

Windham County Safe Place  
Accredited Child Advocacy Center  
112 Hardwood Way,  
Brattleboro, VT 05301



Samantha Prince  
Executive Director  
802-689-9581

Abby Bliss  
Victims Advocate  
802-578-1358

INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT  
State of Vermont Special Investigation Unit  
FY 2020-2021 Program Support Grant  
Windham County Safe Place Child Advocacy Center/Southeastern Unit for Special  
Investigations

The Southeastern Unit for Special Investigations (SUSI) was established in 2007 with a grant from the State of Vermont Special Investigation Unit Program Support. In April 2010, the Policy Board of Directors for the SUSI approved an expansion of the unit to include a child advocacy center component, and renamed the unit, Windham County Safe Place Child Advocacy Center/Southeastern Unit for Special Investigations, Inc. (Safe Place). In 2016, Safe Place became a fully accredited CAC per designation by the National Children's Alliance. Safe Place is a multi-disciplinary/multi-agency task force responsible for investigating and prosecuting child sexual assault and severe child abuse and neglect cases in Windham County. In addition to conducting investigations, the unit is responsible for providing advocacy to victims of these crimes and support to children and their families in identifying and obtaining mental health and other needed services. Safe Place has an overarching goal to reduce assaults on children as well as child victimization and to improve the investigation and prosecution of these crimes.

To accomplish this goal, Safe Place has four objectives: (1) to investigate criminal allegations in a timely, thorough manner with specially trained investigators in order to maximize the likelihood that offenders will be held fully accountable; (2) to minimize the potential further trauma to victims given the intrusiveness of investigation and prosecution; (3) to protect victims from further abuse; and (4) to create public awareness through the media, public forums and other community outreach programs.

With regard to Case Review Meetings, Peer Review Meetings, and Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) Meetings referenced below, the Safe Place Executive or her designee will be responsible for coordinating the schedules for all meetings, for securing meeting space, for communicating information about meetings with team members, and for any other necessary details to ensure successful meetings. The Safe Place Executive Director or her designee will coordinate and establish the agenda for regular Case Review Meetings and Peer Review Meetings. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the Safe Place Executive Director to seek pertinent training opportunities for all team members, to notify team members in whatever way possible to enhance their skills to accomplish the mission of the organization.

The following agencies/individuals are participating with Safe Place for fiscal year 2021: Windham County State's Attorney's Office, Department for Children and Families – Brattleboro Office, Vermont State Police, Brattleboro Police Department, Dover Police Department, Wilmington Police Department, Bellows Falls Police Department, Windham County Sheriff's Office, mental health providers, and SANE/medical providers.



- What The Windham County State's Attorney's Office Will Do:

The Windham County State's Attorney will assign a Deputy State's Attorney and a Victim Advocate to the unit. The designated Windham County Deputy State's Attorney and the Victim Advocate will participate in regular Case Review Meetings. A representative from the Windham County State's Attorney's Office will participate in monthly MDT/Case Review Meetings.

The Windham County State's Attorney or his/her designee will serve on the Policy Board of Directors for Safe Place.

- What The Department for Children and Families Will Do:

The Department for Children and Families will designate at least one special investigator, who will be responsible for the investigation of reports of child sexual assault and severe child abuse and neglect cases in Windham County. In addition to investigative duties the assigned investigators will participate in Case Review, Peer Review, and MDT Meetings, as well as State of Vermont SIU trainings (space permitting), and other pertinent trainings to enhance his/her competence in investigating these cases. It is recommended that supervisors also designate alternate investigators competent in conducting these specialized investigations in the event the primary investigator(s) are unavailable.

The District Director of the Department for Children and Families Brattleboro Office, or his/her designee will serve on the Policy Board of Directors for Safe Place.

- What Law Enforcement Agencies Will Do:

The law enforcement agencies indicated above will each assign to Safe Place only investigators who have completed specific training regarding investigation of allegations of child sexual assault, severe child abuse and neglect, and adult sexual assault and/or have received specific mentoring from an investigator who has received such training. In the event that a law enforcement agency does not have an officer trained in these investigations, or, that its trained investigator is unavailable, that agency will request, through the State's Attorney or the Safe Place Director, a trained officer from the team to conduct investigations of these cases in its jurisdiction. In addition to investigative duties the assigned officer will participate in Case Review, Peer Review, and MDT Meetings, as well as State of Vermont SIU trainings (space permitting), and other pertinent trainings to enhance his/her competence in investigating these cases.

- What Windham County Safe Place Will Do:

Windham County Safe Place Child Advocacy Center will maintain a secure, clean, and welcoming environment where alleged victims and their family can access comfortably. Safe Place will ensure that proper equipment, supplies, and materials are on site for successful interviews, trainings, and meetings. Additionally, there will be working space available for any members of the SIU that may need space to continue their work in addition to attending interviews and such.

Safe Place will maintain staff on site that are well trained, empathetic, and knowledgeable



regarding trauma, resources in the community, and the process of investigations. will coordinate services for child victims of abuse to assure that victim support and advocacy services will be provided to all CAC clients and their non-offending family members as part of the multidisciplinary response. Whenever possible, the Case Coordinator from Safe Place CAC will meet with the family at the time of the interview to initiate services. If a scheduling conflict exists, the Case Coordinator will make efforts to contact the family by phone as soon as reasonably possible after the interview.

Services provided by Safe Place may include the following: Work with the family to assess their needs and refer them to community resources as appropriate, including but not limited to mental health supports, housing, public assistance, and protective orders; provide family with information and assistance regarding Crime Victim Compensation; maintain communication with the States Attorney's Victim Advocate in cases that involve criminal prosecution; meet with the non-offending caregiver during the forensic interview.

Aside from victim advocacy and case coordination, this position at Safe Place will also work to ensure that the center and the MDT are running smoothly. Safe Place provides this assurance to the MDT as well as the benefit of hosting trainings, presentations, and pertinent meetings relevant to the work of the SIU. Lastly, Safe Place will provide an onsite interviewer trained in many facets of legally sound interviewing techniques that are applicable to all children and adults. Safe Place will make scheduling interviews accessible and feasible for the team and ensure ample opportunity to allow alleged victims to be interviewed in a timely manner.

- What Mental Health Providers Will Do:

Mental Health Providers on our team will work closely with Safe Place to respond to requests for mental health services for mental health services for victims and their non-offending family members seen at Safe Place, giving high priority to victims who present as traumatized and who require treatment in a timely fashion. For those clients that our Mental Health Providers are unable to take on, they will work with Safe Place to ensure clients are referred to other trauma-focused clinicians in our community. Mental Health Providers on our team will make every effort to participate in monthly Case Review meetings coordinated by Safe Place. They will also keep up to date on available trainings and CEUs and provide documentation to Safe Place.

- What Medical Providers Will Do:

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs) will participate in Safe Place's multidisciplinary team and share all relevant information with the team at Case Review meetings when they are able to attend. They will only share the information that is appropriate to the case investigations, maintaining confidentiality of all protected health information. SANE and position members of the multidisciplinary team will maintain competence through ongoing educational programs as required by their certification and educational needs. If monthly case review meetings are not manageable for medical providers, they will communicate all necessary case information in a timely manner to investigators and Safe Place.

- What Forensic Interviewers Will Do:



Safe Place will have a staff person available to interview children and adults regarding allegations of abuse that fall under the purview of the Special Investigative Unit (SIU). The staff person will be trained in a research-based model of Forensic Interviewing and may be available to interview individuals who are able to come to the Child Advocacy Center, as well as interview in the community when requested. The interviewer will be unable to interview any youth without permission from a parent or guardian.

In the event that Safe Place is unable to provide a Forensic Interviewer, a member of the MDT will be available to conduct interviews. It is best practice that Forensic Interviews are conducted by MDT members who have completed forensic interview training and are current with their ongoing continuing education units, and participate in peer review and case review meetings.



**SIGNATURE PAGE**

Tracy Kelly Shriver 2/4/21  
Tracy Kelly Shriver date  
Windham County State's Attorney

Lisa Bruce 2/10/2021  
Lisa Bruce date  
DCF District Director, Brattleboro

David Bemis 02/04/21  
Chief David Bemis date  
Bellows Falls Police Dept.

[Signature] 02/03/21  
Lt. Jeremy Evans date  
Brattleboro Police Department

[Signature] 02/03/2021  
Lt. Eric Albright date  
Vermont State Police

[Signature] 2/4/21  
Chief Matthew Murano date  
Wilmington Police Dept.

[Signature] 2/3/21  
Chief Randall Johnson date  
Dover Police Dept.

[Signature] 3/5/21  
Samantha Rince date  
Executive Director and Forensic Interviewer,  
Safe Place CAC/SUSI

Mark R. Anderson  
Digitally signed by Mark R. Anderson  
Date: 2021.02.03 11:20:17 -05'00'  
Sheriff Mark Anderson date  
Windham County Sheriff

Annie Richards 3/12/21  
Annie Richards date  
APRN, B.C.

[Signature] 2/10/2021  
Paola Fiora del Fabro date  
Trauma-Informed Mental Health Services

[Signature]  
Carol Scott date  
Victim Advocate, WCSA

Nicole L Dean RN BSN  
Nicole Dean date  
SANE, Brattleboro Memorial Hospital

[Signature] 2/8/21  
Abby Bliss date  
Case Coordinator, Safe Place CAC/SUSI