

To: Senate Health and Welfare Committee

FROM: Lund

Submitted by: Melissa Appleton, Coordinator of Post Permanency Services, melissaa@lundvt.org

DATE: 1/21/25

RE: Post Permanency Services Program

Dear Senators,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. We value your time and work on important matters impacting Vermont's children and families. I also want to extend a big thank you for your funding support last legislative session.

I am Lund's Coordinator of Post Permanency Services. I have been working in the permanency field with adoptive and guardianship families for the past 18 years. I see daily the positive impact of Post Permanency Services and how critical it can be in supporting stability and resiliency for these families.

I want to share an adoptive parent quote which I think represents the importance of this program and why we so value the state's support:

"Thanks to my Post Permanency Service Provider I learned that parenting children from the foster care system is not intuitive. These children often need the very opposite of what their bodies are communicating. When my son was hitting, kicking, and yelling profanities at us, he really needed to know that we would not leave him. That we could indeed handle him and his behaviors. It takes a lot of courage, vulnerability, resources, self-care, and support to provide a sense of permanency and unconditional love in this situation. Post permanency plays a primary role in this for our family."

This family adopted their son through the VT foster care system. In his early years he experienced neglect, abuse, and multiple foster care placements. Prior to adoption, these parents did a lot to prepare for their son. They are also experienced parents and professionals. However, even with preparation and experience, they still needed adoption competent services to help them along their family's journey. That's where Post Permanency Services stepped in. Lund provided this family with parent coaching and education on early trauma and attachment. The family received referrals to other resources, services, and trainings focused on their son and family's needs. Their Lund worker also attended school meetings to help advocate for increased school accommodations. Additionally, this parent was able to connect with other parents through Lund's support groups. This specialized support is what this caregiver and often others need as they care for their children joined with their families through adoption and guardianship.

Raising a child is one of the hardest jobs. Parenting through adoption or guardianship can have added complexities and challenges. It is important for these caregivers to have access to providers who understand their family's unique needs. The state's funding support for Post Permanency Services

assures these families have the specialized assistance and resources they may need after adoption finalization. Children do well when their parents do well. Post Permanency Services helps parents do their best.

We continue to see high numbers of families seeking services and supports. Below is 2024 data on clients served and services provided:

- Lund served 162 open clients.
- Lund provided 295 consultations to non-opened adoptive and guardianship families and service providers.
- Lund provided 38 support groups across the state with 137 participants.
- Lund currently serves five DCF districts in six counties. Areas/districts served include Newport, Burlington, Middlebury, Springfield, and Brattleboro.

The program also continues to see high satisfaction from families served. Below are results from the Spring 2024 Satisfaction Survey:

- 93% of respondents reported feeling either satisfied or very satisfied with services received. 7% were neutral
- 98% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed their Post Permanency Services Provider was knowledgeable about adoption.

With the increased funding last year, Lund's Post Permanency program is brought closer to full funding. The increased state funding strengthens the financial stability of our program so we can uphold the high level of service to families.

Our partnership with our legislators is one of our most valued assets. We welcome any follow up questions you may have and are so grateful for your past and current support to Post Permanency Services.

With gratitude,

Melissa Appleton, LICSW
Coordinator of Post Permanency Services, Lund