations, and access for residents of counties that do not currently provide supervised visitation services. The Vermont Center for Crime Victims Services, the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence and supervised visitation providers shall be consulted in the preparation of the report."

Without this appropriation, the entire system of supervised visitation will be impacted, and programs will likely close, putting the safety of families and children at risk.

Thank you for your consideration and support.