

# 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.

**III. An Overview of the CHINS Process and the Impact of the Opioid Epidemic.** Justice Karen Carroll 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: <https://www.vermontjudiciary.org/sites/default/files/documents/Chins%20Procedure%20Powepoint.pptx> 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%202018pptx.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.