

SCAN Policies Database State Profile 2023: Vermont

Overview of the SCAN Policies Database

The State Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) Policies Database compiles data on the definitions and policies that states use in their surveillance of child maltreatment, along with data on associated risk and protective factors. The SCAN Policies Database is funded by the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation in collaboration with the Children's Bureau in the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Mathematica leads this project in partnership with Child Trends.

The project's purpose is to review and compile information from states' definitions and policies to create a database of those definitions and policies that can be used for analysis. The SCAN Policies Database is a resource for researchers, analysts, child welfare agency staff, and others interested in examining differences between states in their definitions and policies on child maltreatment and how they change over time.

Content

The scope of the SCAN Policies Database includes information about state definitions and policies related to child abuse and neglect for all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. The SCAN Policies Database team gathered this information through a document collection, review, and coding process. The team obtained input from states on data collection through a confirmation and verification process. More information about these data collection procedures can be found in the data user's guide and data collection protocol, accessible at <https://www.scanpoliciesdatabase.com/data-use-resources>.

The SCAN Policies Database 2023 represents data collected, reviewed, and verified between June 2023 and July 2024. The data reflect the state definitions and policies for the calendar year 2023. The scope of topics in the database includes states' definitions of child abuse and neglect, as well as information about policies related to reporting, screening, and investigating child maltreatment. Key aspects of the child welfare systems' response and context are also included.

The content in the SCAN Policies Database is organized into six domains. The state profiles, codebook, data collection protocol, and data file are also organized by these domains. In the protocol, each question begins with a letter prefix identifying the domain for each variable. The six domains with the identifying protocol number prefix are listed below.

Domain	Question prefix
Definitions	D
Reporting	R
Screening	S
Investigation	I
Child welfare response	W
Child welfare system context	C

State profile

This SCAN Policies Database state profile is a summary of the information collected about the definitions and policies for the identified state. Each of the six domains contain a set of tables that depict the state's information for all variables within that domain.

The state profile presents data for each variable with “yes,” “no,” “unknown,” or other response, as appropriate. The response of “unknown” appears for topics that could not be located from the state's available resources or verified with that state. In some cases, “logical skip” appears when a question was not applicable to a particular state, given a related response on a preceding question. Some information was not included in the state profile to ensure alignment with Executive Orders or other Presidential Actions.

Data use resources

Several data use resources are available to support users of the SCAN Policies Database:

- **Data user's guide:** The guide has detailed information about the data set, including the process used to collect and review the data, the scope of information included in the data set, guidance on using the data, such as how to link the data with other data sources, and notes about specific topics. The data user's guide includes appendices, including information about changes to the data between 2021 and 2023 that reflect changes to state laws and policies during that time period. There is one data user's guide that is updated and applicable for all rounds of data collection for the SCAN Policies Database.
- **Codebook:** The codebook provides information about each variable in the data set, including variable names, labels, definitions, protocol number, variable type, and frequencies. There are separate codebooks to summarize the data from each round of data collection.
- **Errata statement:** The errata statement presents corrections applied to previous rounds of data for the SCAN Policies Database. Starting in 2023, there is one errata statement that is updated and applicable for all rounds of data collection for the SCAN Policies Database.
- **Data collection protocol:** The protocol has the questions used to collect information about states' laws and policies as part of the data review and coding process for each round of data collection. There are separate data collection protocols for each round of data collection for the SCAN Policies Database.

These data use resources can be found on the SCAN Policies Database website (<https://www.scanpoliciesdatabase.com/data-use-resources>) or from the National Data Archive for Child Abuse and Neglect (NDACAN) (<https://www.ndacan.acf.hhs.gov/>).

More information

More information about the SCAN Policies Database can be found at <https://www.scanpoliciesdatabase.com>. General inquiries can be submitted to SCANPoliciesDatabase@mathematica-mpr.com.

State identifying information

Table I. State Identifying information

	Response
State abbreviation	VT
State Federal Information Processing Standard (FIPS) code	50
Census region code	Northeast
State verified coding of information	Yes
State confirmed documents reviewed	Yes
State definitions and policies for calendar year	2023
Data version	2023v1

Domain D: Definitions of child maltreatment

Table D.I. State's definition of child maltreatment

	Response
1. Types of maltreatment included in state definition	
a. Physical abuse	Yes
b. Excessive corporal punishment	Yes
c. Sexual abuse	Yes
d. Emotional maltreatment	Yes
e. Neglect	Yes
f. Inadequate clothing	Yes
g. Inadequate shelter	Yes
h. Malnourishment, inadequate food	Yes
i. Medical neglect, inadequate medical care	Yes
j. Failure to thrive	Yes
k. Educational neglect	Yes
l. Abandonment	Yes
m. Injurious environment. Likelihood of harm to child's health, physical well-being	Yes
n. Drug lab. Child present within structure where methamphetamine is being created	Yes
o. Inadequate supervision. Failure to meet parent or caretaker responsibilities	Yes
p. Drug or alcohol misuse. Parental drug or alcohol misuse causing harm to child	Yes
q. Prenatal exposure to drugs or alcohol	Yes
r. Illicit substance. Illegally providing a controlled substance to a child	Yes
s. Human trafficking, involuntary servitude, sexual servitude	Yes
t. Female genital mutilation	No
u. Shaken baby syndrome, abusive head trauma	Yes
v. Failure to protect. Failure to protect from harm	Yes
w. Domestic violence. Exposure to domestic violence	Yes
x. Factitious disorder by proxy	Yes
y. Institutional abuse/neglect	No
z. Other definition (specify)	No
2. Subtypes of maltreatment included in state definition	
a. Subtypes of maltreatment considered abuse	Medical child abuse includes factitious disorder by proxy
b. Subtypes of maltreatment considered neglect	Neglect includes medical neglect, inadequate clothing, inadequate shelter, and malnourishment
c. Subtypes of maltreatment considered other than abuse or neglect	Not applicable
3. Level of harm included in state's definition of child maltreatment	
a. Inflicts harm	Yes

Table D.1 (*continued*)

	Response
b. Imminent danger or substantial risk of harm	Yes
4. Differences in level of harm included in state's definition of child maltreatment by type of maltreatment	No
5. Type of harm or injury specified in state's definition of child maltreatment	
a. Death, bodily injury, impairment of physical condition	Yes
b. Impairment of mental or emotional condition	Yes
c. Harmful environment, conditions	Yes
d. Type of harm or injury not specified	No
e. Other (specify)	No
6. Variation in extent of injury or harm by maltreatment type in the state's definition of child maltreatment	No
7. Perpetrator identified as part of state's definition of child maltreatment	Yes
8. Types of perpetrators specified as part of state's definition of child maltreatment	
a. Any person	Yes
b. Parent	Yes
c. Guardian	Yes
d. Caregiver/caretaker	Yes
e. Family member or parent's paramour	Yes
f. Household member	Yes
g. Person responsible for child	Yes
h. Other (specify)	No
9. Types of perpetrators vary by type of maltreatment	Yes
10. Explanation of variation in types of perpetrator by maltreatment type	For sexual abuse, the perpetrator can be a person responsible to care for a child or any other person, whether an adult or a minor
11. Child age included in definition of child maltreatment	Yes
12. Specific child age in definition of child maltreatment	Under age 18 with variability under 18
13. Variability of child age by type of maltreatment	Yes - Educational neglect applies to children age 6 through grade 6

Table D.II. Child maltreatment definition exemptions

	Response
1. Exemption included in state's definition of child maltreatment	
a. Financial issues, financial inability to provide for a child	Yes
b. Discipline; physical discipline, if it is reasonable and causes no bodily injury to the child	Yes
c. Safe haven exemption; newborn relinquished or abandoned in accordance with infant safe haven and safe surrender laws	Yes
d. Infant testing positive for drugs – medical; newborn with positive test for controlled substance due to parent's medical treatment	No
e. Religious observance; parent relies on spiritual or religious forms of medical treatment	Yes
f. Other exemption (specify)	No
2. Safe haven exemption included in state's definition of child maltreatment	
a. Must leave a child at specific safe haven locations or designated providers	Yes
b. Child must be left by parent or parent's agent	Yes
c. Child must be left by a certain age (specify)	Yes - 30 days old or younger
d. No intent to return	No
e. Child must be left unharmed	Yes
f. Other (specify)	No

Table D.III. Definitions and response for child fatalities and near-fatalities cases

	Response
1. State's definition of fatalities or deaths caused by child maltreatment	
a. Not specified or defined	No
b. Injury from abuse or neglect caused death	Yes
c. Abuse or neglect was contributing factor in death	No
d. Death of child who was in child welfare custody or foster care	No
e. Other (specify)	No
2. State conducts case reviews with a child fatality review team or a similar review process for fatalities caused by child abuse or neglect	Yes, reviews are required for all or some cases
3. State's definition of near-fatalities or near-deaths caused by child maltreatment	
a. Not specified or defined	No
b. General reference to a serious or critical condition or injury that is life threatening with a substantial risk of death	Yes
c. Specific injury or specific medical treatment or intervention (specify)	Yes - Life-threatening cardiopulmonary dysfunction directly attributable to conditions resulting from suspected abuse or neglect as evidenced by: (a) respiratory insufficiency/failure requiring intubation and mechanical ventilation, (b) respiratory insufficiency/failure requiring medications to reverse effects of toxic ingestion, or (c) cardiac arrhythmia with or without cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).'
d. Other (specify)	No
4. State conducts case reviews with a review team or similar review process for near-fatalities caused by child abuse or neglect	Yes, reviews can be conducted but are not required

Domain R: Reporting child abuse and neglect

Table R.I. Reporting policies

	Response
1. Statewide centralized reporting	Yes
2. Decentralized reporting	Logical Skip
3. Standard for reporting child maltreatment	
a. Known abuse and neglect	No
b. Reasonable cause to believe a child was abused or neglected	Yes
4. Universal mandated reporting	No
5. Required training for mandated reporters	No
6. Penalties for failure to report	Yes, all mandated reporters
7. Specific penalties for failure to report	
a. Criminal charges	Yes
b. Civil charges	No
c. Professional licensure suspended or revoked	Yes
d. Other (specify)	No
8. Penalties for false reporting	No
9. Specific penalties for false reporting	Logical Skip
10. Immunity for reporters of child abuse and neglect	Yes
11. Information requested at the time of report	
a. Identifying information of child	Yes
b. Location and contact information of child and family	Yes
c. Type and severity of suspected maltreatment	Yes
d. Date of suspected maltreatment	No
e. Identifying and other information of alleged perpetrator(s)	No
f. Identifying and other information of reporter	Yes
g. Identifying information of child's parents, guardian, or caregiver/caretaker	Yes
h. Identifying and other information of family or household members	Yes
i. Information on prior maltreatment	Yes
j. Other (specify)	No
12. Anonymity of reporter	General public (not mandated reporters) can remain anonymous
13. Tribal involvement in state or local public child welfare agency's process to accept reports of Tribal cases	No, Tribes are not involved
14. State requires all notifications of substance-exposed newborns (SENs) to be submitted as reports of child maltreatment	
a. State does not require all cases of SENs to be reported for child maltreatment, but they could be reported if they meet certain criteria	Yes
b. State requires all SENs to be reported as child maltreatment	No
c. Other (specify)	No
15. Accepts reports of risk without an allegation of child maltreatment (risk-only reports)	No

Table R.II. Types of mandated reporters

	Response	Response	Response
1. Types of mandated reporters	Included in state's definition of mandated reporters	Training required ¹	Subject to penalties for failure to report ²
a. Foster parents	Yes	Logical Skip	Yes
b. School staff - teachers	Yes	Logical Skip	Yes
c. School bus drivers or other transportation staff	Yes	Logical Skip	Yes
d. Before- /after-school program staff	Yes	Logical Skip	Yes
e. Child care staff	Yes	Logical Skip	Yes
f. Camp counselors, directors, or administrators	Yes	Logical Skip	Yes
g. Athletic coaches or staff	Yes	Logical Skip	Yes
h. Medical or dental professionals	Yes	Logical Skip	Yes
i. Substance abuse disorder treatment providers	No	Logical Skip	Logical Skip
j. Mental health, counselors, or other social service professionals	Yes	Logical Skip	Yes
k. Police or other law enforcement	Yes	Logical Skip	Yes
l. Emergency medical technicians, firefighters, or other emergency personnel	Yes	Logical Skip	Yes
m. Judges	No	Logical Skip	Logical Skip
n. District attorneys or other attorneys	No	Logical Skip	Logical Skip
o. Guardians ad litem or court-appointed special advocates	No	Logical Skip	Logical Skip
p. Other court personnel	No	Logical Skip	Logical Skip
q. Shelter staff	No	Logical Skip	Logical Skip
r. Those who work in fields processing or monitoring print, film, or computer images	No	Logical Skip	Logical Skip
s. Religious clergy	Yes	Logical Skip	Yes
t. Volunteers	No	Logical Skip	Logical Skip
u. Coroners or medical examiners	No	Logical Skip	Logical Skip
v. Staff or contractors of state and county agencies	Yes	Logical Skip	Yes

Table R.II (*continued*)

	Response	Response	Response
w. Other type of mandated reporter (specify)	No	Logical Skip	Logical Skip

¹ Responses in this column can equal logical skip when the given type of mandated reporter is not included in the state's definition of mandated reporters or when no training is required for mandated reporters (Table R.II). Responses in this column can be yes when a state has universal mandated reporting (Table R.I) and all mandated reporters require training (Table R.II).

² Responses in this column can equal logical skip when the given type of mandated reporter is not included in the state's definition of mandated reporters or when no mandated reporters are subject to penalties (Table R.I). Responses in this column can be yes when a state has universal mandated reporting (Table R.I) and when all adults or all mandated reporters are subject to penalties (Table R.I).

Domain S: Screening reports of child abuse and neglect

Table S.I. Screening policies

	Response
1. Statewide centralized screening	Yes
2. How screening is decentralized	Logical Skip
3. Information required to screen in report	
a. Identifying information of child	No
b. Location and contact information of child and family	No
c. Type and severity of suspected maltreatment	Yes
d. Date of suspected maltreatment	No
e. Identifying and other information of alleged perpetrator(s)	No
f. Other (specify)	Yes - Sufficient information to make a determination

Table S.II. Screening decision process and activities

	Response	Required cases	Conditions or types of cases
1. Decision processes used during screening			
a. Supervisory review	Yes	Required for all	—
b. Team-based decision	No	Logical Skip	—
c. Individual screener	No	Logical Skip	—
d. Other (specify)	Yes - A second person (Family Services Worker, another Family Services Supervisor, District Director, Director of Operations, Sr. Policy and Operations Manager, or Policy and Operations Manager) screens reports that are not accepted by the supervisor to determine if a report is a valid allegation.	Required for all	—
e. Unknown	No	—	—
2. Variability of decision process used for screening			
a. Consistent statewide	Yes	—	—
b. Varies locally	No	—	—
3. Certain activities or information are required as part of screening	Yes		
4. Activities or information required as part of screening			
a. Safety or risk assessment	Yes	Required for all	Not applicable
b. Review agency records for prior involvement with child protective services	Yes	Required for some	If information in the report is insufficient to justify report acceptance or indicates that a family may have had previous child protection involvement
c. Other (specify)	No	Logical Skip	Not applicable
5. Types of safety or risk assessment used during screening			
a. Structured decision making	No	—	—
b. Other (specify)	Yes - The type of assessment or procedure is not specified	—	—
6. Consistency of screening activities/information			
a. Consistent statewide	Yes	—	—
b. Varies locally (specify)	No	—	—

Table S.III. Screeners

	Response
1. Screener of abuse and neglect reports	
a. Caseworkers (frontline staff)	No
b. Case managers (supervisors)	No
c. Staff in specialized screening unit	Yes
d. Other (specify)	Yes - Local district staff; Family Service Division Operations team staff
2. Qualifications of screener	
a. Associate's degree	No
b. Bachelor's degree	Yes
c. Master's degree	Yes
d. Training for screening (specify)	No
e. Years of experience (specify)	Yes - No experience required with a master's degree; 18 months of human services casework, including at least 6 months with a child or youth services caseload where duties included direct responsibility for client intake, assessment, plan development, monitoring, service procurement, and case closure in a formal human services delivery system with a bachelor's degree; Satisfactory completion of 12 to 18 months experience as a Family Services Worker trainee in the Department for Children and Families with no degree
f. Other (specify)	No
3. Degree in social work or related field for screeners	No
4. Tribal involvement in state or local public child welfare agency's process to screen Tribal cases	No, Tribes are not involved

Domain I: Investigations of child abuse and neglect

Table I.I. Investigations policies

	Response
1. Findings from child maltreatment investigations can lead to criminal penalties	Yes
2. Investigator for reports	
a. Caseworkers (frontline staff)	Yes
b. Case managers (supervisors)	Yes
c. Staff in specialized investigations unit	Yes
d. Law enforcement	Yes
e. Other (specify)	No
3. Qualifications of investigator	
a. Associate's degree	No
b. Bachelor's degree	Yes
c. Master's degree	Yes
d. Training for conducting investigations (specify)	No
e. Years of experience (specify)	Yes - No experience required with a master's degree; 18 months of human services casework, including at least 6 months with a child or youth services caseload where duties included direct responsibility for client intake, assessment, plan development, monitoring, service procurement, and case closure in a formal human services delivery system required with a bachelor's degree; Satisfactory completion of 12 to 18 months experience as a Family Services Worker trainee in the Department for Children and Families with no degree
f. Other (specify)	No
4. Degree in social work or related field for investigators	No
5. Level of evidence required for substantiation (founded/indicated/confirmed)	Probable or reasonable cause
6. Investigation determination can result in an "inconclusive" finding	No

Table I.II. Required activities/information for investigation

	Response	Required cases	Conditions or types of cases
1. Certain activities or information required for the investigation process	Yes		
2. Specific activities or information required for investigation			
a. Review agency records for prior involvement with child protective services	Yes	Required for some	Allegations of risk of harm/sexual abuse
b. Visit to child's home	Yes	Required for all	Not applicable
c. Interview or observation of child victim	Yes	Required for all	Not applicable
d. Interview or observation of other children living in child's home	Yes	Required for all	Not applicable
e. Risk or safety assessment	Yes	Required for all	Not applicable
f. Evaluation of home environment or home study	Yes	Required for all	Not applicable
g. Interviews with child's parents, caregivers, or other adults residing in child's home	Yes	Required for all	Not applicable
h. Check of criminal records for adults in home	Yes	Required for some	Allegations of risk of harm/sexual abuse
i. Check of child welfare or central registry for prior child maltreatment allegations against adults in home	Yes	Required for some	Allegations of risk of harm/sexual abuse
j. Medical evaluation	Yes	Required for some	When child has visible trauma; To determine whether emotional maltreatment resulted in impaired psychological growth and development
k. Mental health evaluation	Yes	Required for some	When sought out by family services worker; To determine whether emotional maltreatment resulted in impaired psychological growth and development

Table I.II (continued)

	Response	Required cases	Conditions or types of cases
l. Interview alleged perpetrator	Yes	Required for some	Perpetrator is willing to be interviewed; Perpetrator is a minor and their parents give permission; Perpetrator is not the child's parent or caretaker or not residing in the home, and in both cases, has not been interviewed by the police in the context of a joint investigation; Perpetrator can be located; Perpetrator does not present a significant risk to the safety of the child or protective parent; Perpetrator will not be informed of the allegation due to the wishes of the youth victim and approval by the child safety manager
m. Interview reporter or collateral source	Yes	Required for some	If it is in the best interest of the child; If interviewing is reasonable given the circumstances; If the safety of any individual will not be jeopardized
n. Other (specify)	Yes - Visit to the location of alleged abuse or neglect; Determination of the nature, extent, and cause of any abuse or neglect; Determination of the identity of the alleged perpetrator; Identity of other children living in child's home; Identity of other children who may be at risk	Required for all	Not applicable

Domain W: Child welfare response

Table W.I. Differential or alternative response

	Response
1. Differential/alternative response	Yes--implemented statewide
2. Types of maltreatment eligible for differential/alternative response	Only certain types of maltreatment are eligible
3. Types of maltreatment <u>not</u> eligible for differential/alternative response	
a. Cases involving child fatalities and near-fatalities	Yes
b. Substance-exposed infants	No
c. Physical abuse	No
d. Sexual abuse	Yes
e. Neglect	No
f. Abandoned infants	No
g. Other (specify)	Yes - Malicious punishment; Child exposed to methamphetamine production; Abuse or neglect that causes serious physical injury; Abandonment (any age); Physical abuse of a child under age 3 or a non-verbal or non-ambulatory child of any age; Substantial child endangerment
4. Eligibility for differential/alternative response determined by a risk determination	No
5. Tools used to determine risk for differential/alternative response	Logical Skip
6. Risk level eligible for differential/alternative response	Logical Skip
7. Other types of cases or conditions eligible for differential/alternative response	
a. No other cases or conditions	No
b. No immediate safety concerns	No
c. No or few prior reports of child abuse or neglect	No
d. Other (specify)	Yes - There are 5 factors considered when determining whether to respond with an investigation or an assessment response: (1) there is reason to believe that a child's safety will be jeopardized if parental permission cannot be obtained to interview the child, (2) the nature and severity of the abuse and extent of a child's injury, if any (for example, physical abuse and peer-to-peer sexual abuse can be accepted as an assessment instead of an investigation), (3) the alleged perpetrator's prior history of child abuse or neglect, including history of past reports, investigations or assessments, (4) to the extent known by the reporter, the alleged perpetrator's willingness and capability to accept responsibility for the conduct and engage in a plan of services, (5) any strengths and formal and informal supports and/or resources that are available or exist within the family and community, including resources and supports for people with disabilities if relevant

Table W.I (continued)

	Response
8. When is determination made for differential/alternative response	
a. At the time of screening to assign to differential response	No
b. After a report is screened in	Yes
c. Other (specify)	No
9. Referrals to community services for cases engaged in differential response	
a. No	No
b. Yes - for all cases	No
c. Yes - when families express interest	No
d. Yes - when there is a determination of risk	Yes
e. Yes - other (specify)	No

Table W.II. In-home services, foster care, and permanency

	Response
1. In-home services provided for unsubstantiated cases to maintain intact families	Yes--implemented statewide
2. In-home services provided post reunification	Yes--implemented statewide
3. Permanency	
a. Kinship guardianship as a permanency option	Yes
b. Subsidized guardianship	Yes
c. Subsidized kinship guardianship	Yes
d. Subsidized adoption	Yes
4. Foster care case management staff	
a. State/county public agency staff	Yes
b. Contracted provider staff	No
c. Tribal agency staff	No
5. Qualifications of foster care case managers	
a. Associate degree	No
b. Bachelor's degree	Yes
c. Master's degree	Yes
d. Training for case management (specify)	No
e. Years of experience (specify)	Yes - No experience required with a master's degree; 18 months of human services casework, including at least 6 months with a child or youth services caseload where duties included direct responsibility for client intake, assessment, plan development, monitoring, service procurement, and case closure in a formal human services delivery system required with a bachelor's degree; Satisfactory completion of 12 to 18 months experience as a Family Services Worker trainee in the Department for Children and Families with no degree
f. Other (specify)	No
6. Degree in social work or related field for foster care case managers	No

Table W.III. Tribal foster care and Tribes that directly operate Title IV-E programs through an agreement with HHS

	Response
1. Tribal involvement in foster care for Tribal cases	No, Tribes within state do not provide foster care
2. Tribes directly operate a Title IV-E program through an agreement with US HHS	No
3. Number of Tribes that directly operate a Title IV-E program through an agreement with US HHS	Logical Skip
4. Specify Tribes that directly operate a Title IV-E program through an agreement with US HHS	Not applicable

Table W.IV. Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)

	Response
1. Federal ICWA requirements codified in state law	No
2. Federal ICWA requirements that are codified in state law	Logical Skip
3. State law codifying ICWA includes state-recognized Tribes	Logical Skip

Table W.V. Extended foster care

	Response
1. Foster care extension for youth older than age 18	Yes
2. Age youth are allowed to remain in extended foster care	Other - Up to age 22 (until 22nd birthday)
3. Youth must proactively request, provide consent, or opt-in to receive extended foster care	Yes
4. Criteria for youth to remain in extended foster care	
a. There are no criteria to remain in extended foster care	No
b. Enrolled in school	Yes
c. Employed	Yes
d. Participating in workforce development/training program	Yes
e. Comply with independent living/self-sufficiency plan	No
f. Receive independent living or other services	No
g. Medical condition exemption	Yes
h. Other (specify)	Yes - Contribute to the cost of services based on a sliding scale, if the youth is working
5. Reentry to extended foster care allowed for youth older than age 18 who aged out or left foster care	Yes
6. Conditions for youth to reenter extended foster care	
a. Youth consent or sign a voluntary placement agreement	Yes
b. Youth develop an independent living plan	No
c. It is in the best interest of the youth	No
d. Other (specify)	No

Domain C: Child welfare system context

Table C.I. Child welfare system context

	Response
1. State- or county-administered child welfare system	State-administered
2. State operates under legal consent decree or other court-ordered monitoring	No

Supplemental Notes on State

Definitions

Foster or kinship parents are often referred to as caregivers or caretakers, and they are included in the definition of "person responsible for a child's welfare." Any substitute care provider would also be included in this definition.

Although female genital mutilation (FGM) is not specifically defined, reports of FGM or risk of FGM (e.g., plans, purchased plane tickets, etc.) could fall under physical abuse or risk of harm.

For near-fatalities, serious or critical conditions must be certified by a physician.

Reporting

If the state needs to seek court involvement through a Child in Need of Care or Supervision petition, the identity of the reporter would become known in the affidavit. Reporters are informed of this during training.

A member of the public can refuse to give their name and therefore remain anonymous. Additionally, reporters wishing to remain anonymous must block their phone number when making the call; otherwise, their phone number is attached to the report.

Foster parents who fail to report suspected abuse or neglect of a foster child may have their license revoked.

Screening

Centralized Intake and Emergency Services (CIES) Unit, which includes Family Services Workers and Supervisors, conducts screening.

There are 2 stages to the screening process. A Family Services Supervisor in the statewide CIES Unit makes the initial determination about report acceptance. If the report is not accepted by the CIES Supervisor, a second person from the local district (Senior Family Services Worker, Family Services Supervisor, or District Director) will screen the report to determine if the report is a valid allegation. The Director of Operations, Sr. Policy and Operations Manager, or Policy and Operations Manager from the child welfare agency's Family Service Division Operations team may also conduct the second screen.

The state will screen and accept reports with missing information (fields are marked "unknown," and more information is collected later). This information includes:

1. Identity, address, or other contact information of the reporter;
2. Name and address of parents or person responsible for the child's care;
3. Child's age;
4. Nature and extent of the child's injuries, together with any evidence of previous abuse and neglect of the child or the child's siblings;
5. Any other information that might be helpful in establishing the cause of the injuries or reasons for the neglect, as well as in protecting the child and assisting the family.

There are no recognized Tribes within the geographic boundaries of Vermont. However, the child welfare agency collaborates with Tribes located in other states and exercises shared jurisdiction in completing interviews, reviewing information, and making decisions.

Investigations

Family Services Workers and Family Services Supervisors include staff who investigate reports of abuse or neglect.

The Residential Licensing and Special Investigations (RLSI) Unit is involved in investigations when the alleged perpetrator resides or receives services in a licensed or approved foster home or facility serving children.

Additional qualifications may be required for higher-level staff who conduct investigation activities.

As a result of an amendment to 33 V.S.A. § 4912, the level of evidence required for substantiation will change from reasonable cause to a preponderance of evidence effective September 1, 2024.

Other activities that could be part of an investigation, but are not required, include: (1) taking photographs of trauma visible on a child who is the subject of a report, (2) seeking consultation with a physician, and (3) if the physician deems it appropriate, giving the child a radiological examination.

Child welfare response

Family Services Workers and Family Services Supervisors include staff who conduct foster care case management.

Additional qualifications may be required for higher-level staff who conduct foster care case management.

State Statutes and Policy Documentation Sources

Child Fatality Review Team, Vt. Stat. Ann. § 18-30A (2023).

Child Welfare Services, Vt. Stat. Ann. § 33-49 (2023).

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