Vermont Judicial Commission on Family Treatment Dockets

Meeting Minutes

Date: February 12, 2018

Present:
Hon. Paul Reiber
Hon. Karen Carroll
Hon. Brian Grearson
Ms. Patricia Gabel
Commissioner Ken Schatz
Deputy Commissioner Karen Shea
Ms. Theresa Scott
Dr. Frederick C. Holmes
Senator Jane Kitchel
Mr. Mathew Valerio
Mr. Marshall Pahl
Attorney General T.J. Donovan
Senator John Campbell
Representative Maxine Grad
Ms. Alice R. George
Ms. Mary Alice McKenzie
Ms. Lisa Ventriss

Also present at the meeting was Ms. Sally Borden, Executive Director of the KidSafe Collaborative of Chittenden County.

Nora Sydow, Senior Court Management Consultant with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC), was also in attendance. Ms. Sydow’s work at NCSC is focused on child protection court improvement, and NCSC will be providing the Commission with support and technical assistance.

I. Call to Order and Welcome Remarks. Chief Justice Reiber called the meeting to order at 1:10pm, welcomed all Commission members to its first meeting, and thanked all members for dedicating their time and expertise to this important issue. Chief Justice Reiber encouraged all Commission members to think outside the box and seek creative solutions to the problems and issues identified by the Commission.

Each Commission member introduced themselves and provided a summary of their background.

II. Overview of the Purpose and Charge of the Commission. Chief Justice Reiber provided general background on the evolution of the opioid epidemic in Vermont and the impact it has had on the courts, most recently with Vermont children and families served by the court. Chief Justice Reiber noted the significance of having the full support of the Supreme Court behind this Commission and encouraged the Commission to not only focus on court processes, but overall systems improvement.
delivered a presentation defining a Children in Need of Care or Supervision (CHINS) case and describing
how it make its way through the court process, including an overview of the state and federal statutory
timeline and process requirements. The PowerPoint presentation can be accessed at:
Justice Carroll indicated the many instances during the court process that could serve as a treatment
discussion point between the Judge and parent(s).

IV. How has the opioid epidemic impacted children, families, and the child protection process in
Vermont? Commissioner Kenneth Schatz and Deputy Commissioner Karen Shea, Vermont Department
for Children and Families, delivered a presentation that described how the opioid epidemic has
impacted children and families in Vermont. Their PowerPoint presentation can be accessed at:
https://www.vermontjudiciary.org/sites/default/files/documents/DCF%20presentation%202%2012%202018.pptx
Commissioner Schatz and Deputy Commissioner Shea provided numerous statistics and
trends, as well as an overview of some of the programs and initiatives underway at the Department to
serve children and families impacted by the opioid epidemic. There was further discussion by
Commission members on what other data, both court and child welfare data, that might be available to
assist the Commission with its work. This led to a conversation about what metrics the Commission
might want to explore related to its charge and ultimate recommendations.

V. How does the Commission further define the problem? Chief Justice Reiber suggested that the
Commission might explore a statewide online survey of system stakeholders, as well as regional focus
groups, to further identify and diagnose the nature of the problem and to garner ideas for improvement
from practitioners in the field across the state. The Commission would be asked to provide feedback on
draft survey questions.

VI. Public Comment Period. There were no public comments.

VII. Next Steps. Chief Justice Reiber reported that the next Commission meeting would be scheduled for
next month. A website has been created for the Commission at
https://www.vermontjudiciary.org/about-vermont-judiciary/boards-and-committees/commission-on-
family-treatment-dockets and resources, meeting agendas and minutes, and other useful information
will continue to be posted to this site.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:04 pm.