

JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN TASK FORCE

AMENDED CHARGE

April 2018

“All children need safe, permanent families that love, nurture, protect and guide them.”¹

When courts are asked to make decisions about a child’s life because of allegations of abuse or neglect, the courts are responsible for ensuring that children’s rights to safety, permanence, and well-being are met in a timely and complete manner. It is only through the collaboration of the Judicial system, the Agency of Human Services, State’s Attorneys, the Defender General’s Office, the Attorney General’s Office, schools, and other community partners that these needs can be met.

A. Charge

The Vermont Justice for Children Task Force is a collaborative, interdisciplinary effort that brings together those who are in charge of decisions that can improve outcomes for children involved in the child protection system. The Task Force approaches its work mindful of children’s developmental needs and unique sense of time. To improve outcomes for these children, the Task Force will:

- (1) **Identify systemic barriers** which contribute to children remaining in care longer than necessary;
- (2) **Develop solutions** designed to reduce the impact of such barriers in a manner which ensures that due process and legal rights of all parties are respected and protected;
- (3) **Measure the effect** of reforms once implemented;
- (4) **Report progress to the Vermont Supreme Court**, with recommendations as appropriate.

The Task Force works closely with the Vermont Court Improvement Program to develop and implement its strategic plan to promote the improvement of court proceedings in child welfare proceedings and enhance collaboration between the judicial branch and DCF-Family Services Division. The Task Force will work toward shared goals to increase the safety, permanency, and well-being of children in the child welfare system.

The Task Force consists of one or more justices, the Chief Superior Court Judge, a superior court judge, a probate judge, the State Court Administrator, the Agency of Human Services Secretary, DCF Commissioner, DCF Family Services Deputy Commissioner, Department of Health Deputy Commissioner, Department of Mental Health Deputy Commissioner, Agency of Education Secretary, Defender General, Deputy Defender General, a State’s Attorney, an Assistant Attorney General, an attorney practicing in the field of juvenile law, two legislators, a

¹ The Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care, *Fostering the Future: Safety, Permanence and Well Being for Children in Foster Care*, 2004.

representative from the Guardian ad Litem program, and a youth member from the Vermont DCF Youth Development Program.

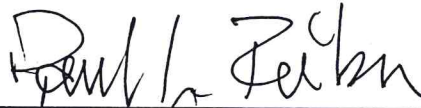
The office of the Court Administrator shall provide the Task Force with necessary administrative assistance from its staff.

B. Expenses

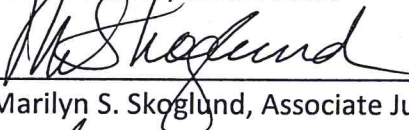
In the performance of their duties, non-Judicial branch Task Force members shall be reimbursed for reasonable and necessary expenses. Judicial branch members shall be reimbursed the normal state employee expenses. The Court Administrator's Office shall pay reasonable expenses of this Task Force when claims are submitted on proper vouchers approved by the Court Administrator or designee.

This Charge is effective through June 2019 unless further extended by the Court.

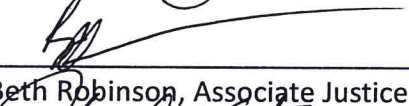
Signed in Chambers at Montpelier, Vermont this 7th day of March, 2018.



Paul L. Reiber, Chief Justice



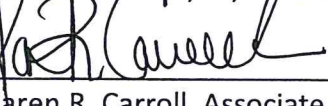
Marilyn S. Skoglund, Associate Justice



Beth Robinson, Associate Justice



Harold E. Eaton, Jr., Associate Justice



Karen R. Carroll, Associate Justice

**Vermont Justice for Children Task Force
Participating Members
April 2018**

Paul L. Reiber, Chief Justice

Marilyn S. Skoglund, Associate Justice

Karen R. Carroll, Associate Justice

Brian J. Grearson, Chief Superior Judge

Thomas J. Devine, Superior Court Judge, Family Division

Eleanor W. Smith, Superior Court Judge, Probate Division

Patricia Gabel, State Court Administrator

Tari Scott, Chief of Trial Court Operations

Al Gobeille, Secretary, Agency of Human Services

Kenneth Schatz, Commissioner, Department for Children and Families (DCF)

Karen Shea, Deputy Commissioner, DCF Family Services Division

Amy Fowler, Deputy Secretary, Agency of Education

Cindy Thomas, ADAP Division Director (designee of Deputy Commissioner, Dept. of
Health, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs)

Melissa Bailey, Commissioner, Department of Mental Health

Matthew F. Valerio, Defender General

Marshall Pahl, Chief Juvenile Defender

Pamela A. Marsh, Juvenile Public Defender

Maureen Martin, Assigned Counsel

Kerry McDonald Cady, Deputy State's Attorney (Windham County)

Kate Lucier, Assistant Attorney General

Jane Kitchel, State Senator

Sue Buckholz, State Representative

Ridmi Coe, Youth Representative

David Kennedy, Guardian ad Litem Program Manager

Kevin Christie, State Representative/Guardian ad Litem