Eight Key Themes from District Action Plans

Prepared from the *Vermont Restorative Report (May 2026)*

1. Voice of Children & Young People • Too little face-to-face time with children and youth. • Decisions are often made without fully understanding their wishes and experiences. • Bureaucracy and workload reduce time for meaningful engagement. • Improvement needs clearer priorities, capacity, training, and leadership. • Stronger lived-experience input and feedback systems are needed.	**2. Family Engagement & Participation** • Family engagement is inconsistent across workers and teams. • Some practice is collaborative; some remain overly procedural. • Confusion about information-sharing rules limits partnership. • Family Group Conferencing received strong support. • More attention is needed to kinship networks and family advocacy.
3. Interagency Partnership • Partnerships vary widely by district, agency, and leadership. • There is no strong integrated multi-agency prevention strategy. • Staff want better communication, trust, and coordination. • Shared challenges need more joined-up leadership and response. • Information sharing across agencies is unclear and inconsistent.	**4. Practice Approach** • Vermont needs one clear, integrated practice framework. • Practice should be relational and restorative. • Core principles should include child-centered, family-focused, strengths-based, trauma-informed, and culturally responsive practice. • Supervision is central to quality practice and staff support. • Teams want more clarity about the purpose and function of supervision.
5. Quality Assurance, Data & Evidence • Staff want stronger client feedback processes. • The focus should shift from output and speed to experience and outcomes. • More feedback is needed from children, families, and communities. • Staff want easier access to research and evidence about what works. • Teams need usable local data to support improvement.	**6. Workforce Development & Skills** • Workforce diversity is seen as important to meeting family needs. • Staff need stronger support around mental health, substance use, and behavioral issues. • Teams want to build skills in communication, conflict, and family engagement. • Staff also want more confidence in collaborative change work. • Developing emerging leaders is a key priority.
7. Strategy, Policy & Procedures • Staff want policy intent and daily practice to align more clearly. • Inconsistent guidance creates hesitation and variation. • The department needs a single integrated prevention strategy. • Child protection is often experienced as reactive and over-proceduralized. • Kinship care should be developed as a distinct service model. • Staff safety culture is a clear strength.	**8. Leadership** • Leadership support for restorative work is strong. • State, regional, and district leaders have supported training and change efforts. • Local leadership is helping change happen at different speeds where needed. • Distributed leadership reflects restorative values in action. • Sustaining progress will require enabling policy, support, and shared responsibility.