



**ANNUAL REPORT ON**

**Outcomes**

**for Vermonters**

~ January 2020 ~



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# Department for Children and Families

## Mission & Vision

The Department for Children and Families fosters the healthy development, safety, well-being and self-sufficiency of Vermonters.

We envision Vermont as a place where:

- ➔ People prosper
- ➔ Children and families are safe and have strong, loving connections
- ➔ Individuals have the opportunity to fully develop their potential

## Departmental Structure

DCF is structured around the Commissioner's Office, Business Office and six program divisions that administer the department's programs and services:

1. Child Development Division (CDD)
2. Economic Services Division (ESD)
3. Family Services Division (FSD)
4. Office of Child Support (OCS)
5. Office of Disability Determination Services (DDS)
6. Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO)

## Departmental Priorities

While each division has its own priorities and areas of focus, we are unified in our 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)

## Departmental Highlights

### Child Development Division (CDD):

We continue to see an increase in the need for Children’s Integrated Services (CIS) — compounded by the increase in children coming into DCF custody, the opioid crisis and the complex needs of families. The CIS Early Intervention Program has seen a 28% increase in children receiving services in the past five years.

### Economic Services Division (ESD):

Despite investments in community-based emergency housing initiatives, expenditures on hotel/motel stays increased in both SFY 2018 and 2019. This highlights the fact that housing instability and homelessness continue to be significant challenges facing Vermonters.

### Family Services Division (FSD):

The total number of child safety interventions, which includes assessments and investigations, increased by 13% from SFY 2018 to SFY 2019. During that same period, the number of active cases (e.g., custody, conditional custody and family support) dropped by 6% — an encouraging trend that is continuing into SFY 2020.

### Office of Child Support (OCS):

Vermont OCS continues to rank among the top states in the country for current support paid to children and families and payments on arrears. In FFY 2018, 86% of the OCS caseload with a child support obligation received a payment. One promising practice helping OCS achieve this goal is the *Work4Kids* program, which helps parents find and keep good paying jobs so they can pay child support. Over 1,000 people have participated so far and the results are impressive: payments received from employers 6 months after participants joined the program were three times higher than those received 6 months before joining program.

### Office of Disability Determination (DDS):

DDS makes medical decisions on about 4,000 initial disability applications filed by Vermonters every year. Its high accuracy and allowance rates along with fast processing time helps ensure Vermonters with disabilities and serious illnesses get the benefits they need in a timely fashion.

### Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO):

In SFY 2019, the Family Supportive Housing (FSH) program served 210 families with 238 children under the age of 6. As of June 30, 2019:

- ➔ 137 families were still enrolled
- ➔ 104 families were stably housed
- ➔ 13 families had a voucher and were searching for housing
- ➔ 13 families had exited the program successfully AND were stably housed

## **Child Development Division (CDD)**

CDD improves the well-being of Vermont children by developing and administering a continuum of high-quality, comprehensive child development and family support services that promote health and well-being, school readiness and foundations for lifelong success.

### **Populations Served**

The division focuses its efforts on four populations:

1. Pregnant and postpartum people and parents
2. Children from birth to age six and their families
3. Children ages five to 12 participating in afterschool programs
4. Early childhood and afterschool programs and professionals

## OUTCOME: Families are safe, nurturing, stable and supported

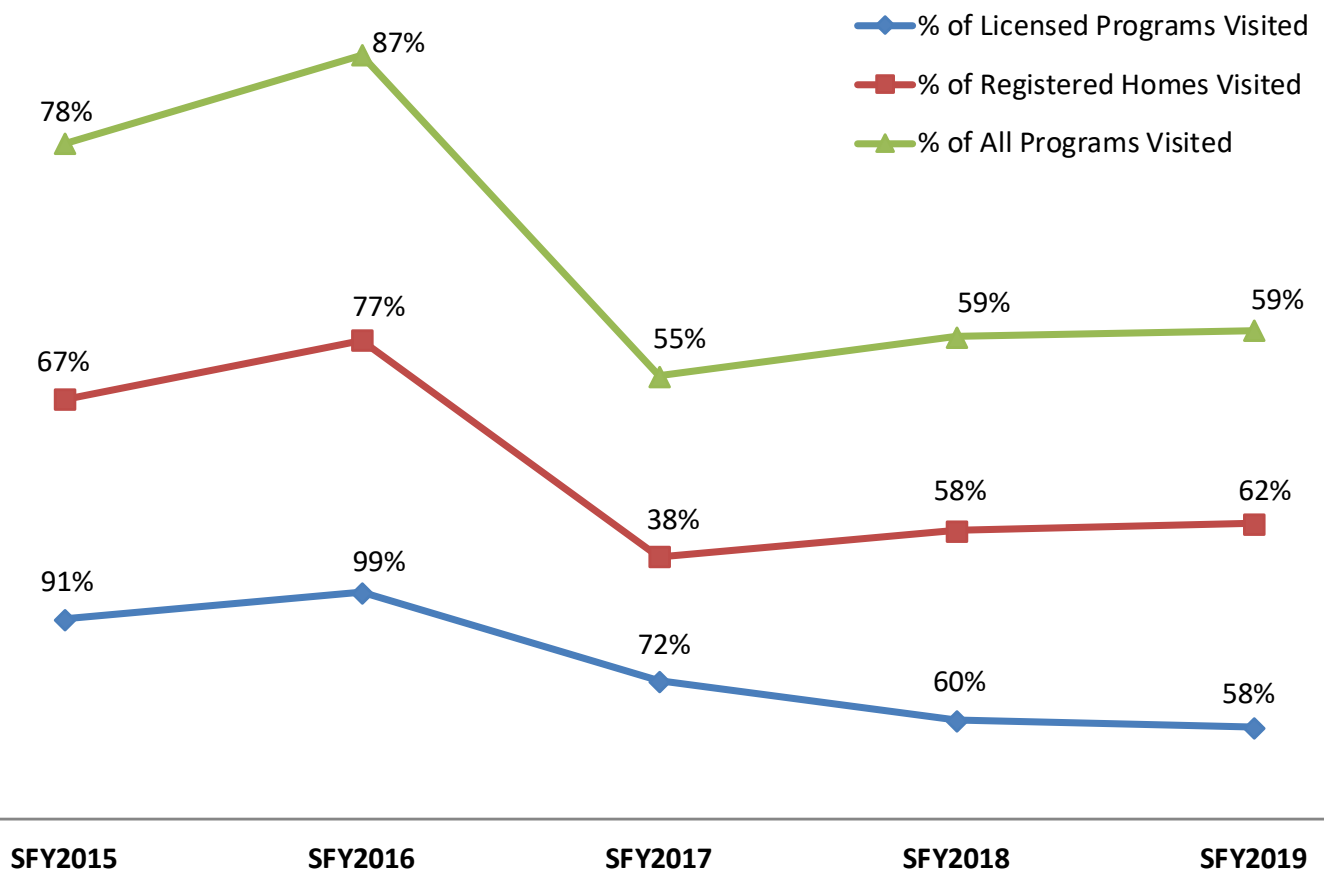
### Performance Measure: Programs Visited by Licensing

CDD regulates and monitors registered family child care homes and licensed child care programs to make sure they provide safe and healthy environments for children.

CDD's goal is to visit 100% of all programs at least once a year. In SFY 2019, licensors visited 59% of all programs, 58% of licensed programs and 62% of registered homes. Visits were below target due to licensing staff turnover and hiring of new licensor positions.

With new federal funding, three additional licensor positions were approved in SFY 2019 for a total of 12 licensors (up from 9). Visits continued to be low throughout the hiring and training period. All licensors were working independently in the field by the summer of 2019, and CDD expects to meet their goal of visiting 100% of all programs in SFY 2020.

### Child Care Programs Visited by Licensing





## OUTCOME: Children are ready for school

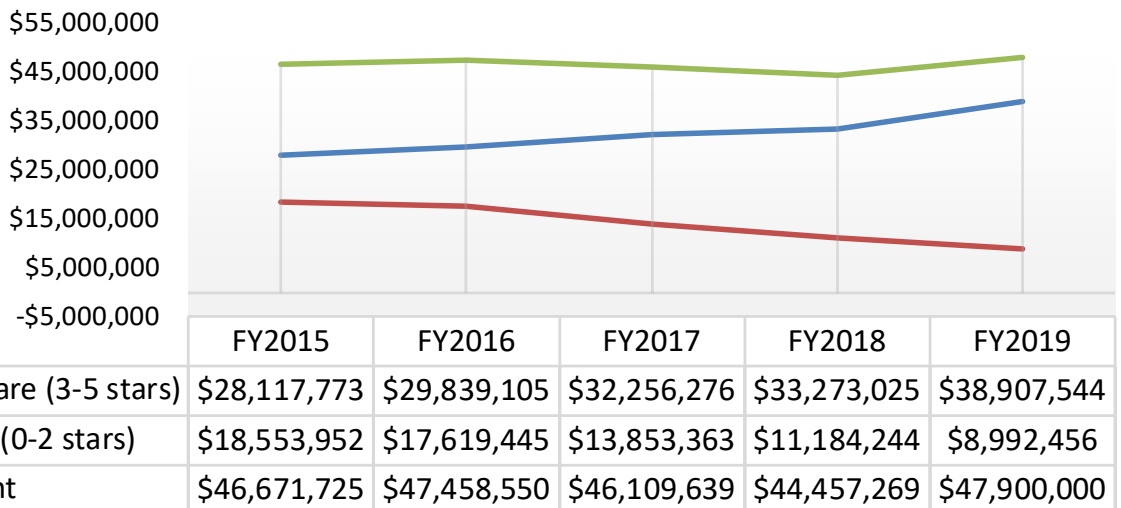
### Performance Measure: Financial Assistance for Children in High Quality Care

In SFY 2019, \$47.9 million in Child Care Financial Assistance helped 11,590 children (average of 7,959/month) to access early care and education and afterschool programs.

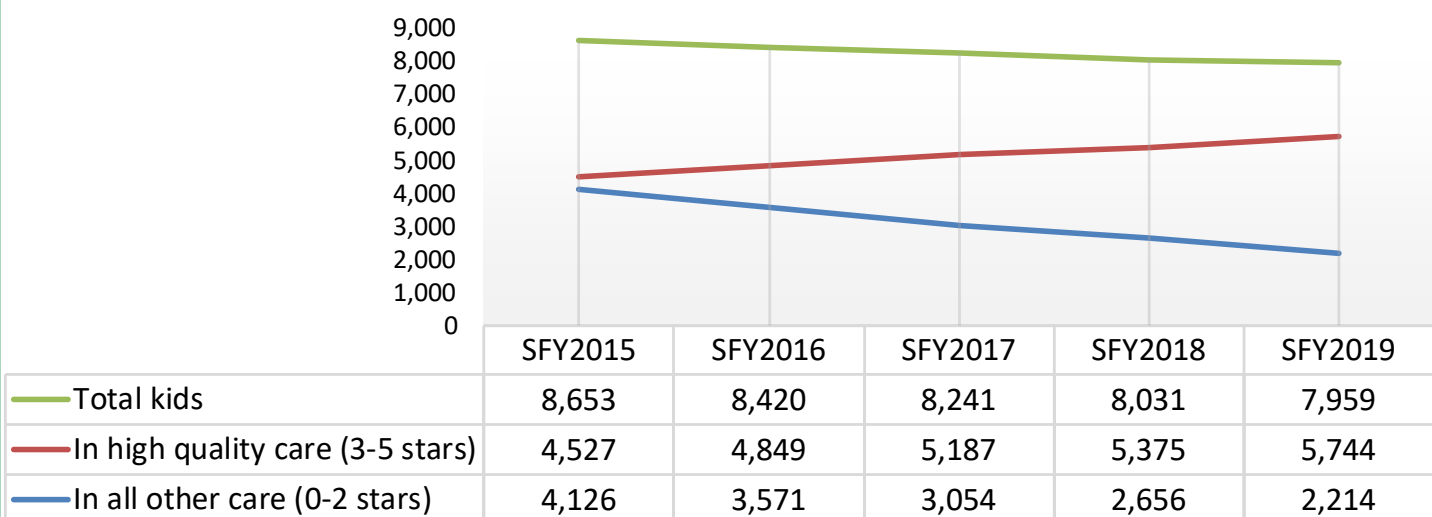
- ➔ 81% of the total budget was spent on high quality care (three or more stars)
- ➔ 72% of the children getting assistance were in high quality care

In January 2019, CDD increased the rates paid to childcare providers for infants and toddlers. In July 2019, CDD adjusted the income guidelines and increased the rates for preschool and school age children. We hope these changes will increase participation in the program as it makes childcare more affordable for working families.

### Child Care Financial Assistance: Dollars Spent



### Child Care Financial Assistance: Average # of Children



## OUTCOME: Families are safe, nurturing, stable and supported

### Performance Measure: Child Care Capacity by STARS Participation

The number of child care spaces reported by licensed and registered child care programs has increased, and we continue working to increase the number of spaces in programs participating at the top levels of the Step Ahead Recognition System (STARS).

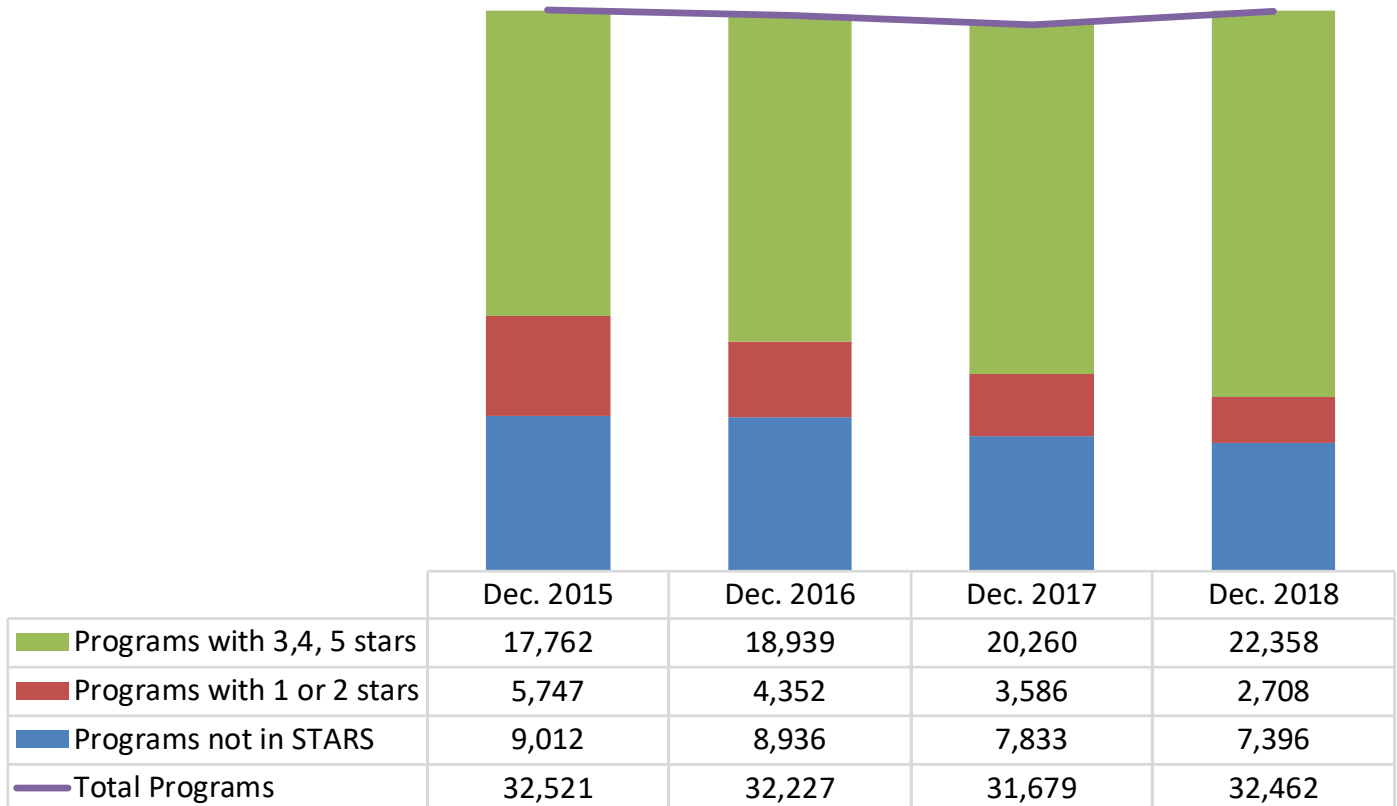
- The number of spaces in all programs participating in STARS increased from 72% in December 2015 to 77% in December 2018.
- The number of spaces in programs participating in the top tiers of STARS (3, 4 or 5 stars) increased from 55% in December 2015 to 69% in December 2018.

CDD is working on several initiatives aimed at:

- Encouraging new child care programs to open.
- Increasing total capacity while maintaining the high quality of programs.

These initiatives include implementing a recruitment campaign, developing business supports and addressing barriers.

### Reported Child Care Capacity: STARS Participation



## OUTCOME: Families are safe, nurturing, stable and supported

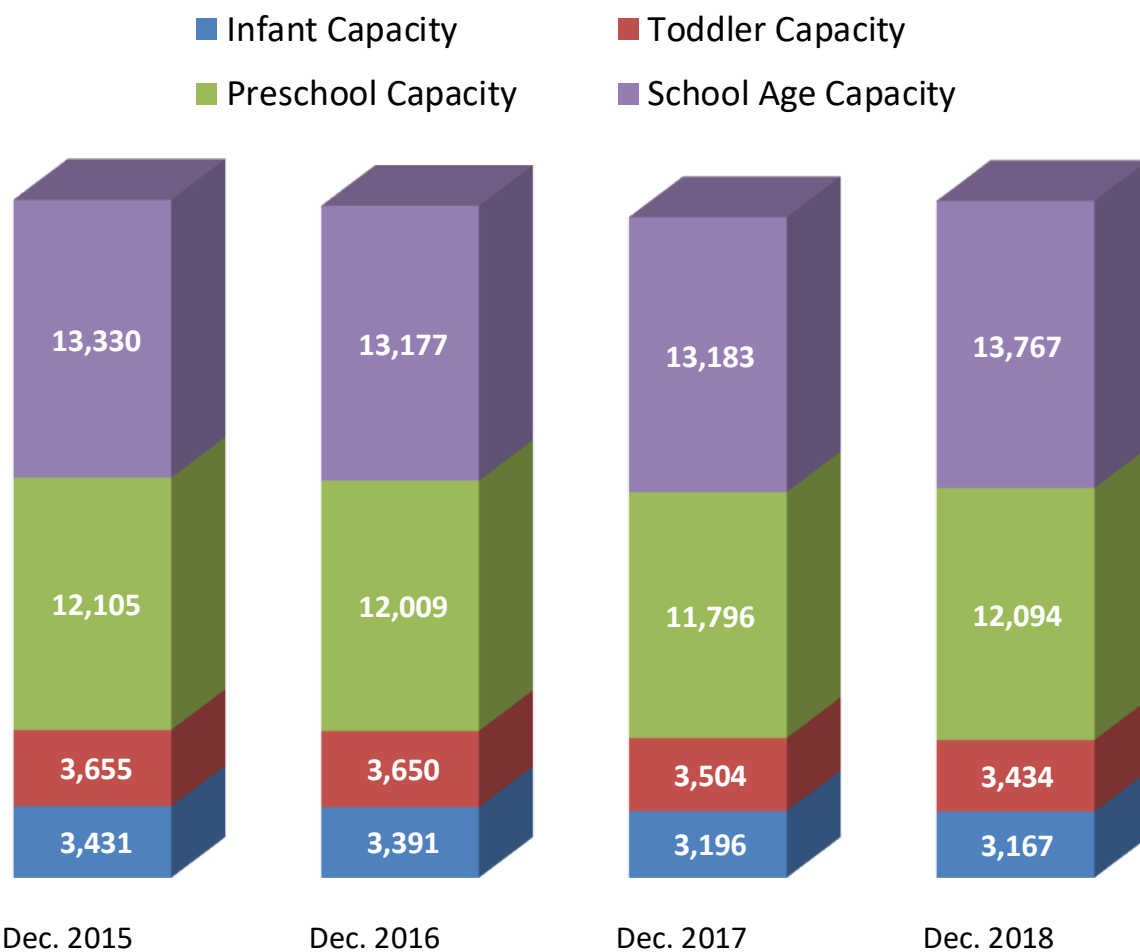
### Performance Measure: Child Care Capacity by Age of Children

Vermont has experienced a reduction in the number of childcare programs in the state. The good news is that the overall number of childcare spaces increased by 783. The bad news is that infant and toddler spaces decreased by 99. We are doing several things to try to increase the capacity for infants and toddlers, especially in rural areas. We launched a childcare recruitment campaign and, in spring of 2020, will be launching a grant program to increase the capacity of programs to serve infants and toddlers.

Between December 2017 and December 2018, the total number of:

- ➔ Child care spaces increased by 783
- ➔ Infant spaces decreased by 29
- ➔ Toddler spaces decreased by 70
- ➔ Preschool spaces increased by 298
- ➔ School-aged spaces increased by 584

### Reported Child Care Capacity: Age of Children



## OUTCOME: Families are safe, nurturing, stable and supported

### Performance Measure: Participation in Early Intervention Services

Children's Integrated Services (CIS) provides upstream prevention services to vulnerable children and their families. This includes early childhood mental health, specialized child care, early intervention and home visiting. CIS is an example of integration and collaboration across multiple departments and disciplines to streamline service delivery using a multi-generational approach.

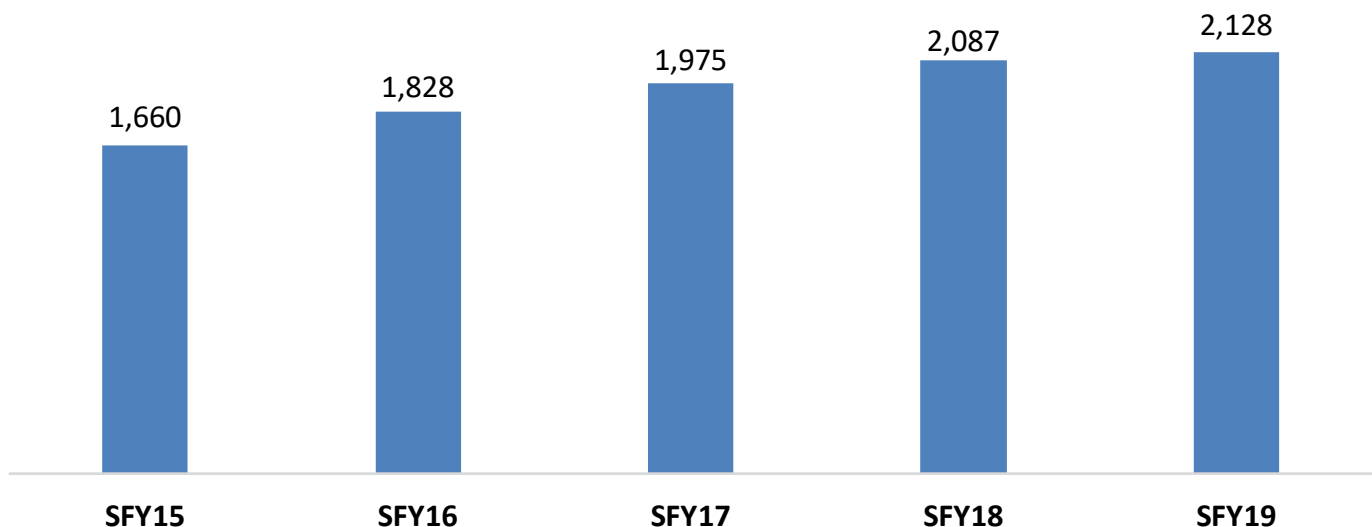
Vermont has seen a growth in the need for CIS services due to increasingly complex cases and increases in the populations served by CIS. For example:

- ➔ Children in DCF custody, from birth to age 6, went from 317 in 2013 to 550 in 2019
- ➔ Infants born with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) increased from 12.8 per 1000 births in 2007 to 29.5 per 1000 births in 2017.

The type of cases described above are automatically referred to CIS for evaluation and follow-up.

One program for children with disabilities and delays, CIS Early Intervention Services, has seen a 28% increase in cases over the past five years. This demonstrates both increasing need and earlier identification of issues.

### Annual Number of Children Served by CIS Early Intervention Services



## **Economic Services Division (ESD)**

ESD administers economic benefits such as 3SquaresVT, Emergency/General Assistance, Fuel Assistance and Reach Up.

These benefits provide a safety net for individuals and families who may be experiencing unemployment, underemployment, single parenthood, aging, disability, the death of a family member or other life-changing event.

### **Populations Served**

1. Families with children
2. Seniors
3. People with physical disabilities
4. Vermonters with low to moderate incomes

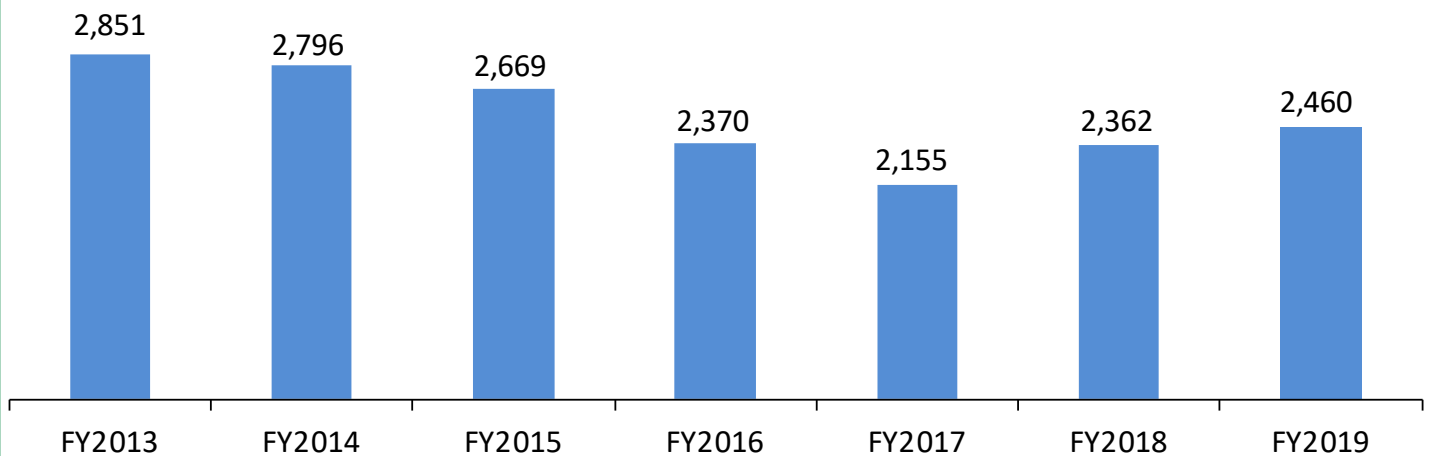
## OUTCOME: Vermonters are healthy

### Performance Measure: GA/EA Housing Assistance: Motel/Hotel Stays

- The number of households getting motel/hotel vouchers through GA/EA Housing Assistance increased, from 2,362 in SFY 2018 to 2,460 in SFY 2019.
- The total number of days of hotel/motel stays provided increased, from a total of 43,066 days in SFY 2018 to 57,164 in SFY 2019.

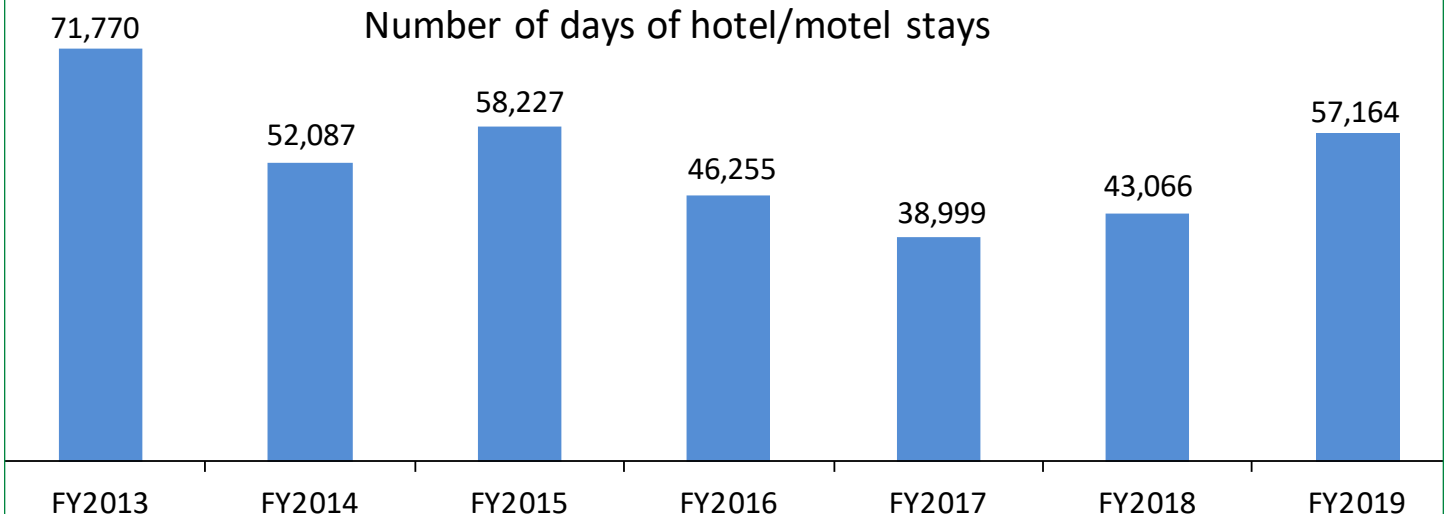
### EA/GA Hotel & Motel Stays

Unduplicated count of households served



### EA/GA Hotel & Motel Stays

Number of days of hotel/motel stays



## OUTCOME: Vermonters are healthy

### Performance Measure: GA/EA Housing Assistance: Expenditures & Investments

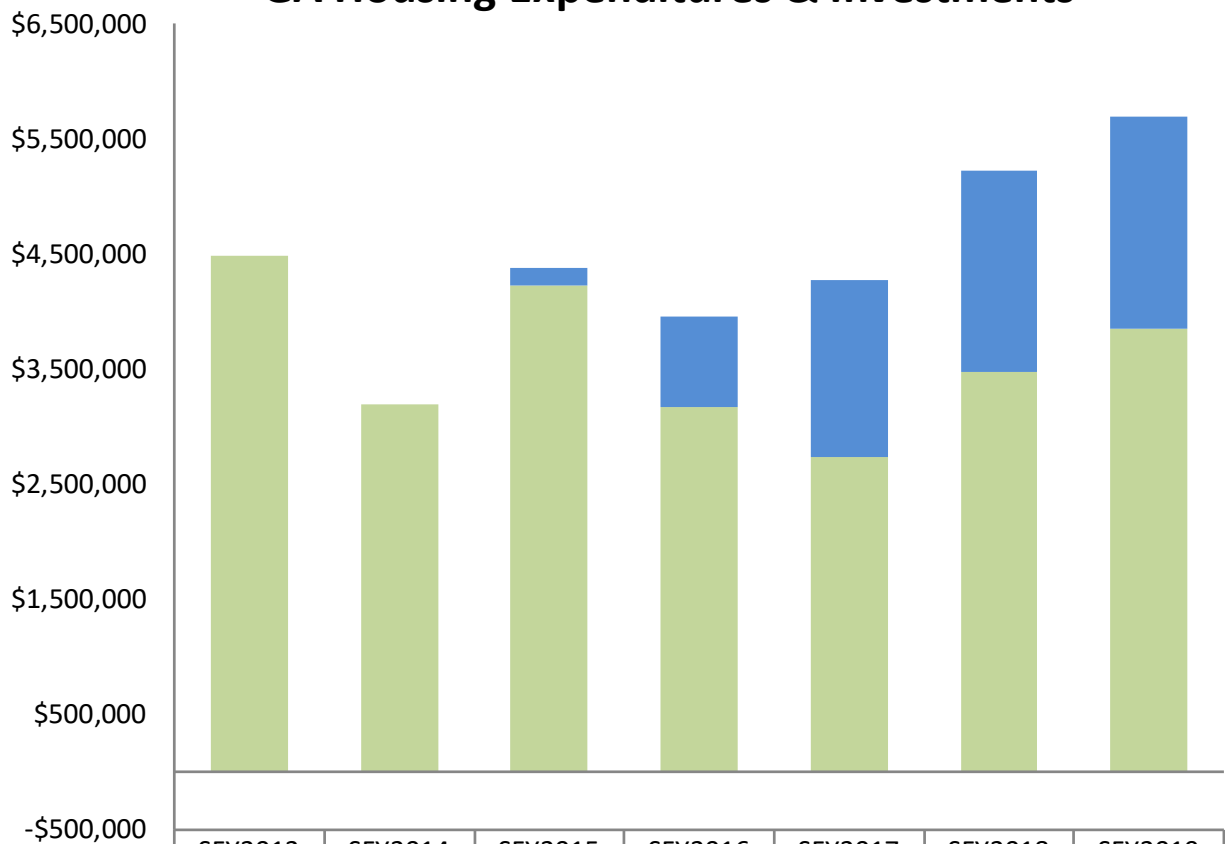
Starting in SFY 2016, GA/EA housing expenditures on hotel/motel stays have gone down as the department — through our Office of Economic Opportunity — invested more funds in community-based initiatives designed to lower reliance on hotel/motel stays.

These community investments supported a range of projects, including:

- Seasonal warming shelters
- Emergency apartments for families
- Expansion of shelter overflow and services at domestic violence shelters

Although investments in community-based initiatives continue to increase, the hotel/motel voucher program experienced increases in both SFY 2018 and 2019. While it's difficult to point to any one variable as the cause, it clearly shows that housing instability and homelessness continue to be significant challenges facing Vermonters.

### GA Housing Expenditures & Investments



Community Investments	\$0	\$0	\$158,568	\$788,544	\$1,548,581	\$1,758,095	\$1,843,579
Hotel/Motel Stays	\$4,487,722	\$3,195,116	\$4,222,150	\$3,172,578	\$2,730,568	\$3,470,838	\$3,845,625

The above table does not include Harbor Place, which is a separate GA contract.

## OUTCOME: Vermonters are healthy

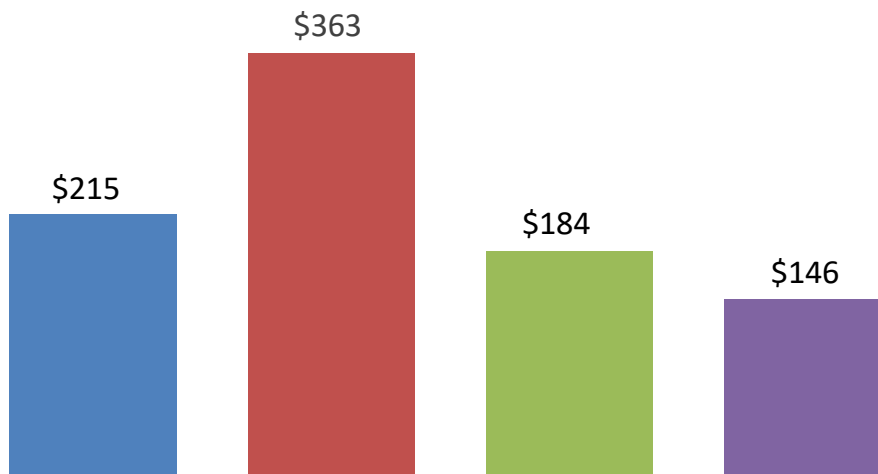
### ONE-MONTH SNAPSHOT OF 3SQUARESVT RECIPIENTS (SEPT 2019)

<b>Total Recipients</b>	<b>67,209</b>
- Recipients aged 0-17	21,753
- Recipients with a disability	20,223
- Recipients aged 60 or older	14,608
<b>Total Participating Households</b>	<b>38,579</b>
- Households with children aged 0-17	11,106
- Households with at least one person with a disability	19,028
- Households with at least one person aged 60+	13,424

### Average 3SquaresVT Benefit

as of September 2019

- - All Households
- - Households with children aged 0-17
- - Households with at least one person with a disability
- - Households with at least one person aged 60+





## OUTCOME: Vermonters are healthy

### Performance Measure: Individual Career Advancement Network (ICAN)

In October 2018, ESD expanded Vermont's SNAP Employment & Training Program by bringing on additional providers and expanding eligibility. The newly-branded program is known, in Vermont, as the Individual Career Advancement Network (ICAN).

#### VISION:

Vermonters with low-incomes have clear pathways to overcome barriers and develop marketable and in-demand skills, leading to career advancement.

#### MISSION:

To help 3SquaresVT recipients utilize their benefits, gain the essential skills needed for gainful employment and successfully transition off public assistance.

#### TARGET POPULATION:

ICAN helps eligible Vermonters conduct job searches, connect to employers who are hiring, enhance their job finding skills, gain new job skills, get work experience and learn how to achieve industry certifications.

ICAN is available to anyone who gets 3SquaresVT with the exception of those getting Reach Up. Many participants have significant barriers to employment (e.g., unstable housing, criminal histories and substance abuse/mental health issues).

#### STATISTICS FOR FFY2019:

During the program's first year:

- ➔ Over 4,500 individuals were referred to ICAN
- ➔ Over 1,000 Vermonters attended an ICAN orientation
- ➔ 677 participants successfully completed an ICAN activity
- ➔ 56% of participants who completed an ICAN activity reported starting a job

For more information, go to <https://dcf.vermont.gov/benefits/ICAN>.

## OUTCOME: Families are safe, nurturing, stable and supported

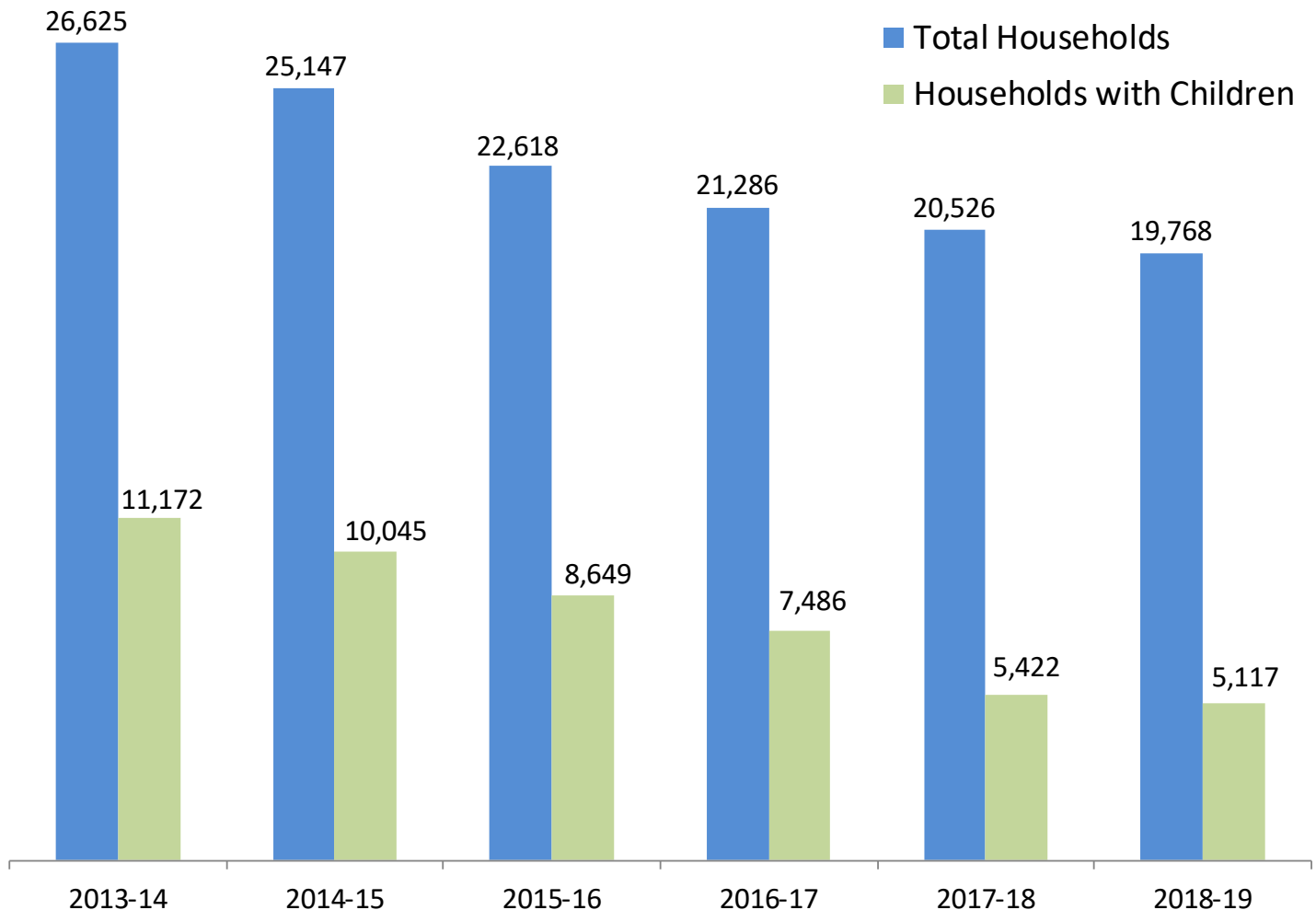
### Performance Measure: Seasonal Fuel Assistance

Seasonal Fuel Assistance (also known as Home Heating Assistance) helps lower-income Vermonters to heat their homes by paying part of their home heating bills.

During the 2018-19 heating season (*November 1, 2018 to March 31, 2019*):

- ➔ 19,768 households received a full fuel benefit
- ➔ 5,117 of those households included children
- ➔ The average benefit paid per household was \$715

### Households Receiving Fuel Assistance



# OUTCOME: Families are safe, nurturing, stable and supported

## Performance Measure: Reach Up Grants

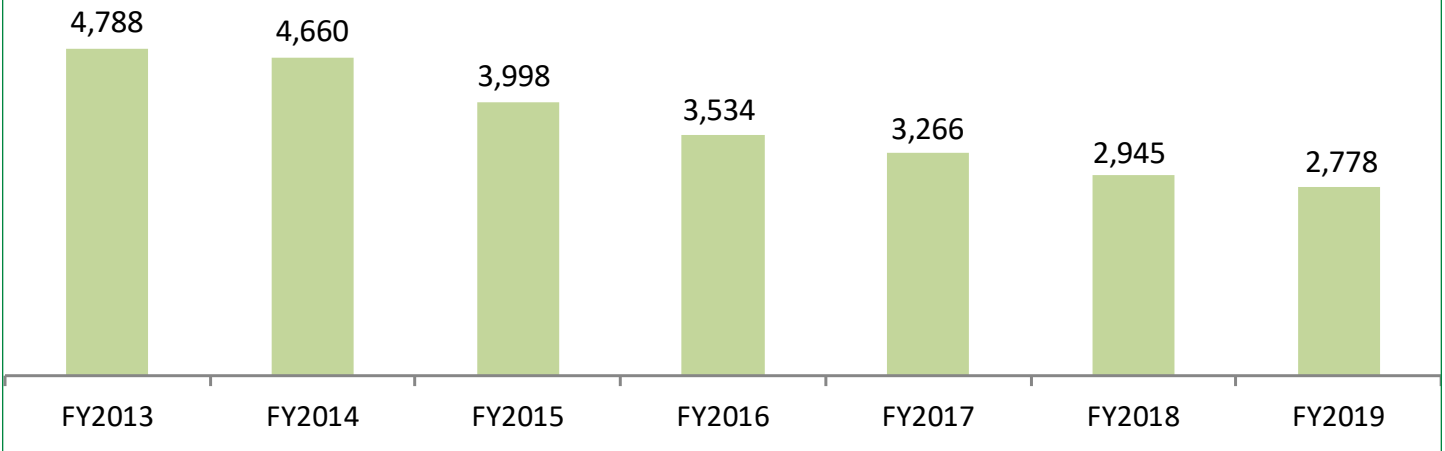
Reach Up joins families on their journey to overcome obstacles, explore opportunities, improve their finances and reach their goals. The Reach Up caseload is continuing its downward trend due to a stable economy and low unemployment rate.

In SFY 2019, Reach Up:

- ➔ Helped 2,778 families each month (*on average*) to meet their basic needs and find employment.
- ➔ Provided 1,296 child-only grants each month (*on average*) to parents receiving SSI and adults caring for the minor, dependent children of relatives or family friends.

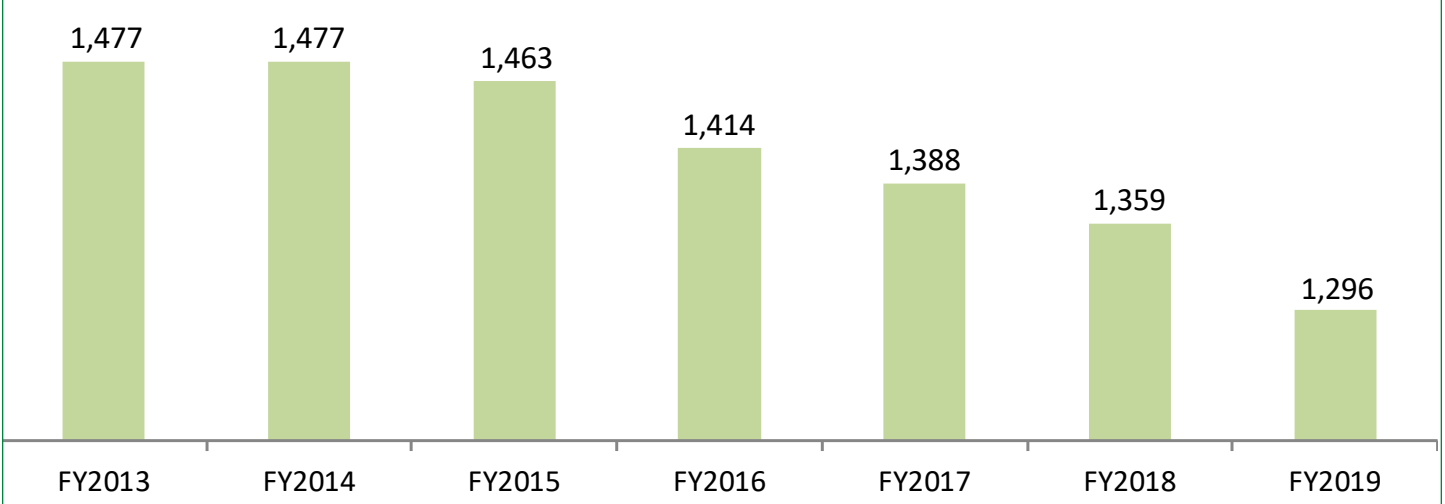
### Families on Reach Up

Average Monthly Caseload



### Total Child-Only Grants

Average Monthly Caseload



## OUTCOME: Families are safe, nurturing, stable and supported

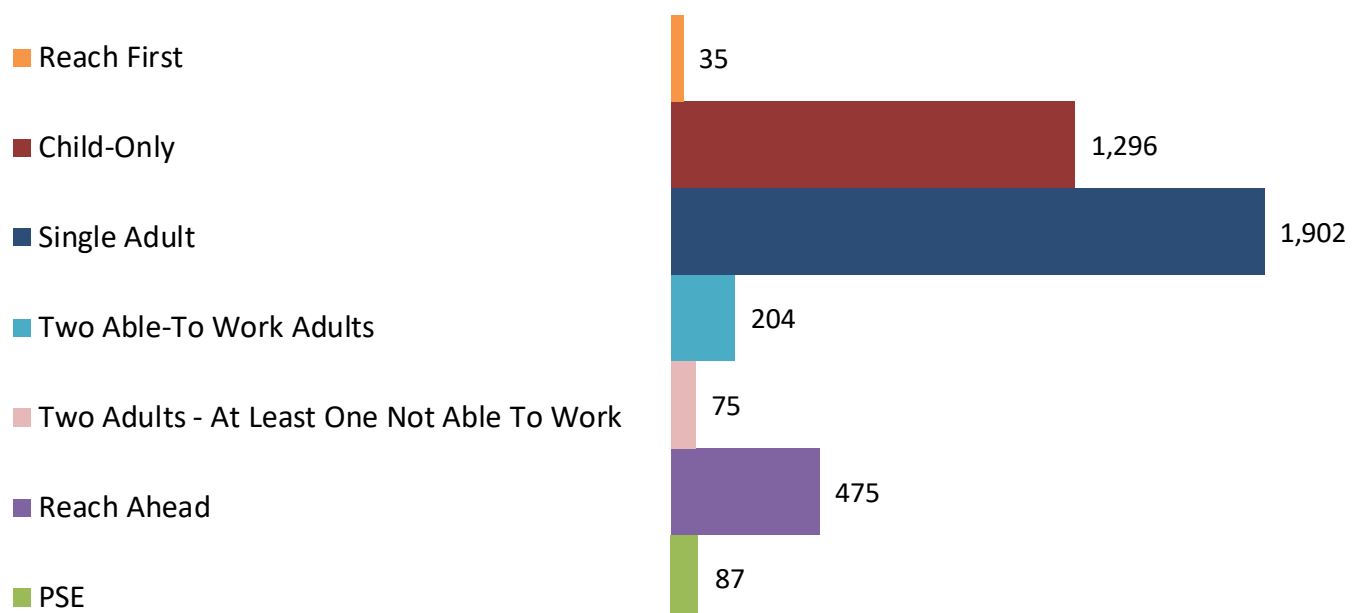
### Performance Measure: Reach Up: Types of Families on the Caseload

The chart below describes the types of families on the Reach Up caseload in FFY 2019. In addition to regular Reach Up cases, we also had the following types of cases:

- ⇒ *Child-Only Reach Up* provides cash assistance to help eligible adults care for the minor, dependent children of relatives or family friends
- ⇒ *Reach First* helps families who meet the eligibility requirements for Reach Up but will likely be self-sufficient in 4 months or less
- ⇒ *Reach Ahead* helps families transition from Reach Up and the Postsecondary Education program to work. Because of new legislation that came into effect on July 1, 2015, participants may now get the following benefits for up to 24 months:
  - ⇒ A child care subsidy
  - ⇒ Supports to help them keep a job (e.g., help paying for car repairs)
  - ⇒ A cash benefit to buy food

### Types of Families in the Reach Up Caseload

Average Monthly Caseload FFY2019



## **Family Services Division (FSD)**

FSD works in partnership with families, communities and others to make sure children and youth are safe from abuse, their basic needs are met (e.g., food, clothing, shelter and health care) and they abide by the law. FSD also ensures families are supported to achieve these goals.

### **Populations Served**

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

## OUTCOME: Families are safe, nurturing, stable and supported

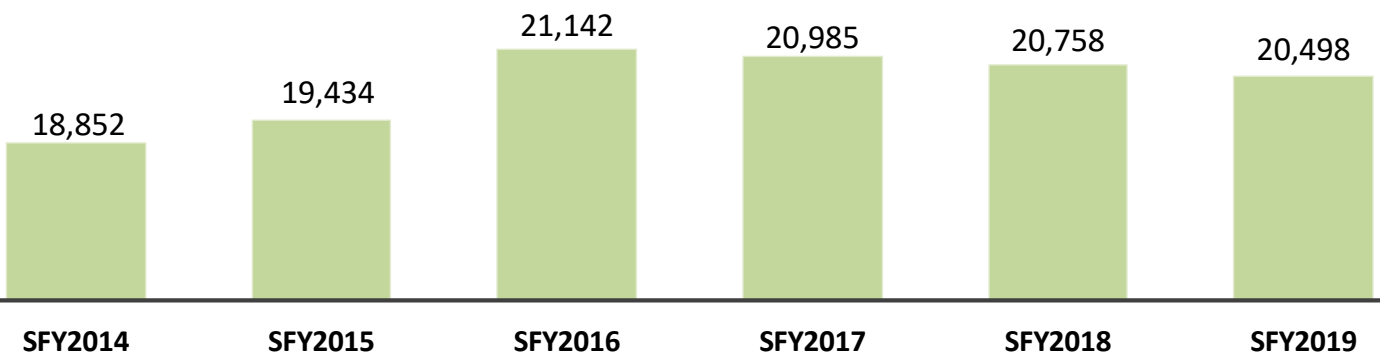
### Performance Measure: Child Safety Intakes & Interventions

In SFY 2019, FSD received 20,498 calls (*intakes*) about suspected child abuse or neglect. While the number of intakes has gone down slightly, the number of investigations has increased, in part due to the growing number of reports of physical and sexual abuse.

In SFY 2019, FSD initiated 6,087 child safety interventions:

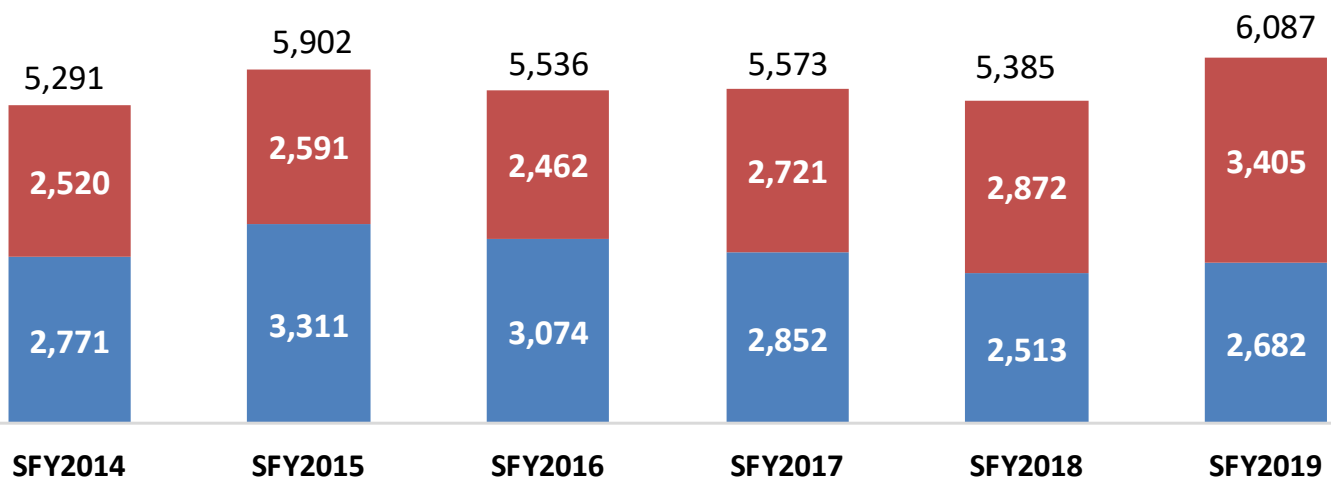
- 3,405 investigations
- 2,682 assessments

### Total Child Abuse/Neglect Intakes



### Child Safety Interventions by Type

■ Assessments      ■ Investigations



## OUTCOME: Families are safe, nurturing, stable and supported

### Performance Measure: Children & Youth in DCF Custody

A judge may order a child be taken into DCF custody if the child:

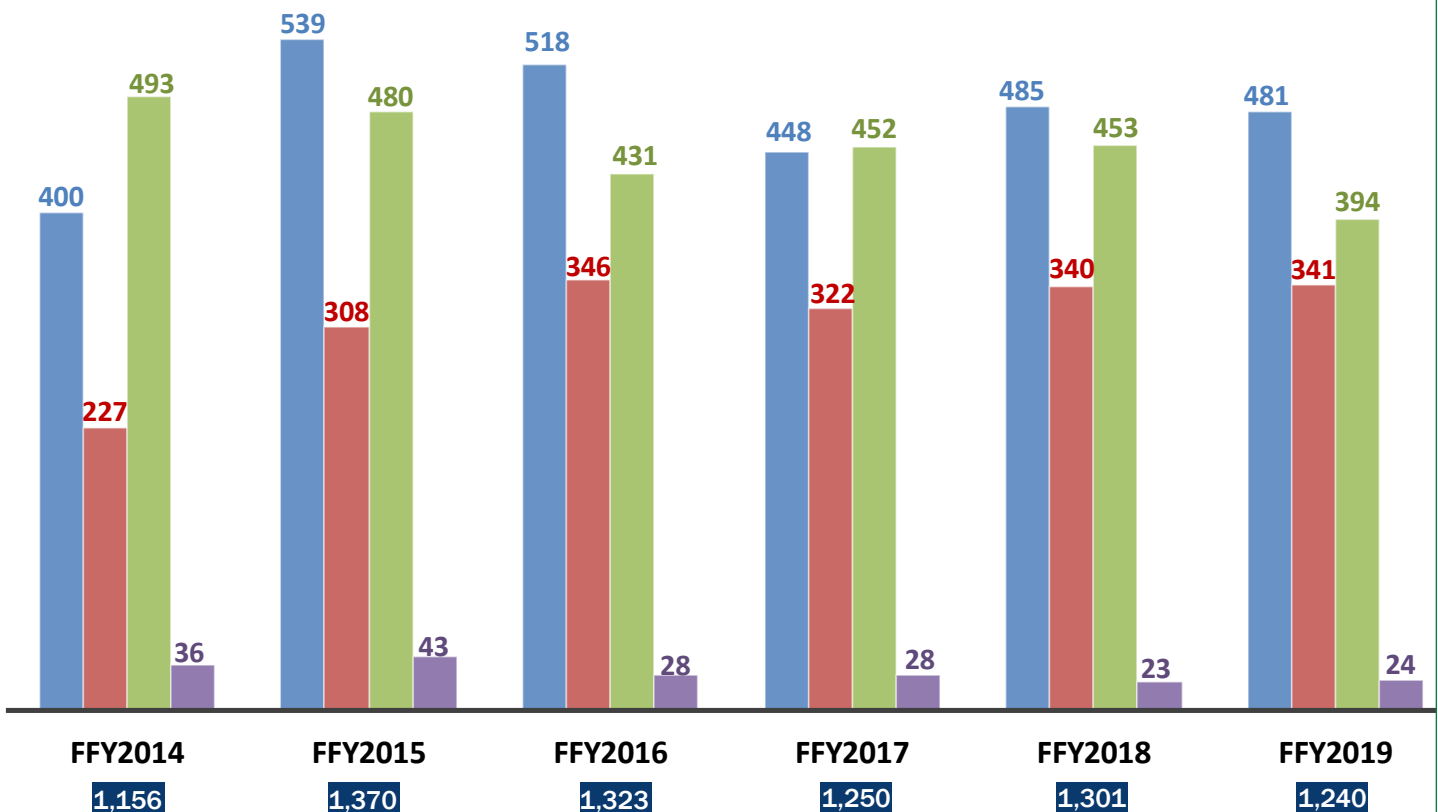
- ➔ Has been abused or neglected
- ➔ Is beyond or without parental control
- ➔ Has been adjudicated delinquent

The number of children, aged 0-5, in DCF custody remains high as a result of the opioid crisis. Based on data collected from FSD staff between 2014 and 2017, about 50% of the children from this age group came into custody because of opioid abuse in their families. This number decreased to 41% in 2018 and 40% in 2019, which is an encouraging trend. Another encouraging trend is the decrease in the number of children aged 12-17 coming into custody.

### CHILDREN IN CUSTODY BY AGE RANGE

As of Sept 30th

■ 0-5 ■ 6-11 ■ 12-17 ■ 18+



# OUTCOME: Families are safe, nurturing, stable and supported

## Performance Measure: Caseload Count by Type of DCF Involvement

Our ongoing caseload includes the following types of cases:

➤ Children in DCF custody:

When a judge places a child in the temporary custody of the Department for Children and Families because of concerns about the child’s safety and well-being.

➤ Children in the conditional custody of a parent or relative:

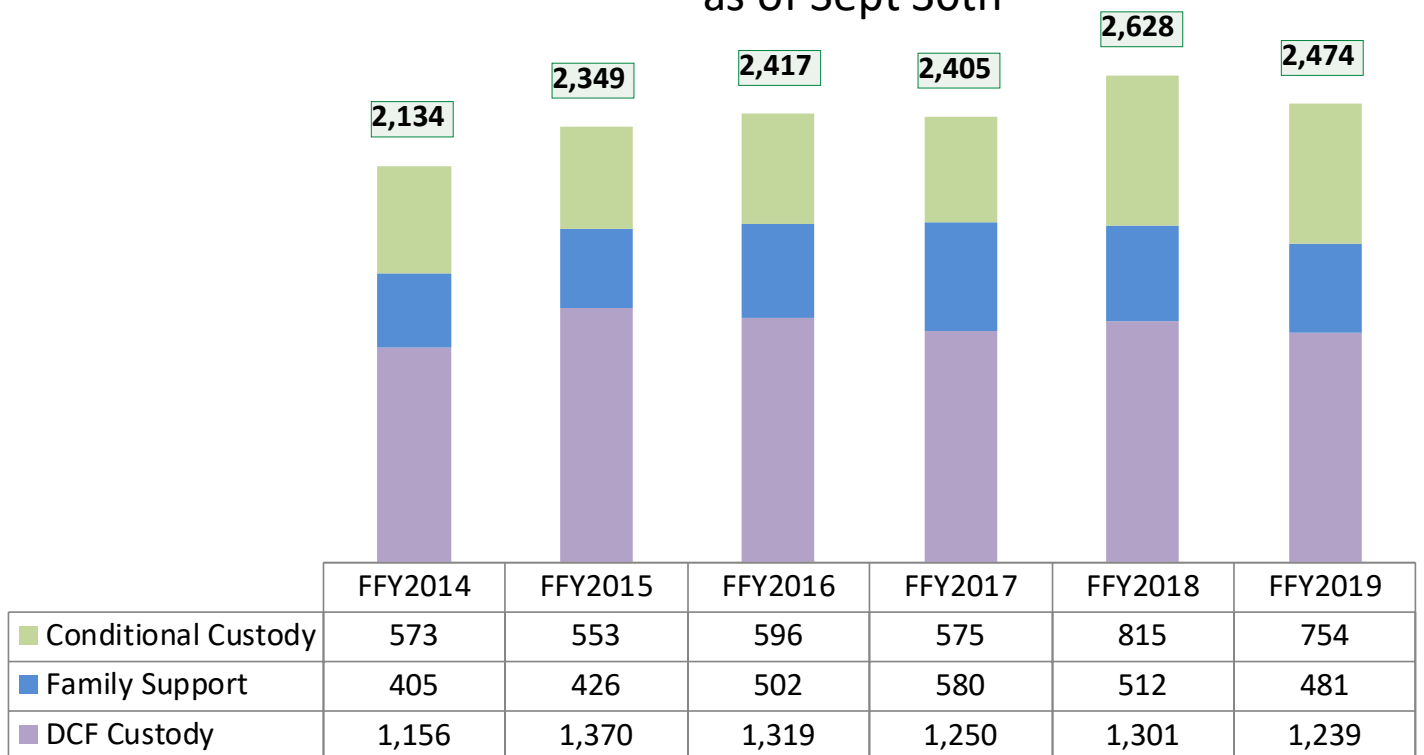
When a judge places a child in the conditional custody of someone other than DCF and orders DCF to remain involved— to supervise, provide services and ensure the child’s safety.

➤ Families getting ongoing support:

When a non-custody case is opened for ongoing services after an investigation or assessment determines there is a high to very high-risk of future maltreatment. This allows FSD to provide supports that help parents build their capacity to safely parent their children.

FSD saw a downward trend in custody cases reflective of the decrease in CHINS court filings (Children In Need of Care and Supervision).

## Caseload Count by Type of Agency Involvement as of Sept 30th





## OUTCOME: Families are safe, nurturing, stable and supported

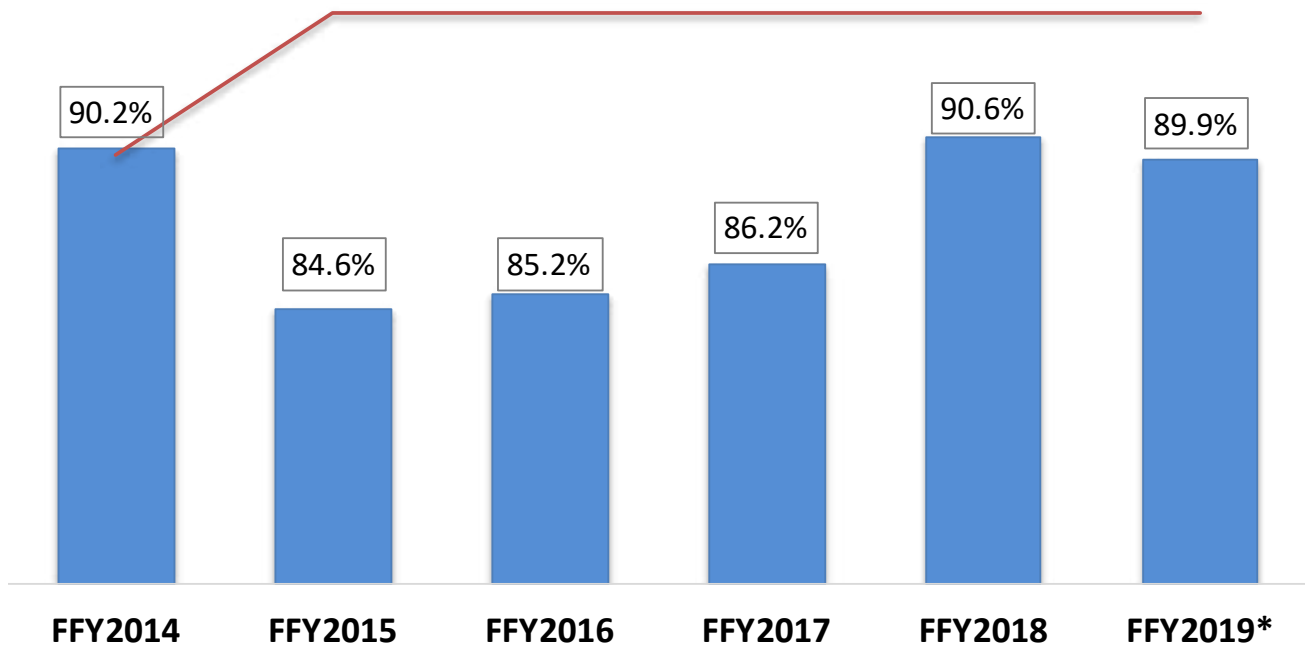
### Performance Measure: Social Worker Contact with Children in DCF Custody

Research shows that regular social worker contact with children and families leads to more positive outcomes for children in state custody.

- ➔ In FFY 2013 & 2014, the federal standard for face-to-face contact between social workers and children in custody was that 90% of children would be seen every month of the year.
- ➔ Starting in FFY 2015, the federal standard was increased to 95%.

We have struggled to meet the new, higher standard since it was first implemented due to high caseloads. Last legislative session, DCF received funding to add 14 additional positions, including 9 Family Services workers. These new positions have been staffed, improving FSD's capacity to complete all monthly face-to-face contact with children and youth in our care.

### Face-to-Face Contact Between Family Services Workers & Children in Custody



\* Unofficial at time of printing

## OUTCOME: Families are safe, nurturing, stable and supported

### Performance Measure: Children Placed in Licensed Kinship Foster Homes

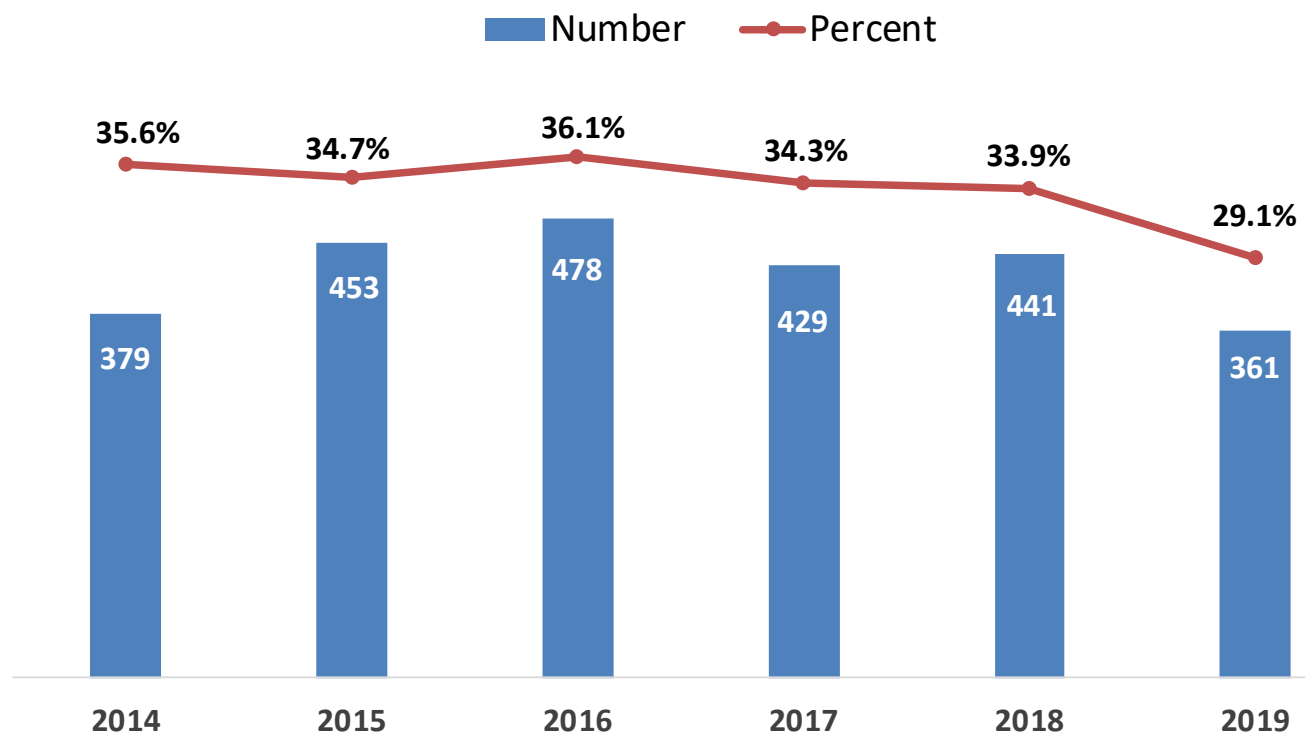
Children in DCF custody are placed with relatives or other known connections (*kinship foster homes*) whenever possible. To become licensed, kin must go through the same licensing process as other foster parents. This includes passing background checks and attending specialized training. Research shows that compared to being placed in non-related foster homes, children placed in kinship foster homes typically experience:

- ➔ Better behavioral development
- ➔ Better mental health functioning
- ➔ Better placement stability
- ➔ Closer ties with their birth parents and siblings
- ➔ Similar reunification rates

Kinship care has been steadily decreasing. In response to this trend, FSD has revised its kinship care policy and increased quality assurance efforts in order to turn the curve.

### Children in DCF Custody Placed with Relatives & Other Known Connections

as of Sept 30th



## OUTCOME: Youth successfully transition to adulthood

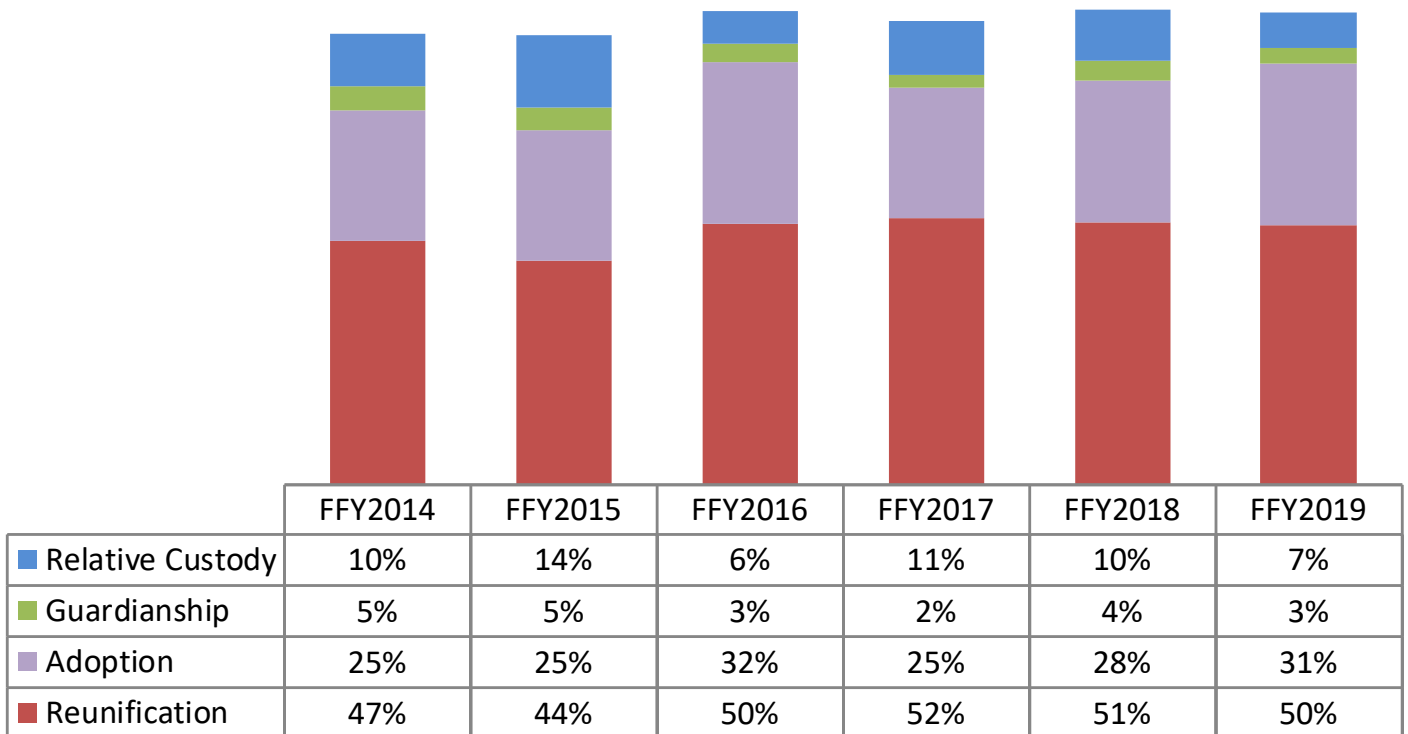
### Performance Measure: Children Who Exited DCF Custody To Permanence

The ultimate goal of state care is to provide children and youth with safe, permanent homes — ideally with their parents. From their first day in state care, Family Services workers typically work towards two goals at the same time (*concurrent planning*):

1. To return children home to their parents.
2. To help children secure other permanent placements — preferably with extended family members or known connections — if they cannot safely return home.

This helps FSD to achieve timely outcomes that respect children’s need for stability. Living in uncertainty and moving between different living situations can be extremely disruptive to children’s development and educational success.

### Children in DCF Custody Who Exited to Permanent Placements e.g., return home, permanent guardianship, adoption



## OUTCOME: Youth successfully transition to adulthood

### Performance Measure: Transitional Services Provided to Youth in DCF Custody

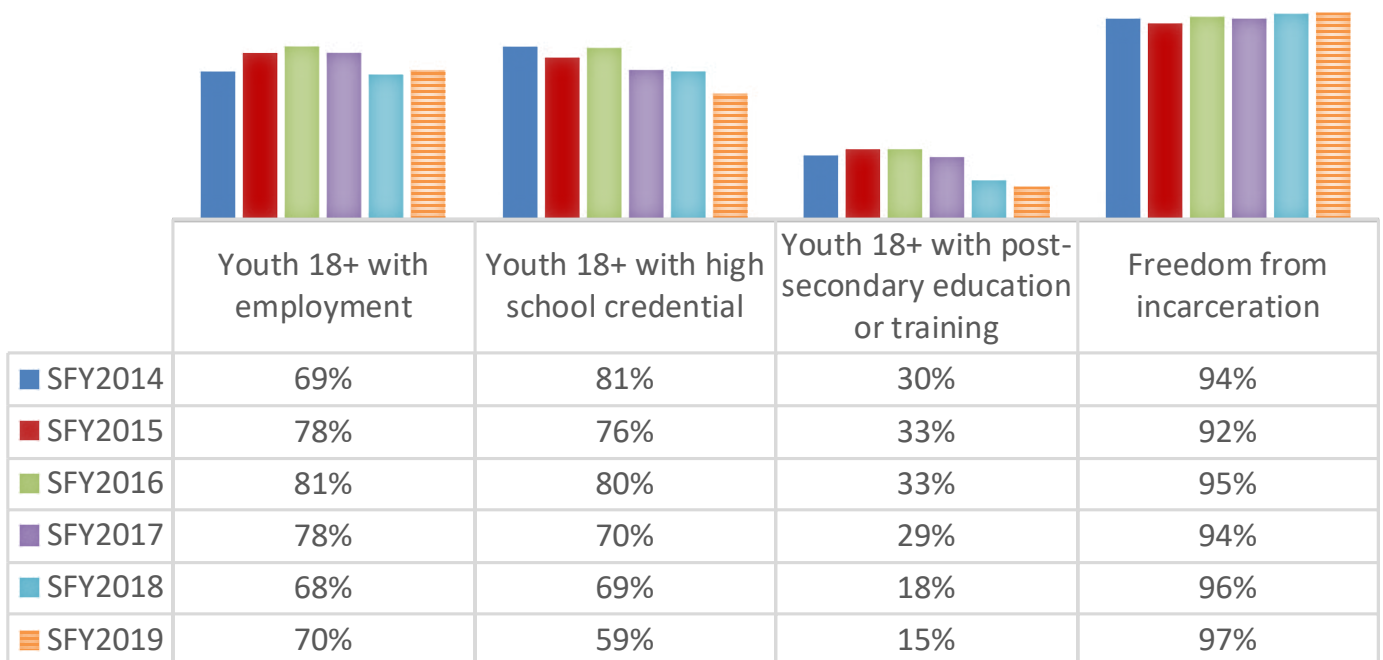
The Youth in Transition Act (Act 74), passed in 2007, helps youth leaving foster care to successfully transition into adulthood. The Act has created opportunities for youth to stay in supportive living situations while they complete high school; pursue training and higher education; and establish safe, independent housing.

Youth Development Program (YDP) services are delivered statewide through the Washington County Youth Service Bureau. Services include case management, extended care funding, help applying to post-secondary education and training, help finding a job/housing, life skills assessment and instruction and referral to community services.

Outcomes in SFY 2019 include:

- ➔ 529 DCF youth voluntarily engaged in YDP case management services
- ➔ 925 plans of care were developed, detailing the youth's life goals

## YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM OUTCOMES



**\*Starting in SFY 2018, the 18+ data includes youth age 17 who turned 18 during the reporting period, are still in high school and have not yet graduated.**

## Office of Child Support (OCS)

OCS improves children's economic security by:

1. Establishing, enforcing and modifying child support orders for children who don't live with both parents.
2. Establishing and enforcing medical insurance provisions in court orders.
3. Collecting, recording and distributing child support payments through the OCS Registry.
4. Establishing legal parentage.

### Populations Served

- Parents entitled to medical and child support
- Parents obligated to pay medical and child support
- Guardians entitled to medical and child support
- Parents who live in other states seeking assistance in Vermont courts

## OUTCOME: Families are safe, nurturing, stable and supported

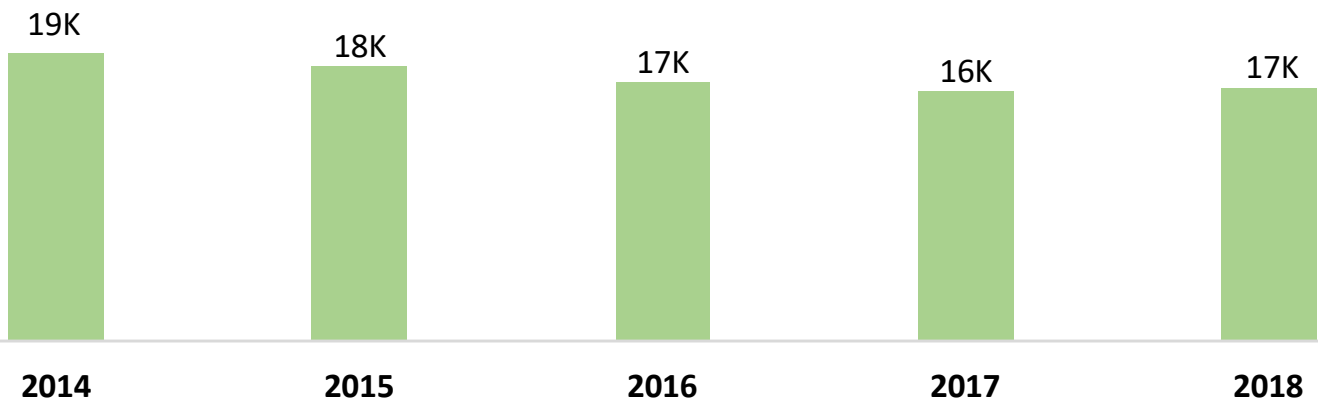
### Performance Measure: Child Support Cases & Collections

In FFY 2018, the Office of Child Support (OCS):

- Had 16,664 child support cases serving 19,622 children
- Collected \$37,616,915 in child support payments

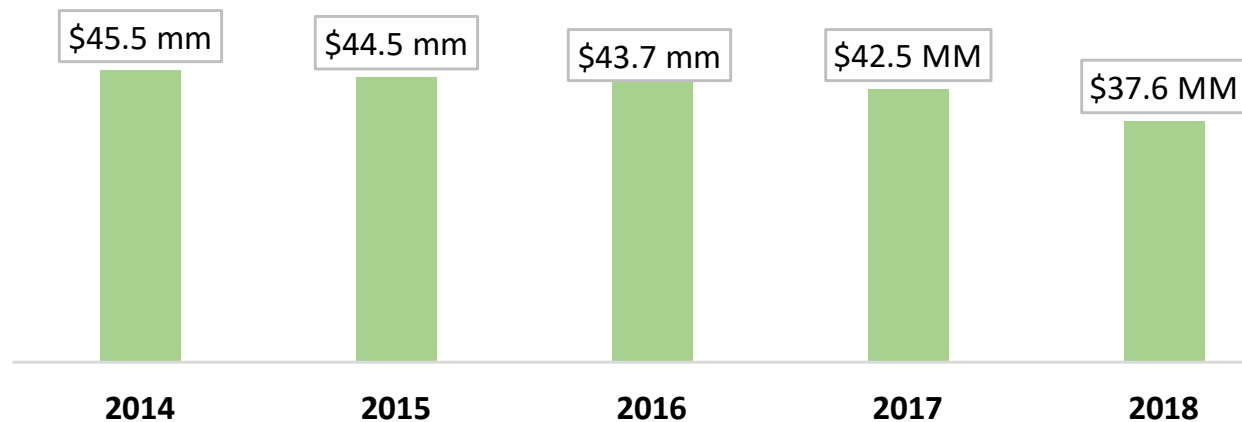
Child support is a key economic support for children. Parents who support their children financially are more likely to also support them in other ways.

### Child Support Cases by Federal Fiscal Year



### Child Support Collections by Federal Fiscal Year

MM = million



## OUTCOME: Families are safe, nurturing, stable and supported

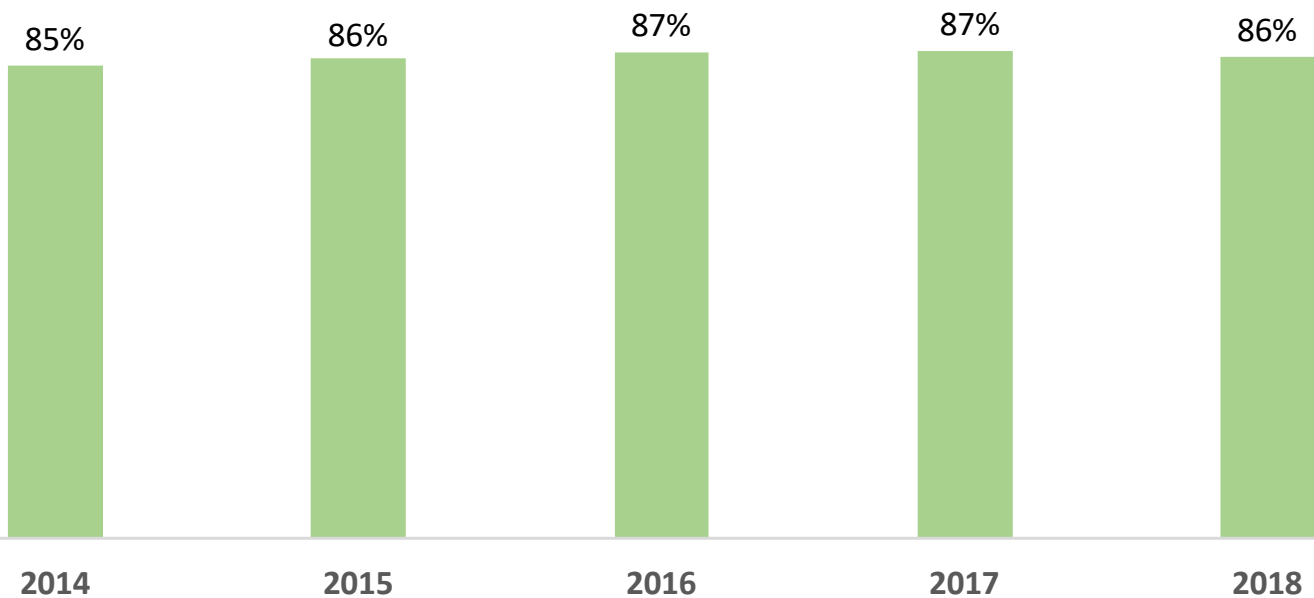
### Performance Measure: Percent of Child Support Obligations With Payments

Vermont OCS continues to rank among the top states at the national level for current support paid to children and families and payments on arrears. In FFY 2018, 86% of the OCS caseload with a child support obligation received a payment.

While collections continue to remain a primary performance measure, OCS has made strategic decisions to focus on working with all parents informally and impartially, striving to reach agreements that work for everyone. This focus enables staff to:

- ➔ Educate families about parentage and how to establish, enforce and modify child support orders
- ➔ Help families calculate support guidelines, determine and collect money owed and compose court filings
- ➔ Review families changes in circumstances, striving for realistic orders and consistent payments
- ➔ Refer family members to community and State programs, including employment and life skills services

### Cases With a Child Support Obligation that Received a Payment



## OUTCOME: Families are safe, nurturing, stable and supported

### Performance Measure: Work4Kids

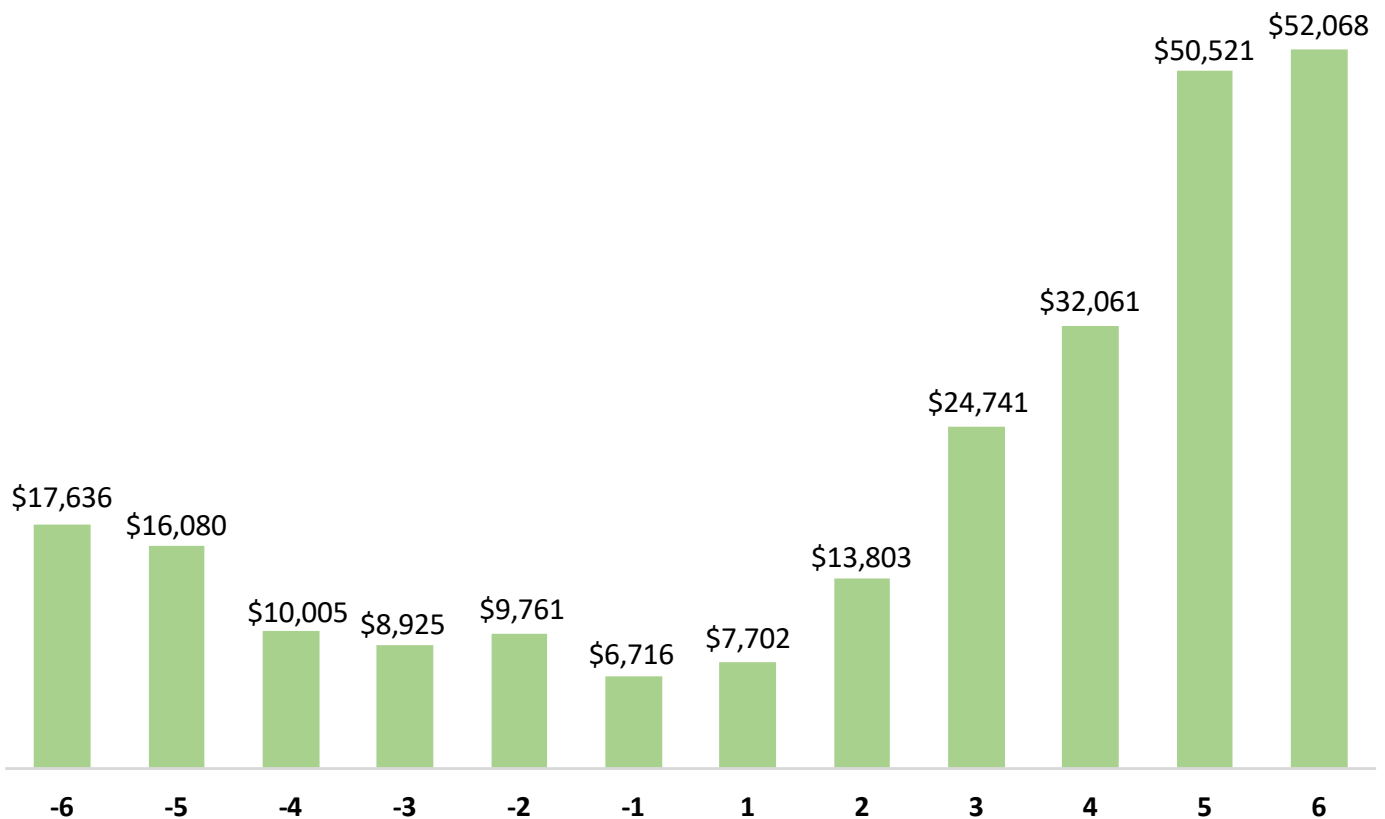
Work4Kids is a joint program between OCS, Voc Rehab, the Vermont Judiciary and other partners. It helps parents find and keep good paying jobs so they can meet their child support obligations.

- ➔ Since the program started in August 2012, over 1,000 people have participated.
- ➔ From August 2012 to October 2019, payments received from employers six months after people joined the program were cumulatively three times higher than payments received six months before.

While some participants with challenging barriers to employment did not find employment, they may have still received:

- ➔ A better understanding of their barriers and disabilities
- ➔ Strategies for coping with their barriers/disabilities
- ➔ Help applying for Social Security benefits (when appropriate)

### Employer Payments 6 months +/- W4K Referral Date





## OUTCOME: Vermont has open, effective, and inclusive government

### Performance Measure: Key Federal Performance Indicators

The indicators in the chart below are preliminary for FFY 2018. These federal performance metrics are based on IV-D cases only. They enable OCS to track outcomes over time and in comparison to child support programs across the country.

#### ➔ [% of Cases with Collections on Past Due Support](#)

When current support is not paid on time, the unpaid amounts, plus surcharges and penalties, become arrears still owed to the children. These unpaid balances may still be recovered for the custodial parent after the children turn 18.

#### ➔ [% of Ordered Child Support Paid](#)

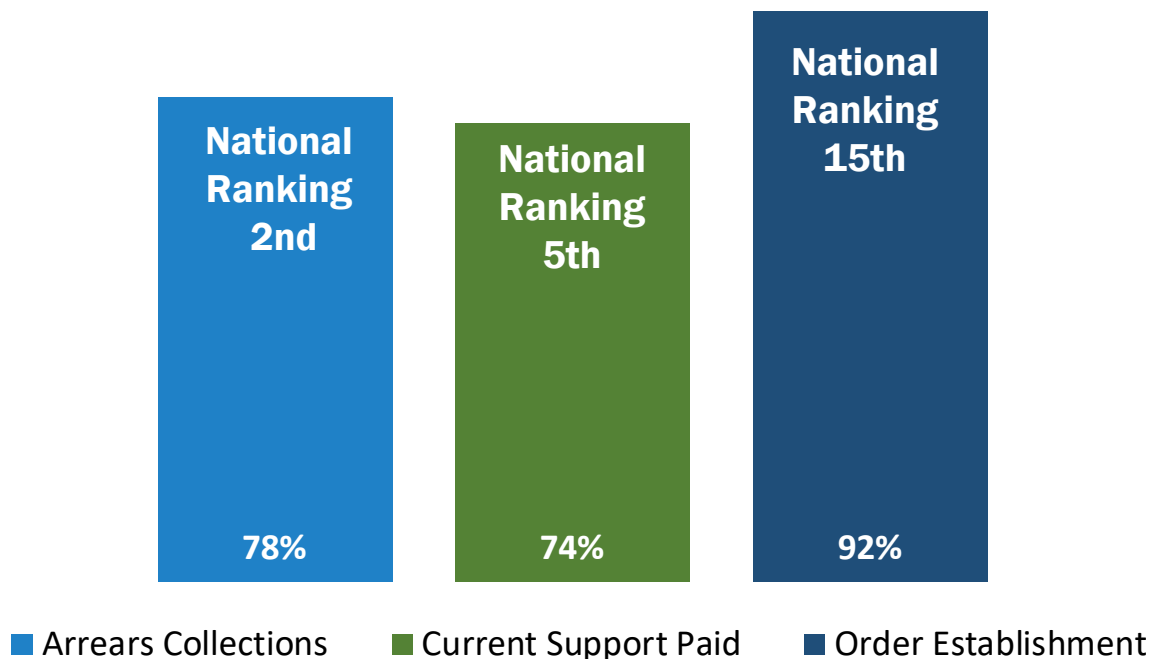
A key indicator of financial security for children entitled to child support is the percent of child support actually paid for children who are minors compared to the aggregate amount that should be paid in a year pursuant to court orders.

#### ➔ [% of Cases with Child Support Orders Established](#)

The Child Support Order is a court document that spells out who must pay support, who receives support for the children covered by the order, the amount to be paid and how often payments are made.

### Key Performance Measures

FFY 2018



# Office of Disability Determination Services (DDS)

DDS provides applicants with accurate medical eligibility decisions as quickly as possible, as governed by Social Security federal statutes, regulations and policy, with full and fair consideration of each applicant's situation and respect and concern for the individual's well-being and legal rights.

## Populations Served

1. People who have applied for disability benefits under:
  - a. Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)
  - b. Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
2. People who must be found disabled to qualify for Medicaid through the State of Vermont

Approximately 97% of the DDS workload is SSDI/SSI with all direct and indirect costs fully funded by the Social Security Administration (SSA). Non-SSA Medicaid cases are about 3% of the workload.

## Program Integrity

DDS also regularly performs Continuing Disability Reviews of people receiving disability benefits to determine whether they continue to meet the medical requirements.

## OUTCOME: Vermonters with disabilities live with dignity & independence

### Performance Measure: Accuracy Rate on Initial Cases

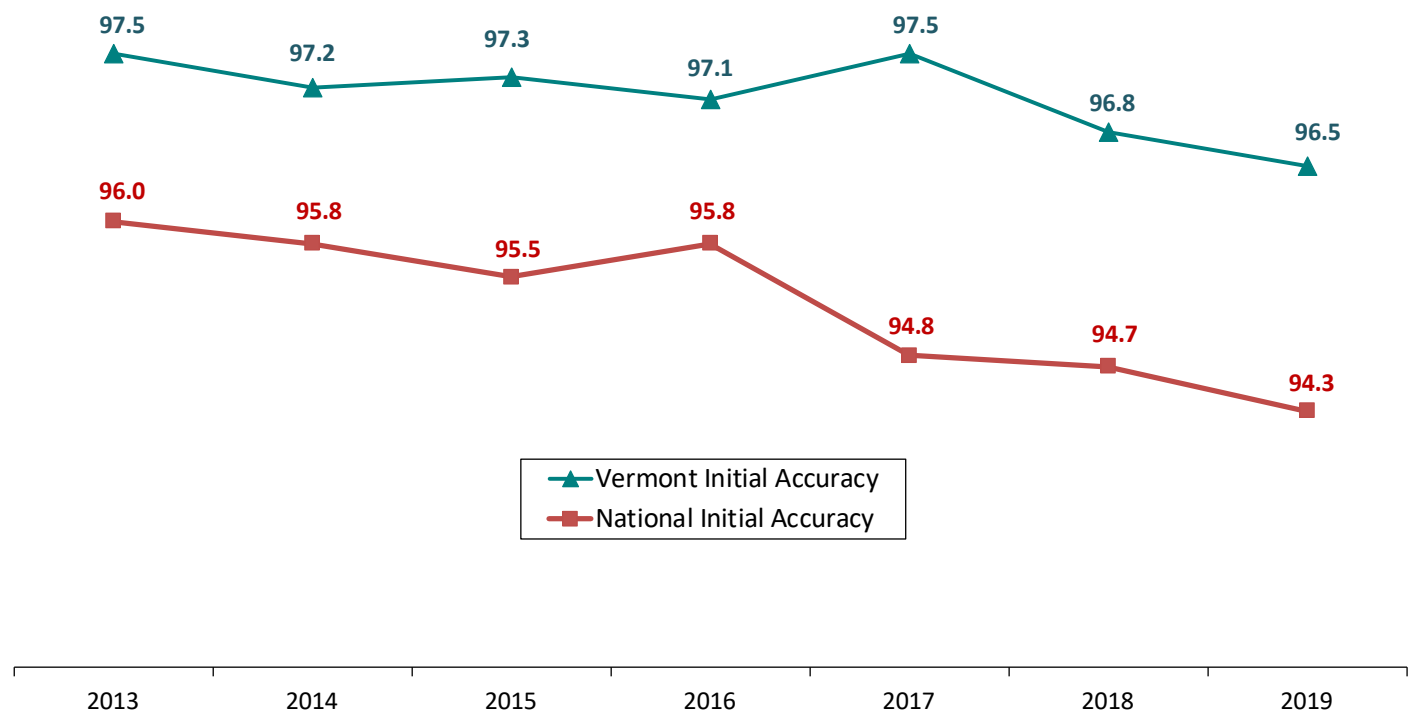
Disability benefits are vital to thousands of Vermonters with severe disabilities and serious illnesses. These benefits are a lifeline for many recipients who would live in poverty without them. DDS makes the medical decision on approximately 4,000 initial disability applications filed by Vermont residents every year.

One of the most important measures of performance is initial case accuracy. DDS must meet federal regulatory requirements, and mistakes may subject applicants to undue hardship. Erroneous determinations may also jeopardize program integrity and the proper use of public funds.

Maintaining high accuracy requires regular training, professional development and the mentoring of adjudicators and medical consultants. It also requires a robust quality assurance program that monitors key decision points in the case process.

- In FFY 2019, Vermont's initial case accuracy rate was the third highest in the nation with a rate of 96.5% — 2.2 percentage points higher than the national average.

**DDS PERFORMANCE ACCURACY: INITIAL CASES**  
PERCENTAGE



## OUTCOME: Vermonters with disabilities live with dignity & independence

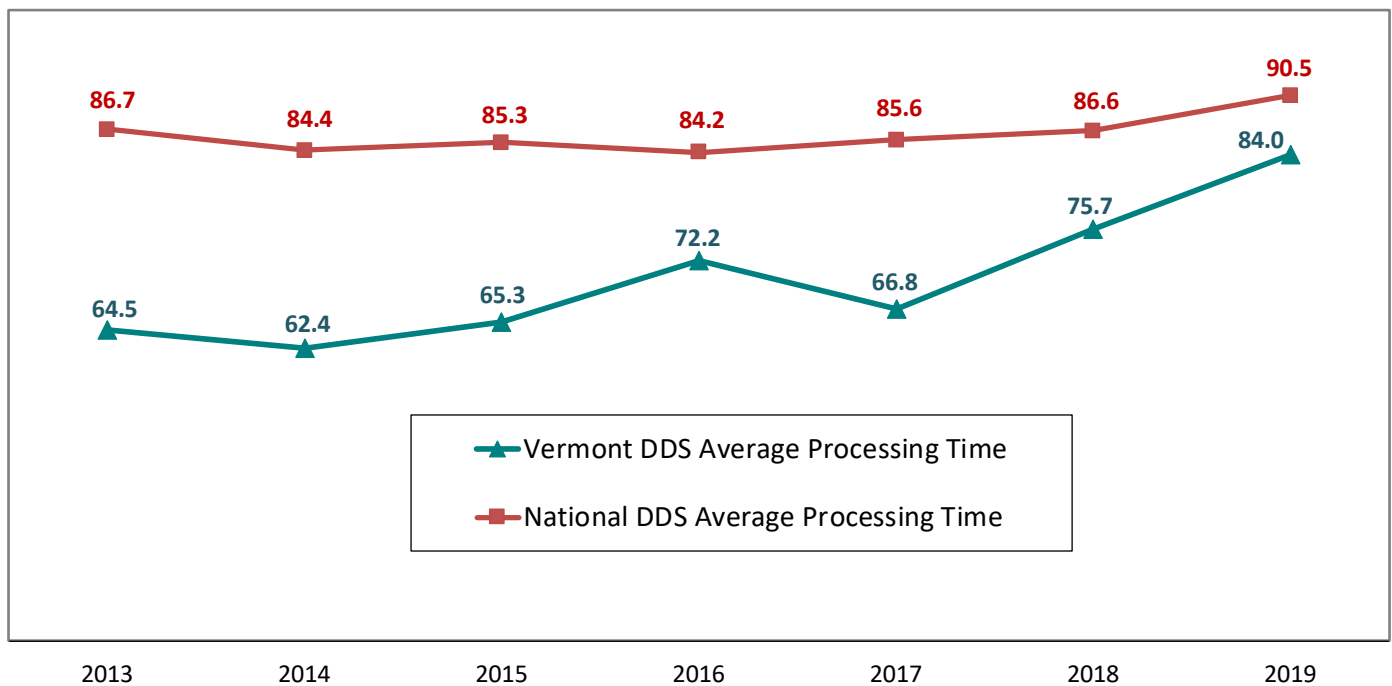
### Performance Measure: Average Processing Time for Initial Cases

Another important performance measure is the time it takes DDS to make an initial case decision. A long wait time can be a significant hardship for people with disabilities.

DDS continually works to achieve optimal casework timeliness by implementing process improvements and assessing staffing needs and workload trends. Having a sufficient number of fully trained staff to handle the workload is critical to achieving good processing times. Higher processing times generally reflect periods when federal funding for DDS replacement hiring is not adequate or state hiring approval is delayed. Once DDS hires, it takes two years for new adjudicative staff to complete training and become fully productive.

- ➡ In FFY 2019, DDS's case processing speed ranked in the top third of the DDS's in the country— 6.5 days faster than the national average. This helped disabled Vermonters to get the benefits to which they are entitled, faster.

**DDS AVERAGE PROCESSING TIME FOR INITIAL CASES: DAYS**



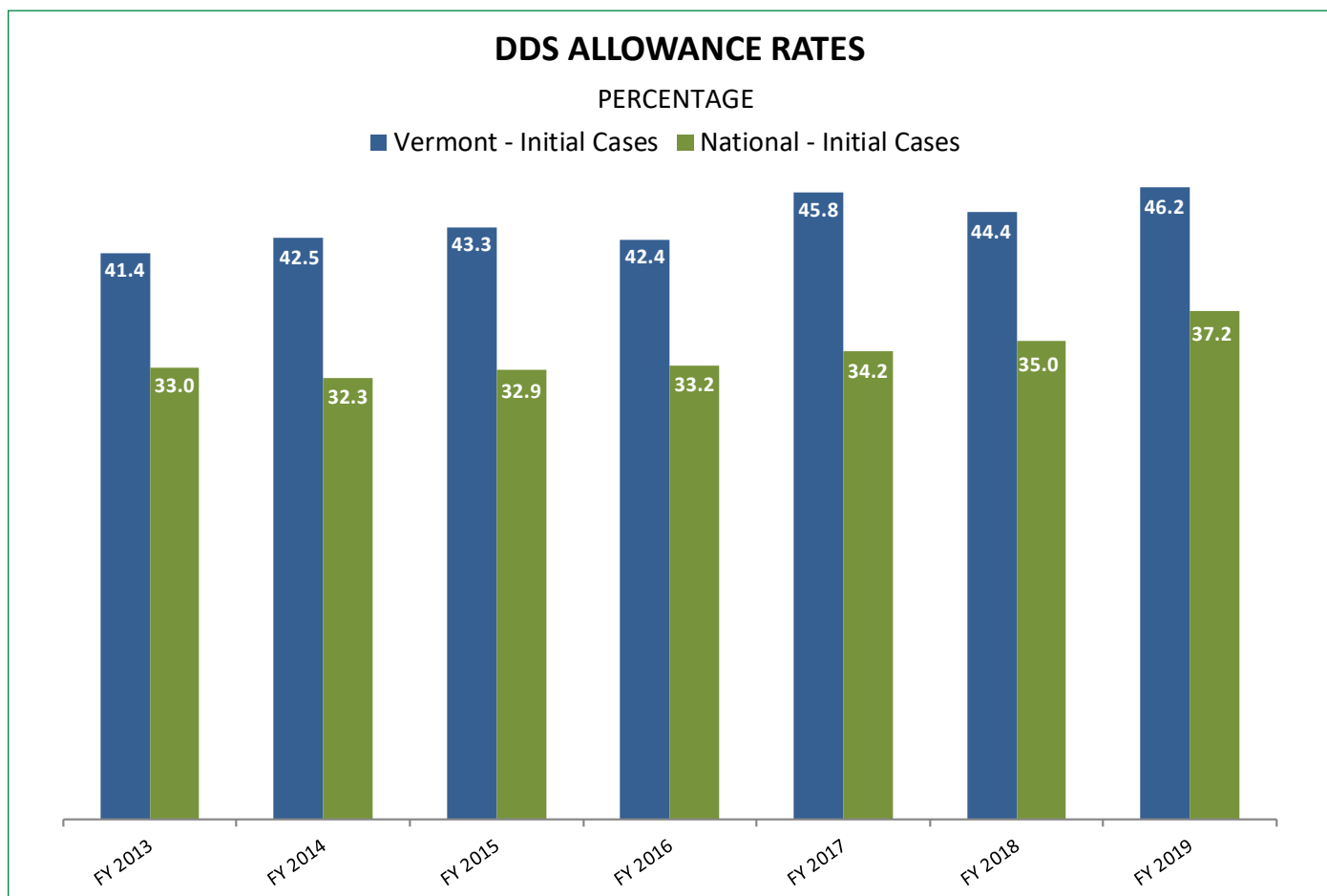
## OUTCOME: Vermonters with disabilities live with dignity & independence

### Performance Measure: Allowance Rates

The medical requirements for the Social Security and SSI programs are very stringent, requiring essentially complete, permanent (or long term) inability to perform any substantial work in the national economy.

Demographic, economic and other factors may affect allowance rates. DDS strives for accurate decisions rather than any specific number of allowances. However, when coupled with high accuracy, a high allowance rate is an indicator of high quality services provided to Vermonters with disabilities:

- ⇒ Giving full, fair consideration to each applicant's unique medical situation
  - ⇒ Getting benefits quickly to those who clearly meet the requirements
  - ⇒ Avoiding a lengthy appeals process whenever possible
- ➡ In FFY 2019, Vermont's initial case allowance rate – the percentage of determinations with a medical finding of disabled – was 46.2%. This was 9 percentage points higher than the national rate.



## OUTCOME: Vermonters with disabilities live with dignity & independence

### Performance Measure: Continuing Disability Reviews (CDR's)

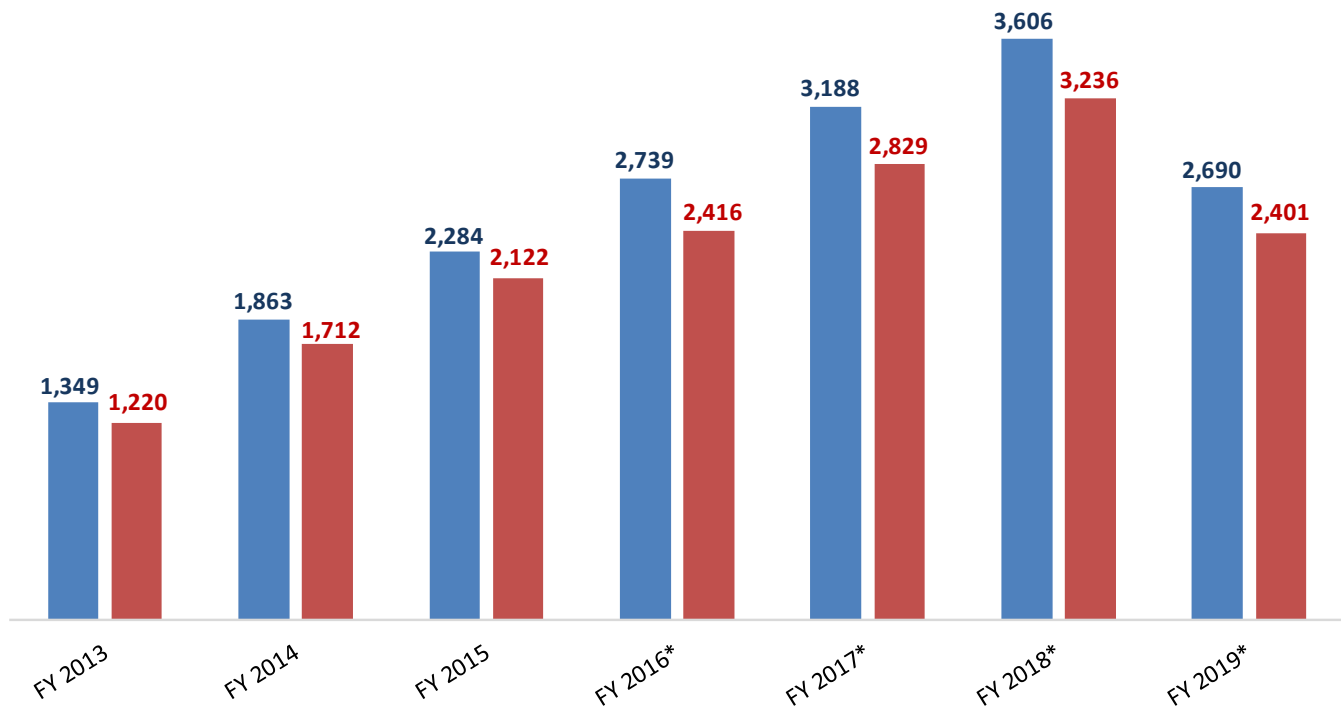
Each year, Social Security assigns Vermont a number of CDR's to process so they can ensure benefits continue or end appropriately. While the number assigned had been increasing in recent years, there were significantly fewer beneficiaries up for review in Vermont and from other states in 2019, compared to prior years.

The primary medical reason that benefits stop is that a person's condition has significantly improved to the point that he/she can perform substantial work activity. Most people with serious, long-term illnesses and impairments that initially qualified them for disability benefits will continue to be eligible.

Although only a small percentage of people stop receiving benefits in this process, CDR's are critical for program integrity. The program savings are significant – for every administrative dollar spent nationally on CDR, Social Security historically estimates a program savings of nine dollars.

### Number of Continuing Disability Reviews Performed

■ Total Reviews    ■ Total Continuances after All DDS Appeal Steps\*



\* Initial continuances, cessations and total reviews in FFY 2016 - 2019 include CDRs that VT did for other states. Since VT does not process appeals of other states' cases, the total continuances for these years do not reflect initial cessations that might have been reversed on appeal.

## **Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO)**

OEO administers federal and state funds that support the work of organizations that provide direct services to low-income Vermonters. These services include asset building and financial capability, emergency food shelves, emergency homeless shelters, rapid re-housing, homelessness prevention, supportive housing, job readiness training, micro business development, weatherization assistance and more.

### **Populations Served**

Most OEO programs target Vermonters with incomes at or below 125% of the federal poverty guidelines, though some programs range up to 200% of poverty or 80% of area median income.

## OUTCOME: Families are safe, nurturing, stable and supported

### Performance Measure: Family Supportive Housing (FSH)

Family Supportive Housing (FSH) was developed by the Agency of Human Services to reduce the incidence and duration of child homelessness in Vermont. Priority is given to families who have had multiple episodes of homelessness, have open cases for services with Family Services, and/or have at least one child under the age of six.

- ➔ In SFY 2019, FSH had providers in seven communities: Barre, Bennington, Brattleboro, Burlington, Rutland, St. Johnsbury and White River Junction/Hartford.
  - ➔ The providers formed partnerships with local affordable housing programs and private landlords to help participating families access stable housing.
  - ➔ The service coordinators worked with Family Services, Reach Up, mental health and substance abuse treatment and recovery providers and others to coordinate services to meet the families' needs.
- ➔ In SFY 2019, FSH served:
  - ➔ 484 individuals. Of these, 238 were children under the age of 6.
  - ➔ 210 families. Of these:
    - 58 (42%) had an open case with FSD
    - 95 (45%) were on Reach Up at the time of enrollment
- ➔ As of June 30, 2019:
  - ➔ 137 families were still enrolled
  - ➔ 104 families were stably housed
  - ➔ 13 families had a voucher and were searching for housing
  - ➔ 13 families had exited the program successfully AND were stably housed

*"I worked with a client who had bed bugs twice and incurred a big debt to the housing authority. She had a significant distrust of banks. I encouraged her to enroll in the FSH Savings Account program and had to accompany her to the bank a few times. Once she enrolled, she began making regular contributions. I worked with her on a specific goal and she began paying off the debt to the housing authority which allowed her to get placed on the Section 8 waitlist." ~ FSH Service Coordinator in Burlington*

To learn more, read the Family Supportive Housing Program's Annual Report for SFY 2019 at <http://dcf.vermont.gov/oer/reports>.



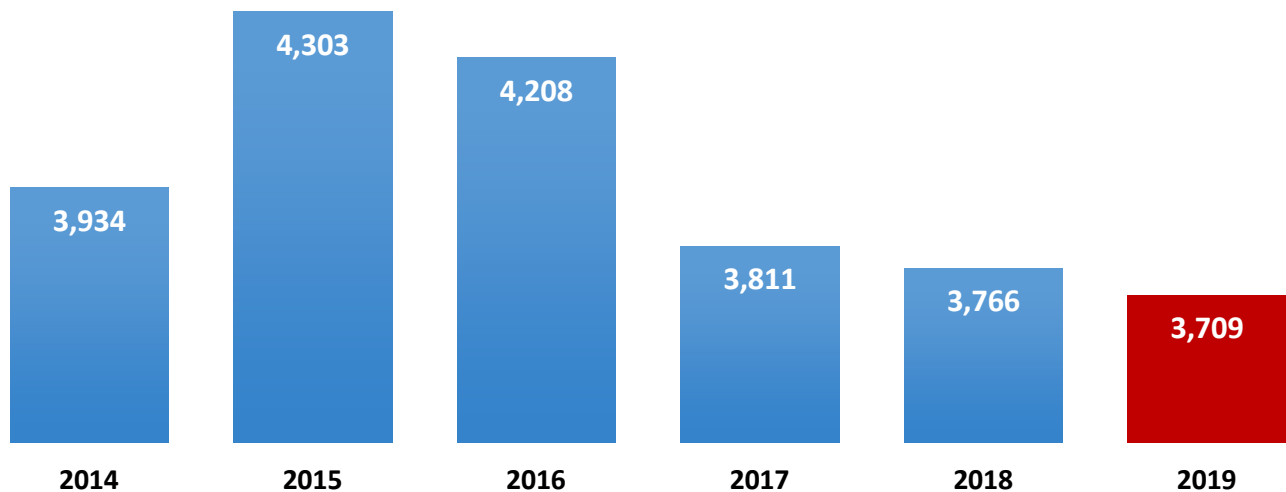
## OUTCOME: Vermonters are healthy

### Performance Measure: Housing Opportunity Grant Homeless Shelters

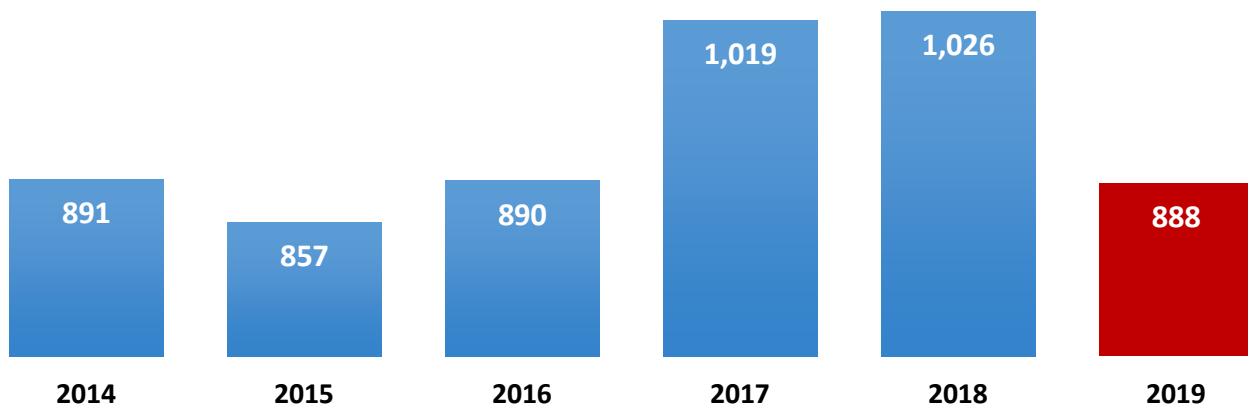
The Housing Opportunity Grant Program supports basic operations and essential services at 39 overnight emergency shelters in Vermont.

- ➔ The number of persons sheltered decreased slightly in SFY 2019.
- ➔ The number of children sheltered decreased, due in part to a reduced capacity to serve families with children.

### Publicly-Funded Homeless Shelters: Persons Sheltered



### Publicly-Funded Homeless Shelters: Children Sheltered



To learn more, read the Housing Opportunity Grant Program's Annual Report for SFY 2019 at <http://dcf.vermont.gov/oer/reports>.

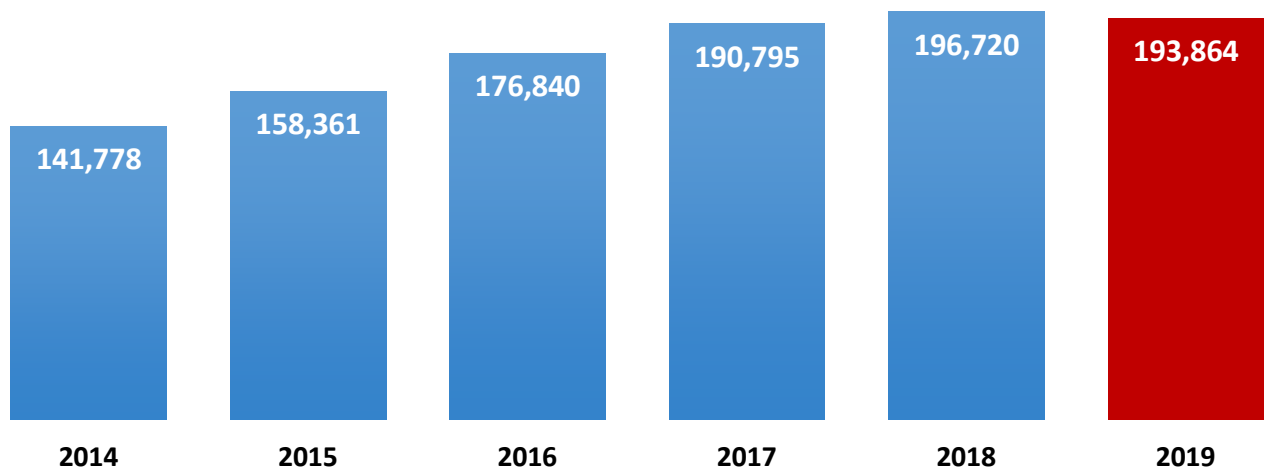
## OUTCOME: Vermonters are healthy

### Performance Measure: Housing Opportunity Grant Homeless Shelters

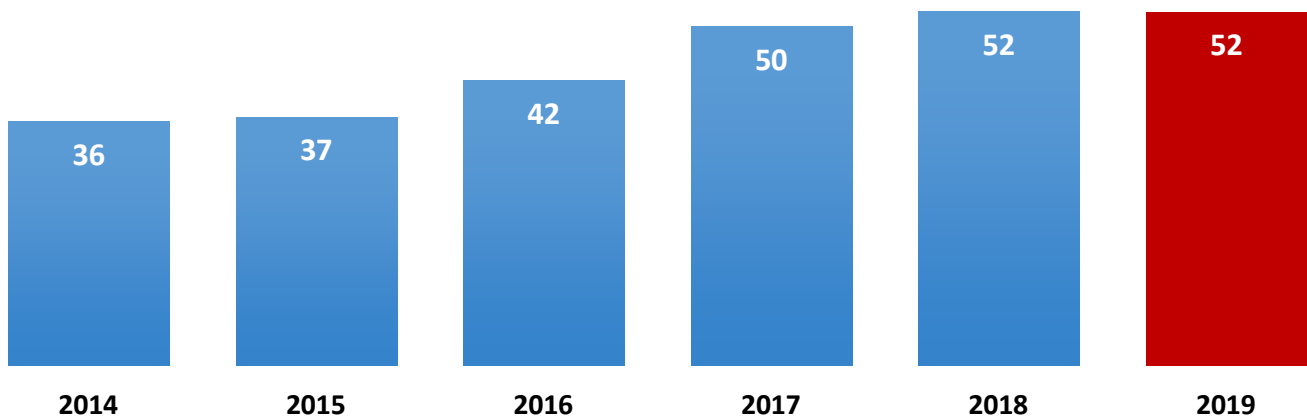
While the total number of persons sheltered and bednights decreased, the average length of stay remained the same as last year — the highest level in more than 17 years

This is largely due to the significant barriers people face when trying to secure stable housing. This includes a lack of available rentals, the high cost of rent, and the tenant history and low incomes of people exiting shelter.

### Publicly-Funded Homeless Shelters: Shelter Bednights



### Publicly-Funded Homeless Shelters: Average Length of Stay



## OUTCOME: Families are safe, nurturing, stable and supported

### Performance Measure: Low-Income Homes Weatherized

The Weatherization Assistance Program helps lower-income residents save fuel and money by improving the energy efficiency and health and safety of their homes. This leaves them with more money to pay for food, housing, health care, childcare and other necessities. Priority is given to older Vermonters, people with disabilities, families with children, households getting Fuel Assistance and households with higher energy bills.

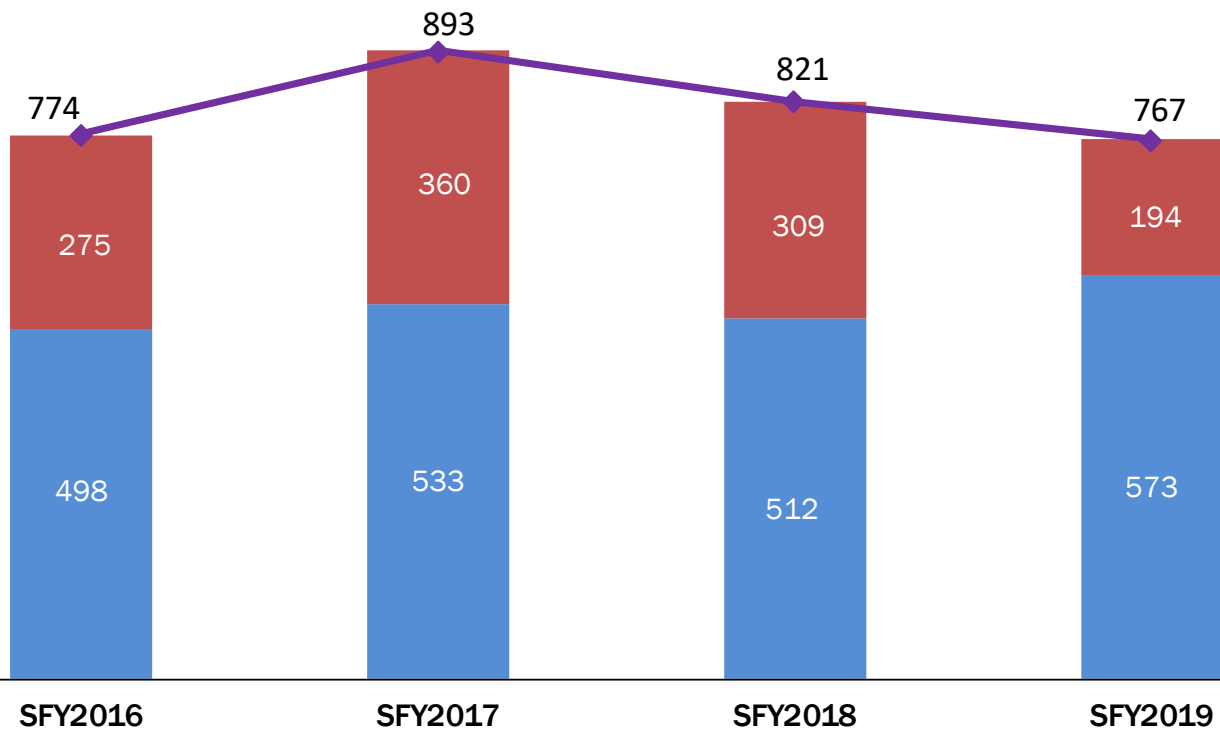
In SFY 2019:

- ➔ The program weatherized 573 single-family homes and 194 buildings with 2+ units
- ➔ The average investment per unit was \$10,173
- ➔ The average energy savings was 34%

The reduction in weatherization of 2+ unit buildings is the result of adjustments made to the program to account for the higher costs associated with weatherizing a single-family unit versus a 2 + unit building. Before this adjustment, there was an inherent bias in the program to weatherize more 2 + unit buildings.

### Low-Income Weatherization Program

Single-Family Units   2+ Unit Buildings   Total Units Completed



## OUTCOME: Families are safe, nurturing, stable and supported

### Performance Measure: Vermont Matched Savings Program

OEO provides funds to the five Community Action Agencies in Vermont for this matched savings program for low-income Vermonters. The goal is to help people invest in their first homes, business, post-secondary education, home repairs or vehicles needed for work.

Participants save up to \$1,000 of earned income, which is then matched by state funds. Federal funds were also used to match participants' savings until (and including) SFY 2017. Starting in SFY 2018, the program has relied solely on state funds.

In SFY 2019:

- ➔ 97,000 in state funds was used for match
- ➔ 110 people increased their savings
- ➔ 22 participants withdrew a total of \$49,009 to invest in small businesses
- ➔ 5 participants withdrew a total of \$12,350 to buy their first homes
- ➔ 5 participants withdrew a total of \$13,070 to pursue education/job training

*Lack of income means you don't get by. Lack of assets means you don't get ahead.*

### SINCE 2001:

**1,071** LOW-INCOME VERMONTERS

SAVED AN AVERAGE OF

**\$858** EACH OVER 2 YEARS

SAVINGS WERE MATCHED **2:1** TO HELP THEM

**INVEST \$2,819,526**

IN THEIR OWN FUTURES



**Home**  
224



**Business**  
605



**Education**  
257

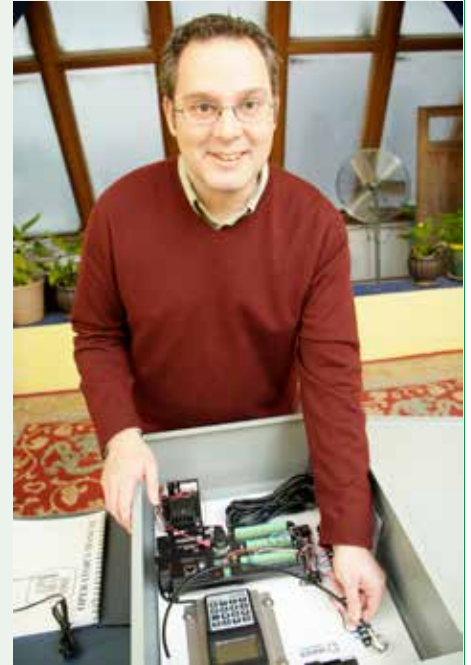
## OUTCOME: Vermont has a prosperous economy

### Performance Measure: Micro Business Development Program (MBDP)

MBDP provides training and assistance to help low-income Vermonters start and grow businesses. Assistance includes one-to-one business counseling, business training, networking opportunities, business plan development and financial management training.

In SFY 2019:

- ➔ 646 low-income Vermonters participated:
  - ➔ 26 unemployed participants created jobs for themselves
  - ➔ 59 participants started new businesses
  - ➔ 36 participants expanded their businesses
- ➔ 77 FTE jobs were created for participants and others
- ➔ \$565,657 in capital was leveraged



***Business ownership is a proven pathway out of poverty, helping to increase income, create wealth and move people off public assistance.***

### SINCE 2010:

**4,183** LOW-INCOME VERMONTERS

PARTICIPATED IN MBDP

**682** NEW BUSINESSES WERE STARTED

**483** BUSINESSES WERE EXPANDED

**872.2** JOBS (FTE) WERE CREATED

**\$10,509,303**

IN CAPITAL WAS LEVERAGED



# **Department for Children and Families**

Fostering the healthy development,  
safety, well-being and  
self-sufficiency of Vermonters

<http://dcf.vermont.gov>