Vermont
Diligent Recruitment Plan

[2020-2024]

Diligent recruitment is a systematic approach to identify, recruit, develop and support a pool of families who can meet the needs of children and youth who require placement in foster care. One of the key goals of Diligent Recruitment is to intentionally recruit foster parents who:

- Are best able to meet the needs of the children in care;
- Will actively support reintegration and the role of birth families; and,
- Are willing to meet the immediate and long-term needs of the children in care

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2020-2024 Vermont Diligent Recruitment Plan

I. Context and Background

Understanding Diligent Recruitment

Diligent recruitment is a systematic approach to identify, recruit, develop and support a pool of families who can meet the needs of children and youth who require placement in foster care. One of the key goals of Diligent Recruitment is to intentionally recruit foster parents who:

- Are best able to meet the needs of the children in care;
- Will actively support reintegration and the role of birth families; and,
- Are willing to meet the immediate and long-term needs of the children in care

The Multi-Ethnic Placement Act (MEPA) of 1994, as amended, prohibits the delay or denial of any adoption or placement in foster care due to the race, color, or national origin of the child or the foster or adoptive parents. It also requires States to provide for diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families who reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children for whom homes are needed. To meet MEPA's diligent efforts requirements, States must have a comprehensive plan that includes:

- A description of the characteristics of waiting children;
- Specific strategies to reach all parts of the community;
- Diverse methods of disseminating both general and child-specific information;
- Strategies for assuring that all prospective parents have access to the home study process, including location and hours of services that facilitate access by all members of the community;
- Strategies for training staff to work with diverse cultural, racial, and economic communities;
- Strategies for dealing with linguistic barriers;
- Non-discriminatory fee structures; and
- Procedures ensuring a timely search for prospective parents awaiting a child, including the use of exchanges and other interagency efforts, provided that such procedures ensure that the placement of a child in an appropriate household is not delayed by the search for a same race or ethnic placement.

Key Information: The Structure of Child Welfare in Vermont

The Agency of Human Services was created by the Vermont Legislature in 1969 to serve as the umbrella organization for all human service activities within state government. The Agency is led by the secretary who appointed by the Governor. The Secretary's Office is responsible for strategically leading the agency and its departments and establishing and implementing agency wide policies and practices that cross departmental boundaries.

The Department for Children and Families (DCF) DCF sits within the broader Agency of Human Services. DCF is structured around the Commissioner's Office, Business Office and six program divisions that administer the department's major programs:
1. Child Development Division
2. Economic Services Division
3. Family Services Division
4. Office of Child Support
5. Office of Disability Determination Services 6. Office of Economic Opportunity

While each division has its own priorities and areas of focus, the DCF is unified in a passion for:

- reducing poverty and homelessness
- eliminating hunger
- Improving the safety and well-being of children, youth and families
- keeping children safe from abuse
- providing timely and accurate financial supports for individuals and families
- supporting Vermont's most vulnerable citizens (e.g., older Vermonters, people with disabilities, and families with children

The Family Services Division (FSD) works in partnership with families, communities and others to make sure children and youth are safe from abuse, their basic needs (e.g., food, clothing, shelter and health care) are met and youth are free from delinquent behavior. They also ensure families are supported to achieve these goals.

FSD serves the following populations:

- At-risk children, youth and families
- Children and youth in the care and custody of the state
- Youth on juvenile probation
- Foster, respite and adoptive parents

A Family Services District Office is located in each of the 12 AHS regions across the state. Each local office is led by a District Director who is responsible for carrying out the mission of the Division and practicing the day to day work of child protection in accordance with best practice and policy.

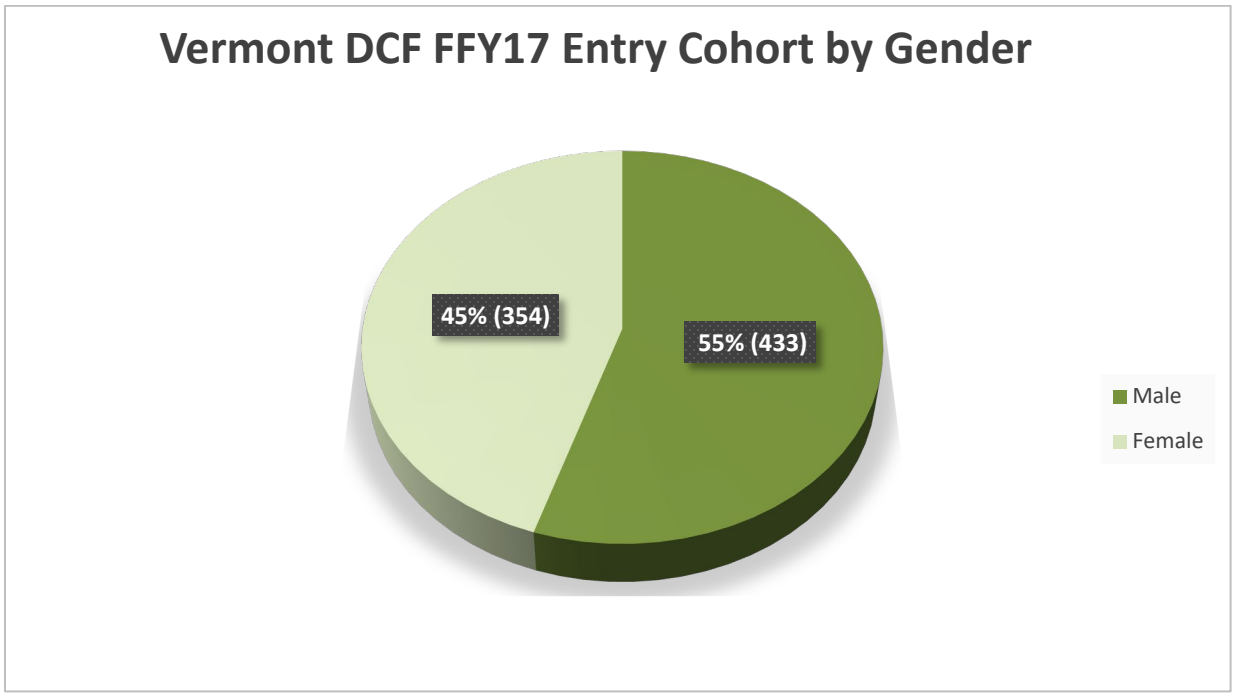
Districts range in size, with variations in the number of staff on hand to do the work. Each district is however responsible for the full scope of child protection work carried out by the division. Additional work units are located within the Division's Central Office. FSD is led by a Deputy Commissioner and is supported by the Family Services Management Team, made up by the Directors of each work Unit. An Operations Unit provides management oversight to the 12 District Offices. The Revenue Enhancement Unit supports all of the procurement of services for the Division and they are closely involved with the overall financing of the Division. The Policy, Planning and Practice Unit attend to the development and implementation of all Division Policy. The Quality Assurance Team and the Juvenile Justice Team also sit in this work unit. The

Residential Licensing and Special Investigations Unit licenses and regulates foster care and residential programs that serve children. They also conduct child abuse investigations on cases that involve a licensed caregiver or other regulated child serving programs. Our Domestic Violence and Child Abuse prevention supports also sit in this unit. The System of Care Unit oversees foster care, adoption and guardianship, post permanency supports as well as all three of the interstate compacts. A long-standing public/private partnership between the State of Vermont Permanency Planning Team and Lund is responsible for child specific recruitment for children who have no identified permanency resource. The Special Services Unit oversees the high end of the system of care including Residential Treatment and WRAP level services.

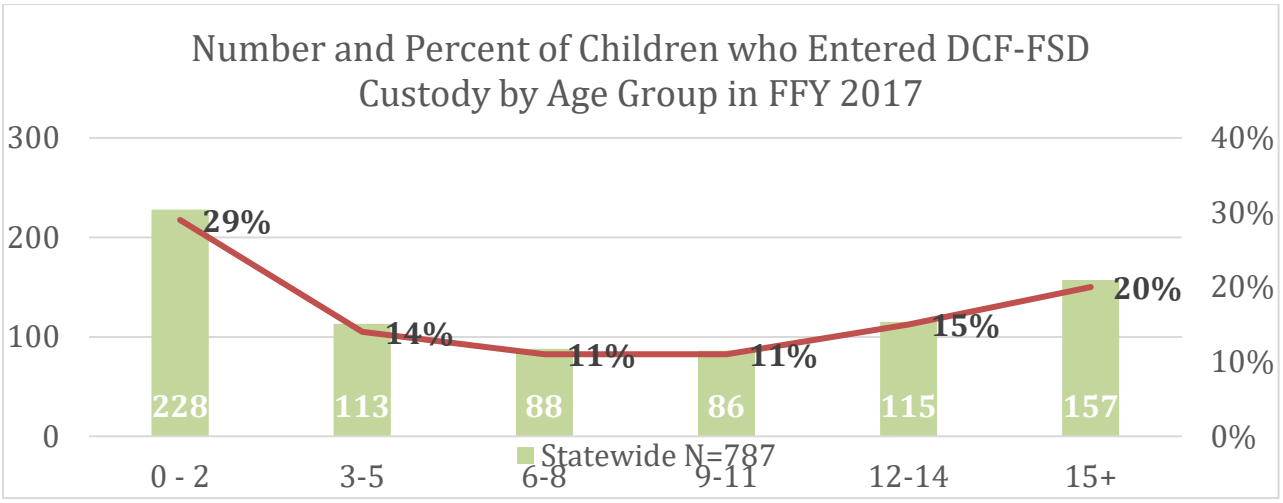
See Appendix A for an FSD Organization Chart

Key Information: What do we know about Child Characteristics?
The following demographic information will provide detail related to the children being cared for in foster care in Vermont:

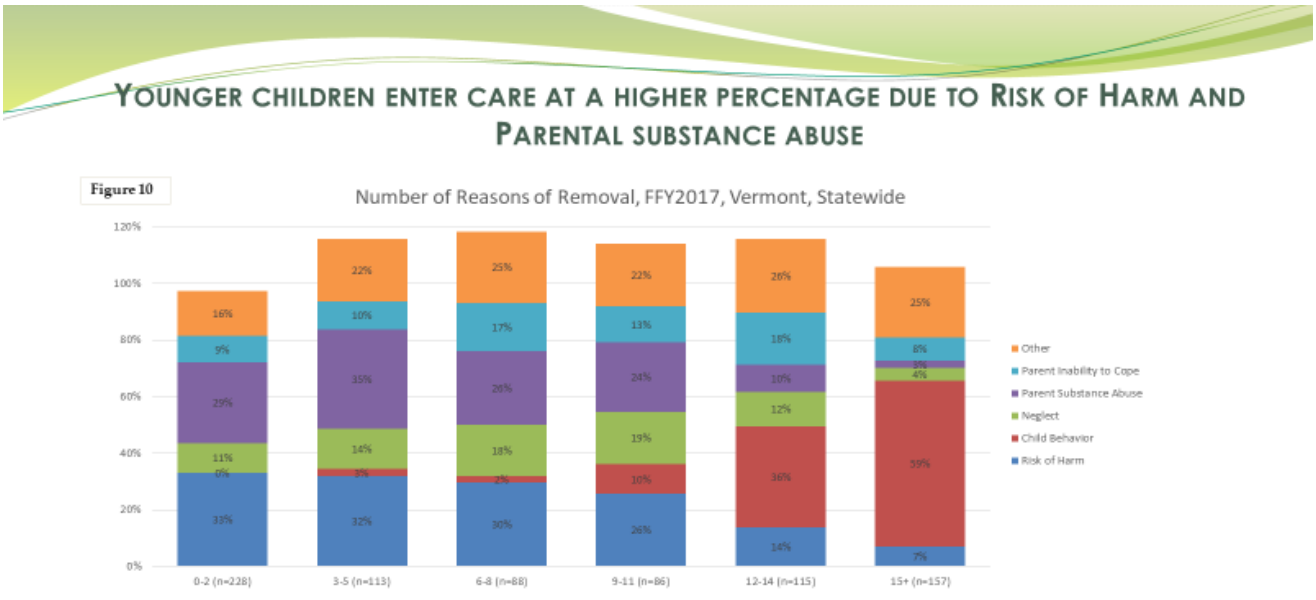
Just over half of the children who entered care were Male



The cohorts of children entering care were grouped by age



The very young cohort of children entering care came to the attention of the division due to their vulnerability typically entering due to a risk of harm often connected to substance abuse. Approximately 60% of the under 5 population of new custody entrants are impacted in some way by the opiate crisis. The older cohort of youth entering care typically came to the attention of the division related to their behavior.



Data Source: ROM Foster Care Counts report identifying youth entering foster care from 10/1/2016-9/30/2017, unduplicated count, capturing the first entry if multiple entries for a single child exist.
Data Details: A single child can have multiple removal reasons at the time of removal. Other category = combined removal reasons of Abandon, Child Substance Abuse, Inadequate Housing, Parent Death, Parent Jail, Physical Abuse and Sexual Abuse.

A cursory analysis of VT data indicates that there is not a disparity between the race of the children who enter foster care and the race of the caregivers they are placed with. There is some anecdotal evidence however, that youth of color may be somewhat overrepresented in residential and institutional levels of care. Further analysis of this data could be considered later to better understand this information.

World Population Review (2018) indicates that the Vermont population is 624,263

- 94.7% White,
- 1.2% African American,
- 2% Hispanic,
- 1.5% Asian,
- 2% of more than one race or ethnicity.
- 37% claim no religious affiliation

Additionally, there are no federally recognized tribes in Vermont

Certain regions of VT are more racially diverse than others. Local District Offices will need to analyze their data to ensure they have a caregiving population that reflects the race and ethnicity of the children who are entering care. There are several communities where New Americans have settled. Special attention to engaging leaders in those communities and developing healthy supportive relationships will need to be incorporated into the DR local plans in those districts.

A thriving LGBTQ community exists in the Greater Burlington Area. Many same sex couples have come forward to foster children. Many of those couples have adopted their foster children when those children have not been able to reunify.

CURRENTLY, 80% OF CHILDREN ENTERING CARE ARE PLACED INITIALLY IN RELATIVE OR FOSTER HOME CARE

Figure 6

INITIAL PLACEMENT TYPE FOR CHILD ENTRIES (10/1/16-9/30/17)	Foster Home	433	55%
	Group Home	70	9%
	Institution	43	5%
	Intensive Residential	10	1%
	Non-Final Adopt	6	1%
	Parent	30	4%
	Relative	194	25%
	Independent Living	1	0%

Data Source: ROM Foster Care Counts report identifying youth entering foster care from FFY 2017 10/1/2016-9/30/2017.
Data Details: Includes an unduplicated count, capturing the first entry if multiple entries for a single child exist.

Nonrelative Foster Care continues to be the most common type of placement at 55%. There is significant variation from one FSD district to another regarding the use of relative placement ranging from a concerning 8.9% to a rate of 49.3% with an average statewide kin placement rate of 28%. These numbers have fluctuated throughout the PIP period. Increasing Kinship placement is an identified priority of the DR plan. One clear fact is that FSD must improve the overall rate of kinship care if we hope to reduce the amount of recruitment, we need to do to identify non-relative caregivers. Based on the research, sustained focus on this area of diligent recruitment will yield improved outcomes in placement stability, minimize the trauma of removal, maintain vital connections and improve overall child well-being measures.

II. Diligent Recruitment Guiding Principles and Values

While children remain in out-of-home placement, the Vermont Department for Children and Families, Family Services Division and its partners seek to provide safe and appropriate family foster homes that encourage and support reunification when that can be safely accomplished. We are committed to keeping siblings together, ensuring that placements minimize trauma and are conducive to supporting children's cultural, spiritual, academic and emotional development.

This list of Guiding Principles and Values was developed as a part of the Family Services Division Strategic Planning process, which included a cross-representation of system stakeholders

We Believe…

Children, Youth, and Families

- Deserve to be safe, heard, and connected to their communities.
- Know themselves best and their expertise should be valued
- Are viewed in the context of their culture and community.
- Can grow and change with support and adequate resources.
- Are active participants and partners in the process.

Staff

- Offer their dedication and commitment, which are essential in carrying out our mission.
- Provide quality work that is strengths-based, trauma-informed, and influenced by research.

Foster and Kin Families

- Are primary partners in ensuring the well-being of children and youth.
- Deserve timely training, communication, and support they need to be effective.

Communities

- Are essential to keeping children safe and promoting healthy families.
- Collaborate to meet the holistic needs of children, youth, and families.

III. Vision for Diligent Recruitment in Vermont

The overall vision for Diligent Recruitment in Vermont was constructed in collaborative fashion by the DR Core Team, comprised of twenty-seven internal and external stakeholders at both the state and district levels.

Introduction of the Key Infrastructure Elements

After deep problem exploration and identification of root causes, the group identified five key infrastructure elements essential for a successful DR Program in Vermont.

The key infrastructure elements are summarized below, including the description and practices for each.

1.) A Responsive Model of Engagement and Support

A model for engagement and support of resource families—from recruitment to post placement—that ensures:

1. Families are recognized as valuable resources;
2. All families have access to a common, efficient, and supportive home study, training, and licensing process;
3. Agency resources are readily accessible;
4. Family concerns are addressed quickly; and,
5. An Agency culture where all staff have an integral role in the recruitment, development, and support of families.

2.) Community Engagement

Communities are engaged in understanding the needs of children in care and are provided with opportunities to support those children and the families that care for them.

3.) Unified Policy and Procedures

Unified policies and procedures for the recruitment, development, and support of resource families, with District plans to meet the needs of individual communities.

4.) Training and Development

A training and development program that:

1. Equips resource families to meet the needs of children in their care;
2. Enables and supports the workforce to effectively engage and meet the needs of families; and,
3. Educates the community about the needs of children at risk of entering foster care, the needs of resource families, and the continuum of ways to support the children of Vermont.

5.) A Unified Data Model

A unified system for data collection and reporting, utilizing the same variables to establish a baseline, set goals and objectives, monitor progress, and assess the effectiveness of strategies for recruiting, developing, and supporting families.

These key elements represent the vision for Diligent Recruitment and together they provide the foundation for the development of priorities for a Diligent Recruitment Program in Vermont.

The Vermont DR program will provide general, targeted, and child-specific recruitment and will support and develop caregiving families that meet the needs of children in care and are capable of:

1. Participating in concurrent planning;
2. Accommodating siblings placed together;
3. Offering care to children with special needs;
4. Supporting educational stability; and,
5. Reflecting the diversity of Vermont's children.

What Will Change Under Our New Approach to Diligent Recruitment—What Will be New and What We'll Stop Doing

Practice Changes

- Each district office will use a common tracking spreadsheet to support to collection of data related to system response from inquiry, first contact, orientation, initial training, through the home study process and on to licensing. We will be able to identify areas where caregivers tend to drop out with a goal of streamlining and shortening the entire process.

- Recruit new families and when they demonstrate interest ensure that we respond to the inquiry in a timely manner

- Offer Orientation meetings for potential caregivers across the state on an ongoing and routine basis including an online version statewide...
- Redesigned Caregiver Training to afford an interested person the opportunity to engage in training immediately through online offerings and then a series of face to face learning sessions. We have stopped the approach of only offering trainings in each district twice/per year for six consecutive weeks at a time.
- Reduce our practice of placing children before caregiver training has been completed by shifting how and when training is delivered.
- Reinvest in and embed Family Finding into division practice throughout the life of a case. Formalize and provide structure to family finding activities by contracting with community partners to complete family finding on every new custody case within 45 days of entry. Offer guidance and training and to the field to support

Family Finding implementation. Message to foster families and birth parents about family finding.

- Caregivers who are well trained and supported will be better able to care for the children who need care. The well-being needs of the children will be better understood and consistently met. Families who are supported are likely to continue to provide care and will tell their friends about their successful experiences.
- FSD will be able to stop placing children in homes based heavily on the availability of the home. Recruitment activities combined with adequate Caregiver Support and development will ensure that a cadre of skilled caregivers are available and prepared to meet the needs of the children who need care. Families will have a role in their own development as caregivers and will be more fully engaged in identifying their strengths and challenges
- Increase consistency across the state in the core level of support proactively and routinely offered to all caregivers across multiple domains. Caregivers will know what supports are available to them and the Division will ensure that those supports are accessible.

Organizational Culture Changes

- Coaching to support a culture shift related to the responsibility for recruitment and retention of caregivers, making it clear and reinforcing that all FSD staff have a role in the recruitment and retention of caregivers.
- Funding has been allocated to hire Foster Parent Recruitment and Retention Specialists in each district. Their job description focuses their work on activities that will support DR implementation. Additionally, the FY 2020 budget supports three of our larger districts to hire a second Resource Coordinator (RC). The RC's responsibilities include many activities connected to DR including recruitment, making placements and the ongoing training and support of caregivers.
- The work of recruitment and retention of caregivers will be incorporated in an intentional and systematic way in each district office. This work will no longer be "the thing that we get to when we have time". We have increased staffing in each district office to offer additional resources to support this shift.
- Caregivers are volunteers who respected and treated as the important partners they are. We will continue to support regular listening sessions in each district on a regular basis to keep a pulse on the experiences of caregivers. Staff, in their various roles will be supported and expected to collaborate with caregivers.

Data Informed Decision-Making Changes

- Use the District Practice Profile for our Key Infrastructure Elements for Diligent Recruitment to determine how well district practice compares to recommended practice in DR.
- Use data to select specific recruitment activities and to stop engaging in activities that are not effective
- Increase consistency in data collection to understand and improve initial system response
- Provide DR data to the local districts to support ongoing planning, management and CQI monitoring

Communication and Marketing Changes

- A person skilled in communication, marketing and branding has been hired to support ongoing DR implementation. The expectation is that this support will lead to the development of a comprehensive DR communication plan, create a unified brand and message and will limit the multiple and varied messages that are currently shared.
- Caregivers receive routine communication via e-news twice per month
- FSD has increased its presence on social media. 60% of the new inquiries received are coming from Front Porch Forum, a neighborhood building service unique to Vermont
- FSD has developed relationships with the Vermont Association of Broadcasters and Vermont Public Radio. Ads are being aired at reduced rates

IV. Our Approach to Diligent Recruitment

The State of Vermont, like many jurisdictions has been experiencing an increase in the number of children entering foster care. As of the writing of this Diligent Recruitment (DR) Plan, there are currently 1337 children placed in care. While an initial look at data seems to indicate that we have plenty of homes to care for the children in our custody, our districts are experiencing a different reality. Licensed homes do not always have the capacity or availability to respond to the specific needs of the children needing care. Caregivers consistently share that they wish that they had more support and contact from the district offices. Children entering care have increasingly complex presentations which only exacerbates those difficulties.

Vermont had not infused resources, financial or otherwise, into the system to address this growing challenge. With foster care numbers on the rise, and some significant challenges with outcomes based on our 2015 CFSR, this DR Plan places a focus on

recruitment and retention of caregivers; becoming an important component of our Program Improvement Plan (PIP).

In setting the stage for the development of this Diligent Recruitment plan, it is important to understand that in spite of shared values and mission, policy and general agreement on what equals best practice there is still variation from District to District in how day to day work is accomplished. The challenges that a district experiences is impacted by a multitude of factors; caseload volume, staff experience and turnover, differences in how the judge on the bench engages with the district office, geographical area of the specific region, and access to a range of supportive services to name a few.

Any statewide Diligent Recruitment Plan developed would need to be crafted to provide clear expectations and a framework that would support strong implementation while still providing the flexibility for each district to individualize their local plan to meet their unique needs based on the specific variables at play

The Change Management and Implementation Milestones construct provided by the Capacity Building Center for States (CBC) will be used here as a guide to walk through how the Core Team has approached the development of this DR plan.

Phase One: Identify and Assess Needs or Opportunities

The State Core Team in collaboration with Center consultants focused on deeper problem exploration to identify major root issues and themes, share and validate findings with internal and external stakeholders, and develop priorities and recommendations for the creation of a unified statewide DR plan. Major activities included:

- Engagement with the National Resource Center for Diligent Recruitment (NRCDR). Initial activities with the NRCDR included the completion of the DR Navigator tool, which provided an assessment of the current state of recruitment and retention in Vermont. NRCDR and Vermont used the Navigator tool findings as the basis of a project plan.
- Prior to the closure of the NRCDR, an onboarding conference call between Center consultants, DR consultants, and state DR team was coordinated to provide history of DR in Vermont, a summary of the work completed with NRCDR consultants, and logistics planning
- The DR project was approved for continuation as an intensive services project. October 2017 launched the project with FSD leadership and state DR team members and focused on increasing understanding of the Center's capacity building model, the project scope, and team member roles and responsibilities, including group norms
- A critical component of the deeper problem exploration was the creation of a diverse group of 27 internal and external stakeholders who would help to guide and champion the work throughout each phase of the project. This group is known as the DR Core Team.

- The Center's subject matter experts (SME's) led the problem exploration, which included engaging three of the 12 division district offices. These district offices agreed to function as pilot sites for the project. The SME's led several focus group sessions, developed and disseminated surveys, and conducted interviews with local caregivers and community partners.

- Process mapping in each of the pilot districts examined the assessment, placement, training, licensing and post placement supports for resource families to better understand where we might be seeing families drop out. Additional conversation between the core team and the FSD Residential Licensing and Special Investigation Unit (RLSIU) provided a comprehensive understanding of how our processes and policies currently impact our ability to recruit, support and develop caregivers. More importantly, these conversations began to provide clues related to where we could consider implementing change.

- The Division's Quality Assurance (QA) team was engaged to conduct an analysis of our data systems to support the establishment of baselines for performance and to flesh out areas where our data accessibility is not currently as a robust as we would like it to be. This work culminated in several power point presentations to division staff highlighting this area of practice.

Phase Two: Develop a Theory of Change (see Appendix B)

Phase Three: Select and Adapt/ Design Interventions

The Core Team identified three major priorities to be addressed in the Diligent Recruitment Plan:

1.) increase retention of kinship, foster and adoptive parents

Objective i: Reduce % of Kin and Foster Families that close Voluntarily or Withdraw
Objective ii: Increase % of Kin and Foster Families whose level of support and connectedness needs are met to sustain healthy partnerships

2.) improve recruitment by increasing timely system response from inquiry to licensure;

Objective i: Districts adhere to a common, best practice inquiry to licensure process
Objective ii: Increase % of Kin and Foster Families with access to timely, relevant training

3.) increase available capacity of kin foster and adoptive parents

Objective i: Using targeted recruitment plans on the state and district levels to increase the number of homes that, with appropriate support, can safely care for the diversity of children in care (complex needs, LGBTQ, racial and ethnic backgrounds, youth with physical and developmental challenges).
Objective ii: Increase % of children with kinship placements
Objective iii: Increase # of foster homes able to maintain children within their geographical and cultural communities

As noted above, the Core Team was able to boil down the information gained from stakeholders into five themes. We have come to refer to these themes as our "key infrastructure elements". These elements are considered critical to the successful implementation of a Diligent Recruitment Program in Vermont. Ultimately, any activity that a district or the central office engages in to support Diligent Recruitment will be associated with one of the key infrastructure elements. These elements will be described below in further detail.

Over a period of several months with meeting structure and facilitation provided by the CBC, the Core Team was able to reach consensus, on project goals, strategies, objectives and the activities that we would engage in to carry out the initial implementation and ultimately the Statewide plan.

- Created a project management Gantt chart in Excel summarizing project phases and detailed action steps, tracking progress and timelines, and assessing any risks or issues that would prevent successful completion of

the identified project outcome. This tool is used at the beginning of each monthly onsite meeting to maintain focus on the project's desired outcome, monitor status, and make necessary adjustments.

In thinking about this phase of the plan development, the Core Team was very purposeful in making connections to work already underway and considerate of how to ensure that the DR strategies also were linked to our CQI work and the outcome goals articulated in our PIP.

At about the midway point of our planning related to Diligent Recruitment, the Family Services Division embarked on a strategic planning process. From the beginning the DR planning team worked to ensure that the DR planning and outcomes were in alignment with the Strategic Planning work.

This approach was intentional and aimed at addressing the field's concern that they are challenged by managing the existing workload and many other competing priorities and initiatives. By embedding the diligent recruitment program into both our State Strategic Plan and into our ongoing CQI efforts, leaders across the state, will guide the development of a systematic approach to all recruitment and retention activities and messaging.

The Core Team was engaged in conversation about how to shift division culture about who is responsible for the recruitment and retention of caregivers and how this adaptive work will be reflected in the day to day activity that occurs across the division.

- Using CBC supplied strategy development worksheets, the Core Team members have fleshed out strategies and objectives connected to each priority area. From this work, action steps for each priority have been developed to support implementation. Please see appendix C for the DR Action Plan. The DR Action Plan is a living document which articulates plan strategies, priorities, objectives and activities. As the project continues, the Strategies and Priorities are expected to shift infrequently. The Objectives and Activities will be revised regularly based on how the plan unfolds and based on what the data tells us about the success of the various interventions employed.
- For more than a decade, Vermont FSD has had a focus on Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI). There have been various formal processes where the districts have been required to identify their strengths and challenges in a variety of PIP related practice areas. They have also been required to identify strategies both adaptive and technical, rooted in best practice and current research, that would help them improve their performance. In keeping with this approach, the Core Team elected to establish a similar approach to DR implementation.

- District Offices are currently provided PIP related Key Indicator Data to support ongoing monitoring of practice.
- The Core Team, with the support of the CBC, developed a Practice Profile/Assessment using Rickert scales to support a district in understanding how their practice aligns with best practice needed to successfully implement diligent recruitment on the local level. Each of these practice areas fit nicely within one or more of the key infrastructure elements.

Phase Three: Next Steps

- The DR Core Team, purposes to add DR data into the local district CQI process. In July 2019, the CBC will support conversations about the development of Vermont's post PIP CQI process.
- Implementation of the Practice Profile tool will allow districts to thoroughly examine their practice in this area. The better aligned the office is with the Key Infrastructure Elements, the more robust their practice is with the tenets of Diligent Recruitment. The Practice Profile will support Districts to choose which specific strategies they need to implement to round out and improve current practice or assist them with determining to stop engaging in certain practices. This approach will meet districts where they are at and will advance the entire state's approach to the recruitment, support and development of caregivers.
- As implementation continues, the strategies and priorities on the DR Action Plan are expected to shift infrequently. The objectives and activities will be revised regularly based on how the plan unfolds and based on what the data tells us about the success of the various interventions employed.

Phase Four: Plan, Prepare and Implement

The content in this section reflects the current state of the DR Plan implementation. By September 2019, implementation with the three selected pilot regions will have begun.

The QA team has provided baseline data in the following areas and has agreed to support this work on a quarterly basis

Indicator	Frequency	Reporting	Target Population
Priority 1: Increase Retention of Kinship, Foster and Adoptive Parents **Objective i:** Reduce the % of Kin and Foster Families that close voluntarily or withdraw **Measured by closure reason data**	Quarterly	SSMIS Foster Parent Licensing screen query	Statewide Pilot Districts

Priority 3: Increase the Available Capacity of Kinship Foster and Adoptive Parents: **Objective i:** Use targeted recruitment plans on the state and district levels to increase the number of homes that, with appropriate support, can safely care for the diversity of children in care (complex needs, LGBTQ, racial and ethnic backgrounds, youth with physical and developmental challenges). **PROXY measure – Reduced number of unplanned moves.**	Quarterly	AHS Report Catalog – Placement Move Reasons for Children in Custody report	Statewide Pilot Districts
Priority 3: Increase Available Capacity of Kinship, Foster, and Adoptive Parents **Objective ii:** Increase % of children with kinship placements **Measured by Kinship care key indicator data**	Quarterly	Custody Management Report	Statewide Pilot Districts
Priority 3: Increase Available Capacity of Kinship, Foster, and Adoptive Parents **Objective iii:** Increase # of foster homes able to maintain children within their geographical and cultural communities **Measured by residence of primary parent and foster home**	Quarterly	Custody Management Report Foster Home Management Report	Statewide Pilot Districts

Additionally, all 12 districts have started to use a common tracking spreadsheet that tracks all potential caregivers from their initial inquiry through licensing and initial placement. Details about barriers that interfere with timely system response will be detected through ongoing analysis of this data.

Indicator	Frequency	Reporting	Target Population
Priority Two: Improve Recruitment by Increasing Timely System Response from Inquiry to Licensure **Objective i:** Districts adhere to a common, best practice inquiry to licensure process	Monthly	District Inquiry Tracking Spreadsheet to Foster Kin Care Manager	Statewide

Please refer to the DR Action Plan included in the appendix for additional detail related to other activities the Division is currently undertaking related to its DR program.

Phase Four Next Steps:

- The District Practice Profiles will be completed and reviewed initially with the three pilot districts to support local planning. During regular consultation with the Foster Kin Care Manager, based on the information in the profiles, the pilot districts will select specific strategies to employ to advance their local practice.
- The new data will be reviewed by the Foster Kin Care Manager and the districts to determine how the selected strategies are impacting outcomes. Decisions to continue with the implementation of a specific strategy will be made over time based on the data.
- Each objective will ultimately have an identified person responsible and an associated time frame for completion to ensure the work is moving forward. An evaluative component and ongoing monitoring details will be added to the action plan as implementation planning continues.
- The DR Core Team with the support of the CBC will need to set specific targets for improvement now that baseline data is available in some of the priority area. For other priority areas, baseline data still needs to be collected. Several surveys are being developed to support this piece of the work. Change targets for these priority areas will be selected once the baselines have been established.

Phase Five: Evaluation and Ongoing Monitoring

Since the inception of the DR project, the team has adopted or developed several tools (**highlighted in black**) which will support the evaluation and overall monitoring of the implementation plan.

The CBC has provided a **routine meeting structure** and facilitation that has kept the work of the Core Team on track. Planning calls are held prior to each meeting where the agenda for the meeting is developed Each Core Team meeting starts with the review **Gantt chart** which graphically displays project status and timelines. The group has had the benefit of seeing progress over time as we have worked our way through planning. Prior to the close of each Core Team meeting, the group is provided with an opportunity to share a **plus/delta** about their experience of the meeting. This information has helped us to calibrate the content and flow of the meeting to best suit the needs of the group. Each meeting is followed up with **meeting notes** which identify next steps.

The Core Team has utilized a series of **Strategy Development Worksheets** to guide the approach to the identification of Project priorities and the development of objectives and ultimately our **DR Action Plan**.

Access to timely data that can be used to guide decision making has been a cornerstone of the plan. The CQI team has committed to providing quarterly data to support implementation. Baseline data is currently being collected.

This DR plan has been designed to support immediate and longer-term implementation. We are building the plane while we fly it. The following section references much of the work that is in progress and that we expect will be underway by the end of September 2019.

Phase Five: Next Steps

- The Core Team is about to finalize the **District Practice Profile** tool that will support the districts (both pilot and statewide) to explore their current practice related to the Key Infrastructure Elements. This information, supported by consultation, will guide the district in selecting strategies designed to improve their recruitment and retention outcomes in the priority areas identified by the project. Taken together, with the addition of specific change targets, these tools will support both initial pilot site implementation and ultimately statewide implementation.

- A **data display** will be developed to support the presentation of this information to the districts. Through consultation with the Foster Kin Care Manager, district offices receive coaching related to what the data is "telling" them so that they can make mid-course corrections if their trends are not moving in the direction they expected. Having regular access to kin care data, placement stability data, timely system response data, unplanned move data and caregiver satisfaction feedback combined with coaching will allow our system to take an important step toward addressing the recruitment and retention needs of the division.

- The results of the **Voluntary Closure Survey** have led us to recognize that we sometimes expect to confirm one thing and we learn something altogether different. Going forward, we will **revise this survey and routinely re-administer it**. We will also **develop a caregiver stay survey** to better learn what caregivers have to say about what makes them choose to continue caregiving. Additionally, we **will develop a similar survey for kin caregivers** to determine how their experience of the FSD system might differ from the experience of non-relative caregivers.

- A **Comprehensive Communication Plan** will support overall communication with both internal (staff and caregivers) and external partners (community partners, the court system etc.) The Communication Plan will:
    - Systematically introduce the Statewide Diligent Recruitment plan to all of FSD by engaging with multiple existing workgroups including Division Leadership Team, Supervisors Workgroup, CQI Steering Committee, Project Family
    - Systematically introduce the Statewide Diligent Recruitment plan to external partners by engaging with existing groups including our contracted partners, partners in the local

community including mental health agencies, education and the judiciary as well as the FSD Stakeholder Workgroup
- Provide regular updates on DR implementation to both internal and external stakeholders by sharing intervention highlights and Data Displays
- provide elevator speech type talking points related to each of the identified Key Infrastructure Elements. The development of these products will answer the questions of "Why should I focus on this?" and "How will this make a difference in these outcomes?" posed by the Districts who are being asked to implement their local DR plan.
- provide guidance for how to access and use all General Television, Radio, Print and Internet Advertising in accordance with DCF and AHS policies.
- provide guidance for how engage with Front Porch Forum related to target recruitment efforts
- detail how to engage with Project Family's Heart Gallery- photo listing for children who need permanency
- provide guidance on the use of social media in accordance with DCF and AHS policies.
- provide guidance to Districts related to the steps involved with event planning as it relates to DR work including authorization and funding
- support the creation of a speaker/interview bureau to address timely response to media inquiries
- Continue to support the development and expand distribution of Fostering Vermont the bi-weekly electronic caregiver newsletter

- The Core Team will develop a plan for ongoing evaluation and progress monitoring by September 2019. The plan will identify who needs to be involved in ongoing evaluation and progress monitoring.

- In July 2019, the CBC will be supporting FSD with discussion related to post PIP CQI planning. This conversation will address the intersection of the **Strategic Plan** work and the CQI work. Since the work of Diligent Recruitment is a component of the Strategic Plan, it is implied that CQI efforts related to DR work will also be addressed in the July meeting.

- The Core Team is comprised of both direct service and operational level staff who are able to make key decisions. It will be necessary to ensure that the group continues to be configured in this way to support well balanced, realistic decision making.

- The overall success of the DR implementation plan will continue to rest with this Core Team. At a minimum, the Core Team will need to be convened quarterly to

ensure that we are sustaining our attention to implementation benchmarks and adjusting the plan as needed to meet our outcome goals.

V. Connections to Other Family Services Division Efforts

This section provides an overview of other FSD activities relevant to diligent recruitment that are currently underway and those that are in the planning stage. This work ensures that the strategies/activities proposed by the DR team are aligned and integrated with other division efforts. Key Partners who support DR work are also mentioned below.

Three District Offices have been involved in the planning stages of the DR plan. These three districts will also serve as pilots for implementation. Planful engagement of the additional nine District Offices will be critical to a successful implementation. District Leadership have been introduced to the idea of Diligent Recruitment. The comprehensive DR Communication plan will support active and ongoing engagement.

As mentioned before, intentional alignment of the DR plan with Division Strategic Planning activities and the Division's CQI planning are also central to successful implementation. A goal of the DR project is for DR work to align with and leverage the other work of the Division.

The Division's Central Office has demonstrated strong support of the Development of the Diligent Recruitment Plan. Core Team membership includes representation from our Policy, Practice and Planning Team, our Residential Licensing and Special Investigations Unit, our System of Care Team- which includes foster care, adoption, post permanency supports as well as ICPC, our Quality Assurance Team, our operations team and our Revenue Enhancement Team.

FSD has a preexisting relationship with the Child Welfare Training Partnership (CWTP) which is housed at the University of Vermont. This vital partnership supports division wide training and orientation of new employees and provides on going practice coaching to the field. Additionally, the CWTP supports the division's caregiver training program. Representatives from the CWTP have fully participated in the development of this DR plan as Core Team members

The Division hosts a Foster Parent Workgroup which meets regularly to address system challenges and ease of access barriers identified by caregivers from all over the State. They also participate in policy development and revision. This group is co-chaired by the FSD Deputy Commissioner and the Vermont Foster and Adoptive Families Association (VFAFA) President. The VFAFA President is a Core Team Member.

Project Family is a contracted public/private partnership with Lund. Project Family finds adoptive parents for Vermont children in need of family permanency. Representatives from Project Family sit on the Core Team. Project Family and several other contracted partners support Family Finding Practice. Project Family has been instrumental in supporting Permanency Roundtable practice.

The Departments of Mental Health (DMH) and Aging and Independent Living (DAIL) sit under the Agency of Human Services but are separate and distinct Departments from DCF. There is significant partnership between the populations we serve at DCF and those that are served by DMH and DAIL. Access to Coordination of Services is statutorily governed in Vermont. The Departments have weekly management meetings to ensure that the needs of children, especially those with complex presentation, are being met. Children entering and returning from residential treatment are a focus of this work. Additionally, each District Office has local DMH and DAIL involvement. Services for most children are coordinated and delivered at this level.

The Agency of Education (AOE) collaborates with the division on a number of issues including division truancy protocol and the implementation and monitoring of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The State's ability to comply with ESSA has implications for the recruitment and retention of caregivers.

VI. Our Needs and Strengths—What Our Data Tells Us

(Note: items **emboldened** highlight plan priority areas)

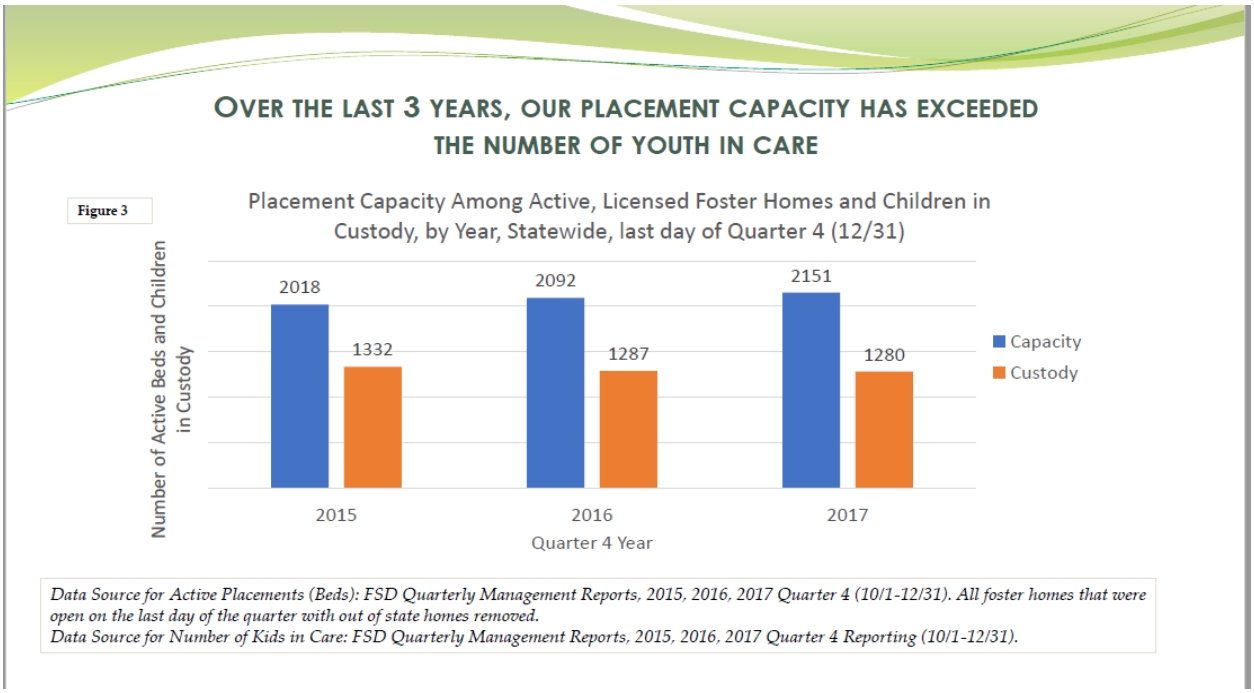
As a child welfare system, we are acutely aware of how **critically important access to relevant, timely data** is in the ongoing management of our work. Unfortunately, our data management information systems have not been resourced in a way that has allowed them to keep pace with our existing demands for information. Each time we identify a need for a data set, we are required to prioritize our requests as a division. Once a request is able to be addressed, we then partner with our IT colleagues to craft a report that will ultimately be available to support the need for that specific data set. This process can take several months at a minimum and is typically the wait is lengthier than that. These challenges can result in the system concluding that "the data isn't available". Unfortunately, our efforts to include funding for a data system upgrade has been cut from our state budget again.

To support implementation using data, we will need to ensure that our District Directors and their local teams have the **support they need to make the best use of their data**. This may include mini trainings about what the information is "saying" and coaching related to how to select a strategy to improve outcomes.

Despite these challenges, we learned as we moved forward with this project is that much more data is available then we can currently access. With additional resources being deployed, we probably do have the information available to successfully guide our DR plan. Ongoing **attention to how we access our data, how we report our data, how we understand what the data is telling us and how we**

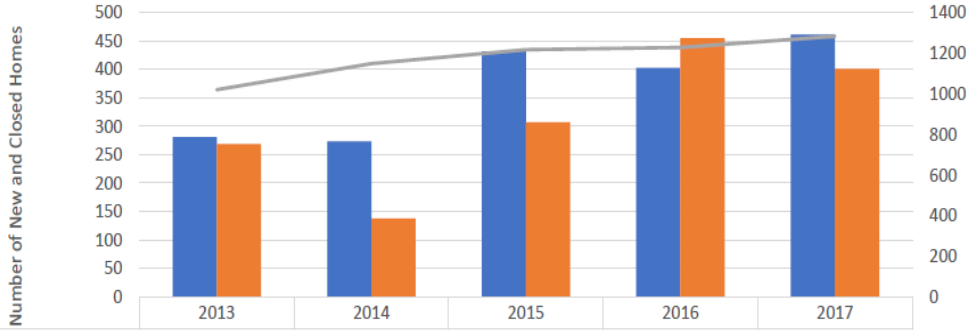
implement change based on the data is a critical component of this DR plan.

Our QA team was enlisted to support the DR work. The following tables reflect the work of the QA data analysis. Taken together, the tables provide a baseline upon which program improvement will be based



OVER THE PAST 5 YEARS, FSD HAS EXPERIENCED INCREASES IN LICENSED FOSTER HOMES

Figure 2 Number of Licensed New and Closed Foster Homes in CY 2013-2017, Vermont, Statewide



	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
New	281	273	432	403	461
Closed	269	138	307	455	401
Active on Last Day of the Year	1020	1148	1217	1228	1283

Data Source: Vermont FSD SSMIS Database Query, Foster Parent Licensing Screen. Closures reflect only those related to homes that were licensed. Pending applications were excluded from these closures.

Based on the information provided in the two slides above, one might conclude that Vermont has been successful in recruiting and retaining an adequate number of caregivers to meet the needs of the population who are currently in need of care. However, this is not the reality experienced by the local districts. They report that **caregivers may have limitations on the age of child they can care for or that the caregiver is not confident that they can meet the complex needs of certain children or** that new children entering care have needs that would make placement with the other children in their home inappropriate.

Interestingly, in Vermont**, we do not have a systematic method for matching families to children cross jurisdictionally**. That is not to say that cross jurisdictional placement doesn't happen, it does. Usually those placements involve kin caregivers who live in a district that is different from the district the relative child resides. We have policy that guides that practice. What is missing is a streamlined, database supported process for identifying homes with qualities in one district that might be a good match for a child in need of a placement in another district. It is possible that a licensed caregiver may not receive a placement for an extended period because that family has identified a specific kind of child that they believe would fit well with their family. In short, we are not intentionally "sharing" families district to district. While we may not be able to procure a better data system to support this work, efforts to open a dialogue related to this challenge are underway. The FSD policy on Cross Jurisdictional Placement of Children is under revision.

Next, we explored the **length of time that a caregiver typically stays open as a foster home.** The chart below references this information. It is interesting to note that our caregiver licensing cycle is a three-year cycle. To better understand how Vermont retention compares to caregiver retention in other states we inquired of the National Foster Parent Association to determine if there are national averages about the typical length of time a foster family remains open. Interestingly, no such numbers are currently available.

A MAJORITY OF LICENSED FOSTER HOMES ARE OPEN FOR 3 YEARS OR LESS

Figure 15 Active Licensed Foster Homes on the Last Day of CY 2017 by Length of Time Open, Statewide

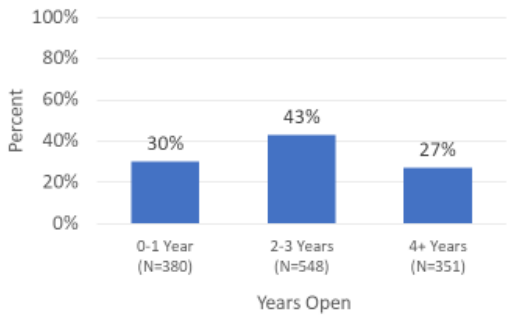
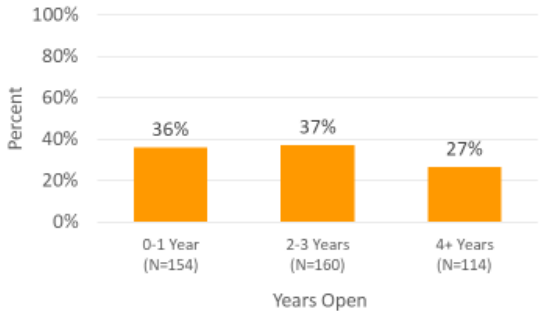


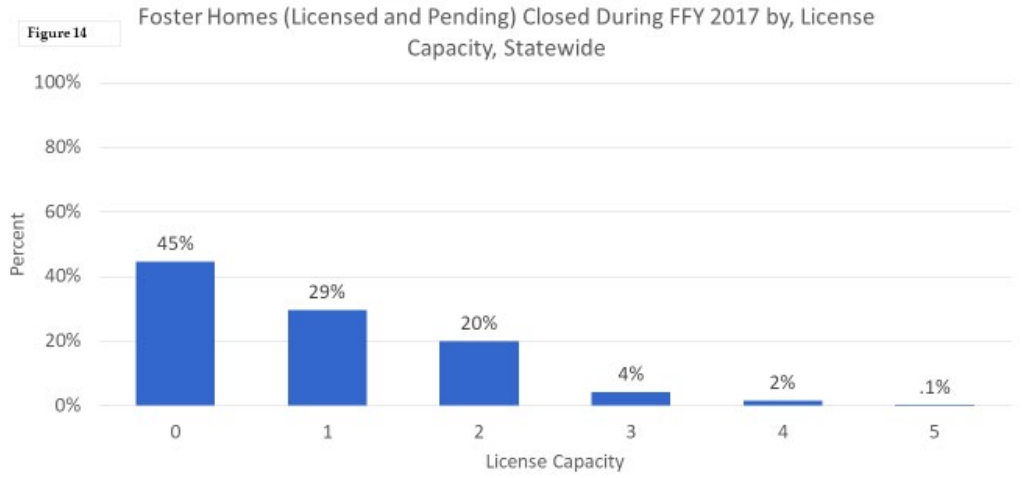
Figure 16 Licensed Foster Homes Closed During FFY 2017 by Length of Time Open, Statewide



Data Source Figure 15: FSD Management Reports, 2017 Quarter 4 (10/1/12/31/2017) Statewide. All foster homes that were open as of 12/31/2017, with out of state homes removed.
Data Source Figure 16: SSMIS Foster Parent Licensing Screen, FFY 2017 (10/1/16-9/30/17) Statewide. All foster homes that closed during FFY 2017 with out of state homes removed.

THE MAJORITY OF CLOSURES ARE HOMES THAT WERE IN APPLICATION

Figure 14



Data Source: SSMIS Foster Parent Licensing Screen. FFY 2017 (10/1/16-9/30/17). All foster homes that closed during FFY 2017 with out of state homes removed.

We learned that **most homes that closed in this data set were homes that were in application.** Discussion pointed to a practice we have in some districts of encouraging multiple kin to apply to RLSI before a specific decision about who will be the most appropriate placement resource for the child has been arrived at. This practice could result in a number of families closing as the placement need was met in another way. This information warrants further exploration to address whether we want to shift the timeframe when a potential caregiver is presented with an application as there are workload implications associated with the current practice. These decisions will be made in conjunction with **the implementations of orientation and the new training format**. Perhaps the families who expressed interest in caring for kin might be encouraged to consider caregiving for a non-relative.

74% OF OUR REGULARLY LICENSED FOSTER HOMES WHO CLOSED, CLOSED VOLUNTARILY IN FFY 2017

Figure 18

Licensed Foster Homes Closed During FFY 2017 by Foster Home Type

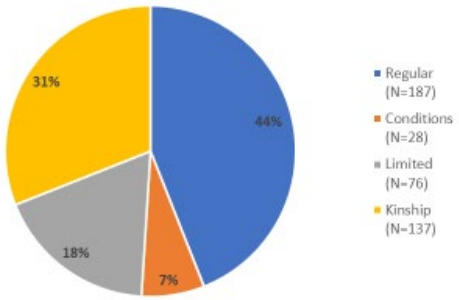
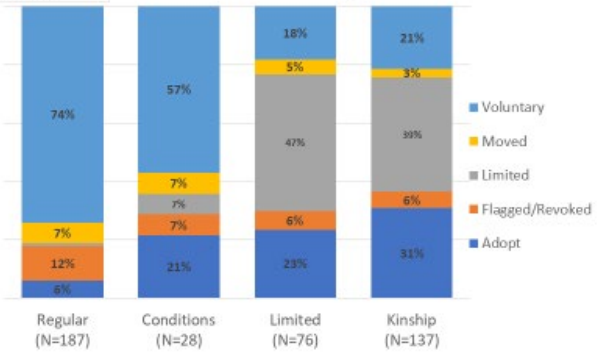


Figure 19

Licensed Foster Homes that Closed in FFY 2017 by Type of Home and Closure Code, Statewide



Data Source: SSMIS Foster Parent Licensing Screen. All foster homes that closed during FFY (10/1/16-9/30/17) with out of state homes removed.

This data set generated significant discussion. What was contributing to **a specific caregiver making a decision to close their foster care license**. What then, would be the practice implications for change related to retention? We recognized that we have not been specifically asking the caregivers about their decision to close. Instead, we rely on the family services worker assigned to the case to select a closure code which is then entered into our foster care database. The data set connected the number of homes that are listed as "flagged/revoked" also warrants additional investigation. The numbers seemed high to the Residential Licensing Team involved in the data analysis discussion. Follow up related to above questions has been incorporated into the DR action plan.

Because we have not routinely or systematically collected data from caregivers at the time they closed their license and since the above data presented many questions, we decided to **survey the 285 licensed caregivers who chose to voluntarily close** in FY 2018.

Here is what we learned:

Licensed/Voluntary Closure Survey Results

285 Caregivers (both kin and non-relative) who voluntarily closed their foster care license in FY 2018 were surveyed in October 2018

21.4% responded 84% female, 90% white,

Average age 54, most frequent age 62

62.2% currently married

Average length of time as a foster parent 5.59 years

Of the questions designed to understand how caregivers viewed the training they received as foster parents:

- 57.6% agreed or strongly agreed that training provided realistic expectations about the children placed
- 49.1% agreed or strongly agreed that the training received was applicable to the children placed with them
- 39.2% agreed or strongly agreed that thee training received reflected what the FSW expected of them
- 37.6% agreed or strongly agreed that the training received prepared them to care for the child(ren) in their home;
- 52.3% agreed or strongly agreed that they were able to access training without delay
- 57.3%agreed or strongly agreed that they were was satisfied overall with the training received.

Of the questions designed to understand how the caregiver viewed communication and respect received as a caregiver from the agency and worker:

- 62.2% agreed or strongly agreed that the communication they had with the worker/the agency was clear and respectful.
- 16.3% agreed or strongly agreed that they hesitated to contact their worker/the agency when they had questions or concerns regarding the child(ren) in their care:
- 52.4% agreed or strongly agreed that the worker/the agency responded to questions and/or concerns about the children in their care, in a timely manner:
- 63.9% agreed or strongly agreed that their worker valued the information they knew about the child(ren) in their care

Of the questions designed to understand how caregivers felt about the information provided about the child(ren) they cared for:

- 63.9% agreed or strongly agreed that they were provided information regarding the background history of the child(ren)
- 55.7% agreed or strongly agreed that the background history provided prepared them to accurately and appropriately care for the child(ren)
- 13% agreed or strongly agreed that one reason why they stopped providing foster care is because they did *not* receive enough background history on the child(ren) to accurately and appropriately care for them.
- 13% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt as if the worker/agency was keeping important information about the child's history from them.
- Respondents indicated they received enough information about the child(ren's)…

Culture	43.7 % agreed or strongly agreed
Family History	52.4 % agreed or strongly agreed
Behavioral Challenges	40.9 % agreed or strongly agreed
Medical Needs	52.4 % agreed or strongly agreed

The following questions were designed to better understand the experience of family's interactions with workers or the agency:

- 54% of respondents indicated that they had a worker change during the time the child(ren) were placed
- 42.6%agreed or strongly agreed that an FSW visited the child in their home at least monthly
- 60.6% agreed or strongly agreed that the worker/the agency made sure that their needs as a foster parent were met, such as respite care, financial reimbursement, and training.
- 60.6% agreed or strongly agreed the worker/the agency informed them of important dates and events related to the child(ren) in their care in a timely manner.
- 67.1% agreed or strongly agreed the worker/the agency included them in important decisions or meetings regarding the child(ren) in their care.
- 55.6% agreed or strongly agreed they felt as though they were part of the case-planning team for the child(ren) in their care.
- 32.7% agreed or strongly agreed that the reimbursement they received was enough to cover the costs of being a foster parent

58.9% of respondents rated their overall experience as a foster parent for the State of VT as satisfying or very satisfying?

Information collected from the **Licensed Caregiver/ Voluntary Closure survey** provides a somewhat different picture than the one we anticipated. Those respondents who voluntarily closed in FY 2018 have provided care longer than average, they are heading toward retirement age, they have generally felt like their communication with FSD was responsive and respectful. They shared that they generally believed they, had been involved in case related decision-making, had enough information to properly care

for the child placed with them and that their needs as caregivers were mostly met. They also shared that their experience of caregiver training was that it could have prepared them better to meet the needs of the child placed, it was available in a timely manner and that overall it met their needs.

VII. Key Partners and Stakeholders

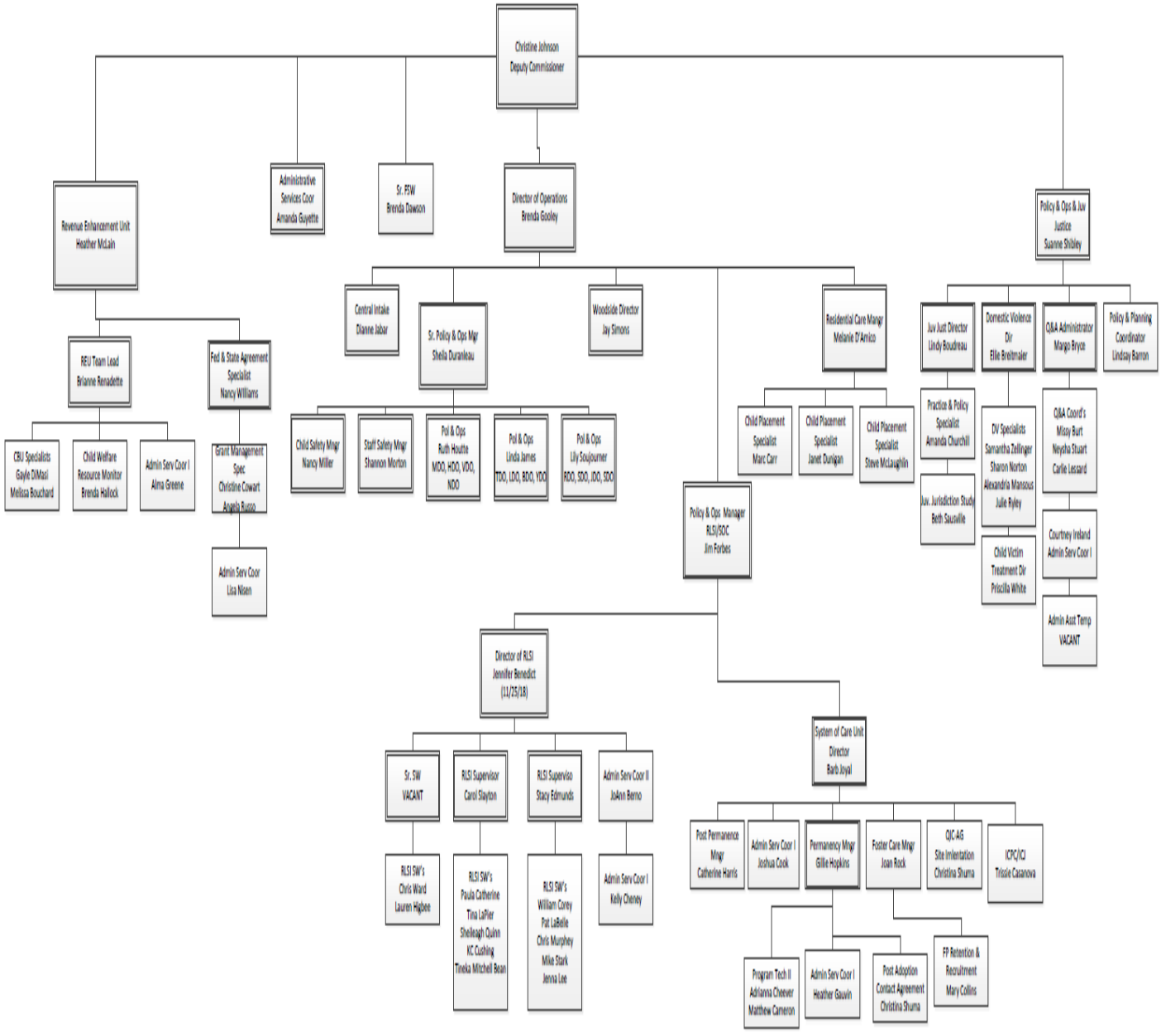
Section V. above provides additional detail related to how our Key Partners are currently being engaged related to activities that are connected to FSD. Most of these partners are already members of the DR Core Team.

As DR implementation continues, additional FSD District offices will be onboarded.

As various DR Plan activities are undertaken additional stakeholders will need to be engaged to complete various components of the Plan. When the Action Plan determines an activity should be initiated, consideration of which Partners or Stakeholders should be engaged will be incorporated into the DR Action Plan as an activity.

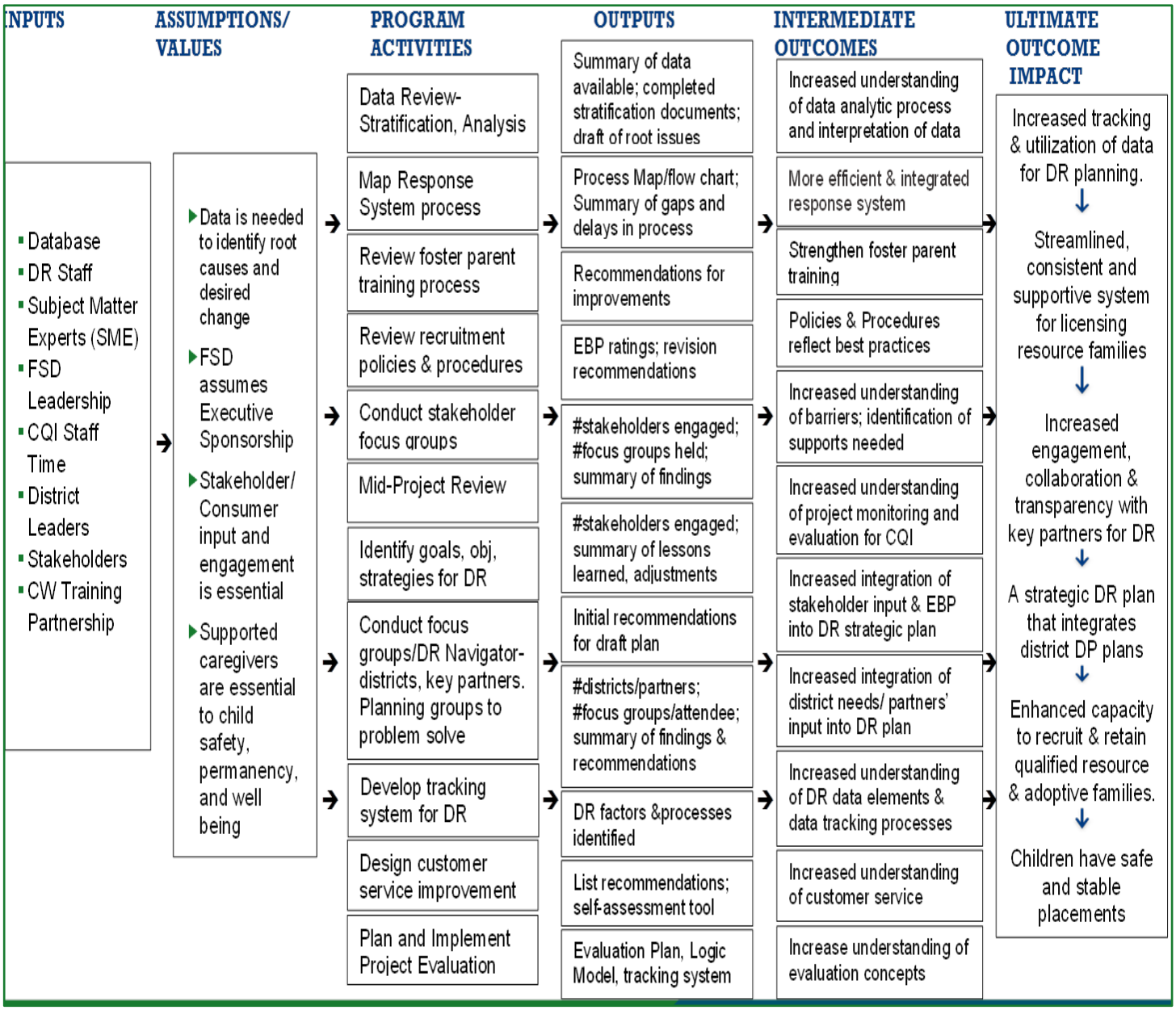
For detail regarding Key Partners and Stakeholders please see Appendices D and E.

Appendix A FSD Organizational Chart



APPENDIX B

Diligent Recruitment Theory of Change



APPENDIX C: Working DR Action Plan

Strategy A. *{from the FSD Strategic Plan}* *Design and Implement effective processes and resources that recruit, develop, support, and retain kinship and foster homes.*
Priority One: Increase Retention of Kinship, Foster, and Adoptive Parents
Objective i: Reduce % of Kin and Foster Families that close Voluntarily or Withdraw

Activity (1) Establish Baseline

#	Action Step	Person or people responsible	Start Date	Complete Date
1	Establish Exit Survey for caregivers who close their license • Collect samples from other states of exit surveys • Determine what our survey format will be • Establish a process for survey administration (format- electronic or paper); or even a phone call from the district the caregiver is closing in- who would do that? ; timeframes for distribution and collection • Look at survey data quarterly to identify themes • Identify strengths and challenges related to the system including communication, responsive engagement etc.	Joan, Barb, Carrie, Jen Benedict Andrea Grimm	January 2019 May 2019	July 2019 August 2019

2	Voluntary Closures • Completed survey of the voluntary closures • Approx. 280 families were surveyed • Analyze data and identify theme • Present to DR core team • Strategize around when and how we engage with someone who has decided to close out their license • Could these caregivers be encouraged to become mentors? OR otherwise support the DR work. • The exit survey will become the ongoing way to stay connected to the system • Identify the number of families who voluntarily close due to dissatisfaction with the system response • Reduce the number of families who voluntary close due to due to dissatisfaction with the system response	Barb	Fall 2018	June 2019
3	Withdrawal of Application-potential staff survey (include RC's and Licensing Staff)	Barb, Joan, Jen B, and other RLSI staff need to explore		

	○ Identify frequency and reason for withdrawal of application ○ Address Quality Assurance issue related to situations where an application is being held by a district and not forwarded to licensing. (they may not be able to be licensed and we counsel out, situations where multiple kin are completing applications, but all of the applications are not being submitted to licensing.) ○ Revisit the thinking behind this particular activity to frame what we are hoping to accomplish and how would a staff survey accomplish this			

Activity (2)
Pilot districts review district specific baseline results and analysis

#	Action Step	Person or people responsible	Start Date	Complete Date
1	Baseline data related to voluntary closure and withdrawal analyzed	Barb	1/2019	6/2019
2	Data related to voluntary closure and withdrawal analyzed will need to be reported district by district and statewide			
3				
4				
5				

Strategy A *{from the FSD Strategic Plan}* *Design and Implement effective processes and resources that recruit, develop, support, and retain kinship and foster homes*
Priority One: Increase Retention of Kinship, Foster, and Adoptive Parents
Objective ii Increase % of Kin and Foster Families whose level of support and connectedness needs are met to sustain healthy partnerships

Activity (1)
Establish Baseline related to how well Foster Parents are being supported and connected

#	Action Step	Person or people responsible	Start Date	Complete date
1	Access Foster Parent Feedback using Foster Parent Workgroup to establish baseline	Brenda G, Joan		July 2019
2	Small Group Analysis of Indicators to Measure 1. Engage Foster Parents and Community to help shape the metric and support measurement 2. Focus Group Results 3. Consider Case Planning Practice effects on Foster Parent Support 4. Worker ability to assess Caregiver needs			
3				
4				
5				

Activity (2) Engage foster parents to identify issues and brainstorm solutions to improve practice.

#	Action Step	Person or people responsible	Start Date	Complete date
1	Bi Monthly Agenda Development for FP Workgroup	Joan, Lindsay B, Foster Parent Workgroup		ongoing
2				

3				
4				
5				

Activity (3) Review feedback from the 12 districts foster parent 'listening sessions' and make recommendations.

#	Action Step	Person or people responsible	Start Date	Complete date
1	Foster Parent Workgroup subcommittee will review listening session feedback to identify priority areas for workgroup to address in 2019-2020	Joan, Erinn, Lindsay and FP working group	April 23 and April 30th meetings	
2				
3				
4				
5				

Activity (4) Design and Implement "Stay" Survey at Renewal of License

#	Action Step	Person or people responsible	Start Date	Complete date
1	Convene the survey work group	Joan, Barb, Carrie, Jen Benedict. FP Amy Anderson		
2	Workgroup members will Collect samples of stay surveys	Joan, Barb, Carrie, Jen Benedict. FP Amy Anderson		
3	Workgroup members will finalize a stay survey	Joan, Barb, Carrie, Jen Benedict. FP Amy Anderson		
4	Workgroup will need to determine process for administering the stay survey, frequency of administration (should it be connected to anniversary date or relicensing process or should it be administered annually to every caregiver at a certain point in time, how many surveys were sent out	Joan, Barb, Carrie, Jen Benedict. FP Amy Anderson, DR pilot districts		

5	Workgroup will determine how data will be analyzed and feedback will be shared with the districts			

Activity (5) Foster Parent Reimbursement Redesign				
#	Action Step	Person or people responsible	Start Date	Complete date
1	Workgroup convened to create a caregiver reimbursement process that is : • Transparent to all parties involved (decision making, standards, etc); • based in best practice and available evidence; • consistently applied to all requests; • engaging of district staff to ensure appropriate accountability for stated requests; • grounded in realistic expectations both of foster parents as caretakers and the Division as a funder; • supportive of and transferrable to the larger plan for foster parent payment reform with the goal of creating a uniform rate structure	Barb	March 2019	September 2019
2	Transition the existing ISB's to CRF rates	Barb and Team with DO collaboration	June 2019	July 1 2019
3				
4				
5				

Activity (6) Placement Stability Project Follow up				
#	Action Step	Person or people responsible	Start Date	Complete date
1	Decision made with Core team about Mentoring/ RPC Plus/CANS/ Trauma Informed clinician access being			

	identified as their own activities on the plan?			
2				
3				
4				
5				

Activity (7) Continue the bi-weekly E-News distributed to Caregivers and encourage VFAFA, Central Office and districts to share relevant news through this vehicle.

#	Action Step	Person or people responsible	Start Date	Complete date
1	Review Baseline data related to E-News distribution	Mary C	Using March 2019 numbers	
2	Increase the number of caregiver families who open the e-news ○ Increase Total distribution, ○ Increase percentage of caregivers who open the newsletter	Mary and Joan	April 2019	June 30 2019
3				
4				
5				

Activity (8) Sustain and grow the Foster Parent Mentoring program established under the Placement Stability Project

#	Action Step	Person or people responsible	Start Date	Complete date
1	On-line training development completed	CWTP	May 2019	July 1, 2019
2	Plan for District level recruitment of mentors	Joan, Resource Coordinators, District Director, FP R and RS	Fall 2019	Jan 2020
3	Develop Mentor Elevator Speech to support communication plan	Joan, Mary	July 2019	Aug 2019

4	Develop Satisfaction Surveys for both Mentors and Mentees			
5	Develop Certificates of Attendance for the training	Joan		
6	Create a Tracking system to support the training	Joan		
7	Work with RCs on making the appropriate matches	Joan and Resource Coordinators	Sept 2019	ongoing

Strategy A *{from the FSD Strategic Plan}*
Design and Implement effective processes and resources that recruit, develop, support, and retain kinship and foster homes

Priority Two:
Improve Recruitment by Increasing Timely System Response from Inquiry to Licensure

Objective i
Districts adhere to a common, best practice inquiry to licensure process

Activity (1)
Define the Vermont system response from Inquiry through Licensure

#	Action Step	Person or people responsible	Start Date	Complete date
1	Develop a common inquiry tool that incorporates all of the components of system response	Joan	Dec 2018	Jan 2019
2				
3				
4				

Activity (2)
Inquiry Tracking Spreadsheet Implementation

#	Action Step	Person or people responsible	Start Date	Complete Date
1	Provide inquiry tracking spreadsheet to all DO's with directions for completing	Joan	Jan 2019	Jan 2019
2	Communication Plan (i)Why this, Why now?			

	(ii)Awareness of Measurement Tool and Usage Expectations. Confirm who in the district is responsible for tool completion. (iii) Consultation and data sharing introduced			
3	Analyze initial data to identify themes, and any problems with the data- is it capturing what we thought it should? Troubleshoot the tracking form and address any QA concerns related to completion			
4	Create a data display format to use ongoing to present info back to districts. Share with RC group for feedback. Adjust display as needed	Joan , QA team member, Barb		
5	Initial round of data analyzed and made ready to present to pilot districts during consultation			
6	Debrief first round and make any needed changes to process			
7	Initial round of data analyzed and made ready to present to remaining districts during consultation			
8				

Strategy A *{from the FSD Strategic Plan}* *Design and Implement effective processes and resources that recruit, develop, support, and retain kinship and foster homes*
Priority Two: Improve Recruitment by Increasing Timely System Response from Inquiry to Licensure
Objective ii Increase % of Kin and Foster Families with access to timely, relevant training

Activity (1) Orientation and Training Program Pilot Assessment				
#	Action Step	Person or people responsible	Start Date	Complete Date

1	Orientation pilot delivered in 3 DR pilot districts	Jen Jorgenson, CWTP TC's Joan, Pilot DOs	Jan 2019	Feb 2019
2	Pilot Districts Implement redesigned training	TCs in VDO YDO and JDO	April 2019	May 2019
3	Debrief first round of orientation	Joan, CWTP, RC's in pilot districts	May 2019	June 2019
4	Review Orientation Pilot data to compare to existing data on Withdrawals and Licensed closures (i) Identify themes (ii) Recommend operational changes as needed	Joan and Josh	June 2019	July 2019
5	Add to the data display format present info back to districts. (i)% of caregivers who have completed orientation (ii) % caregivers who have completed online trainings (iii) % caregivers who have completed the learning network sessions			
6	Assess communications to ensure caregivers are aware of training opportunities. (i) Current scope of communications (ii) Effectiveness of communications			
7	Launch of redesigned competency based foundations training statewide	CTWP and RCs	September 2019	Dec 2019

Strategy B. *{from the FSD Strategic Plan}* *Increase the availability and capacity of kinship and foster homes that meet the diverse needs of Vermont's children and youth*
Priority Three: Increase Available Capacity of Kinship, Foster, and Adoptive Parents
Objective i: Use targeted recruitment plans on the state and district levels to increase the number of homes that, with appropriate support, can safely care for the diversity of children in care (complex needs, LGBTQ, racial and ethnic backgrounds, youth with physical and developmental challenges).

Activity (1) Explore ways to connect all available supports

#	Action Step	Person or people responsible	Start Date	Complete Date
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

Activity (2)
Identify and develop specialized homes with the capability to care for children with more complex needs

#	Action Step	Person or people responsible	Start Date	Complete Date
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

Activity (3) develop framing for aligning child needs with:

(a) Family Finding Practice

(b) Support Plans

#	Action Step	Person or people responsible	Start Date	Complete Date
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

Strategy B. *{from the FSD Strategic Plan} Increase the availability and capacity of kinship and foster homes that meet the diverse needs of Vermont's children and youth*

Priority Three:
Increase Available Capacity of Kinship, Foster, and Adoptive Parents

Objective ii:
Increase % of children with kinship placements

Activity (1) Revisit Family Finding Practice				
#	Action Step	Person or people responsible	Start Date	Complete Date
1	Identify current Baseline for district specific family finding practice	Brenda, Barb, Easter Seals, NFI		
2	Connect Current Initiatives (i) Children's Bureau Funding 2018 Kinship Navigation (ii) Children's Bureau Funding 2019 Kinship Navigation (iii) Child and Family Support Contracted work on Family Finding 1. Develop practice expectations and provide training related to Family Finding to increase the percentage of children with kinship placements. (iv) Project Family's Family Finding work (v) Local Permanence Teams	Brenda and Barb	April 2019	
3				
4				
5	October Family Finding Conference with Kevin Campbell	Barb, CWTP staff side	May 2019	10/24/2019
Activity (2) Implementation of Revised Policy 91 and the impact on Kinship care				
#	Action Step	Person or people responsible	Start Date	Complete Date
1	Policy 91 Kinship Care and Collaboration with Relatives released		5/2/2019	
2	Coordinate to determine how to define the data element on "children in Kinship placement" and how to include or account for the considerations of the impact of children exiting to CCO's	Ken H., Jim, Barb		

3				
4				
5				

Strategy B. *{from the FSD Strategic Plan} Increase the availability and capacity of kinship and foster homes that meet the diverse needs of Vermont's children and youth*
Priority Three: Increase Available Capacity of Kinship, Foster, and Adoptive Parents
Objective iii: Increase # of foster homes able to maintain children within their geographical and cultural communities

Activity (1) Analysis of currently available data (and ongoing process for obtaining, analyzing, and presenting data)

#	Action Step	Person or people responsible	Start Date	Complete Date
1	QA team will produce quarterly data sets related to the following priorities: **Priority 1:** Increase Retention of Kinship, Foster and Adoptive Parents **Objective i:** Reduce the % of Kin and Foster Families that close voluntarily or withdraw **Measured by closure reason data** **Priority 3:** Increase the Available Capacity of Kinship Foster and Adoptive Parents: **Objective i:** Use targeted recruitment plans on the state and district levels to increase the number of homes that, with appropriate support, can safely care for the diversity of children in care (complex needs, LGBTQ, racial and ethnic backgrounds, youth with physical and developmental challenges). **PROXY measure – Reduced number of unplanned moves.**	QA Team		Ongoing

	Priority 3: Increase Available Capacity of Kinship, Foster, and Adoptive Parents **Objective ii:** Increase % of children with kinship placements **Measured by Kinship care key indicator data** **Priority 3**: Increase Available Capacity of Kinship, Foster, and Adoptive Parents **Objective iii:** Increase # of foster homes able to maintain children within their geographical and cultural communities **Measured by residence of primary parent and foster home**			
2	Educational Stability Data	Barb		Quarterly and ongoing
3	Explore the collection of both child/ and caregiver Risk and Protective Factors data to support improved placement practice and matching Consider application to Foster Families. Also applies to P1O2.	Barb/Jennifer B/Jim		

Activity (2) Central Office will provide infrastructure and actionable support to local offices.
For example, Monthly Did You Knows, What's Working Around the State, sharing successful strategies

#	Action Step	Person or people responsible	Start Date	Complete Date
1	Development of the District Practice Profile	DR Core Team	May 2019	July 2019
	District Practice Profile completed by pilot Districts	Pilot Districts	Aug 2019	Sept 2019
2	Foster Kin Care Manager consultation with pilot districts: re District Practice Profile	Joan	Sept 2019	
3	Maintaining of the Foster Parent Distribution List	Josh		ongoing
4	Development of a Brand, Media and Marketing Strategies and Tools	Mary		

5	Development and Implementatio the Communication Plan with internal and external partners	Mary, Joan, Barb, Operations,		
6	Coordination of the monthly foster parent workgroup and subcommittees	Deputy Commissioner, VFAFA President, Lindsay, Joan		
7	Development and editing of printed materials for the public and the district offices	Lynn, Mary, Joan		
8	Coordination and Administration of the Caregiver Mentor Program	Joan	January 2019	ongoing
9	Front Porch Forum administration o Monthly postings o Data Analysis and identification of trends	Joan, Mary and Josh with support from Lynn Bruce	In process	ongoing
10	Develop Talking points for each of the district key infrastructure elements			

Activity (3) Ensure staff awareness to availability and usage of related data				
#	Action Step	Person or people responsible	Start Date	Complete Date
1	Collect inquiry tracking spreadsheet data from districts quarterly	Joan and Josh	Due March 31 2019	
2	Analysis of data collected from the inquiry tracking spreadsheet	Joan, Josh, support from Margo	April 2019	
3	Develop a data display format to share data to the districts to inform decision making	Joan, Josh. QA support		
4	For the first year of tracking, complete quarterly data analysis to suppo data integrity. Engage districts to address any identified concerns	Joan, Operational Support, QA support		
5				

Activity (4) Develop and disseminate framework and strategic messaging for community awareness of foster care population and needs				
#	Action Step	Person or people responsible	Start Date	Complete Date

1	Explore community perceptions of foster care population and needs	Barb, Mary, Joan		
2	Develop internal messaging (including awareness of unintentional messaging)	Mary	4/22/19	Initial: 6/30/19
3	Develop community engagement messaging (including prioritization of efforts within available capacity)	Mary	4/22/19	Initial: 6/30/19
4	Disseminate guidance for communications (The communication plan will define specific steps)	Barb, Mary, Joan		Initial: 9/30/19 Ongoing Frequency: Define in Comms Plan
5				

Activity (5) Identify and establish relationships with community organizations to support foster families to expand their capacity to meet the needs of children so they remain stable in their home communities.

Note: This activity supports P3O1. These activities support the objective to create targeted community recruitment plans.
For plan draft: Much of the messaging is ongoing.

#	Action Step	Person or people responsible	Start Date	Complete Date
1	Provide state-level guidance and support for key considerations and district cooperation in community partnerships.	Barb, Mary, Joan		8/1/19
2	Each district establishes a list of strategic community partnerships.			8/1/19
3				
4				
5				

APPENDIX D

Mapping Diligent Recruitment in Vermont

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the process of recruitment, application, child placement, family approvals, training, licensing, and postplacement for foster homes in Vermont, with a particular view of the areas for possible improvement for children and families. The review, completed by Capacity Building Center for States Subject Matter Experts Marie YoungPeter and Kathleen Belanger is based on the following:

- Notes from the initial NRCDR meeting with Vermont in June 2017, including the results of the Diligent Recruitment Navigator
- Document reviews of training, licensing, policy, family surveys and other documents provided
- Process mapping focus groups conducted at the central office level and in three districts (Middlebury, Morrisville, and St. Johnsbury)
- Work to date with various groups
- Expressed views of management and staff during ongoing meetings
- Focus group phone meetings with the Foster Parent Workgroup leadership and both team leads from the Child Welfare Training Partnership (CWTP)

The report briefly examines the process from initial contact to post placement; data collected related to foster family recruitment, development and support; policy; training; and customer service challenges. In addition, it examines possible differences in processes between districts.

Finally, the report attempts to highlight areas that might be considered as part of state and/or district planning.

This report does not attempt to list or highlight all components of diligent recruitment or to catalogue the many excellent frameworks for practice, wonderful work being accomplished, and exceptional and creative workforce. Instead, it simply highlights areas for consideration to improve the recruitment, development, retention, and support of foster families.

I. Process: Assessment, Placement, Training, Licensing, Postplacement Support

A. Recruitment/Inquiry

While there have been efforts to recruit families at fairs, meetings, etc., it is unclear if such efforts have been successful. The major method of recruiting includes family finding during the placement process, in particular searching for kin and fictive kin families. Families who self-recruit may approach the system by finding and completing a foster care inquiry form on the internet, by calling the district office, or by replying on the Front Porch Forum, an online neighborhood communication forum. The website (http://dcf.vermont.gov/foster) provides regulations and information related to fostering and a link to district phone numbers, but it does not provide a central number to call with questions. Inquiries made on the website (via inquiry forms) are forwarded to the system of care administrative services coordinator, who refers the inquiry to the district.

In most cases, district phones are answered by machine; the automatic prompts do not specifically direct those interested in becoming a foster or adoptive parent.

There does not appear to be a standard way in which families receive a response to an inquiry, a standard format for responding (phone call, letter, central contact), or a standard timeline for responses. However, many resource coordinators (RCs) use an inquiry form with new potential families, calling within two days or at most a week unless the inquiring party is not considered a probable foster family. Typically, the RC would provide prospective foster families with information about types of care, what they can expect, and an orientation on foster care practice in the district office. RC's try to schedule an initial contact with the family within 2 to 3 weeks. An application packet is then either sent out or provided at the initial face-to-face contact with the RC.

This part of the process takes from 1 to 3 weeks to complete.

B. Family Self-Evaluation and Application

There does not appear to be a consistent orientation or other method for families to inquire, pose specific questions, or hear from other foster families except by making an initial inquiry on paper or by calling the district office RC. The application packet may be mailed to inquiring families or may be provided directly by the RC at the first appointment. It is then the family's responsibility to complete the application, though the RC may walk through the application with the family to assure completion. Follow up on inquiries and completion of the application is inconsistent and depends on the initial impression of the families' interest and capacity, the district where the inquiry was received, the number of families needed, and current workload.

This part of the process is indefinite, since it depends on the family to complete the application.

C. Placement and District Approval

Placing With Kin (estimated 35 percent with relatives and 30 to 35 percent with fictive kin)

Vermont emphasizes finding families that already are known to the child needing a placement, including fictive kin families (families who may have a relationship with the child but are not related by blood or marriage). Efforts are made to find relatives, friends, or neighbors who know the child, or even school personnel or others who have had some dealings with the child. Placement searches may be made prior to a removal as part of the casework, but often placement searches occur during the removal process. Families are sometimes uncooperative in suggesting friends or relatives. However, staff is most diligent in searching for kin and fictive kin, including "cold calling" school nurses, therapists, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc. When a placement is found, it often is driven by an imminent decision by the court to remove the child. The social worker making the placement or the RC will bring a licensing application packet to the home and will complete an initial home safety assessment. The district RC reviews with the family the requirements for providing foster care and assists in completing the application packet if necessary. The RC also will complete initial background checks. If an emergency placement is needed, the district director has authority to provide immediate approval with completion of a preliminary home assessment. At this point, or before, the child is placed in the home.

Next, the RC attaches a cover sheet to the family's application to highlight that a child already has been placed in the home, scans the application, and sends to the Residential Licensing and Special Investigations (RLSI) unit. RLSI regulates residential facilities, child placing and adoption agencies, regulated child care settings, and foster homes and conducts school-related investigations and politically related conflict cases. In addition, the RC notifies the CWTP of the family's need for training.

This part of the process takes from 1 to 5 days to complete.

Placing With Non-Kin (estimated 30 percent)

When the search for a foster home does not conclude with an appropriate kin family, the workers begin to look for non-kin or community foster homes. Districts will review a list of licensed families to identify an

appropriate and available home. However, there is a limited pool of diverse non-kin families available for placements. There are some efforts at "general" recruitment strategies (Front Porch Forum and other social media or media), but available resources tend to focus on identifying kin and fictive kin families as needed, and these typically take priority in recruitment and licensing efforts.

D. Licensing

Licensing Homes With a Child Already Placed in the Home (estimated 80%)

The RC apprises RLSI that a child is currently in the home, thus placing priority on licensing these homes. Instructions for fingerprinting are sent by mail in 1 to 2 weeks, and it is up to the foster parent to follow through. An RLSI worker is assigned within in 1 to 2 weeks. RLSI staff complete additional background checks, set up a home visit to complete the licensing home study, and if there are no safety concerns, licenses the home.

This part of the process takes from 2 to 4 months to complete when a child is already in the home.

Licensing Homes With a Child Not Already Placed in the Home (estimated 20%)

In general, families may inquire about providing foster care, or fostering to adopt by calling the district, filling in an inquiry form (link included in Front Porch Forum posts), or by calling the 800 number. The 1-800 number is not widely used in DCF marketing materials for foster care; it is more often associated with Project Family and Adoption and is answered by a Project Family worker. Inquiries through the 1-800 number are passed on to the districts by the Project Family worker. Most foster care and respite marketing materials provide the *fostercare.vt.gov* or *imreadytohelp.vt.gov* links to the Family Services Division (FSD) webpage. They also contain district specific phone numbers.

When inquiries are received by the system of care administrative services coordinator through the FSD website inquiry form, they are referred to the district where the family resides. From there, an initial informal screening is conducted in which the social worker and/or the RC make a brief determination concerning whether the inquiry is serious and whether the family is a potential caregiver. Based on this assessment, the RC may return the call and visit the family within a week, or as long as a month or two later. There also may be families for which follow-up does not occur.

Due to the urgency in licensing homes with children already in the home, the application process for licensing all other homes is much lengthier and considered lower priority. For this reason, some districts hold application packets until they are ready to place a child, moving the application to a higher priority.

Please see the "Process Maps" noting steps in the licensing process located in the appendices A and B.

*This part of the process takes from 6 to 12 months or longer to complete when a child is **not** already in the home.*

E. Training

A request for training takes place as soon as the home receives district approval, or when RLSI receives the licensing packet. The CWTP contacts the family and provides a schedule of available trainings that the family can receive. (See the section on training, below). Training generally is available twice a year, and scheduling for training is up to the family. Focus groups and previously conducted surveys indicate that lack of appropriate child care to support these training sessions is a barrier to families being able to schedule and attend training, especially if a child already has been placed in the home. If training is not readily available or not considered as high priority by the foster families, they may not receive training until well after a placement, if at all. In addition, when two parents are in the household, only one parent may receive the training, or families may receive sections of the training rather than the complete training. In some districts, informal training may be arranged or provided by the RC, pending a family's ability to attend required training.

Part 1 of the training may be completed in 6 months to 1 year, or not at all.

Part 2 of the training generally takes longer to complete, since it is only offered two times per district per year. (Approximately 8 months to 18 months.)

F. Postplacement Support

There is no standard provision of postplacement support (see customer service). However, there are a variety of contracted services to assist families, including mental health services, mentoring, transportation, child care and emergency services. Both staff and resource families reported difficulty accessing these supports, the large number of documents required of social workers to refer families and children for support, and the variability in service provision depending on staffing.

G. Possible Differences by District, and Role of Discretion

There are differences between districts for each step in the process, for kin and non-kin, and particularly for recruiting and responding to inquiries that are not solicited in the child placing process, i.e., non-kin "community" recruitment. In addition, with the emphasis on family finding at the time of the child's removal, each district has discretion in choosing families to contact as well as in approving families for placement. These differences may be attributable not only to variation between districts but also as a result of staff turnover, including new district directors, changes in social workers, and changes in RC's within the district.

An example of this was raised during one of the focus groups conducted. A foster/adoptive family spoke about a specific worker who refused to consider their licensed home for placement due to a misunderstanding concerning the terms of a previous foster placement. Based on the worker's discretion, the home was not used during that worker's tenure.

There was also concern that placing a child across district lines (with a relative in another district) was complicated, depending on the district, and sometimes almost impossible, even if the placement was best for the child.

Key Challenges and Ideas to Consider

Key Challenges	Ideas to Consider
Recruitment, licensing and training appear to be siloed efforts, operating independently from each other. There is limited capacity for recruitment of non-kin homes, resulting in minimal recruitment efforts and delays in licensing. Therefore, the pool of licensed homes is shallow. There is wide discretion in selecting or not selecting homes for approval. There is variability in the time it takes to approve, license, and train families.	Consider strategies to integrate practice across these systems, including developing unified policies and procedures and tracking systems. Consider ways to elevate the recruitment of a pool of non-kin or non-child specific homes on a continuum, including for emergency care, respite, and fostering. Consider ways to evaluate homes that may be eliminated from consideration too early in the process. Consider setting standards or goals around timeframes for approvals, licensing, and training.

II. Data (or Measurement)

A. Overview

Data on foster families is located in three systems (not including state payment systems). The district offices collect data on the potential and actual foster families in their districts, in either paper lists, Word documents, and/or Excel spreadsheets. Data also is collected and families are tracked by RLSI as part of its licensing and reporting functions. Finally, data is collected through and families are tracked by the CWTP as part of its responsibility to provide training to families.

Because data is located in three (or more) different systems, information often is conflicting. The district may receive information about a family who has not received training, when in fact training has been

provided but is listed under a different name. In addition, because systems operate independently, it is difficult to obtain an overview of progress through an entire system of application, district approval, child placement, licensing, training, and postplacement support.

Although there have been efforts to standardize the format for tracking families at the district level, there is currently no obligation to collect data or track it in a common way. Differences in the kind and format of tracking result in difficulty in reporting and analyzing current foster care capacity, processes, strategies for recruiting and supporting families, and outcomes.

The district offices are responsible for recruitment and support of families and have access to the information about the families, even as the data changes. They also have frequent need to reference this data and to keep it updated. However, the district has no formal responsibility to track families uniformly. The RC tracks families locally and is supervised by the district director. Without district responsibility for uniform collection and sharing, the opportunity exists for the RC to collect what is most important to him/her, in the format most sensible.

B. Recruitment/Inquiry/Follow-Up

Tracking recruitment activities, particularly those activities that contributed to the recruitment of specific families, provides the state with information about successful and unsuccessful strategies. In addition, it allows comparison of strategies used across districts and for particular families in order to choose strategies that are more promising.

Tracking families who inquire about fostering (including date of inquiry, method of inquiry and follow-up activities for inquiry) provides immediate insight into not only those who choose to foster, but those who do not foster. Inquiry data can be linked to follow-up activities, place, district, and family characteristics to help focus recruitment.

Some recruitment/inquiry data is collected from in Front Porch Forum, some in RLSI, some with agencies, and some in district offices. There is no standard list of all inquiries.

C. Application

Districts had difficulty providing any information about how long it might take between a family's inquiry into foster caring and application completion, a timeframe often tracked in other systems to determine both the number and percent of families who do not complete an application and to determine barriers to application completions. However, the groups felt this data is only tracked informally at a district level, if at all. In addition, other states and jurisdictions often have procedures to assist families during the application process to assess their own capacities to foster, allowing families to select out prior to the licensing and training processes. We could not find evidence of this self-selection out of fostering, although it may exist informally in some districts. Therefore, data on self-selection out of the fostering process was not available.

D. Child Placement and District Approval

Comparing child placement dates with other dates (recruitment, inquiry, follow-up, completed application) allows tracking of activities to determine process barriers along with promising practices in ongoing family support.

E. Licensing

While licensing data is collected by RLSI, it is not tied to local district level data (dates of inquiry, kinds of support and follow-up, recruiting activities, etc.) and is informally interfaced with training data. In addition, it is not linked with data on placement stability and other outcomes. For example, one district estimates that about one-third of inquirers become licensed and trained. However, without linking inquiries with licensing, not only is this an estimate but it is not possible to calculate the time between inquiry and licensing, the reason that two-thirds of inquirers (if that is the correct number) are not licensed, when in the process families "drop out," if or when children were placed, etc.

F. Training

Data for training provided through CWTP is maintained by the contractor. Foster family files contain training certificates and documentation for formal and informal training received beyond CWTP but is not entered into a database. A combination of years licensed and additional hours of training allows the foster home to be "leveled up" to receive a higher reimbursement rate. Once leveled up, a foster parent must receive additional hours of training each year to maintain the level of reimbursement. However, due to limited tracking in training, licensing, recruitment, and placement it is difficult to determine how many and how long children might be placed in a home where families have not received the required training or where disruptions or other difficulties possibly linked to lack of preplacement training may occur.

G. Support, Follow-Up and Exit From Fostering

Postplacement follow-up and training is tracked individually by foster parent. At times, there have been local and state surveys relating to foster parent satisfaction, reasons for choosing to no longer foster, etc. Some districts have exit interviews with foster parents who choose not to continue to foster. However, the results are not tracked in a way that can be linked to other data or compared across systems and across districts. In addition, there was a suggestion from some foster parents for surveys of licensed families who do not have children in care, and for surveys of specific issues related to caring for children. One effort established to follow up and provide family support is the foster parent recruitment specialist assigned in some districts who reach out to families with a placement in order to check in and help them receive the supports needed.

H. Role of Discretion in Foster Family Data

The collection of data for families is discretionary, since there is no uniform point of collection/merging/tracking. There is limited responsibility for submitting accurate and formatted data, limited authority to enforce data maintenance, and therefore no feedback mechanism to report merged data related to interventions, funding, and district policies and practices.

Key Challenges and Ideas to Consider

Key Challenges	Ideas to Consider
Inconsistencies in data collection across districts. Necessity to track at the district level. Inconsistencies in data collection across systems. Lack of data on key elements Time constraints, responsibilities for tracking, and current inability to examine data from recruitment/inquiry to follow-up. Lack of policies and procedures that detail expectations for data collection, and lack of feedback mechanisms to ensure compliance.	Consider simple uniform tracking at the district level (even Excel). Consider regular reporting to the state. Consider reporting from state to districts relating strategies to outcomes. Consider uniform reporting of licensing and training into the uniform tracking system. Consider responsibility for tracking and reporting resting at the district management level.

III. Policy

A. Description

Although any agency policy can potentially affect the diligent recruitment program and the families interested in being a foster/kin family, there were specific areas of Vermont's policy considered to be significant in the recruitment and retention of resource families. The policy sections reviewed include:

- Working with youth and families
- Placing children and youth
- Planning with children and families

RLSI unit

Vermont aligns policy development with practice and implementation reflecting the mission and values of those outlined in the agency's practice model, which was in part a result of a 2010 grant from the Northern Caribbean Implementation Center (NCIC). As a result, each policy appears able to stand alone and to be revised independently from other policies.

Current policy is prescriptive and somewhat general, describing the "who" and "what" of policy and not necessarily addressing the "when" and "how" in a safety/risk averse model.

Vermont licensing regulations that guide licensing policies specifically address:

- Application and evaluation for licensure
- Characteristics of foster parents
- Responsibilities of foster parents
- Physical environment

RLSI currently has responsibility for the development of policies and for promulgation of regulations governing state licensed foster/kinship care homes, residential treatment programs, child-placing agencies for both adoption and foster care, and Commissioner-designated shelter programs.

In addition, RLSI processes applications, completes required fingerprint and background checks, conducts home studies and issues a license for foster/kin care. RLSI is committed to continuous improvement, incorporating findings and performance indicators from the recent LEAN project for improving the licensing process for foster/kin families, revising current policies, and increasing transparency. The proposed policy revisions currently underway are intended to reflect the current mission of RLSI.

B. Policy vs. Implementation and Enforcement; Differences by District

Dissemination and training of policy occurs in different ways and there does not appear to be a formal process assuring review and understanding of policies by district staff and/or resource families. Staff sometimes viewed policy as unclear or inconsistent, creating confusion in implementation. This included policies related to record documentation, placing children across districts, respite care, disruptions in care, and the roles and expectations of foster parents and social workers in working together to assure support from first contact to postplacement of the child.

Though policy specifies that a home should be licensed prior to placing a child in care, placements are routinely made months before a home is fully licensed. While current policy requires foster parents to have completed training requirements by the end of the first year of licensure, it appears that many families and or individual parents have not completed this requirement.

C. Role of Discretion in Policy

Policies provide general guidance and expectations and depending on the policy, may include specific actions to be taken in a particular role or by the districts. The policy guiding diligent recruitment of foster and adoptive parents provides for significant staff discretion and offers minimal direction for when actions are to be initiated and completed. This may lead to inconsistency in performance and accountability.

Homes not meeting policy requirements may be revoked or closed, or if a foster child is in the home it may be closed to any other children. Variances for non-safety related issues are routinely requested through RLSI, particularly in situations where children already are placed in the home and immediate licensure is needed (often kin families) or where children remain in a home that is noncompliant with training requirements.

Discretion is important in the practice of child welfare. However, it also is important to select policies that can be implemented and enforced and to determine ways to limit discretion appropriately so as not to disadvantage children and families.

Key Challenges and Ideas to Consider

Key Challenges	Ideas to Consider
Inconsistencies in administering and enforcing policy. Policies that are not being enforced (foster parent training, etc.). Lack of policy for preparation of foster families prior to child placement. Unclear expectations around policy and practice in licensing and supporting foster families. Unclear policy guidance for staff addressing the role of foster parents and how to involve and work with them. Siloed policies independent of practice.	Consider incorporating practice guidance in policy or developing a practice and procedural guide. Consider ways to strengthen processes for monitoring compliance and policy enforcement. Explore ways to strengthen and formalize training on policy that incorporates best practice. Consider staff training or orientation sessions on the agency's values, the skills and types of families needed, characteristics of children coming into care, expectations of working with the agency and regulations overview. Establish minimal requirements around training and understanding for families prior to licensure. Consider developing expectations and guidance for how resource families should be treated and supported from first contact through post placement. (Treat them like gold.) Consider cross-system incremental policy development related to foster care that incorporates gradual steps toward policies that demonstrate good practice and are enforceable.

IV. Training

Vermont's FSD contracts with University of Vermont's CWTP for development and implementation of training for prospective and current foster and kin families and development of staff core competencies and delivery of workforce training. Training formats include teleconferences, classroom settings, one-to-one and group coaching/mentoring, and online access to courses and materials.

A. Resource Family Training

Foster and kin families are expected to complete the two-part Foundation for Foster Care training within the first year of licensure and preferably before foster children are placed in a home. Part 1 of the Foundations for Foster Care course for kin includes lessons on roles of a kinship caregiver, adjusted parenting and discipline, managing family dynamics, legal and financial Issues, and navigating daily life. Part 1 Foundations for Foster Care for non-kin includes courses on the many hats of a foster parent, "From the Circle of Courage to Discipline," permanency and the court process, and navigating daily life. Part 1 is generally available monthly in each district during evenings.

Typically this content is delivered through four 90-minute teleconference calls that have been described as challenging by some foster families, as they had trouble focusing for that long of a time on the phone. It was noted that Part 1 may be provided in-person or online as well.

Part 2 includes courses on connections and identity; understanding and supporting attachment; helping children cope with loss; understanding sexual abuse and trauma; parenting adolescents and discipline for all ages; and resiliency and self-care. The content is delivered in five classroom sessions that run three hours each. There is some discretion at the district level to offer the training in weekend sessions. Part 2 is available two times per year in each of the 12 districts.

Individual training sessions may be acceptable substitutes for completing required training at the discretion of RCs. Though the RCs have in the past provided one-on-one sessions to support the ability for the family to take a placement, it may not be sustainable on a large scale.

CWTP currently is undergoing a significant revision of the caregiver curriculum. It is working toward a competency based format to include: child and youth development; attachment; youth life skills and preparation; fundamental relationships with the child's family; maintaining connections; personal and family safety; kinship awareness; substance use disorder; domestic violence; mental health; respecting differences; permanency; the life of a case (process); role and resource use; educational well-being and school stability; trauma-informed practice; vicarious trauma and self-care; trauma-informed parenting skills; and sexual abuse. Input from stakeholder groups has been included throughout the revision process.

In addition to curriculum modifications, CWTP is examining, along with stakeholders, methods of training delivery to increase accessibility for families, including online, group, phone and face-to-face offerings. Curriculum development is tentatively scheduled for completion by fall 2018, with pilot trainings in spring 2019.

B. Issues Raised Concerning Resource Family Training

Many states offer an orientation or formal process in which prospective resource families can learn about fostering, meet current foster families, understand personal and facility/home qualifications for fostering, be apprised of agency guidelines and procedures, have questions answered, and complete or begin to complete an application with assistance if families are still interested. There is no formalized process for orientation of prospective families in Vermont. In addition, there is no formal training or guidance available to help support prospective families in completing required paperwork and navigating the system, although RCs provide assistance routinely on an individual basis.

Foundations 1 classes require 90-minute phone discussions. While this appears flexible to meet rural families' individual needs, the sessions are difficult to accomplish in evenings when children require the most care. It also may make it impossible for both parents to attend, resulting in training for only one. In addition, this requires 360 minutes, or 6 hours of individualized training per family or per person, a significant expense. Finally, one-on-one sessions exclude interactions with other foster families during the initial stages of placement, a time when contact with others may be most valuable.

Foundations 2 classes are offered in each district twice per year. Since they are often full, some families will attend training in another district or will wait an additional six months. Families have experienced long delays from application submission to availability of training often resulting in frustration and discouragement for the family. In addition, as noted in the CWTP Evaluation Summary, past surveys indicated frustration with the combination of kin and non-kin families in the same, large class because of different challenges and concerns.

Because placements often are made prior to licensure and prior to completion (or even initiation) of training, families may be even more unprepared for their intense responsibilities and unclear about roles and expectations related to the agency, the social worker, navigating resources to meet the needs of the children, and expectations related to working with birth families. This may lead to placement disruptions or home closures. In addition, families may be isolated from other resource families. While the RC and the social worker, and even the whole district staff may work to assist these new families, there are still challenges that are could be addressed by preplacement (or immediate upon placement) training.

CWTP data indicated that at the time of this report, 669 caregivers licensed prior to 2017 have not yet completed all of the required training, possibly impacting title IV-E compliance (Title IV-E Foster Care Eligibility Review Report for April 1, 2016 – September 30, 2016).

Exemptions from licensing training requirements may be available through RLSI under unique, but rare, circumstances.

C. Staff Training as it Relates to Foster Care and Resource Families

The current new worker curriculum focuses on core components of practice. However, the worker's role in engaging and working with foster/kin foster families is only a small component. There is no specific content on dynamics and practice for engaging and working with caregiver families, and no opportunity for cross training for caseworkers and resource families. CWTP provides a valuable coaching component as additional support around child welfare practice that can be requested by a district for individual or group coaching. This is thought to be underused in some districts.

D. Possible Differences by District

Districts have varying emphases and enforce requirements differently. Some work more diligently at resolving training conflicts and enforcing requirements. Delivery of training can differ by trainers, availability and inclusion of other providers, facilities, and other variables.

Key Challenges and Ideas to Consider

Key Challenges	Ideas to Consider
Absence of pre-application method for families to understand foster caring, speak directly and informally with agency representatives, and to self-assess suitability for caregiving. Placement of children prior to completion of training requirements. Policy that provides up to 1 year for completion of training requirements and inconsistent monitoring and enforcement for completion of training requirements. Lack of specific training or focus on the dynamics of working with licensed foster/kin families and lack of clarity in the role of the social worker and resource family. No specific training or support for families in completing paperwork and/or navigating the system.	Consider developing a formalized orientation process for interested and applying families. Consider requiring a specific amount of training prior to placement or immediately following placement. Consider cross-system policy development, unified tracking, and collaborative enforcement of training requirements, possibly implemented in stages. Consider developing training or other resources for understanding the role of the foster parents and social workers and expectations in working together for first contact through post placement. Consider ways that families can be supported in navigating the licensing process, competing paperwork and accessing support. (Mentoring or FP Navigators.)

V. Customer Service

A. Overview of Customer Service

"Customer service refers to the manner in which an agency provides its services and the way an agency treats people. Providing good customer service means underscoring respect, empathy, and caring as we relate to each other and the people we serve" (Using Customer Service Concepts to Enhance Recruitment and Retention Practices, NRCDR, 2013).

Customer service is an attitude that assures not only respect for foster families, but also an understanding that foster families are volunteers who provide an essential and difficult service, caring for the children

and often families within the child welfare system. It requires an understanding of the challenges and barriers faced by families and an interest in learning ways to decrease barriers and to support families. A system that embraces customer service concepts finds those tenets infused in not only policy, training, support, and the process of foster care but also in the way phones are answered, social workers interact in the care of the child, communities provide resources and support, and work processes across all systems of the agency.

B. Customer Service in Vermont

In Vermont, as in all states, customer service appears to vary by district, by worker, and by family. Consistent with the variability in the process of becoming licensed, trained, and supported in completing the placement process and accessing resources, there is also variability in the degree of customer service afforded each family.

While rural communities, in which people tend to know each other, may naturally be more responsive and flexible, there are no specific polices related to the principles and practice of working with foster families, to inclusion of customer service principles, and no identified specific training. Workers for children and families, administrative office support, and other personnel may not understand their roles in supporting foster families and may not understand the importance of viewing foster families as “golden” assets to the children, the families, and the agency.

C. Support of Non-Kin Families

There appears to be limited engagement or outreach for non-kin resource family recruitment, development, and support and often there are barriers for non-kin inquiring into foster caring. They may experience significant delays in the process, creating frustration and questions about the actual need for foster homes. They may find it difficult to assess their capacity to care for children in the system and may find it difficult to receive personalized information demonstrating their value and the many options that may be available to care for children and families in their communities. They may have to navigate web sites and automated answering systems simply to investigate the possibility of fostering or supporting foster families.

D. Support for Kin Families

At the same time, because of the urgency, children often are placed with relatives and fictive kin without the relatives and fictive kin having the knowledge and support needed to adequately care for the children. Customer service may be provided by the RC, but the RC is only one element of a multi-faceted system that families navigate.

E. Support for All Families

Foster family support, currently the responsibility of the district RC, varies by RC, by district, and by resources available. It appears to be the RC’s responsibility to provide individual training to families on billing and reporting, working with the biological family, working with the social worker, etc. While support may be available through contracts with other agencies, timely referrals can be impacted by the referral paperwork required to receive these supports. In addition, the resources available may support only the child and not the family providing care. There also may be other barriers, including cost and time required for transportation, access to childcare, and other issues related to waitlists and overall availability of the needed services in the specific region. The focus groups stated that the relationship between the child’s social worker and the foster family can have a tremendously positive impact on outcomes for the child, or can lead to a negative impact which can damage relationships between the foster family and biological family, place unreasonable demands on the foster family, or ultimately lead the family to decide to disrupt the placement. Respect and valuing the caregiver were identified as central to the success of the partnership.

The local community and courts can also be viewed as part of the customer service model of a state and are important to engage as part of the system. Courts may place unreasonable demands on foster families and schools, health care systems, mental health providers, social service providers, and community organizations. Other community members can be engaged in providing resources and support

on multiple levels and may be influenced by cross systems customer service training and community engagement.

Finally, there does not appear to be a consistent process to monitor family satisfaction and agency responsiveness. Some surveys have been initiated as one way of obtaining feedback. The Foster Parent Work Group now exists as a resource for foster parent input and collaboration.

Key Challenges and Ideas to Consider

Key Challenges	Ideas to Consider
Inconsistencies in how families experience the system and receive support. Reliance on one staff person, the district RC, to provide education, training, support, along with general recruitment of families. Apparent inconsistencies in cross-system understanding of the value and needs of resource families. Limited engagement in the community to identify informal as well as formal supports. Difficulty accessing community supports due to paperwork required.	Consider developing written customer service principles and guidelines for the agency and train staff. Review all training and policy through a customer service lens. Develop ongoing mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating foster family satisfaction, including the kinds of supports perceived as needed and received by the agency. Train staff on specific "customer service" principles and practices. Train specific staff in rural community engagement principles for planning and implementing plans related to foster care. Engage key stakeholders in the community to identify and develop informal and formal supports for families and to be co-responsible for recruitment, development, retention, and support of foster families. Review and share: *Using Customer Service Concepts to Enhance Recruitment and Retention Practices.* *Treat Them Like Gold: A Best Practice Guide to Partnering with Resource Families*

VI. Continuing forward

This report identifies issues raised by district staff, management, contractors, kin and non-kin foster families, and others. In an effort to distill these issues into an actionable plan, the following are suggestions for collaborative state and district planning. Vermont may wish to consider these topics (or others) for short- and/or long-range planning, for selecting priorities for planning, and/or for selecting elements within the topics for planning. It is noted that the agency is in the process of implementing several initiatives that address some of the items listed.

A. Develop a unified system for collecting, storing, retrieving and using foster family data that:

   i. Includes (but is not limited to):
      a. Foster families and their characteristics
      b. The processes (and dates) for recruiting, approving, developing (training), licensing, retaining and supporting families
      c. Outcomes related to strategies for recruitment, development, retention and support
   ii. Is flexible, recognizing the need for local collection, maintenance

iii. Provides simplicity and relative uniformity for entry at the local level
iv. Provides relative uniformity so that data can be combined with data from other systems and other districts
v. Provides information to determine baselines and to use for planning, monitoring, and evaluation
vi. Is reliable across foster care, licensing, and training
vii. Identifies responsibilities for collection and data sharing
viii. Provides information to all contributors to inform and improve practice at all levels

Other states have recognized the need for unified collection and reporting while at the same time understanding the need for local and flexible collection and modification. Because these data are only minimally used in federal child welfare reporting, states and tribes have developed tracking ranging from Excel spreadsheets to more sophisticated models.

B. Develop and/or improve a set of unified policies and procedures for recruitment, development, and support of foster and adoptive families that:

i. Includes expectations and guidance for how resource families should be treated and supported from first contact through post placement (Treat them like gold)
ii. Uses cross-systems incremental policy development related to foster care
iii. Incorporates gradual steps toward policies and procedures that demonstrate good practice and are enforceable
iv. Eventually includes a procedures and and/or practice guide
v. Considers both the value and limitations of discretion, and ways to modify discretion (see Discretionary Justice or other materials)
vi. Establishes minimal and enforceable requirements around training for families prior to licensure
vii. Includes a methodology for continuous policy and procedure evaluation and modification, with cross-system planning on a regular basis

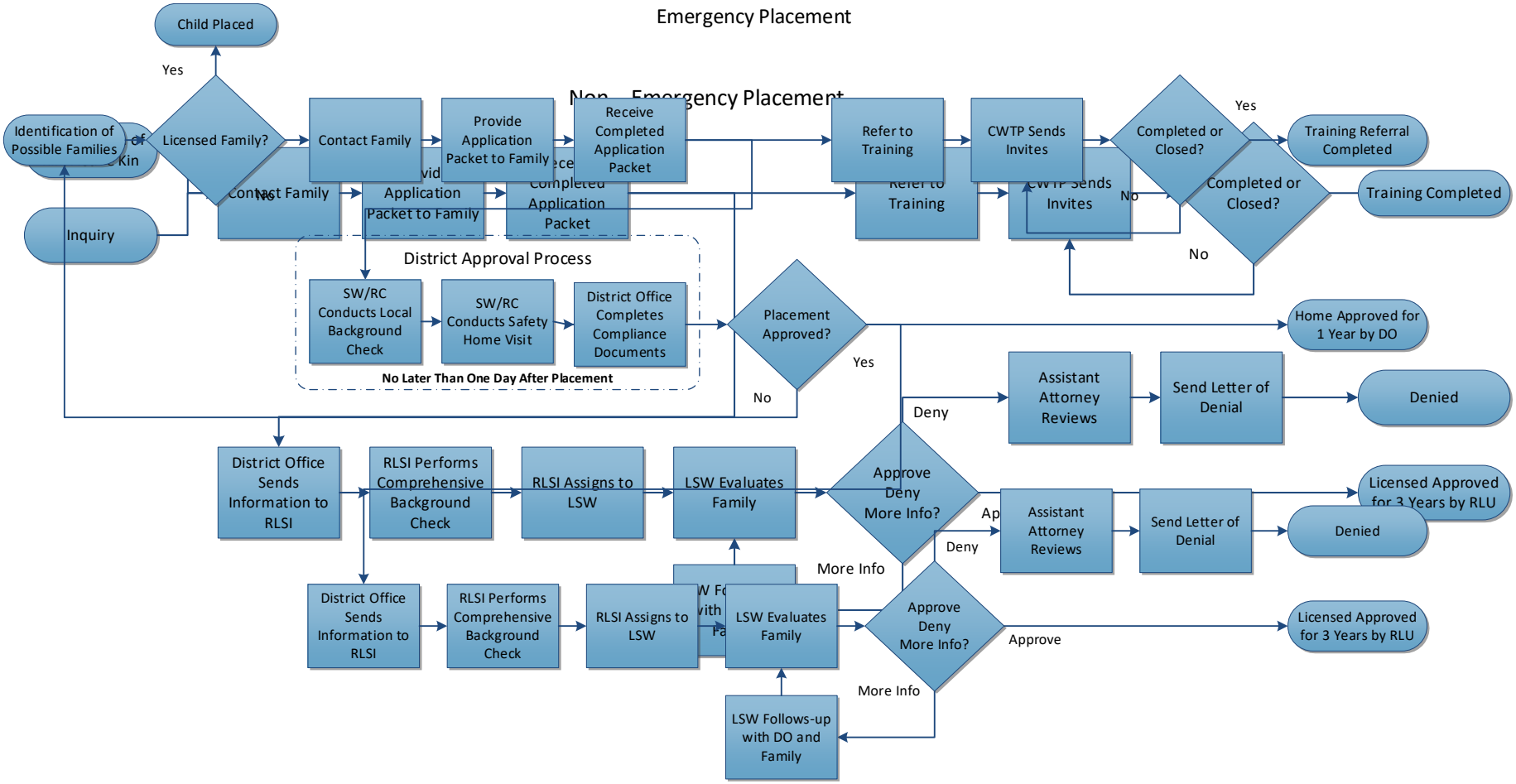
C. Develop or modify foster parent training and training delivery that:
i. Begins prior to (or immediately upon) placement of a child
ii. Is accessible to all families
iii. Includes the provision of child care
iv. Includes an orientation, family co-assessment or procedure for, co-screening in and out
v. Includes early contact with other foster families

D. Develop a cross-systems customer service model that:
i. Analyzes and reduces the length of time from initial contact to completion of training and licensing
ii. Supports both kin and non-kin families and immediate or longer-term placement of children
iii. Includes training for all staff
iv. Includes a review of all contact with families with the lens of support

E. Develop and implement community engagement that:
i. Assists in developing a “pool” of trained and licensed caregivers for all levels of care
ii. Identifies the community as co-responsible for the care of children in the community
iii. Collaborates in the development of a continuum of supports for the entire foster care system, including recruitment of families, supporting staff, and supporting families through community-identified strategies
iv. Removes barriers to engagement by recognizing the value of social capital and including communities in the planning process

F. Development of a single statewide diligent recruitment plan that:

i. Reduces reliance on emergency family finding
ii. Includes the development of a pool of families
iii. Improves cross-district family finding and support
iv. Provides a format for district diligent recruitment planning while recognizing the unique characteristics, assets and barriers of districts


Emergency Placement
Child Placed
Yes
Non - Emergency Placement
Identification of Possible Families
Licensed Family?
Contact Family
Provide Application Packet to Family
Receive Completed Application Packet
Refer to Training
CWTP Sends Invites
Completed or Closed?
Yes
Training Referral Completed
Training Completed
No
Inquiry
District Approval Process
SW/RC Conducts Local Background Check
SW/RC Conducts Safety Home Visit
District Office Completes Compliance Documents
No Later Than One Day After Placement
Placement Approved?
Yes
No
Home Approved for 1 Year by DO
Deny
Assistant Attorney Reviews
Send Letter of Denial
Denied
District Office Sends Information to RLSI
RLSI Performs Comprehensive Background Check
RLSI Assigns to LSW
LSW Evaluates Family
Approve Deny More Info?
Licensed Approved for 3 Years by RLU
More Info
LSW Follows-up with DO and Family
Approve

APPENDIX D:

Key Infrastructure Elements, Activities and the Partners Who Support Them	
A statewide diligent recruitment program that provides general, targeted, and child-specific recruitment. The program will recruit and develop kinship and foster parents that meet the needs of children in care with a focus on: 1. Engaging with children, youth, and family throughout the life of the case; 2. Accommodating siblings placed together; 3. Offering care to children with special needs; 4. Supporting educational stability; and, 5. Reflecting the diversity of Vermont's children.	
Activity Underway	**FSD Currently Partnering With**
Consultation and TA with the CBCS	CBCS
PR Materials revised and printed	Commissioner's Office
May National Foster Care Month	Community Mental Health, Governor's Office
Nov Celebrate Adoption Month	Lund and Project Family
Permanency Roundtable Activities	Lund and Project Family
Strategic Planning	Contracted consultant,
Activity Under Development	**Potential Partnerships**
Conversation with DHVA related to kids in Emergency Departments and "stuck" in residential care	DHVA (Medicaid)
Diligent Recruitment Plan implementation	Districts, Central Office, DR Core Team
Future Activity to Consider	**Potential Partnerships**

Key Element: Responsive Model of Engagement and Support	
A model for engagement and support of kinship, foster, and adoptive parents —from recruitment to post placement—that ensures: 1. Kinship, foster, and adoptive parents are recognized as valuable resources; 2. Kinship, foster, and pre-adoptive parents have access to a common, efficient, and supportive home study, training, and licensing process; 3. Kinship, foster, and adoptive parents are encouraged to access all available Agency of Human Services resources; **4.** Kinship, foster, and adoptive parent concerns are addressed quickly; and, Family Services Division and contracted agencies embrace a culture where all staff have an integral role in the recruitment, development, and support of kinship, foster, and adoptive parents	
Activity Underway	**FSD Currently Partnering With**
FP Recognition Events (usually in May) Dinner Picnics Support Groups	VFAFA
Holiday Drives/Holiday Parties District Newsletters	
Coffee Hour/ opportunity for caregivers and DO staff to meet and greet	District Local associations
Consistent use of the Placement Checklist and supplement	
FP recruitment and Retention Positions Job description Support from ZDO how to use the role effectively Sharing of ideas	
FP Workgroup and subcommittees	VFAFA, Caregivers,
FP Listening Sessions and follow up Advisory boards	Caregivers
FP voluntary closure survey	Caregivers
VFAFA Contract	
Kin Navigation	Vermont Kin As Parents
FP Mentoring Program	Local CFP Associations
Kinship Navigator Deliverables	
Resource Parent Curriculum +	CWTP , Designated Agencies

FP recruitment and Retention Positions Job description Support from ZDO how to use the role effectively	
FP Payment Reform	
Activity Under Development	**Partnerships**
Role of DA's in supporting placement stability (ISB's and DS waivers)	DMH and DAIL
Holiday Drives/Holiday Parties Sharing of ideas	Local Business communities
Mobile Response-in home caregiver defined "crisis" support	DMH
Coffee Hour/ opportunity for caregivers and DO staff to meet and greet	Local Foster Parent Associations
Support Groups	Local Foster Parent Association Vermont Consortium for Adoption and Guardianship
Home study Redesign Workgroup	DMH Child Placing Agencies?, Lund
Family Finding Workgroup	Contracted Partners
Future Activity to Consider	**Potential Partnerships**

Key Element: Community Engagement	
Communities are engaged in understanding the needs of children in care and are invited to support those children and the families caring for them.	
Activity Underway	**FSD Currently Partnering With**
Tabling at Events	
Project Family and RC working collaboratively	Lund
Bench/Bar Meetings	Judiciary in the local districts
Support and Stabilization Services- WRAP type services delivered in a community setting	Becket Support and Stabilization NCSS Hi Fidelity Wrap Several Local Community Mental Health Providers
Tatum's Totes- a grassroots group that assembles and provides basic hygiene kits to children entering care	Tatum's Totes non-profit
Annual free passes to children in foster care	VT State Parks
State Park punch cards provided to caregivers to support the foster family's ability to access state Parks with the child in care	VT Parks Forever
Partner with Outright Vermont to ensure that policy development is supportive and inclusive of the needs of LGBTQ youth and caregivers	Outright Vermont, PRIDE Vermont
Engagement of various Faith Based Communities	PINS Partners and the Brattleboro Area Pastor's Fellowship
Activity Under Development	**Potential Partnerships**
Racial Justice Workgroup – a small group of Stakeholders met to explore strategies for ensuring that we are a racially just organization	NAACP, Association of African Living in Vermont, CWTP, VT State Police
Free refurbished bikes to foster kids	Green Mountain Foster Bikes Program
Future Activity to Consider	**Potential Partnerships**
Community Gatherings	Rotary, Libraries, Senior Centers, Fraternal Organizations, Grange,

Can look like an information session Invitations to schools, DA's, community at large sharing about the need for support of foster caregivers	
Explore possible partnership with these civic minded groups to determine if they could consider support caregivers of the children who live with them	Collaboration with Local Child Placing Agencies Colleges/Universities Youth Thrive- Youth Led Advocacy Group Day Care Centers Parent Child Centers Pediatricians Museums/ ECHO/Child Friendly venues Broader Business Community Chamber of Commerce VT Association of Snow Travellers

Key Element: Unified Policy and Procedures	
Policies and practice aligned to enhance the recruitment, development, and support of kinship, foster, and adoptive parents, while preserving district ability to meet the unique needs of their community.	
Activity Underway	**FSD Currently Partnering With**
Family Finding	Contracted Partners support initial Family Finding activities
Revised Kinship Care Policy Implementation	In collaboration with contracted partners
Monitoring of Key Indicators related to Timely Permanency	QA Team , Local Permanency Teams and Project Family focus on timely permanency
Recruiting for waiting children	Project Family, Wendy's Wonderful Kids
Heart Gallery/Photolisting	Project Family
Activity Under Development	**Potential Partnerships**
Future Activity to Consider	**Potential Partnerships**

Key Element: Training and Development	
A training and development program that: 1. Equips kinship, foster, and adoptive parents to meet the needs of children; 2. Enables and supports the workforce to effectively engage and meet the needs of kinship, foster, and adoptive parents; and, 3. Educates the community about the needs of children at risk of entering foster care, the needs of kinship, foster, and adoptive parents and the continuum of ways to support the children of Vermont	
Activity Underway	**FSD Currently Partnering With**
Trauma Informed Training/ RPC curriculum	Local Community Mental Health, CWTP
FP Training redesigned	CWTP
FP Orientation	CWTP
National Training Initiative curriculum available for free to child welfare staff and mental health staff (Trauma informed and adoption competent training modules)	NTI staff, CWTP, Quality Improvement Center in Adoption and Guardianship project staff, DMH
Activity Under Development	**Potential Partnerships**
Future Activity to Consider	**Potential Partnerships**
What efforts are the division undertaking related to the development of cultural competence	Racial Justice Workgroup stakeholders

Training on Placement Practice for FSW staff	CWTP

Key Element: Unified Data Model	
A common approach to data collection and reporting based on best practices; used to establish goals, monitor performance, and drive continuous quality improvement in recruiting, developing, and supporting families.	
Activity Underway	**FSD Currently Partnering With**
Activity Under Development	**Potential Partnerships**
Refine and re-administer Survey of FP who voluntarily closed license	RLSI
District CQI Plans- what will this look like in the next iteration	CQI Workgroup, QA team, CBC, other stakeholders
Future Activity to Consider	**Potential Partnerships**

Collect data to determine if there is a link between Face to Face contact in the placement setting FP retention rates	IT Team, CQI Team

APPENDIX E: STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS GRID

Stakeholder Analysis

This analysis describes any individual, group, or organization who may affect, or be affected by, the implementation of this project at the state or county level. The purpose of this section is to:

- Identify stakeholders that are crucial to the success of the implementation.
- Understand stakeholder interests, expectations, and potential conflicts.
- Develop a strategic approach to managing stakeholder interaction.
- Inform on communications and sustainability planning.

Stakeholder	Description	Influence	Interest	Interests and Expectations
Children		Low	High	- Orientation about potential placement - Process for Decision Making - Voice
Advocacy Groups	represent the interests of a particular contituency group in communities and at the legislature	Unknown	High	- Informed about constituency group - Focused on child's best interest
GALs	appointed by the court to look out for the best interests of children in the court process	High	High	- Focused on child's best interest - Services - Changes to placement
Parents Bar	represents paretns in court	High	Hgh	- System organization and status - "Macro view of system"
Parents		High	High	- What is happening in the Foster Home - Process for decision making - Transparency of placement process - Safety of children
State Attorney's	represents state in court	High	Hgh	- System organization and status - "Macro view of system"
Assistant Attorney General	represents division in court	High	Hgh	- System organization and status - "Macro view of system"
Children's Attorney	represent child in court	High	Hgh	- System organization and status - "Macro view of system" - Focused on child's best interest
Foster Parent Association	advocacy, supports communication between division and caregivers	High	High	- Clear and consistent communication - Policy and procedure information - Individual case information - DR plans and progress towards meeting goals - Transparency around safety
AHS Leadership - DHS - DAIL	Funding and overall decisionmaking. Access to supports and services	High	High	- Data - DR Goals & Outcomes - Collaboration
Parent/Child Centers	Provide support services	Low	Low	- General information
Contracted Providers	contractors provide essential services that support CW mission	low	high	- promote placement stability - support overall practice of the division - Collaboration
Law Enforcement	partner with child welfare related to child safety and law abidence practices	Low	Low	- Role in trauma informed practice - Overall safety of child - Collaboration
Medical Community	partner with child welfare related to child safety practices	mod	high	- Macro view of system - safety of Children - Consultation
Media	can influence public perception either positively or negatively	high	mod	- Could support changing public perception