

Town of Richmond

Request for Special Appropriations

Request for Fiscal Year: 2025

Organization's Name: **Chittenden Unit for Special Investigation**
Address: **50 Cherry St, Suite 102**
City, State, Zip: **Burlington, VT, 05401**
Website address: **Currently working on a new one**

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Program Name: **Chittenden Unit for Special Investigation**
2. Contact Person/Title: **Tara Gonthier/ Executive Director**

Telephone Number: **802-652-6800**
E-mail address: **tgonthier@bpdvt.org**

3. Total number of individuals served in the last complete fiscal year by this program:
204

4. Total number of the above individuals who are Town residents: 3
Please, attach any documentation that supports this number. **Please see attached Annual Report**

Percent of people served who are Town residents:
.01%

5. Amount of Request: \$3,431.00
6. Total Program Budget: \$1,066,201.00 Percent of total program budget you are requesting from the Town of Richmond:
0.3%

7. Please state or attach the mission of your agency: **Please see attached Annual Report**

8. Funding will be used to:
 X Maintain an existing program Expand an Existing Program
 Start a new program

9. Has your organization received funds from the Town in the past for this or a similar program?
Yes

If yes, please answer the following:

- a. Does the amount of your request represent an increase over your previous appropriation? If yes, explain the reason(s) for the increase.

No

- b. Were any conditions or restrictions placed on the funds by the Selectboard? ____
If yes, describe how those conditions or restrictions have been met.

No

B. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

1. Statement of Need: Identify the issue or need that the program will address (use statistical data to justify the need for the program). To what extent does this need, or problem exist in the Town of Richmond?

CUSI is a county wide task force established in 1992. We investigate all sexual assaults, human trafficking, child/infant deaths, and severe child abuse cases. For FYI 23 we were able to provide services for 3 cases out of Richmond.

2. Program Summary:

- a. Identify the target/recipients of program services. Specify the number of Town residents your program will serve during the fiscal year and explain the basis upon which this number is calculated. Indicate any eligibility requirements your program has with respect to age, gender, income or residence.

CUSI investigates as many cases as the town presents which fall under our design regardless of their age, gender, income or residence.

- b. Identify what is to be accomplished or what change will occur from participating in the program. How will people be better off as a result of participating in the program? Describe the steps you take to make the project known to the public, and make the program accessible and inclusive?

CUSI will be able to continue send highly trained specialized detectives and department of family and children services to investigate all allegations referred to our department. Having this highly trained unit will help serve the people of Richmond better and provide them wrap around services during their difficult time.

3. Program Funding:

- a. Identify how Town funds, specifically, will be used (i.e., funds will provide "X" amount of units of service.)

Town funds will be used in our day-to-day operation. It will also help send members of our unit to specialize trainings to keep our staff current. This is vital to continue to provide the most efficient, less traumatizing and time effective help to our victims.

- b. List the other agencies to whom you are submitting a request for funds for this program and the amount requested. How would this program be modified should revenues be lost?

Requests are sent to every town in Chittenden County that does not have an in-kind detective donation. Loss of funding would be devastating to CUSI. We would not be able to maintain a specialized unit and it would fall back on local and state agencies who are not as well trained in these types of investigations.

C. ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

1. Describe your agency's capability to provide the program including its history, previous experience providing this service, management structure and staff expertise.

CUSI has been operating since 1992. We currently have 7 detectives (including 1 Lt who is the Director of CUSI) and a worker from DCF and victim advocate all on-site. Staff attends multiple trainings per year to make sure that they are up to date and qualified to investigate the specialized cases that we receive.

2. How will you assess whether/how program participants are better off? Describe how you will assess program outcomes. Your description should include: what (what kind of data), how (method/tool for collecting the data), from whom (source of data) and when (timing of data collection).

We use our specialized training to interview victims, get them connected with mental health providers, collaborate with schools, UVM Medical Center to make sure that the victim has wrap around services as they navigate this difficult time. We utilize the Chittenden Children's Advocacy Center (CCAC) NCATrak computer program to keep track of cases, data is collected of hospital visits, referrals to medical, mental health, prosecution, DCF outcomes, interviews. They require quarterly reports that must be submitted to track our data and cases. Funding on our CCAC requires that we collect data for our cases.

3. Summarize or attach program and or service assessments conducted in the past two years.

Please see attached FY23 Annual Report

4. Does your organization have a strategic plan and a strategic planning process in place? No - If yes, please attach your plan.

The strategic plan should include a mission statement, goals, steps to achieve the goals, and measures that assess the accomplishments of the goals.

5. What is the authorized size of your board of directors? Up to

 15

How many meetings were held by the board last year? 9

I, the undersigned, confirm the information contained herein is accurate and can be verified as such. I understand and agree that if the requested funds are approved, the disbursement of funds are subject to all conditions established by the Richmond Selectboard.

Signature of Applicant Tara Gonthier Date 10/2/23

Tara Gonthier Executive Director
Print Name of Applicant and Title



CUSI

Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations

50 Cherry Street, Suite 102

Burlington, VT 05401

Phone: (802) 652-6800

Fax: (802) 652-4167

Town of Richmond
PO Box 285
Richmond, VT 05477

Attn: Duncan Wardwell and Select Board

FY 25 Cash Payment Due: \$3,431.00

The above amount was calculated based on the participating agency paying 100% of its share of the operating cost for CUSI, based on the agency's percentage of population.

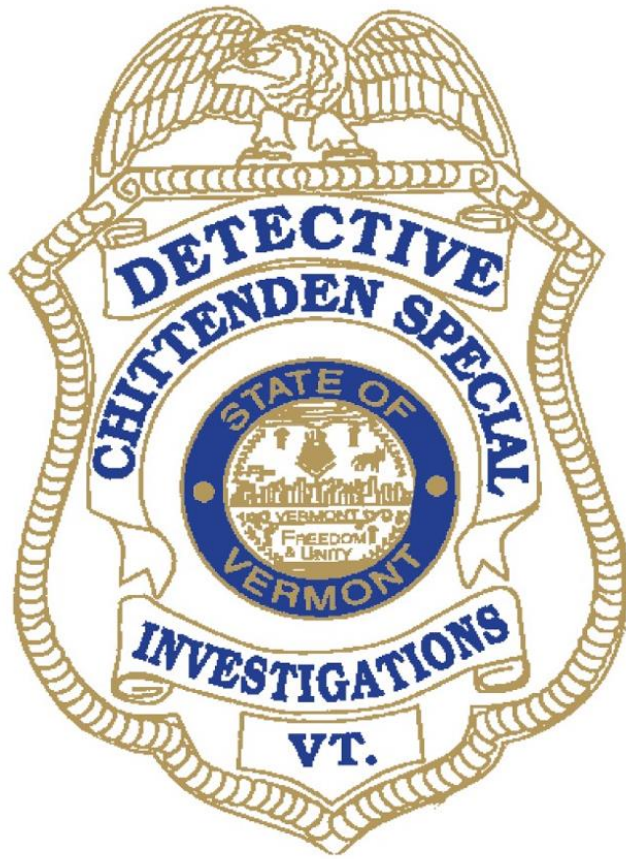
We appreciate all your continued support.

Payments should be made payable to CUSI and mailed to:

**Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations
50 Cherry Street Suite 102
Burlington, VT 05401**

Attn: Tara Gonthier

Thank you very much!



2023

Annual Report

CHITTENDEN UNIT FOR SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS

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TO OUR STAKEHOLDERS

Our Mission

Our mission is to protect and support all children, families, and adults by strengthening our community's response to abuse through investigation, prosecution and intervention while fostering professional collaboration to promote education and advocacy regarding the prevention of abuse.

Who We Are

The Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations (CUSI) is a multi-agency task force dedicated to providing criminal response to reports of sexual assaults, serious child abuse and child fatalities. For 30 years, the primary focus has been to protect and support all children, adults, and families. CUSI defined what is now known as a multidisciplinary team (MDT) approach to investigating crimes of this nature. The multidisciplinary team is the heart of CUSI and is composed of six police detectives, a unit director, a victim advocate, an in-house investigator with the Department for Children and Families (DCF), and a dedicated prosecutor from the Chittenden County State's Attorney's Office. We work jointly with mental health and medical providers, as well as with the Department of Corrections.

In addition, CUSI is co-located and partners with the *Chittenden Children's Advocacy Center (CCAC)*. CCAC collaborates with CUSI to emphasize the coordination of investigations and intervention. The CCAC is funded separately by local, state and federal grants.

The CCAC provides many benefits including:

- Prompt follow up to reports of abuse
- Consistent and compassionate support to the child and family
- A family friendly environment designed to create a sense of safety and security for children and adults
- Referrals to professionals with expertise in specialized disciplines
- Fewer victim interviews
- Increased successful prosecutions
- Victim Advocacy support on site

The Chittenden Children's Advocacy Center continues as an accredited member of the National Children's Alliance with the latest re-accreditation occurring in May 2024.

Current Staffing

Det. Lt. Richard Weinisch, CUSI Director, Burlington Police Department

Tara Gonthier, Executive Director of the Chittenden Children's Advocacy Center

Det. David Hurwitch, Vermont State Police

Det. Eric Dalla Mura, Burlington Police Department

Det. Daniel Boyer, South Burlington Police Department

Det. Nicole Peatman, Essex Police Department

Det. Tom Chenette, Burlington Police Department

Det. Elizabeth Fell, Colchester Police Department

Elizabeth Dziobek, Victim's Advocate, Chittenden County State's Attorney's Office

Meghan Swan, Family Services Worker, Vermont Department for Children & Families

What We Do

The fundamental goal of CUSI is to conduct the highest quality criminal investigations for these types of crimes while meeting the emotional needs of victims and families. CUSI and CCAC investigate crimes in Chittenden County which consists of a population of approximately 171,857 residents. On average, CUSI investigates over 160 cases a year. 70% of those cases involve child victims. In recent years we have noticed an increase in the complexity of cases given the substantial increase in computer usage, social media, mobile devices and drugs.

We currently have two detectives that coordinate the Chittenden County Sex Offender Registry Compliance Check. Per the Vermont Sex Offender Registry, <https://vcic.vermont.gov/sor> searching by County, there are approximately 257 sex offenders in Chittenden County. CUSI maintains information pertinent to sex offender compliancy checks in Chittenden County and works with VCIC sex offender registry, US Marshalls, Probation and Parole and all law enforcement agencies in Chittenden County.

CUSI Case Incidents & Sex Offenders by Location

July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023

Town of Incident	CUSI Case Count	Sex Offenders
Bolton	0	0
Burlington	42	77
Charlotte	2	3
Colchester	18	22
Essex	17	49
Hinesburg	5	2
Huntington	0	2
Jericho	3	5
Milton	19	25
Richmond	3	5
Shelburne	5	10
South Burlington	15	18
St. George	1	0
Underhill	1	5
University of Vermont	1	0
Westford	1	2
Williston	9	9
Winooski	5	23
Out of County Assist	19	-
Out of State Assist	1	-
Unknown	12	
Community Service/SANE Kits	25	-
Total	204	257

OUR COLLABORATORS

The Chittenden Children's Advocacy Center, collaborating with CUSI, is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit entity offering a range of services to children and families affected by these crimes. The primary goal of *The Chittenden Children's Advocacy Center* is to ensure that children are not further traumatized by the intervention system intended to protect them. This program has many benefits, with an approach that allows for faster follow-up to child abuse reports, more efficient medical and mental health referrals, fewer child interviews, more successful prosecutions, and consistent support for child victims and their families. It is our goal to support them and meet their emotional needs.

CUSI works closely with the statewide *Internet Crimes against Children Task Force (ICAC)*. ICAC expertise is frequently used during cases of computer-facilitated exploitation or when computer-generated evidence may strengthen a CUSI case. CUSI detectives work with the ICAC team and have received extensive training in computer forensics and online undercover operations.

CUSI may also work with *HOPEWorks*, and the *Forensic Nursing Program* at the University of Vermont Medical Center, including the *Childsafe Clinic*. We continue to work with other collaborative partners throughout the county and our state as well.

FUNDING

The *Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations* maintains a specialized approach of improved protection and services for victims in our community. This Unit promotes cooperative efforts between the various agencies that are involved in the prevention, investigation, advocacy, medical, therapeutic treatment, and prosecution of cases to better protect and serve victims and their families. Part of that cooperative effort includes contributions from towns in Chittenden County to help sustain this specialized unit. The contributions help pay for space for this specialized unit to all be under the same roof, training, specialized forensic testing and help run our day-to-day operations. CUSI is unique as it is the only Special Investigations Unit in Vermont that is all under the same roof. We are very fortunate. Being able to do this helps cut down on retraumatizing the victim and their families.

The current funding formula is based on population and excludes those communities that contribute one or more full-time detectives to the CUSI operation. Town contributions are determined by the budget required to fund the CUSI organization for the year allocated proportionally to communities not contributing in kind services based on total population. CUSI is able to remain a successful unit due to the continued support of town contributions and without it we would not be able sustain this specialized unit which would be a huge detriment to the community.

CUSI Director's Year In Review

2023 was a big transition year for CUSI and the CCAC that sparked a lot of positive change for the organization. We onboarded two new detectives for CUSI that replaced the two most senior detectives in the unit that had a combined 10 years of experience at CUSI. This change has given the opportunity for new CUSI detectives to expand their professional careers with this important role and they get to attend some of the best specialized trainings available that would not otherwise be possible without the funding that is available to our organization.

The CCAC Executive Director role underwent a transition from a long tenured person to the appointment of the current ED, Tara Gonthier. Tara proactively stepped up in an interim role during a tough period of vacancy and has done a great job in working to rebuild the CCAC back to the high level of service that everyone has come to expect from this organization.

VA Dziobek proactively created a partnership with Eden Valley, a local mental health organization that specialize in youth trauma. This partnership provides Eden Valley with a location to host youth group sessions and provide CUSI with an ongoing relationship with a very coveted resource in the space of youth therapy. This allows for the prioritization of some of our most vulnerable child victims to obtain services that otherwise may have a wait list of a year or longer.

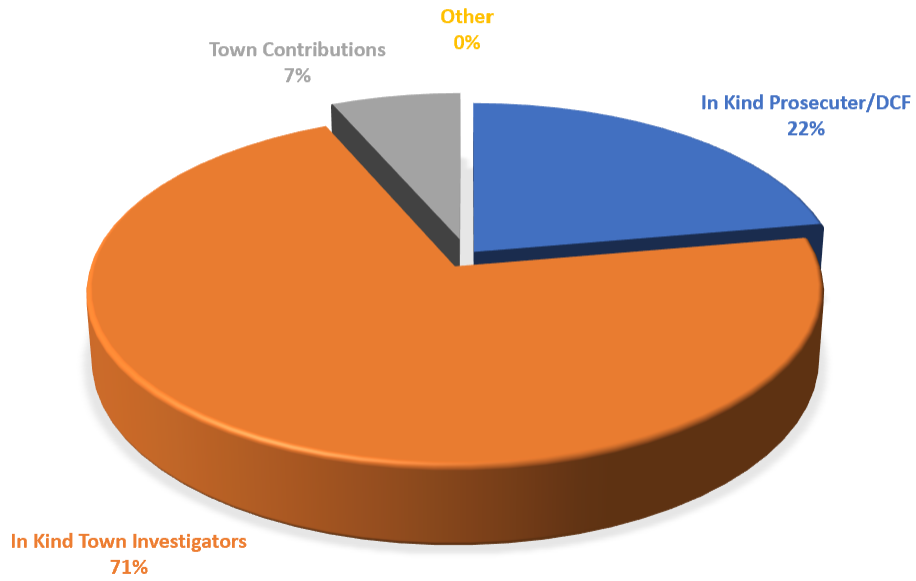
The team at CUSI has been working to update and upgrade our workspace to ensure that we maintain a comforting space for victims, professional partners, and everyone that uses our workspace. This includes amongst other things, new furniture, repainting of rooms, updated children's play space, etc.

Finally, CUSI underwent a technological advancement by transitioning to an IT company that specializes in Criminal Justice Information Security (CJIS). This ensures that our organization is CJIS compliant and is well protected from potential cyber-attacks and other information system threats. Equipment upgrades include the transition to a modern IP phone system, updated Wi-Fi services, and much needed server maintenance and upgrades.

We celebrated our 30th Anniversary this past year. We are proud and committed to our work and to the communities we serve. We thank you for your continued support.

CUSI Annual Financial Report

CUSI 2022/2023 INCOME \$1,200,063



CUSI 2022/2023 EXPENSES \$1,231,808

