



Children know how to connect the dots. It's time our state leaders did the same.

The New Hampshire Child Advocacy Network (NH CAN) knows that children's needs are connected. Ignoring a child's needs today will only lead to bigger problems – with more expensive interventions – tomorrow.

Disregard the need for affordable medical care? A child with a painful ear infection cannot concentrate in school and may require emergency room care.

Ignore the need for quality, affordable early care and education? Children in low quality care aren't ready for school and are less likely to become skilled workers.

Turn your back on a child's unexplained bruises? An abused child is three times more likely to commit a violent crime as an adult.

Children know how to connect the dots. It's time for New Hampshire's leaders to do the same, by supporting a state budget that invests in children.

When we ensure quality child care, education, health care and child protection today, we avoid greater social and economic costs tomorrow. This legislative session, let's connect the dots and invest in a thriving future.



**NH
CAN**

New Hampshire
Child Advocacy Network

Putting the Pieces of the Puzzle Together

New Hampshire CAN do better for our children.

Too many of New Hampshire's children lack the care they need and the opportunities they deserve:

◀ Approximately 17,000 children don't have health coverage. Thousands more have insurance but don't have access to the primary or specialty care they need.

◀ 16 school districts in the United States don't provide public kindergarten programs. All are in NH.

◀ On any given day, more than 1,000 children attending school are homeless.

◀ On any given day, more than 3,000 children are receiving protective services.

◀ 22% of school-age boys and 17% of girls are overweight; another 20% are at risk of becoming overweight.

The 2005 legislative session offers an opportunity for strategic investments in our children, our families and our future.

Invest in children. It is the right thing to do. And it is the smart thing to do.

The annual Children's Agenda was developed collaboratively by the nearly 200 partner organizations and advisors in NH CAN. For more information about NH CAN, the 2005 Children's Agenda, or individual action steps, please visit the Children's Alliance of New Hampshire Web site at www.ChildrenNH.org.



New Hampshire Child Advocacy Network 2005 Children's Agenda

FOUNDATION PRIORITY

NH CAN's 2005 Children's Agenda sets priorities for action in four key areas of children's well-being: safety and protection, economic security, education, and health.

At the foundation of our Agenda is a philosophy of strategic investment — of preventing problems and building strong systems today to support success for our children and our future.

For 2005, we urge you to support our **Foundation Priority:**

Promote the health and well-being of all NH children by supporting:
a) a state budget that improves investments in children and families, and b) state funding for a quality public education for every child.

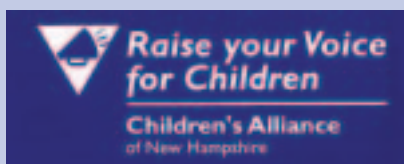
HEALTH

Priority: Ensure health insurance coverage for all NH children by preventing reductions to Medicaid and SCHIP benefit and eligibility levels and by identifying and enrolling all currently eligible children.

NH's children's health insurance program, Healthy Kids, is a national model. Since its establishment by the Legislature in 1993, Healthy Kids has reduced the percentage of uninsured children from 10.7% to 5.2%. Our rank as the third-best state for covering kids is threatened by budget cuts and the proposed GraniteCare plan that would replace health coverage with health services accounts for an estimated 21,500 children. Cuts to children's insurance would harm children, families and the state's fiscal health. Uninsured children are up to 10 times more likely than children who have health insurance not to have had a preventive care visit in the past 12 months and up to seven times more likely not to have had a dental checkup. We must protect the progress we've made and continue to try to enroll the remaining 17,000 children in the state who qualify for Healthy Kids.

Reduce childhood obesity and related health issues by increasing public support for physical activity in schools and healthy food choices for all students.

Obesity has reached epidemic proportions in NH and threatens to affect the health and well-being of thousands of children and adolescents. Twelve percent of NH 5-year-olds cannot pass a minimum fitness test when they enter school. One year later, more than half fail the same test. By age 10, more than three-quarters fail. Children who are overweight or obese are at increased risk for developing chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure and cancer as adults. The prevalence in obesity and overweight among children is attributable to factors that include high-caloric foods and the lack of physical activity. Schools present a unique opportunity to promote healthy eating and physical activity. Yet now, when children's need for exercise is so clear, our state is considering eliminating school-based physical educa-



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tion programs from the state's education standards. Now is not the time to remove physical education from our schools. By keeping physical education in the school standards, we can help children develop healthier lifestyles.

ECONOMIC SECURITY

Priority: Remove barriers to work for low-income families with children by increasing the state's reimbursement for child care providers.

Forty-five percent of NH children who live with single mothers are in poverty. The lack of affordable, dependable child care is one of the factors that prevents these parents from finding and keeping jobs that will make them self-sufficient. About 7,000 children receive state "scholarships" to pay for child care while their parents work their way off of welfare. Despite the rising costs of providing care, the state's reimbursement has not increased since 2000. Although it costs \$200 a week or more to care for a 1-year-old, the top state reimbursement is \$120. Most providers charge the parents the difference, which makes it increasingly harder for the working poor to afford quality care for their children. An increase in the child care reimbursement rate will not only help low-income working families, it will also improve the quality of care by reducing high turnover rates among child care professionals who earn an average \$8.55 per hour, often with no benefits.

Reduce homelessness among low income working families by increasing access to safe, adequate, and affordable housing.

One in every four people spending the night in a shelter in NH is a child. The lack of affordable housing in NH causes economic stress for families, overcrowding and homelessness that is devastating for children. Thousands of children live in substandard apartments or motels, spend summers living in campgrounds and winters in unwintered summer rentals, or are forced to go without food, clothing, health care or other necessities because their parents pay more than half of their income for housing. Nearly one-third of children nationally live in housing-stressed families. Locally, we must work with workforce coalitions to support affordable housing in all communities. On the federal level, adequate funding for Section 8 housing assistance and support for the National Housing Trust Fund are critical to preventing more children from becoming homeless.

EDUCATION

Priority: Ensure the right of all NH students to a high quality public education by:

- a) supporting efforts to define adequacy at a level that ensures high quality education for all children;
- b) supporting efforts to assess the cost of adequacy at a level that ensures state funding of high quality educational services for all students; and
- c) monitoring and opposing legislative efforts aimed at diverting public funds from public schools and/or providing public funds for private purposes while not meeting current funding obligations for public schools.

Eleven years since the NH Supreme Court ruled that the state has a constitutional obligation to provide and pay for an adequate education for all children, the Legislature still has not defined what an adequate education is or what it costs. A recent study by the Citizens Voice Project found that the average gap between the fund-



ing NH sends to public schools and the cost of meeting basic state requirements is \$2,125 per student, or at least \$425 million statewide. Local taxpayers are filling that growing gap with rising local property taxes. This makes the quality of education uneven and dependent on the property wealth of a given town. Despite the chronic underfunding of NH's schools, efforts continue to siphon money away from public education through various "school choice" efforts. We need to plug the drain on public school funding and ensure all NH children have access to a high-quality public education.

Improve educational outcomes for all children by including public kindergarten as required standard for school approval.

Any second grade teacher will know – without being told – which students in their class went to kindergarten and which didn't. A growing body of evidence shows that children who attend kindergarten develop better language skills, have better social skills and fewer behavioral problems, are less likely to require special education, less likely to drop out of school, and more likely to be literate, enroll in secondary education and employed as adults. Yet 20% of NH's children do not have access to public kindergarten. NH is the last state in the nation that does not provide universal access to public kindergarten – but we have a chance to change that. The state Board of Education is revising its state standards for school approval. We need to ensure that those standards include a requirement to provide public kindergarten for all eligible children.

CHILD SAFETY AND PROTECTION

Priority: Improve care for abused and neglected children by achieving and maintaining accreditation of the state child protective system.

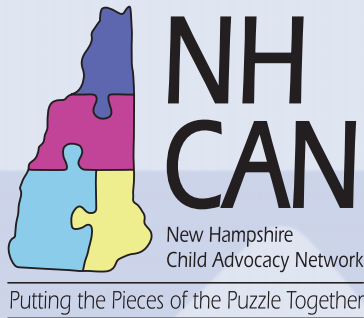
NH's Child Protection Act says abused and neglected children have the right to "care, treatment, counseling, supervision, and rehabilitative resources." And it makes the state responsible for providing prevention and intervention services to families. That vision has never been fully realized. NH's child protection system has made significant progress in recent years, but much remains to be done. Legislation being introduced in 2005 would require accreditation of NH's child protection system. Accreditation will require the state to improve a wide array of services for children and families, will make those improvements permanent, and will provide for citizens and state government a reliable external quality control system based on best practices and uninfluenced by political and budgetary pressures.

Ensure the safety of children by banning concealed firearms in all schools and safe school zones in NH.

NH is one of only four states that allows anyone with a concealed carry permit to have a loaded weapon on school property. While federal law establishes Safe School Zones (a 1,000-foot radius around U.S. schools) and prohibits firearms of any kind within that circle, a loophole in the law allows a concealed gun in a Safe School Zone in states that have a concealed weapon permit process. States such as NH that issue concealed carry permits must have additional laws banning concealed weapons from inappropriate places. To make matters worse, a 2003 state law prohibits towns and cities from passing local ordinances or regulations on firearms. Our children deserve better. Children deserve to be safe at school and free from fear that an adult or one of their peers will enter their school with a gun and do them harm. We must close this loophole and pass a law banning concealed firearms in Safe School Zones.

PARTNERS

Adoptive Families Together
Adult Learning Center
AFL-CIO, NH
Alliance for Better Child Care
Alliance for Community Supports / Project Renew
American Academy of Family Physicians
American Cancer Society
American Friends Service Committee, NH
American Heart Association
America's Promise
Atkinson Academy PTA
Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families
Big Brothers/Big Sisters Greater Seacoast
Big Brothers/Big Sisters NH State Alliance
Bi-State Primary Care Association
Boscawen Elementary PTA
Casey Family Services, NH
Cedarcrest
Chase Home for Children
Child Advocacy Center of Rockingham County
Child and Family Services of NH
Child Development Center of Strafford County
Child Health Services
Children of Sullivan County
Children's Alliance of New Hampshire
Children's Coalition of Southern NH
Claremont Coalition
Coalition for Adequate Education Funding
Coalition for New Hampshire Oral Health Action
Community Action Program, Belknap-Merrimack County, Inc.
Community Child Care Center
Community Support Network, Inc.
Concord Substance Abuse Coalition
Council for Children and Adolescents with Chronic Health Conditions
Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of NH
Crotched Mountain Foundation
Danbury Community Center
David's House
Derry Village Extended Day Program
Disabilities Rights Center, Inc.
Early Childhood Mental Health Network of Upper Valley
Early Education and Intervention Network
Early Learning NH
Easter Seals NH and ME
Education-A-Must
Endowment for Health
Episcopal Diocese of NH
Every Child Matters
Families First of the Greater Seacoast
Families for Justice
Families Matter in Carroll County
Family Mediation and Juvenile Services
Family Resource Center at Gorham
Family Resource Connection, NH State Library
Family Support NH
FamilyStrength
Foundation for Healthy Communities
Friends of Recovery, NH
Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network
Girl Scouts of Swift Water Council
Girls, Incorporated
Good Beginnings of Sullivan County
Granite State Federation of Families for Children
Growing Places
Healthy Minds and Bodies
Henniker PTA
Heritage United Way
Home Health and Hospice Care
Hood Center for Children and Families
HUB Family Resource Center
Immaculate Heart of Mary Children's Center



Putting the Pieces of the Puzzle Together

Institute for Health, Law and Ethics, Franklin Pierce Law Center
Interlocken, Inc.
Kearsarge Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
Keene Day Care Center
Kingston Police Department
Lake Sunapee Region VNA
Lakes Region Day Care Center
Lakes Region United Way
Little Frogs and Polliwogs Learning Center
Londonderry High School PTSA
Makin' It Happen Coalition for Resilient Youth
March of Dimes
Microptix
Million Mom March, NH Chapter
Monadnock Family Services
Monadnock United Way
Nashua Soup Kitchen and Shelter
National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI), NH
National Association of Social Workers, NH
National Congress for Fathers & Children, NH Chapter
National Education Association, NH
Neighbor to Neighbor
New Beginnings
New Futures
NFI North, Inc.
NH Association for the Education of Young Children
NH Association of Family and Consumer Sciences
NH Association of School Principals
NH Association of School Psychologists
NH Ceasefire
NH Children's Trust Fund
NH Citizens Alliance
NH Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence
NH Coalition to End Homelessness
NH Commission on the Status of Women
NH Community Loan Fund
NH Council of Churches
NH Developmental Disabilities Council
NH Family Voices
NH Federation of Teachers
NH Head Start Parents' Association
NH Healthy Kids Corporation
NH Healthy Schools Coalition
NH Hospital Association
NH Housing Forum
NH Minority Health Coalition
NH Parent Teachers Association
NH Partners in Health
NH Pediatric Society
NH Public Health Association
NH Public Television - Ready to Learn
NH Safe Kids
NH School Administrators Association
NH School Boards Association
NH School Nurses' Association
NH Special Education Policy Project
North Country United Way
Odyssey House, Inc.
Orion House, Inc.
Parent Information Center
Parent to Parent Upper Valley Support Group

Parenting New Hampshire
Parents as Teachers, SAU 6
Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) NH
Penacook Community Center
Planned Parenthood of Northern New England
PlusTime NH
Portsmouth Early Education Program
Richie McFarland Children's Center
Riverbend Parent-Child Centers
Salem Family Resources-Success By Six
Smoke-Free NH Alliance
Strafford County YMCA
Strafford County Head Start
The Children's Place and Parent Education Center
The Circle Program
The Family Center of Greater Peterborough
The Friends Program
The Grapevine Family and Resource Center
The Sad Cafe / Drugs Are Dangerous
Tri-County Head Start
United Church of Christ, NH Conference
United Way of Greater Nashua
United Way of Merrimack County
United Way of Merrimack Valley
United Way of Northern New Hampshire
United Way of Sullivan County
United Way of the Greater Seacoast
United Way of the Upper Valley
Upper Connecticut Valley Community Coalition
Visiting Nurse Alliance of VT and NH, Inc.
VNA Upper Valley Fatherhood Program
VNA, Child Care and Family Resource Center
White Birch Community Center
Wolfeboro Area Children's Center
Workforce Opportunity Council
Youth Venture

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