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In this newsletter you will also find an article written by AHS Secretary, Hal Cohen, explaining how IFS is helping the Agency to shape statewide service delivery and payment reforms. Many questions have arisen over the past few months about what payment reform in the state will mean for IFS.  Secretary Cohen's piece provides an explanation of the All-Payer Model, Medicaid Pathway and the IFS intersection.  **In partnership, Carol, Cheryle and Susan IFS Management Team** | | | | | | | |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | **Farewell to Team Members**  **Kate Dearth**, MSW Field Student Kate spent the past nine months completing her internship with IFS.  For those of you who had the pleasure of meeting Kate she brought a fresh energy, perspective and critical-thinking to all she did.  She dedicated her time to assisting in the Agency’s "Turn the Curve" effort to reduce the number of children going into residential care, completing a deep dive into the situations specific to young children who have been placed in residential over the past year and creating recommendations to address the issues she and her colleague, Shawn Vetere, found in their research. Kate will be greatly missed at IFS and we wish her the best in her final year of the MSW program at UVM.      **Carolynn Hatin,** IFS Business Administrator Carolynn will be departing IFS on Friday, April 29th. Carolynn has been with IFS for over two years now and to say she has been invaluable would be an understatement.  Carolynn had a magic for holding many details that assisted all of us in being able to move IFS forward. She coordinated schedules, took exceptional meeting notes, designed the new IFS website, got the newsletters out. She did all of this and more, with a constant smile and positive, can-do attitude. Carolynn has taken a position at UVM where she will be closer to home and her family.  We will all feel Carolynn’s absence, UVM has the good fortune to have her joining their team.  **Cindy Walcott, Deputy Commissioner, Family Services** Cindy will be retiring from state government after more than 40 dedicated years with Family Services. Cindy has been involved with IFS since the beginning of the integration efforts. She is a member of the State Leadership Team and has been relied upon for her exceptional ability to take complicated information and discern what the important message is and how to frame it in a clear, concise way. She is a colleague many rely on for her knowledge, perspective and calm in the face of change and challenge.  There are not enough words to express the gap that will exist upon Cindy’s departure.  We hope her summer is filled with sun, calm and the gratitude of the many staff, families, partners, and friends who she has touched over the years.  https://gallery.mailchimp.com/4e39b5c2a0fb69f761f052cc7/images/be89b5bd-5c7d-4494-81b7-d831839e06e2.jpg  **IFS Milestones** Payment and Finance Reform—What does this all mean for IFS?  **A message from Hal Cohen, Secretary, Agency of Human Services**  Last month I attended an Integrating Family Services (IFS) Stakeholder meeting to share the Agency’s commitment to IFS and to hear from IFS regions about their experiences using this approach. There were over 90 participants and it was exciting and encouraging to see how IFS is developing.    The Agency is leading, and participating, in major statewide delivery and payment reforms. The two IFS pilot regions of Addison and Franklin/Grand Isle are great leaders for integration in our system; they are showing us all what can be accomplished through provider partnerships and a movement away from the fee-for-service payment and service delivery model. I want to thank them for their leadership and innovation, and take a moment to tell you about how IFS is helping the Agency to shape statewide delivery and payment reforms.  [Click here to read more](https://gallery.mailchimp.com/4e39b5c2a0fb69f761f052cc7/files/A_message_from_Hal_Cohen.pdf).   **https://gallery.mailchimp.com/4e39b5c2a0fb69f761f052cc7/images/29e94b73-2a6b-4ebd-b638-cf0b6b702e5b.jpg**  **IFS & Social Media:  New Platforms for Change** Let's Start Tweeting!!! https://gallery.mailchimp.com/4e39b5c2a0fb69f761f052cc7/images/fce63fdf-6b2b-4349-891c-6dc452433f9d.jpg  It's perhaps no secret by now that social media is no longer only for individual people, but is also used by businesses, organizations, causes, and even governments as an additional way to share information, spread awareness, and make connections. IFS has been exploring platforms we can use to share more about the work we are doing.  To that end we are excited to announce that you can now follow IFS . . . on Twitter!   That’s right – IFS has made its first foray into social media. For folks who may be less familiar, Twitter is an online platform where you can post written messages of up to 140 characters, as well as share photos and video, to your profile which can be seen and shared by other users you connect with (also known as your “followers”). This site is particularly well-used by celebrities, public officials, organizations, as well as state & federal agencies. Some familiar faces on Twitter include our own Governor Peter Shumlin (@GovPeterShumlin), Senator Bernie Sanders (@BernieSanders), the Vermont Department of Health (@healthvermont), the Department for Children and Families (@VermontDCF), and the Agency of Human Services itself (@VermontAHS). And now, IFS!   We are excited to begin offering this new access point to share about the work we are doing on behalf of children, youth, and families in Vermont. If you have any questions or suggestions for our page, please connect with the account’s moderator: Cheryle Bilodeau at [Cheryle.Bilodeau@vermont.gov](mailto:Cheryle.Bilodeau@vermont.gov) – oh, and remember to follow us at **@IFSVermont.** Happy Tweeting!  **Update on "Turn the Curve" regarding Children & Youth in Residential Settings**  In the fall of 2015, information was shared about how AHS and IFS had begun “Turn the Curve”, an initiative aimed at addressing the high number of children and youth in residential care settings with the mission of reducing those numbers by identifying strategies that will allow more children and youth to be placed and supported in settings within their home communities. Building our communities’ capacities to better meet the needs of children and their families is a long-term goal, and in order to enact the most meaningful changes that will support this vision, the “Turn the Curve” has continued its efforts in three primary areas: the ongoing activities of its Advisory Committee, implementing a series of Focus Groups, as well as completing a several months long data dive into the lives of ten children placed in residential settings. Read on to learn more about each of these efforts.  [Click here to read more.](https://gallery.mailchimp.com/4e39b5c2a0fb69f761f052cc7/files/Update_on.docx)  **Youth Thrive and the Strengthening Families Approach**  Last month we shared an update about the Strengthening Families (SF)**TM** approach and how it has been accepted as one of the guiding principles of IFS.  While SF focuses on younger children, Youth Thrive™ is both a research-informed framework based on a synthesis of research on positive youth development, resilience, neuroscience, stress and impact of trauma on brain development, and the name of the Center for the Study of Social Policy’s national initiative to improve the well-being outcomes of all youth and young adults (ages 9-26), with a particular focus on those in, or transitioning from, foster care. Like the Strengthening Families (SF)**TM** framework, the Youth Thrive **TM** framework is focused on building the following protective and promotive factors: **Youth resilience****Social connections****Knowledge of adolescent development****Concrete supports in times of need****Social and emotional competence** In regards to the Strengthening Families (SF)**TM**  approach, IFS and the Department for Children and Families, Child Development Division have convened a Strengthening Families Leadership Council.  This council is charged with advancing a vision for adoption and implementation of SF. It will be important as we move forward with the Strengthening Families Leadership council to determine the most effective way to also integrate Youth Thrive **TM** in Vermont in collaboration with the Vermont Coalition for Runaway and Homeless Youth, Youth Development Program and other youth-serving agencies and programs in Vermont.  For more information on Youth Thrive, visit <http://www.cssp.org/reform/child-welfare/youththrive>  **New IFS Website has launched!**  We are excited to announce the new IFS website which can be found at <http://ifs.vermont.gov/>.  The new website uses the template also used by most AHS departments.  The new website is also more agile, interactive, and is easier to read and navigate.  Incredible thanks and kudos go to Carolynn Hatin, for her development of this site.  **IFS Efforts Support Integration** **Teaming Initiative-Providing Integrated Services for Families with Complex Needs**  How do we ensure services and supports are coordinated for families that have complex needs and require true coordination across service providers? This is not a new question and yet there is a lot of progress to be made to unify services—right now a family involved with multiple agencies could have separate plans for DCF, Probation, Reach Up, Children’s Integrated Services and Mental Health. Accomplishments over the past two months include:   * A team from across FSD, DMH, ESD, AHS, DCF and IFS met for several months and  identified two regions of the state (Chittenden and Rutland) to begin piloting this teaming initiative. * [A slide deck](https://gallery.mailchimp.com/4e39b5c2a0fb69f761f052cc7/files/4.25.16.pptx) has been developed and revised multiple times that describes the initiative in detail and has been presented to multiple audiences to get feedback and input on the concept. * Data re: risk populations have been analyzed to narrow target population and focus the effort. * Field Directors were apprised of this effort and immediately stepped forward to assist in coordination and moving it forward. * A common template to utilize for teaming meetings has been drafted.   **Autism Supports and Services**  How do we use our collective resources to move autism services forward for children and their families in Vermont? This is the question the Autism Work Group is focusing on which is being co-led by IFS and DAIL (Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living).  The group consists of a diverse set of state, community and family members. At the next meeting on May 3rd the group will determine how to prioritize goals and action steps to address gaps in services.  Full meeting minutes and agendas can be found on the IFS website.  If you have questions and/or would like to be involved, please contact [Cheryle.Bilodeau@vermont.gov](mailto:Cheryle.Bilodeau@vermont.gov) or [Diane.Bugbee@vermont.gov](mailto:Diane.Bugbee@vermont.gov). This group is open and we welcome your input and participation.  **Work Group Updates**  **Leadership and Governance**, Co-chaired by Carol Maloney, Terri Edgerton and Mary Moulton This group has been working on two fronts: a) clarifying the roles and responsibilities of each component of the IFS infrastructure – on the state level and in the regions; and b) improving communication pathways between and among community stakeholders and state partners. The work group completed its recommendations regarding a governance framework and the State Leadership Team and Implementation Team are now reviewing and providing feedback on this framework.  The final two meetings of this group will be used to create a framework for how to assure sustainable, meaningful youth and family engagement in IFS service delivery and decision making. The IFS guiding principle #4: Ensure that youth and families’ voices inform processes, plans and policies will be front and center in these discussions.   **State and Local Service Delivery**, Co-chaired by Belinda Bessette and Cheryle Bilodeau This work group continues to focus on informing the service delivery framework for IFS regions.  This group has been thinking about how we have consistency in IFS regions while ensuring there is room in all communities for innovation and creativity.  By the end of May, this work group will have created a service delivery framework and is working on a tool that can be utilized by regions that allows for regions to look at how outcome data is impacted by service delivery. As well, this group will reconvene for two more meetings this fall to discuss and create a clear way of how we think through and streamline communications regarding assessments for children and youth.  **Community Based Prevention and Promotion**, Co-chaired by Carol Maloney and Charlie Biss By May this group will be prepared to offer suggestions and principles about how to embed these ***Strengthening Families* TM**protective factors in the IFS regions and how to support them at the state level. The most recent discussion focused on the protective factor called: Social and Emotional Competence.    **Accountability and Oversight**, Chaired by Cheryle Bilodeau and Keith Grier, with special assistance from Dru Roessle This work group will complete its work in late May.  We have identified IFS population indicators and are working on formalized IFS performance measures.  This group has relied heavily on Results-Based Accountability and taking time to answer the question of: “Is what we are doing helping children, youth and families to be better off?” It's essential that we have data so we can track and adjust service delivery as needed to serve Vermont’s children, youth and families.  **Laughter REALLY is the best medicine**    https://gallery.mailchimp.com/4e39b5c2a0fb69f761f052cc7/images/d639ef41-07d5-4cb3-b6ec-ddd749e4db6e.gif  **For general questions about IFS, contact any of the IFS Management Team members:**  Carol Maloney: [carol.maloney@vermont.gov](mailto:carol.maloney@vermont.gov) or (802) 279-6677  Susan Bartlett: [susan.bartlett@v](mailto:susan.bartlett@state.vt.us)ermont.gov or (802) 917-4852  Cheryle Bilodeau: [cheryle.bilodeau@](mailto:cheryle.bilodeau@state.vt.us)vermont.gov or (802) 760-9171 OR  [Click here](http://ifs.vermont.gov/)**to visit our website!** | | | | | | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | | | | |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | | | | | | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | | | |