



STATE OF VERMONT
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
JOINT LEGISLATIVE JUSTICE
OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE AND JOINT
LEGISLATIVE CHILD PROTECTION
OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

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MEMORANDUM

To: Joint Fiscal Committee

From: Rep. Ann Pugh, Chair of Joint Legislative Child Protection Oversight Committee, and Senator Dick Sears, Chair of Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee

Date: November 16, 2020

Subject: Long-term plan for justice-involved youths

Pursuant to 2020 Act No. 154, Sec. E.316, the Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee met jointly with the Joint Legislative Child Protection Oversight Committee on November 12, 2020 to review the Department for Children and Families' long-term plan for Vermont justice-involved youths in the custody of the Department for Children and Families who require locked, secure placement. After reviewing the plan, including cost comparisons, capacity, and expertise evaluations, the Committees unanimously voted to approve the Department's proposal to contract with the Becket organization to operate a secure placement facility for youths who require a locked setting in which to reside and receive treatment.

In connection with this approval, the Committees specified the following conditions for the proposal:

- the Department work with local government where the new proposed facility is, including holding duly warned community meetings regarding the use of the facility
- juveniles in the custody of the State shall always reside and receive treatment in the least restrictive environment
- the use of the facility shall be limited to justice-involved youth and shall employ a "no eject/no reject" policy
- the Department shall ensure that a person with PhD level clinical experience has oversight over the facility and program
- in negotiating the lease, the Department ensure that the money expended in improving the infrastructure of the facility will be recaptured by the State if the plan for the facility falls through

The Committees did not support a motion to require that the Becket facility be staffed by State employees. The Committees do, however, request that the Joint Fiscal Committee

and the Department explore the proposal put forward by the Vermont State Employees Association with respect to staffing the facility for justice-involved youth. If that proposal is rejected, the Committees request that consideration be given to Becket hiring Vermont State employees formerly employed at the Woodside facility.