



**CHILD  
PROTECTION  
IN VERMONT  
REPORT FOR 2021**

**Child Protection Hotline:  
1-800-649-5285**

# MESSAGE FROM DCF COMMISSIONER & FAMILY SERVICES DIVISION (FSD) DEPUTY COMMISSIONER

---

We continue our work to stabilize Vermont's system of care — a system that has been significantly affected by the pandemic. Core treatment programs are operating at reduced staffing capacity. Some have had to suspend services altogether. The worker shortage is impacting the availability of services at all levels — from community-based care, foster care, and residential treatment facilities.

To support the system and align with state policy goals to move away from a detention and correctional based system for youth, FSD continues to focus its work on trauma-informed, therapeutic treatment models that connect youth to age-appropriate services.

DCF-FSD has supported the system of care throughout the pandemic. Here are a few examples of our efforts:

1. Working to establish an interim in-state secure setting to stabilize youth in behavioral health crisis.
2. Provided substantial emergency relief funding to residential programs in Vermont to support ongoing services for youth in need of an intensive level of care.
3. Increasing ongoing rates for our Vermont programs and services providers.
4. Providing and funding health care traveling staff to fortify our most critical residential treatment and stabilization programs.

It is vitally important that we strengthen the residential and stabilization programs that serve children and youth in custody.

We must also make sure Family Services is a place where the working conditions are positive. Where the best and brightest want to work. The newly-created FSD workforce development group will help. The group is working to find new, innovative ways to improve employee recruitment and retention.

In 2021, despite the many challenges we faced:

- 96.4% of children were visited by their workers every month, exceeding the federal standard of 95%.
- The number of children in custody placed with relatives or family friends increased by over 10%.

We are committed to bolstering the system of care and supporting our workforce — to support the most vulnerable children and youth in Vermont.

**Sean Brown, DCF Commissioner**

**Aryka Radke, FSD Deputy Commissioner**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

---

**This report provides child protection data for calendar year 2021 in Vermont.**

Here are the highlights:

- 18,507 reports were made to the Child Protection Line in 2021 – 2,785 more than in 2020.
- At least 75% of the reports made were from mandated reporters and 18% from non-mandated reporters.
- Based on the 18,507 reports received, we opened 4,423 child safety interventions:
  - ⇒ 1,966 investigations
  - ⇒ 2,457 assessments:
    - 1,515 child abuse assessments
    - 942 family assessments
- At the conclusion of the 4,423 child safety interventions, 876 cases were opened for ongoing services.
- At the conclusion of the 1,966 investigations, 609 reports were substantiated.
- Based on the 609 substantiated reports, there were 722 unique child victims.
- During the last quarter of 2021, there were:
  - ⇒ 1,061 children in DCF custody
  - ⇒ 469 children in the conditional custody of a parent, relative or other person known to the child and family
  - ⇒ 296 families getting ongoing services after an investigation or assessment determined there was a high to very high-risk of future maltreatment

# REPORTS OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT

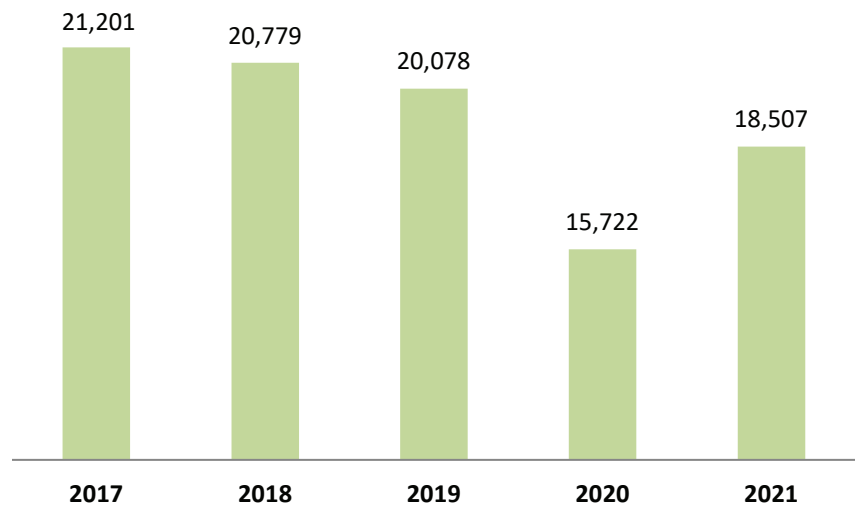
We encourage all Vermonters to call our Child Protection Line when they have concerns about a child's safety and well-being— whether or not they are mandated by law to do so. [1-800-649-5285 \(24/7\)](tel:1-800-649-5285)

## 18,507 in 2021

There were 2,785 more calls made to Vermont's Child Protection Line in 2021. This increase likely reflects the return to "normal" operations since the pandemic began.



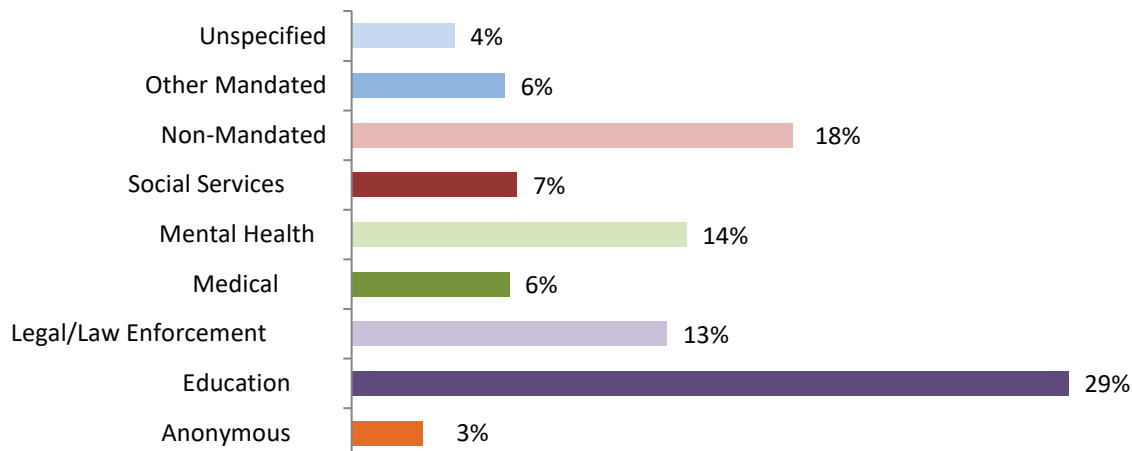
### Reports to the Child Protection Line



**At least 75%** of reports came from mandated reporters.

**At least 18%** of reports came from non-mandated reporters.

### Reports Alleging Child Abuse and Neglect, by Reporter Type (2021)



# REPORTS ACCEPTED FOR INTERVENTION

## 4,423 Child Safety Interventions in 2021

Vermont law authorizes two types of intervention:

1. Assessments
2. Investigations

While the preferred intervention is usually an assessment, an investigation is legally required in certain situations. To learn more, read FSD Policy 52 - Child Safety Interventions: Investigations & Assessments on our website at <https://dcf.vermont.gov/fsd/policies>.



CALENDAR YEAR	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
<b>Calls to Vermont's Child Protection Line</b>	21,201	20,779	20,078	15,722	18,507
<b>Total reports accepted for intervention</b>	5,527 (26%)	5,326 (25%)	4,606 (22%)	3,620 (23%)	4,423 (24%)
- Investigations	3,054	3,173	2,640	1,604	1,966
- Assessments	2,473	2,153	1,966	2,016	2,457
• Child abuse assessments	1,351	1,130	1,117	1,167	1,515
• Family assessments	1,122	1,023	849	849	942
<b>Outcomes of interventions:</b>					
- Investigations substantiated <sup>1</sup>	876	999	822	527	609
- Cases opened for services <sup>2</sup>	1,230	1,281	1,047	794	876

1 INVESTIGATIONS SUBSTANTIATED: A report is substantiated if the evidence found during the investigation would lead a reasonable person to believe the child was abused or neglected.

2 CASES OPENED FOR SERVICES: A case is opened for ongoing services if, during any type of intervention, the assessed risk of future maltreatment is determined to be high or very high.

## VICTIMS OF CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT

The data in the table below is based on substantiated reports<sup>1</sup> of child abuse and neglect. The number of unique child victims listed is an unduplicated count. This means that each child victim is counted only once, regardless of the number of times they were found to be victimized during the reporting year.

The sharp decrease in unique child victims in 2020 correlates to a decrease in reports received due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The slight increase in 2021 reflects a return to “normal” operations since the pandemic began.



<sup>1</sup> When DCF investigates a report of child abuse or neglect, we must decide whether a reasonable person would believe that it happened. If the answer is YES, the report is substantiated and the person’s name is added to the Child Protection Registry - a database of all substantiated reports of child abuse and neglect dating back to January 1, 1992.



# ONGOING FAMILY SERVICES CASELOAD

Our ongoing caseload includes the following types of cases:

➔ **Kids in DCF custody:**

When a family court judge places a child in the temporary custody of the Department for Children and Families because of concerns about a child’s safety and well-being.



➔ **Kids in conditional custody:**

When a family court judge places a child in the conditional custody of a parent, relative or other person known to the family and orders DCF to stay involved – to supervise, provide services and ensure the child’s safety.



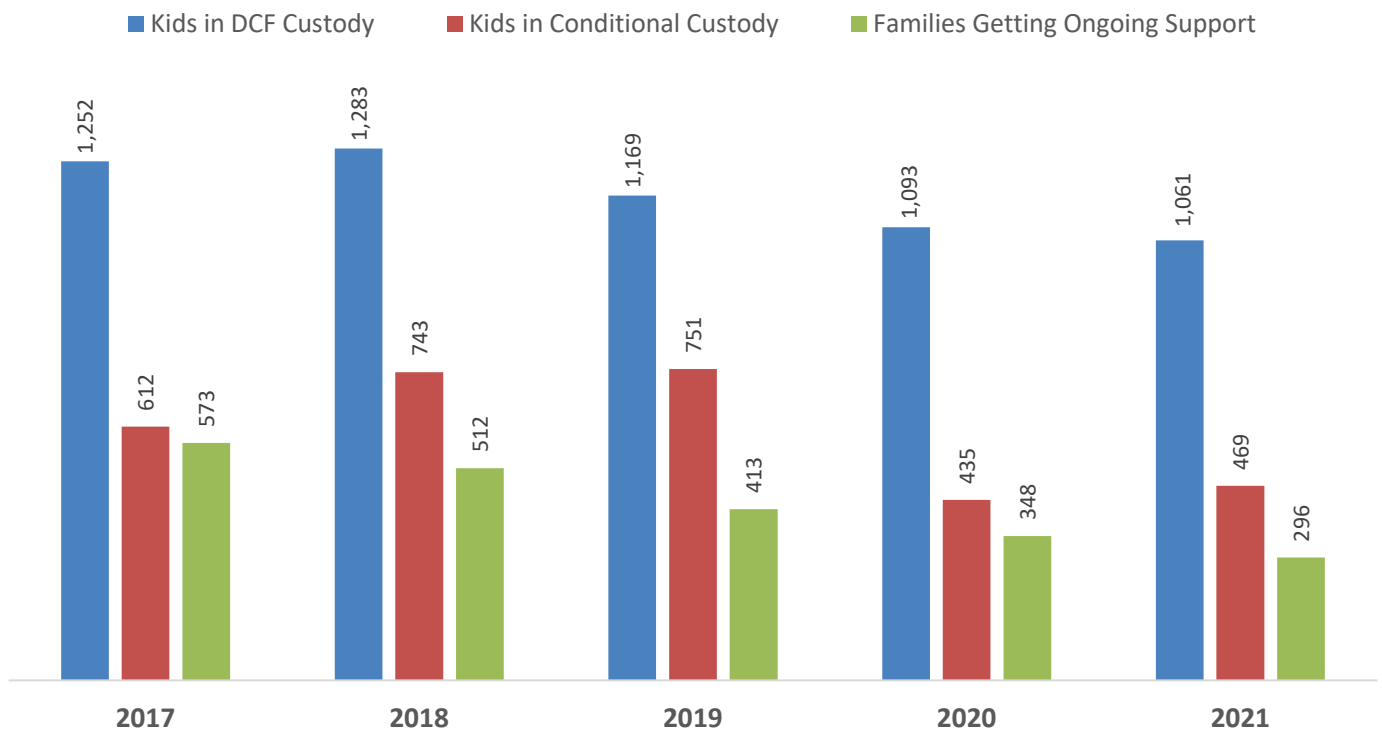
➔ **Families getting ongoing support:**

When an investigation or assessment determines there’s a high to very high risk of future maltreatment and a case is opened for ongoing services.



## Family Services Ongoing Caseload

*point-in-time, Q4 annually*



## ADDITIONAL CHILD PROTECTION DATA

Visit the DCF website for additional child protection data, including:

- ➔ Annual child protection reports dating back to 2006
- ➔ Profiles of interventions & outcomes by district, for 2017 to 2021
- ➔ 2021 data on:
  - ⇒ Reports substantiated by abuser-child relationship
  - ⇒ Reports substantiated by age of abuser
  - ⇒ Reports substantiated by gender of abuser & type of abuse
  - ⇒ Reports substantiated by gender of victim & type of abuse
  - ⇒ Reports substantiated by type of abuse
  - ⇒ Reports substantiated by victim's age and type of abuse

**[protectkids.vt.gov](https://protectkids.vt.gov)**

## VERMONT JUVENILE COURT DATA

Read the annual statistical reports on the Vermont Judiciary's website to get data on juvenile court cases. This includes FY2021 data on:

- ➔ CHINS cases
- ➔ Termination of Parental Rights (TPR)
- ➔ Delinquency
- ➔ Youthful Offenders

**<https://www.vermontjudiciary.org/about-vermont-judiciary/court-statistics-and-reports>**