

Vermont Judicial Commission on Family Treatment Dockets Meeting Minutes

Date: May 6, 2019

Present:

Hon. Paul Reiber
Hon. Karen Carroll
Hon. Brian Grearson
Ms. Patricia Gabel
Commissioner Ken Schatz
Dr. Fred Holmes
Ms. Theresa Scott
Mr. Marshall Pahl
Ms. Tracy Shriver

Also present at the meeting was Mr. Jeremy Zeliger, Kim Owens, Linda Richard, and Scott Griffith with the Vermont Office of the Court Administrator, and Nora Sydow with the National Center for State Courts.

- I. **Call to Order.** The meeting was called to order at 9:10am and Chief Justice Paul L. Reiber welcomed the members and guests. A quorum of the members was present.
- II. **Update on a Related Project.** Chief Justice Reiber announced that a New England Regional Judicial Opioid Initiative was formed with funding provided by the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance. Six states, including Vermont, are part of this regional initiative, which will work to address the opioid epidemic in the region. This initiative will also have strong focus on the impacts of the epidemic on the child welfare system.
- III. **Approval of the meeting minutes.** The minutes from the October 3rd, 2018 meeting were approved.
- IV. **Discussion of Final Report.** Minor changes to the report were suggested including:
 - (1) revise language in paragraph 3 on page 3 to recognize that professionals are bound by their professional roles;
 - (2) Revise language in Paragraph 4 on page 3 to reflect a focus on achieving permanency for the child; and
 - (3) Add to section (4) on page 9 to acknowledge that (1) special attention should be paid to transportation issues faced by participants who must travel to a Regional Treatment Docket and (2) court hours should be flexible in light of participant commitments, and the use of technology for remote court appearances should be considered.

The above changes were unanimously approved and the report was unanimously approved by the Commission pending these changes.

V. Dissemination of Commission report. The Commission discussed how the final report should be disseminated and the consensus was that it should be disseminated as follows:

- The Vermont Judiciary will issue a press release that will be posted on the Judiciary's website
- The Commission should send a copy to the following:
 - Governor
 - Chairs of Governor's Opioid Coordination Council
 - Chairs of the House and Senate Judiciary Committees
 - Chairs of House and Senate appropriations
 - Rep. Chip Conquest
 - Sally Borden, *KidSafe*
 - Chairs of the House Human Services and Senate Health and Welfare Committees
 - Chair of House Health Care Committee

VI. Update on the CHINS Working Group. Chief Justice Reiber reminded the Commission that the CHINS working group, tasked by the Legislature to propose CHINS reforms using \$7 million of the tobacco settlement funds, is still working on developing strategies and reforms. Judge Gearson provided the Commission with an update on the Working Group's progress to date. The budget adjustment act relating to this work has been approved and signed by the Governor. The Working Group will meet again after the end of this session. At this point, the two ideas that have been proposed and are still being explored are a home visiting program and a judicial master pilot. The consensus of the Commission was to convene a group early in the fall and make more recommendations.

VII. Next Steps. Pat Gabel reported that the Court has received Family Treatment Docket proposals from Chittenden and Rutland counties. Now that the Commission Report is final, she will make recommendations to the Supreme Court on the applications.

VIII. Conclusion. Justice Carroll thanked all of the Commission Members for their hard work and dedication over these past 15 months and noted that it has been a very collaborative process that produced a strong set of well-informed recommendations.