

# E nsure a home for every child with rental supports for vulnerable families

## Issue Overview

A growing number of New Hampshire's children can no longer count on a stable home, and far too many more live in households that cannot afford the common necessities of a healthy life- a cake of soap, a jug of laundry detergent- after the rent is paid.

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, known as TANF, provides some basic assistance and education to New Hampshire's most vulnerable families in order to raise families out of poverty. Yet the maximum grant to a single parent family is \$650 per month, while the median cost of a low-end rent anywhere south of the White Mountains is \$700/month. In our four most populous southern counties, where most of the jobs are, and three out four TANF families live, that number is as high as \$900. With these same limited dollars, a parent must also ensure all the other necessities of life, such as food, heating, and transportation in order to seek work and child care. The fact is, the grant is not enough to keep a roof over a family's head while they seek job training or other solutions.

This tenuous situation means that the childcare centers which care for TANF children while parents attend work or training, frequently report families trying to live in camp grounds or their automobiles.

At any single moment, about 2,500 children in our



state are in household that relies on the grant without other housing assistance. But the TANF population constantly rolls over. By the end of this year, 6,000 children will have experienced extreme poverty. And this occurs at exactly the point in their young lives when their brains are developing and their schooling lays the foundation for their future success.

Children without consistent, stable housing are less likely to grow up healthy, well educated, and prepared for future success, and parents without stable housing are less likely to be productive members of the workforce. Rental assistance for vulnerable families is a smart investment in New Hampshire's next generation.

## Proposed Solution

In its final report, the state's Task Force on the Adequacy of the TANF Grant recommended that the state create a targeted \$250 per month housing voucher, which would go solely to those TANF families with no support outside the grant. Figures provided to the Commission by the NH Housing Authority indicate that this would ensure every TANF family financial access to the bottom 20% of the rental housing market everywhere in the state, meaning that no TANF parent need raise their children in their car. It is also calculated to ensure that the monthly grant has enough cushion for basic household

## The 2008 Priorities for New Hampshire's Children

NH CAN is a statewide, nonpartisan network of nearly 100 child-serving organizations working to improve the health and well-being of New Hampshire's children by driving governmental policy, changing budget priorities, and inspiring community action. Each year, NH CAN develops a collective set of Priorities for New Hampshire's Children, a child-centered plan of action for the legislature, state leaders, state agencies, social service providers, schools, communities and families. The Priorities for New Hampshire's Children reflects the consensus of nearly 100 partner organizations, and creates a common call to action that can be shared across our state.

supplies, so no child need go without clean clothes or medicine not covered by Medicaid or food stamps.

## Call to Action

Legislation currently before the NH Legislature addresses the recommendations of the Task Force. Retained Senate Bill 163 (2007) is currently under consideration by the Senate Health and Human Services Committee and may be amended to authorize the \$250/month targeted TANF rent voucher. NH state representatives and members of the Task Force Tom Donovan and James MacKay have filed bills to present this legislative recommendation to the lower house.

Legislators and citizens interested in child well-being should track these measures and support them as they come up in committee, and citizens can support these bills with calls to their legislators.

## Find Out More

- Families for Justice is the lead NH CAN partner for this Priority. Families for Justice can be contacted at [dnamtque@aol.com](mailto:dnamtque@aol.com).
- The NH Housing Authority is a superb and friendly source for information about the Housing market in NH. Call them at



(603) 472-8623 and explain what you need.

- The NH Department of Health and Human Services web site supplies a wealth of basic information about the size and composition of the TANF caseload, available online here: <http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/DHHS/TANF/default.htm> For the most up-to-date numbers, contact the Division of Family Assistance here: 271-4580.
- The Way Home, which operates homeless prevention services and maintain a full service, residential shelter for homeless families in downtown Manchester, is online here: <http://www.hud.gov/local/nh/homeless/2002-09-20.cfm>
- New Hampshire General Court. You can follow the progress of the bill, or find contact information for your local representatives by going to <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/default.htm>.
- Children's Alliance of New Hampshire: You can download copies of the complete Priorities for New Hampshire's Children, additional fact sheets, and information about the New Hampshire Child Advocacy Network at the Children's Alliance website, [www.childrennh.org](http://www.childrennh.org). You can also track the progress of all the Priorities-related bills, as well as contact your local representatives, under the "Get Active" link.

## References

**Prevailing Rents:** Task Force to Study TANE, (HB 1461, Chapter 274, Laws of 2006, NH); Housing Sub-Committee Report, 10/3/2006, p.A-2. Data and analysis provided by N.H. Housing Authority.

**Exposure of Children:** Jan. 07 Snapshot of Children living in parent headed TANF families not in receipt of a federal housing subsidy or a supplemental federal or state disability check issued for a disabled child, and thus exposed to the severest of the deprivations described above; NH Office of Legislative Budget Assistant, Draft Fiscal Note Worksheet for SB 163 (2007), 1/26/07, p.3.

**Cumulative Totals:** NH Division of Family Assistance in-house Data Warehouse, monthly case opening data; estimates based on 50% recidivism rate, 1.6 children per parent headed household.



**NH CAN is a project of the Children's Alliance of New Hampshire**

For more information on the *2008 Priorities for New Hampshire's Children*, please visit [www.ChildrenNH.org](http://www.ChildrenNH.org)

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