



VERMONT

AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES
DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

**CHILD
PROTECTION
IN VERMONT
REPORT FOR 2022**

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

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

FSD is committed to providing a system that is responsive to the unique needs of those in our care and custody, including having treatment and stabilization programs that are holistic, trauma-informed and developmentally appropriate. Considering the compromised system of care we have faced over the last several years, FSD has employed creativity and collaboration to restore the system and to lessen the strain on our workforce.

Our efforts include:

1. Working on developing a temporary facility with a focus on stabilization and generalized treatment for justice-involved youth, while planning for a permanent facility;
2. Contracting for on-call staffing to provide supervision for youth in alternative placement settings;
3. Standing up a short-term stabilization location in Windham County; and
4. Designing an Agency-wide special response team to assist with high end staffing work.

Notwithstanding the system of care challenges, FSD continues to accomplish important goals. The Federal government has approved our Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) five-year Prevention Plan. Now Vermont can begin the work to take part in the most significant federal legislation impacting child welfare in decades. The FFPSA provides states with greater federal funding to invest in preventing children and youth from needing to come into DCF custody and incentivizes reducing reliance on residential treatment in favor of community-based supports when possible. The legislation is fully in alignment with our aim to develop programs that “narrow the front door.” That is, help families address areas of concern before it reaches the critical stage, so that a child will not need to come into custody at all, which has been shown to provide better outcomes overall for children and families.

FSD has also been making significant strides in obtaining a Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS). We have outgrown our legacy data system to the extent that staff must use 11 separate systems and over 30 Excel spreadsheets just to support our key business processes. FSD has hired a project manager and business analyst who are gathering the requirements to issue an RFP to select a vendor or a service to begin implementing the first CCWIS modules. The new system will not only make our work more efficient, but also provide the database functionality to capture Title IV-E drawdown for the FFPSA. The CCWIS system will also allow us to better collect and analyze data on race, which is critical to FSD’s commitment to examine our policies and practices in the context of racial bias and disparate impact. It is important to have a child welfare system that promotes safety and is fair and equitable as well.

Finally, we are committed to supporting and strengthening our workforce. Towards that end, leadership is engaged in finding ways to increase employee retention and make improvements in hiring for the Division. We understand that filling vacancies with the right people and keeping the right people in FSD will create time and space for team members to take a break to rejuvenate and build resilience, which is necessary from a staff wellness standpoint, as well as in service to our child welfare and juvenile justice mission.

We are committed to supporting the most vulnerable children and youth in Vermont, including the system and staff that serves them.

Chris Winters, DCF Commissioner

Aryka Radke, JD, FSD Deputy Commissioner

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides child protection data for calendar year 2022 in Vermont.

Here are the highlights:

- ➔ 19,725 reports were made to the Child Protection Line in 2022 — 1,218 more than in 2021.
- ➔ At least 75% of the reports made were from mandated reporters and 18% from non-mandated reporters.
- ➔ Based on the 19,725 reports received, we opened 4,526 child safety interventions:
 - ⇒ 2,386 investigations
 - ⇒ 2,140 assessments:
 - 1,307 child abuse assessments
 - 833 family assessments
- ➔ At the conclusion of the 4,526 child safety interventions, 623 cases were opened for ongoing services.
- ➔ At the conclusion of the 2,386 investigations, 593 reports were substantiated.
- ➔ Based on the 593 substantiated reports, there were 713 unique child victims.
- ➔ During the last quarter of 2022, there were:
 - ⇒ 1,067 children in DCF custody
 - ⇒ 487 children in the conditional custody of a parent, relative or other person known to the child and family
 - ⇒ 197 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

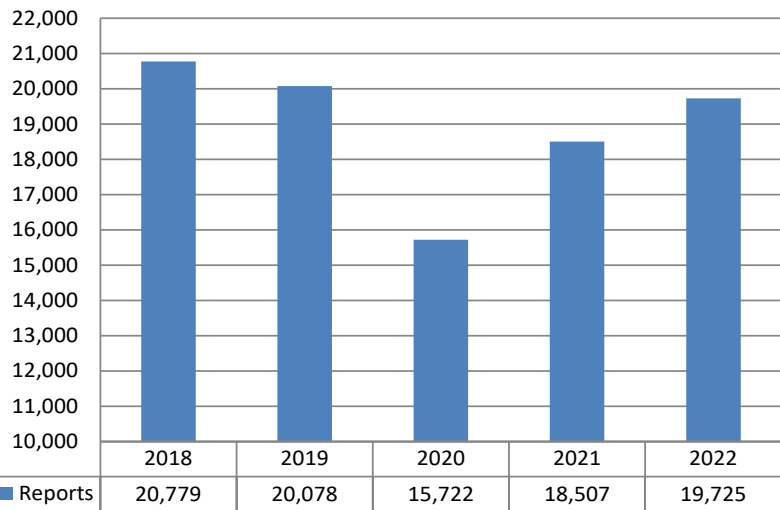
We encourage all Vermonters to call our Child Protection Line when they have concerns about a child’s safety and well-being— whether or not they are mandated by law to do so. [1-800-649-5285 \(24/7\)](tel:1-800-649-5285)

19,725 in 2022

There were 1,218 more calls made to Vermont’s Child Protection Line in 2022. This increase likely reflects the return to “normal” operations since the pandemic began.



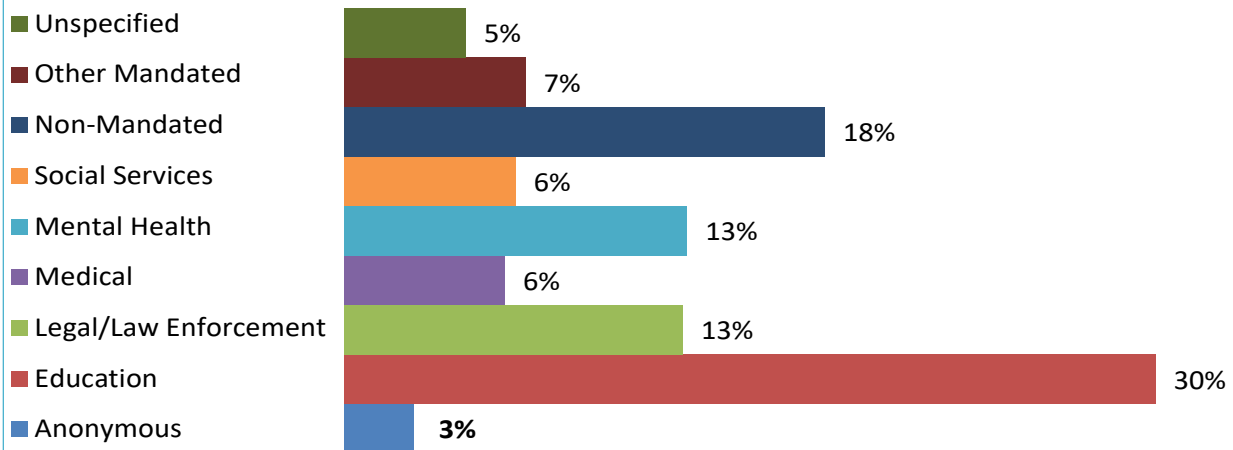
**Reports to the Child Protection Line
From 2018 to 2022**



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 (2022)**



REPORTS ACCEPTED FOR INTERVENTION

4,526 Child Safety Interventions in 2022

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	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Calls to Vermont's Child Protection Line	20,779	20,078	15,722	18,507	19,725
Total reports accepted for intervention	5,326 (25%)	4,606 (22%)	3,620 (23%)	4,423 (24%)	4,526 (23%)
- Investigations	3,173	2,640	1,604	1,966	2,386
- Assessments	2,153	1,966	2,016	2,457	2,140
• Child abuse assessments	1,130	1,117	1,167	1,515	1,307
• Family assessments	1,023	849	849	942	833
Outcomes of interventions:					
- Investigations substantiated ¹	999	822	527	609	593
- Cases opened for services ²	1,281	1,047	794	876	623

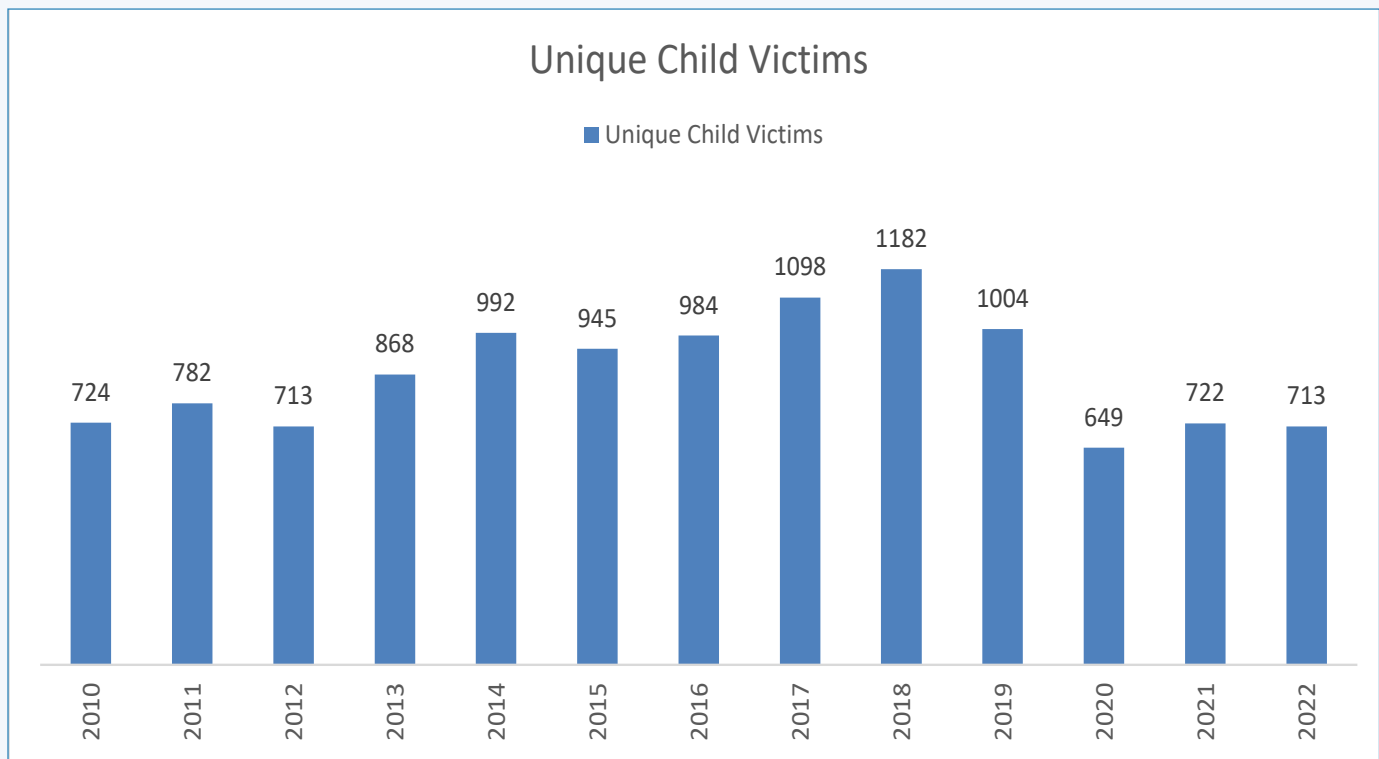
1 INVESTIGATIONS SUBSTANTIATED: A report is substantiated if the evidence found during the investigation would lead a reasonable person to believe the child was abused or neglected.

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 reports¹ 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.



¹ 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.



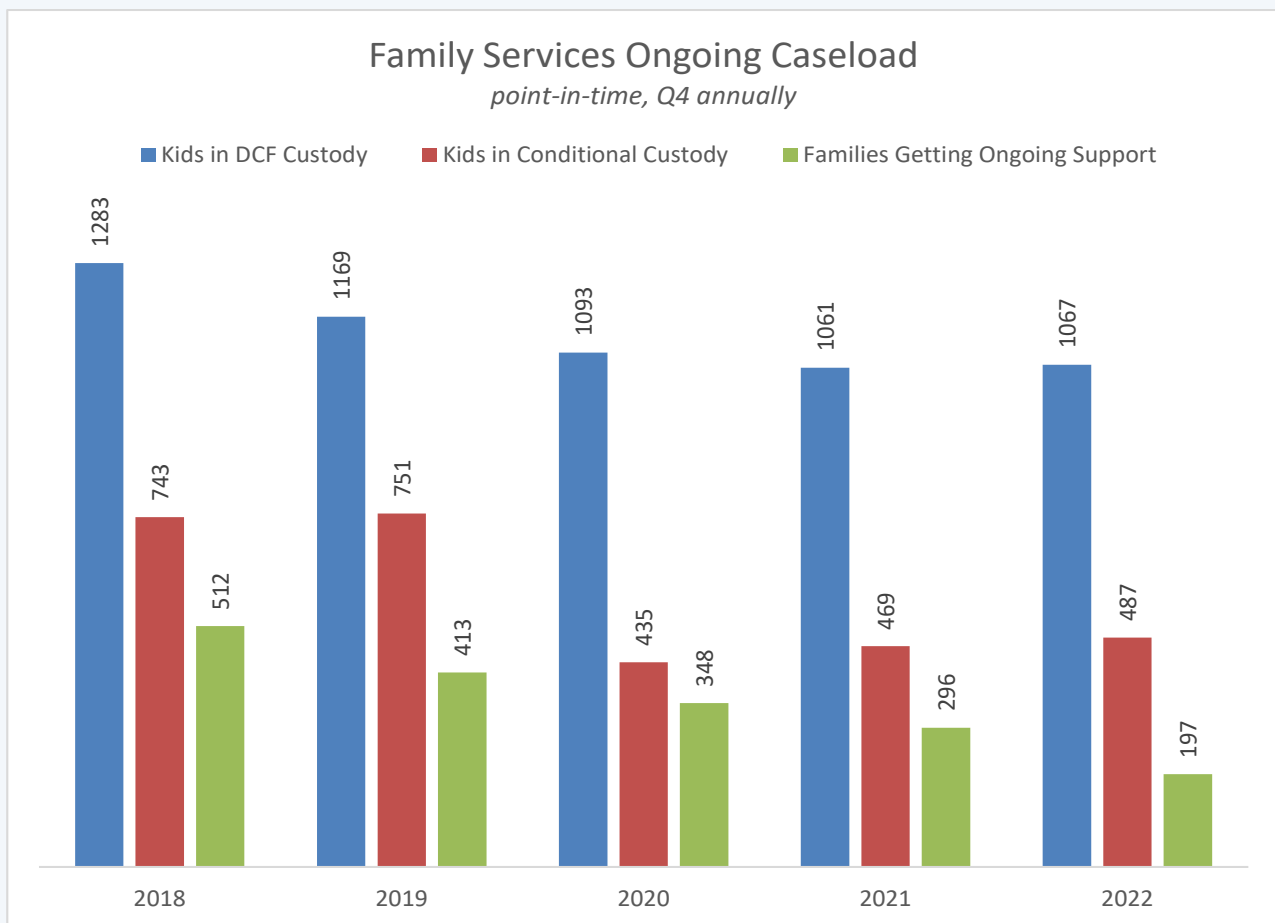
➔ **Kids in conditional custody:**

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.



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 2022
- ➔ 2022 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

VERMONT JUVENILE COURT DATA

Read the annual statistical reports on the Vermont Judiciary's website to get data on juvenile court cases. This includes FY2022 data on:

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

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