

Town of Richmond

Request for Special Appropriations

Request for Fiscal Year: 2024

Organization's Name: Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations  
Address: 50 Cherry Street Suite 102  
City, State, Zip: Burlington VT 05401  
Website address: cusi-vt.org

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

- 1. Program Name: Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations (CUI)
- 2. Contact Person/Title: Veronica (Vickie) Rathgeb / Exec. Director CCAC

Telephone Number: 802.922.5494  
E-mail address: vrathgeb@bpdvt.org

- 3. Total number of individuals served in the last complete fiscal year by this program:  
Richmond 4,119 Chittenden City 176,484

- 4. Total number of the above individuals who are Town residents: 4,119.  
Please, attach any documentation that supports this number.

Percent of people served who are Town residents: 100%

- 5. Amount of Request: \$16,234 estimate
- 6. Total Program Budget: \$102,620 Percent of total program budget you are requesting from the Town of Richmond: 6%

- 7. Please state or attach the mission of your agency: See Attached

- 8. Funding will be used to:  
 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.  
Unknown as of today. FY 24 will be level funded from FY 23.

- b. Were any conditions or restrictions placed on the funds by the Selectboard? No  
If yes, describe how those conditions or restrictions have been met.

## 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? CUST is a county-wide task force established in 1992. CUST investigates all sexual assaults, human trafficking, child/infant fatalities and severe child abuse. CUST also keeps data on SORs. In FY18, Richmond had six cases & four SORs.

### 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. CUST investigates as many cases as the Town presents which fall under our design, regardless of 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? CUST is a law enforcement task force which also consists of a dedicated DCF investigator, victim advocate and Deputy State Attorney. CUST is trained specifically to handle this type of case work.

### 3. Program Funding:

a. Identify how Town funds, specifically, will be used (i.e., funds will provide "X" amount of units of service.) Each town in Chittenden County which does not provide an "in-kind" donation of LE is assessed a dollar amount based on a population formula. Funding is used to support CUST in all areas of cases.

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? (See attached funding formula)  
Loss of funding would be devastating to CUST.

## 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. CUST provides an Annual Report to every town based on the prior fiscal year.

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). Unfortunately due to type of cases CUST investigates, our program will not see an improvement to our cases. With the return of students to in-class attendance, we are seeing a rise in case loads. We do use some of our town funding to train our detectives so they may better investigate their cases. We also work to improve or keep current our equipment. →

3. Summarize or attach program and or service assessments conducted in the past two years. See attached Annual Reports FY 20, FY 21. FY 22 will be approved at October 2022 meeting.

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? 7.

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 Veronica M. Rathgeb Date 10.3.2022  
Veronica M. Rathgeb / Executive Director CCAC  
 Print Name of Applicant and Title

2. (cont.) Data is collected through NCAtrak and reported to the State quarterly.

**2020  
Annual Report**

**Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations**



*Investigation, Advocacy Services, Prosecution*

## **2020 Annual Report** **Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations**

*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.*

### **WHAT WE DO...**

**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 28 years, the primary focus has been to protect and support all children, adults, and families. CUSI defined what is now known as a true multidisciplinary team (MDT) approach to investigating crimes of this nature. The multidisciplinary team is the heart of CUSI and is composed of seven 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)**.

CUSI has become a model for multidisciplinary teams (MDT) throughout the state. These teams maintain specialized skills for outstanding investigations and victim services which involve sexual offenses and serious child abuse. 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. Due to the complexity and importance of these cases, it is vital CUSI detectives be immersed in specialized training to provide support to victims and their families while holding offenders accountable.

**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** and the **CCAC** investigate these crimes in Chittenden County which consists of a population of approximately 173,940 residents. On average, CUSI investigates over 300 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, and other mobile devices.

**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. While investigating these cases,

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.

### ***TRENDS***

Repeat victims, human trafficking, mental health issues, drug addiction, and victims at risk

### ***INVESTIGATIONS MAY INCLUDE***

Victim interviews, medical/SANE exams, witness interviews, search warrants, scene examinations, photographs/videos, evidence collection, controlled phone calls, controlled texts, electronic device analyses, phone records, internet/website records, polygraphs, biological evidence collection, suspect interviews, surveillance, arrests

### ***INVESTIGATING AND PROSECUTING***

Sexual assaults, lewd and lascivious conduct, serious child abuse, child fatalities, human trafficking, sex offender registry and violations, child pornography

### ***TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT***

Keeping our staff current with national standards for investigation, prosecution, and prevention of sexual abuse is of the utmost importance. Ongoing training and professional education are paramount to the CUSI mission. In fiscal year 2020, staff members attended numerous trainings and conferences on sexual abuse, child homicides as well as child abuse and exploitation. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many trainings were canceled or re-scheduled as virtual trainings. To continue to support training during this national shutdown, many investigators also accessed online webinars to further their education in these fields.

Trainings attended: *Investigating Basic Sex Crimes, Homicide School, International Conference on Child and Family Maltreatment, Human Trafficking Conference, Conference on Crimes Against Women, Interviewing & Long Term Techniques in Human Trafficking, Basic Forensic Interviewing, Advanced Forensic Interviewing, Extended Forensic Interviewing, ICAC Undercover Chat Concepts & Techniques, Opening Doors: Trauma Informed Responses to Sexual Assault, CST FIT Training, Investigating Medical Child Abuse, Conference of Crimes Against Children, Sex Offender: Understanding and Responding to Crimes Against Children,*

CUSI investigators also teach First Responder Training, Sexual Assault Investigations and Human Trafficking Training to other state and local law enforcement officers. These courses cover the specifics of suspect interview techniques, legal issues, and considerations in evidence collection. The training focuses not only on the investigation of sexual abuse crimes, but also provides specific guidance and practice on interviewing victims in a caring, non-threatening manner. These interviewing techniques lead to more reliable information to investigating crimes and greater reduction in victim court appearances.

## ***OUR CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER (CCAC)***

**The Chittenden Children's Advocacy Center** collaborates with CUSI to emphasize the coordination of investigations and intervention. This ensures ongoing and effective teamwork, including seamless communication among the multidisciplinary team (MDT) which is the core of the agency.

***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
- Referrals to professionals with expertise in specialized disciplines
- Fewer victim interviews
- Increased successful prosecutions

In addition, a cost benefit analysis conducted by the National Children's Alliance Advocacy Center, funded by the *National Children's Alliance* (NCA), evaluated investigations in a county that uses a CAC approach versus a county that uses traditional joint investigations has proven to be 36% less expensive and more highly valued by community members.

The CCAC is a separate financial entity from CUSI and has a 501(c) (3) non-profit status. The CCAC, including the Director's salary, continues to be supported solely through state, federal and private grants. *The Chittenden Children's Advocacy Center continues as an accredited member of the National Children's Alliance with the latest re-accreditation occurring in 2019.*

## ***MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM RESPONSE***

Due to CAC accreditation requirements determined by NCA, the CCAC formed a Multidisciplinary Team (MDT). Staff from CUSI, DCF, the State's Attorney's Office, mental health providers, Department of Corrections, pediatric trauma specialists, Forensic nurses and school counselors all meet monthly to review CUSI cases involving child victims. In certain cases, other professionals may attend these meetings as well. This forum proves to be very effective; it provides an opportunity to thoroughly review cases and gain input from a variety of disciplines to ensure every possible aspect of an investigation has been considered prior to disposition

## ***PROTECTING OUR COMMUNITY***

Currently Detective Victor Bitca coordinates the *Chittenden County Sex Offender Registry Compliance Check*. Hundreds of Compliance checks are done throughout our county to enforce accountability and ensure security in our community. 257 sex offenders are currently located in Chittenden County. CUSI maintains information pertinent to sex offender compliancy checks in Chittenden County and works with the VCIC sex offender registry, US Marshalls, Probation and Parole and all law enforcement agencies in Chittenden County including Immigration and Customs. To learn more about the *Vermont Sex Offender Registry* please go to Vermont Crime Information Center or search <http://vcic.vermont.gov/sexoffender>

## ***GENERAL BUDGET***

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 and therapeutic treatment, and prosecution of cases to better protect and serve victims and families. Part of that cooperative effort includes contributions from towns in Chittenden County to help sustain this specialized unit.

The current funding formula is based on population and excludes those communities that contribute one or more full-time detectives to the CUSI operation. The cost is \$1.87 per person. The population for each community is based on the 2010 federal census data as updated by the Vermont Health Department in their annual report. The latest update available at the time the budget was set for the fiscal year 2021 was for calendar year 2017. To determine each community's share of the total cost, the population numbers for the towns that contribute one or more detectives is subtracted from the total population for the county. The total assessment (\$102,620 for FY 2021) is then divided by the population (54,917) of the remaining communities. This amount (\$1.87) is then multiplied by the population on the non-contributing communities

Currently in fiscal year 2020, all towns in the county benefit from CUSI services and have been asked to pay their fair share. Invoices are sent to these town with the Directors of both CUSI and the CCAC making themselves available to towns for presentations at the local level. Representatives from CUSI and the CCAC are available upon request to answer questions or provide presentations to any local Select board or municipal body.

## ***GRANT REVENUE***

To further its mission and provide the highest quality investigations and training, the unit regularly applies for state and federal grants and seeks additional private funding throughout the year.

## ***THE YEAR IN REVIEW...***

- Presentations were made to various Town Managers and Select Boards around Chittenden County.
- We continued to raise awareness about the effectiveness of CAC's and SIU's and expand our outreach and communication to endorse the SIU/CAC mission.
- We attended and provided specialized trainings for those working in the field of sexual abuse, child fatalities and severe physical abuse.
- The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on SIU case loads statewide.
- We continue to ensure our facility meets safety standards.
- We have investigated 234 cases.

## ***AS A RESULT...***

We maintain a high conviction rate, even in the most challenging cases. Since the start of this year, we have investigated high profile cases, not to mention the ones that are not seen in the media. We strive to do the most comprehensive investigations and pride ourselves on our ability to do so.



*July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020 we have seen 234 cases.*

This year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we saw a significant downturn in our case load. The downturn was not in Chittenden County alone, but statewide. With Vermont going into a shutdown in mid-March, we noticed a dramatic impact on our child cases. The closing of daycares, schools and extra-curricular activities resulted in a severe lessening of eyes on the child population by adults who work closely with these children and who are also mandatory reporters. Thus, the decrease in child investigations which historically contribute to approximately two-thirds of CUSI's cases.

Our cases continue to get more and more complex with new technology components being created on a frequent basis. The investigations require the detectives to spend significant amounts of time gathering information from corporations like Facebook, Google, Yahoo, Snapchat, Plenty-o-Fish, Instagram, cell phone wireless carriers, etc. The amount of data that is gathered then requires the investigator to spend a tremendous amount of time reviewing the documents and gathering evidence. For detectives to have access to this information, it often requires the issuance of multiple subpoenas and the application of search warrants from a judge before we can even gather the documents that we need from these companies. The cases that we investigate are considered the most heinous crimes to investigate other than murder. The negative effects of these crimes stay with a victim for their entire life and, therefore, we do the best job we can to build the strongest case against the defendants that we investigate.

Special Investigative Units (SIU's) are also required by Vermont law to investigate Human Trafficking. CUSI now provides training to our staff relevant to Human Trafficking. These types of investigations are similar in many ways to the cases that we already investigate; however, there are some very distinct differences that, without proper training, would not allow detectives to be successful. The Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations have worked on several cases of "Human Trafficking" within Chittenden County. These cases require a significant amount of additional resources and expertise that will undoubtedly require additional funding by the State of Vermont in the future. CUSI also participates on county and state-wide committees and taskforces which focus primarily on human trafficking.

CUSI continues to have an active role in teaching at the Vermont Police Academy. CUSI teaches the three-day sexual assault investigation training block that is taught twice a year during the basic police recruit training classes. This block of education encompasses many aspects of sexual assault investigations from the first initial uniform officer's response, to the needs of victims and the process of building a successful case that will lead to a successful prosecution. CUSI has also taken a lead in educating other agencies on how to respond to human trafficking and how to advocate for these victims.

One of the last areas where CUSI has tried to have a more active involvement is in public outreach. Traditionally, CUSI has been looked at as leaders in providing training to youths and parents around Internet Safety. These informational programs are held in a variety of settings - often in schools. CUSI welcomes the opportunity to be invited into any of our communities within Chittenden County.

Consequently, we want to thank all our municipalities for your continued support. Without your patronage we could not apprehend, convict, or incarcerate countless perpetrators. We take pride in keeping our community safe and contributing to your piece of mind. We often receive complimentary letters and phone calls from survivors, their family members, and others. We are always open to feedback and we ask that you direct any concerns or compliments to the Unit's Director, Sergeant Thomas Nash.

**CUSI CASE INCIDENTS & SEX OFFENDERS BY LOCATION**  
*July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020*

<b>Town of Incident</b>	<b>Case Count</b>	<b>Sex Offenders</b>
<b>Bolton</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Burlington</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Charlotte</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Colchester</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Essex</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Hinesburg</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Huntington</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Jericho</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Milton</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Richmond</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Shelburne</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>South Burlington</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>St. George</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Underhill</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>University of Vermont</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Westford</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Williston</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Winooski</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Out of County Assist</b>	<b>14</b>	
<b>Out of State Assist</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>Unknown</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>Community Service/SANE Kits</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>257</b>

**OUR TEAM...**

***The following personnel are currently assigned to CUSI***

**Sergeant Thomas Nash**

***Director*** - Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations

***Home Agency:*** Burlington Police Department

***Years of Service:*** Serving since 2000

***Assigned to CUSI as Director:*** July 2020

Email: [tnash@bpdvt.org](mailto:tnash@bpdvt.org)

**Detective Corporal Eric Dalla Mura**

***Investigator*** - Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations

***Member-*** Vermont Internet Crimes against Children Taskforce

***Home Agency:*** Burlington Police Department

***Years of Service:*** Serving since 2008

***Assigned to CUSI:*** September 2019

Email: [edallamura@bpdvt.or](mailto:edallamura@bpdvt.or)

**Detective Corporal Krystal Wrinn**

***Investigator*** - Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations

***Member-*** Vermont Internet Crimes against Children Taskforce, Vermont Human Trafficking Task Force

***Home Agency:*** Burlington Police Department

***Years of Service:*** Serving since 2009

***Assigned to CUSI:*** October 2016

Email: [krinn@bpdvt.org](mailto:krinn@bpdvt.org)

**Detective Victor Bitca**

***Investigator*** – Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations

***Member-*** Chittenden County Sex Offender Registry Coordinator

***Home Agency:*** Colchester Police Department

***Years of Service:*** Serving since 2013

***Assigned to CUSI:*** April 2019

Email: [victor.bitca@colchesterpdvt.org](mailto:victor.bitca@colchesterpdvt.org)

**Detective Michael Chistolini**

***Investigator*** – Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations

*Home Agency:* Essex Police Department

*Years of Service:* Serving since 2013

*Assigned to CUSI:* April 2018

Email: [mchistolini@essex.org](mailto:mchistolini@essex.org)

**Detective Daniel Boyer**

***Investigator*** – Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations

*Home Agency:* South Burlington Police Department

*Years of Service:* Serving since 2010

*Assigned to CUSI:* September 2020

Email: [dboyer@southburlingtonpolice.org](mailto:dboyer@southburlingtonpolice.org)

**Detective Trooper David Hurwitch**

***Investigator*** – Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations

*Member-* Chittenden County Sex Offender Registry Coordinator

*Home Agency:* Vermont State Police

*Years of Service:* Serving since 2009

*Assigned to CUSI:* January 2017

Email: [david.hurwitch@vermont.gov](mailto:david.hurwitch@vermont.gov)

**Detective Elizabeth Felicciardi**

***Investigator*** – Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations

*Home Agency:* University of Vermont Police

*Years of Service:* Serving since 2012

*Assigned to CUSI:* September 2017

Email: [efelicci@uvm.edu](mailto:efelicci@uvm.edu)

**Veronica Rathgeb-Executive Director CCAC**

***Executive Director-Chittenden Children's Advocacy Center***

*Years of Service with CCAC:* Serving since November 2013

Email: [vrathgeb@bpdvt.org](mailto:vrathgeb@bpdvt.org)

**Armina Medic-Victim Advocate**

*Victim Advocate- CUSI: Office of the Chittenden County State's Attorney*

*Years of Service:* Serving since 2002

*Assigned to CUSI:* October 2014

Email: [armina.medi@vermont.gov](mailto:armina.medi@vermont.gov)

**Kimberly Staiano-DCF**

*Designated CUSI Investigator-Vermont Department for Children and families (DCF)*

*Years of Service:* Serving since 2014

*Assigned to CUSI:* September 2018

Email: [kimberly.staiano@vermont.gov](mailto:kimberly.staiano@vermont.gov)

**Dana Disano- Prosecutor**

*Deputy State's Attorney assigned to CUSI- Chittenden County State's Attorney*

*Years of service:* Serving since 2010

*Assigned to CUSI:* March 2017

Email: [dana.disano@vermont.gov](mailto:dana.disano@vermont.gov)

**Mary Komondy- CAC Case Coordinator**

*CAC Case Coordinator*

*Years of Service with CCAC:* Serving since February 2019

Email: [mkomondy@bpdvt.org](mailto:mkomondy@bpdvt.org)

## CUSI Policy Board Members October 2019

### **Natania Carter**

HOPEWorks  
PO Box 92  
Burlington, Vermont 05402  
802-864-0555  
Email: [natania@hopeworksvt.org](mailto:natania@hopeworksvt.org)

### **Anita Thomason**

Asst. District Director of Department of Children  
and Families (DCF)  
426 Industrial Ave Suite 130  
Williston, VT 05495  
802-951-5165  
Email: [anita.thomason@vermont.gov](mailto:anita.thomason@vermont.gov)

### **Ray Coffey**

Community Services Director  
27 West Allen Street  
Winooski, VT 05404  
802-655-6410  
Email: [rscoffey@winooskivt.org](mailto:rscoffey@winooskivt.org)

### **Raenetta Liberty, RN, BSN (Vice Chair)**

Clinical Coordinator, Forensic Nursing Program  
University of Vermont Medical Center  
111 Colchester Ave  
Burlington, VT 05401  
802-847-5396  
Email: [raenetta.liberty@UVMHealth.org](mailto:raenetta.liberty@UVMHealth.org)

### **Todd Odit**

Town Manager  
Town of Jericho  
PO Box 39  
Jericho, VT 05465  
802-899-9970  
Email: [todit@jerichovt.gov](mailto:todit@jerichovt.gov)

### **Steve Laroche**

Chief of Police  
Milton Police Department  
37 Bombardier Road  
Milton, VT 05468  
802-893-2424  
Email: [steve.laroche@vermont.gov](mailto:steve.laroche@vermont.gov)

### **Susan Hardin**

Deputy State's Attorney  
Chittenden County State's Attorney's Office  
Cherry Street, Suite 305  
Burlington, Vermont 05401  
802-652-0385  
Email: [susan.hardin@vermont.gov](mailto:susan.hardin@vermont.gov)

### **Andrew Hendrickson (Chair)**

Town of Huntington Representative  
1560 East Street  
Huntington, VT 05462  
802-434-2998  
Email: [aeh201@gmail.com](mailto:aeh201@gmail.com)

### **Lieutenant John MacCullum**

Williston Station Commander  
Vermont State Police  
2777 St. George Rd.  
Williston, VT 05495  
802-878-7111  
Email: [john.maccullum@vermont.gov](mailto:john.maccullum@vermont.gov)

### **Matthew Sullivan (Treasurer)**

Deputy Chief  
Burlington Police Department  
1 North Avenue  
Burlington, VT 05401  
802-540-2159  
Email: [msullivan@bpdvt.org](mailto:msullivan@bpdvt.org)

# 2021 Annual Report

## Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations



*Investigation, Advocacy Services, Prosecution*

## **2021 Annual Report** **Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations**

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extensive training in computer forensics and online undercover operations. While investigating these cases, 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.

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Repeat victims, human trafficking, mental health issues, drug addiction, and victims at risk

### ***INVESTIGATIONS MAY INCLUDE***

Victim interviews, medical/SANE exams, witness interviews, search warrants, scene examinations, photographs/videos, evidence collection, controlled texts, electronic device analyses, phone records, internet/website records, polygraphs, biological evidence collection, suspect interviews, surveillance, arrests

### ***INVESTIGATING AND PROSECUTING***

Sexual assaults, lewd and lascivious conduct, serious child abuse, child fatalities, human trafficking, sex offender registry and violations, child pornography

### ***TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT***

Keeping our staff current with national standards for investigation, prosecution, and prevention of sexual abuse is of the utmost importance. Ongoing training and professional education are paramount to the CUSI mission. In fiscal year 2021, staff members virtually attended numerous trainings and conferences on sexual abuse, child homicides as well as child abuse and exploitation. To continue to support training during this national shutdown due to COVID-19, many investigators also accessed online webinars to further their education in these fields.

Trainings attended: *Conference on Crimes Against Women, Basic Forensic Interviewing, Advanced Forensic Interviewing, Extended Forensic Interviewing, Aquatic Abuse: Death & Homicidal Drowning Investigation Training, Presenting Evidence in Child Forensic Interviews, Investigating Drug Facilitated Sexual Assaults, Investigation of Child Homicide, Sexual Offenses: Mind & Motivation, 37<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Child Abuse, COVID-19 Training for Law Enforcement, as well as several virtual webinars*

CUSI investigators also teach *First Responder Training*, *Sexual Assault Investigations* and *Human Trafficking Training* to other state and local law enforcement officers. These courses cover the specifics of suspect interview techniques, legal issues, and considerations in evidence collection. The training focuses not only on the investigation of sexual abuse crimes, but also provides specific guidance and practice on interviewing victims in a caring, non-threatening manner. These interviewing techniques lead to more reliable information to investigating crimes and greater reduction in victim court appearances.

## ***OUR CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTER (CCAC)***

**The Chittenden Children's Advocacy Center** collaborates with CUSI to emphasize the coordination of investigations and intervention. This ensures ongoing and effective teamwork, including seamless communication among the multidisciplinary team (MDT) which is the core of the agency.

***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
- Referrals to professionals with expertise in specialized disciplines
- Fewer victim interviews
- Increased successful prosecutions

In addition, a cost benefit analysis conducted by the National Children's Alliance Advocacy Center, funded by the *National Children's Alliance* (NCA), evaluated investigations in a county that uses a CAC approach versus a county that uses traditional joint investigations has proven to be 36% less expensive and more highly valued by community members.

The CCAC is a separate financial entity from CUSI and has a 501(c) (3) non-profit status. The CCAC, including the Director's salary, continues to be supported solely through state, federal and private grants. *The Chittenden Children's Advocacy Center continues as an accredited member of the National Children's Alliance with the latest re-accreditation occurring in 2019.*

## ***MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM RESPONSE***

Due to CAC accreditation requirements determined by NCA, the CCAC formed a Multidisciplinary Team (MDT). Staff from CUSI, DCF, the State's Attorney's Office, mental health providers, Department of Corrections, pediatric trauma specialists, Forensic nurses and school counselors all meet monthly to review CUSI cases involving child victims. In certain cases, other professionals may attend these meetings as well. This forum proves to be very effective; it provides an opportunity to thoroughly review cases and gain input from a variety of disciplines to ensure every possible aspect of an investigation has been considered prior to disposition

## ***PROTECTING OUR COMMUNITY***

Currently Detective Victor Bitca coordinates the *Chittenden County Sex Offender Registry Compliance Check*. Hundreds of Compliance checks are done throughout our county to enforce accountability and ensure security in our community. 273 sex offenders are currently located in Chittenden County. CUSI maintains information pertinent to sex offender compliancy checks in Chittenden County and works with the VCIC sex offender registry, US Marshalls, Probation and Parole and all law enforcement agencies in Chittenden County including Immigration and Customs. To learn more about the *Vermont Sex Offender Registry* please go to Vermont Crime Information Center or search <http://vcic.vermont.gov/sexoffender>

## ***GENERAL BUDGET***

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 and therapeutic treatment, and prosecution of cases to better protect and serve victims and families. Part of that cooperative effort includes contributions from towns in Chittenden County to help sustain this specialized unit.

The current funding formula is based on population and excludes those communities that contribute one or more full-time detectives to the CUSI operation. The cost is \$1.53 per person. The population for each community is based on the 2010 federal census data as updated by the Vermont Health Department in their annual report. The latest update available at the time the budget was set for the fiscal year 2022 was for calendar year 2018. To determine each community's share of the total cost, the population numbers for the towns that contribute one or more detectives is subtracted from the total population for the county. The total assessment (\$102,620 for FY 2022) is then divided by the population (67,008) of the remaining communities. This amount (\$1.53) is then multiplied by the population on the non-contributing communities

Currently in fiscal year 2021, all towns in the county benefit from CUSI services and have been asked to pay their fair share. Invoices are sent to these town with the Directors of both CUSI and the CCAC making themselves available to towns for presentations at the local level. Representatives from CUSI and the CCAC are available upon request to answer questions or provide presentations to any local Select board or municipal body.

## ***GRANT REVENUE***

To further its mission and provide the highest quality investigations and training, the unit regularly applies for state and federal grants and seeks additional private funding throughout the year.

## ***THE YEAR IN REVIEW...***

- Presentations were virtually made to various Town Managers and Select Boards around Chittenden County.
- We continued to raise awareness about the effectiveness of CAC's and SIU's and expand our outreach and communication to endorse the SIU/CAC mission.
- We provided specialized trainings for those working in the field of sexual abuse, child fatalities and severe physical abuse.
- The COVID-19 pandemic continued to have a significant impact on SIU case loads statewide.
- We continue to ensure our facility meets safety standards.
- We have investigated 229 cases.

## ***AS A RESULT...***

We maintain a high conviction rate, even in the most challenging cases. Since the start of this year, we have investigated high profile cases, not to mention the ones that are not seen in the media. We strive to do the most comprehensive investigations and pride ourselves on our ability to do so.

***July 1, 2020, through June 30, 2021, we have seen 229 cases, 142 child and 87 adult.***

This year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we again saw a significant downturn in our case load from pre-COVID times. The downturn was not in Chittenden County alone, but statewide. With Vermont going into a shutdown since March 2020, we noticed a dramatic impact on our child cases. The closing of daycares, schools and extra-curricular activities resulted in a severe lessening of eyes on the child population by adults who work closely with these children and who are also mandatory reporters. Thus, we continued to see a decrease in child investigations which historically contribute to approximately two-thirds of CUSI's cases.

Our cases continue to get more and more complex with new technology components being created on a frequent basis. The investigations require the detectives to spend significant amounts of time gathering information from corporations like Facebook, Google, Yahoo, Snapchat, Plenty-o-Fish, Instagram, cell phone wireless carriers, etc. The amount of data that is gathered then requires the investigator to spend a tremendous amount of time reviewing the documents and gathering evidence. For detectives to have access to this information, it often requires the issuance of multiple subpoenas and the application of search warrants from a judge before we can even gather the documents that we need from these companies. The cases that we investigate are considered the most heinous crimes to investigate other than murder. The negative effects of these crimes stay with a victim for their entire life and, therefore, we do the best job we can to build the strongest case against the defendants that we investigate.

Special Investigative Units (SIU's) are also required by Vermont law to investigate Human Trafficking. CUSI now provides training to our staff relevant to Human Trafficking. These types of investigations are similar in many ways to the cases that we already investigate; however, there are some very distinct differences that, without proper training, would not allow detectives to be successful. The Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations have worked on several cases of "Human Trafficking" within Chittenden County. These cases require significant amounts of additional resources and expertise that will undoubtedly require additional funding by the State of Vermont in the future. CUSI also participates on county and state-wide committees and taskforces which focus primarily on human trafficking.

CUSI continues to have an active role in teaching at the Vermont Police Academy. CUSI teaches the three-day sexual assault investigation training block that is taught twice a year during the basic police recruit training classes. This block of education encompasses many aspects of sexual assault investigations from the first initial uniform officer's response to the needs of victims and the process of building a successful case that will lead to a successful prosecution. CUSI has also taken a lead in educating other agencies on how to respond to human trafficking and how to advocate for these victims.

One of the last areas where CUSI has tried to have a more active involvement is in public outreach. Traditionally, CUSI has been looked at as leaders in providing training to youths and parents around Internet Safety. Due to COVID 19 restrictions, however, such outreach was unavailable in FY 2021. CUSI welcomes the opportunity to be invited into any of our communities within Chittenden County.

Consequently, we want to thank all our municipalities for your continued support. Without your patronage we could not apprehend, convict, or incarcerate countless perpetrators. We take pride in keeping our community safe and contributing to your piece of mind. We often receive complimentary letters and phone calls from survivors, their family members, and others. We are always open to feedback and we ask that you direct any concerns or compliments to the Unit's Director, Sergeant Rich Weinisch.

**CUSI CASE INCIDENTS & SEX OFFENDERS BY LOCATION**  
*July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021*

<b>Town of Incident</b>	<b>Case Count</b>	<b>Sex Offenders</b>
<b>Bolton</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Burlington</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Charlotte</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Colchester</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Essex</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Hinesburg</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Huntington</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Jericho</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Milton</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Richmond</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Shelburne</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>South Burlington</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>St. George</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Underhill</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>University of Vermont</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Westford</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Williston</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Winooski</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Out of County Assist</b>	<b>3</b>	
<b>Out of State Assist</b>		
<b>Unknown</b>	<b>2</b>	
<b>Community Service/SANE Kits</b>	<b>1</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>273</b>

***OUR TEAM...***

***The following personnel are currently assigned to CUSI***

**Sergeant Rich Weinisch**

***Director*** - Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations

*Home Agency:* Burlington Police Department

*Years of Service:* Serving since 2008

*Assigned to CUSI as Director:* January 2021

Email: [tnash@bpdvt.org](mailto:tnash@bpdvt.org)

**Detective Corporal Eric Dalla Mura**

***Investigator*** - Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations

*Member-* Vermont Internet Crimes against Children Taskforce

*Home Agency:* Burlington Police Department

*Years of Service:* Serving since 2008

*Assigned to CUSI:* September 2019

Email: [edallamura@bpdvt.or](mailto:edallamura@bpdvt.or)

**Detective Corporal Krystal Wrinn**

***Investigator*** - Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations

*Member-* Vermont Internet Crimes against Children Taskforce, Vermont Human Trafficking Task Force

*Home Agency:* Burlington Police Department

*Years of Service:* Serving since 2009

*Assigned to CUSI:* October 2016

Email: [kwrinn@bpdvt.org](mailto:kwrinn@bpdvt.org)

**Detective Victor Bitca**

***Investigator*** – Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations

*Member-* Chittenden County Sex Offender Registry Coordinator

*Home Agency:* Colchester Police Department

*Years of Service:* Serving since 2013

*Assigned to CUSI:* April 2019

Email: [victor.bitca@colchesterpdt.org](mailto:victor.bitca@colchesterpdt.org)

**Detective Michael Chistolini**

**Investigator** – Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations

*Home Agency:* Essex Police Department

*Years of Service:* Serving since 2013

*Assigned to CUSI:* April 2018

Email: [mchistolini@essex.org](mailto:mchistolini@essex.org)

**Detective Daniel Boyer**

**Investigator** – Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations

*Home Agency:* South Burlington Police Department

*Years of Service:* Serving since 2010

*Assigned to CUSI:* September 2020

Email: [dboyer@southburlingtonpolice.org](mailto:dboyer@southburlingtonpolice.org)

**Detective Trooper David Hurwitch**

**Investigator** – Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations

*Member-* Chittenden County Sex Offender Registry Coordinator

*Home Agency:* Vermont State Police

*Years of Service:* Serving since 2009

*Assigned to CUSI:* January 2017

Email: [david.hurwitch@vermont.gov](mailto:david.hurwitch@vermont.gov)

**Detective Elizabeth Felicciardi**

**Investigator** – Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations

*Home Agency:* University of Vermont Police

*Years of Service:* Serving since 2012

*Assigned to CUSI:* September 2017

Email: [efelicci@uvm.edu](mailto:efelicci@uvm.edu)

**Veronica Rathgeb-Executive Director CCAC**

**Executive Director-Chittenden Children's Advocacy Center**

*Years of Service with CCAC:* Serving since November 2013

Email: [vrathgeb@bpdvt.org](mailto:vrathgeb@bpdvt.org)

**Armina Medic-Victim Advocate**

*Victim Advocate- CUSI: Office of the Chittenden County State's Attorney*

*Years of Service:* Serving since 2002

*Assigned to CUSI:* October 2014

Email: [armina.medi@vermont.gov](mailto:armina.medi@vermont.gov)

**Kimberly Staiano-DCF**

*Designated CUSI Investigator-Vermont Department for Children and families (DCF)*

*Years of Service:* Serving since 2014

*Assigned to CUSI:* September 2018

Email: [kimberly.staiano@vermont.gov](mailto:kimberly.staiano@vermont.gov)

**Dana Disano- Prosecutor**

*Deputy State's Attorney assigned to CUSI- Chittenden County State's Attorney*

*Years of service:* Serving since 2010

*Assigned to CUSI:* March 2017

Email: [dana.disano@vermont.gov](mailto:dana.disano@vermont.gov)

**Mary Komondy- CAC Case Coordinator**

*CAC Case Coordinator*

*Years of Service with CCAC:* Serving since February 2019

Email: [mkomondy@bpdvt.org](mailto:mkomondy@bpdvt.org)



## CUSI Policy Board Members October 2019

### **Natania Carter**

HOPEWorks  
PO Box 92  
Burlington, Vermont 05402  
802-864-0555  
Email: [natania@hopeworksvt.org](mailto:natania@hopeworksvt.org)

### **Anita Thomason**

Asst. District Director of Department of Children  
and Families (DCF)  
426 Industrial Ave Suite 130  
Williston, VT 05495  
802-951-5165  
Email: [anita.thomason@vermont.gov](mailto:anita.thomason@vermont.gov)

### **Ray Coffey**

Community Services Director  
27 West Allen Street  
Winooski, VT 05404  
802-655-6410  
Email: [rscoffey@winooskivt.org](mailto:rscoffey@winooskivt.org)

### **Raenetta Liberty, RN, BSN (Vice Chair)**

Clinical Coordinator, Forensic Nursing Program  
University of Vermont Medical Center  
111 Colchester Ave  
Burlington, VT 05401  
802-847-5396  
Email: [raenetta.liberty@UVMHealth.org](mailto:raenetta.liberty@UVMHealth.org)

### **Todd Odit**

Town Manager  
Town of Jericho  
PO Box 39  
Jericho, VT 05465  
802-899-9970  
Email: [todit@jerichovt.gov](mailto:todit@jerichovt.gov)

### **Steve Laroche**

Chief of Police  
Milton Police Department  
37 Bombardier Road  
Milton, VT 05468  
802-893-2424  
Email: [steve.laroche@vermont.gov](mailto:steve.laroche@vermont.gov)

### **Susan Hardin**

Deputy State's Attorney  
Chittenden County State's Attorney's Office  
Cherry Street, Suite 305  
Burlington, Vermont 05401  
802-652-0385  
Email: [susan.hardin@vermont.gov](mailto:susan.hardin@vermont.gov)

### **Andrew Hendrickson (Chair)**

Town of Huntington Representative  
1560 East Street  
Huntington, VT 05462  
802-434-2998  
Email: [aeh201@gmail.com](mailto:aeh201@gmail.com)

### **Lieutenant John MacCullum**

Williston Station Commander  
Vermont State Police  
2777 St. George Rd.  
Williston, VT 05495  
802-878-7111  
Email: [john.maccullum@vermont.gov](mailto:john.maccullum@vermont.gov)

### **Matthew Sullivan (Treasurer)**

Deputy Chief  
Burlington Police Department  
1 North Avenue  
Burlington, VT 05401  
802-540-2159  
Email: [msullivan@bpdvt.org](mailto:msullivan@bpdvt.org)



## CUSI-Mission Statement 1992

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.

## CAC-Our Mission 2003

To serve all children, families and adults

by strengthening our community's

response to abuse through

investigation, intervention

prevention, and advocacy efforts

Teach our girls and boys to know their strengths.  
Help them to be independent.  
Tell them the truth.  
Arm them with knowledge.  
Encourage, advise, empower and listen.  
Be thoughtful, kind and...generous.