

INTRODUCTION

New Hampshire is often touted as one of the best places to raise a child and frequently ranks at or near the top among the 50 states on indicators that measure child well-being. Those rankings reflect the high quality of life that many of New Hampshire's children experience. Yet that reality does not necessarily carry over to children in all areas of the state, particularly as families continue to struggle with the effects of the Great Recession. This publication reveals that

- In 2008, more than one in ten children in New Hampshire lived in poverty up from 6 percent in 2000, and that number continues to grow — especially for children under five years of age whose poverty rate is 12 percent.
- More families lack the ability to adequately feed their children. The use of food stamps by families with children increased 19 percent from 2008 to 2009. Eligibility for the free and reduced lunch program saw a jump from 16.4 percent of school children in 2002 to 20.9 percent in 2008 to 24.8 percent in 2009.
- An increasing number of families are struggling to provide a home for their children. Homelessness is expanding among families with young children and adolescents. In 2009-2010, New Hampshire school districts identified and reported 2,573 homeless students, nearly a 21 percent rise (441 students) from the 2008-2009 count, and this is likely an underestimation.
- Obesity is a developing health concern. In 2008, 15.5 percent of low-income New Hampshire children ages 2 to 5 were obese and another 17.8 percent were overweight.
- More than 56,000 Granite State children have mental illness, yet in 2009 only 12,844 children ages zero to 17 received services and a recent study found that very few children under 6 years of age received necessary treatment.
- Our education system is leaving some of our children behind. According to one test, only 41 percent of fourth graders exhibit reading proficiency and there is a gap between white and non-white students, with 42 percent of New Hampshire's white students scoring proficient or above but only 35 percent of New Hampshire's non-white students scoring at that level.

The *2010/2011 New Hampshire Kids Count Data Book* examines the well-being of children in the Granite State, providing a statistical look at children from birth through young adulthood. The 33 indicators are divided into five sections: family and community, health and wellness, education, safety and well-being, and economic security. Yet they are all interrelated, each one providing another piece of the puzzle that together provides a picture of New Hampshire's almost 300,000 children.

This book reports all data at the county and state levels and often compares our state data to national statistics. All the indicators in this book are presented in a two-page format that includes a definition, the state and national context for the indicator, specific New Hampshire findings, a chart or graph to amplify the written information, and the reference sources. The graphics depict outcomes for the state overall and then alphabetically by county name. In conjunction with this

publication, the Alliance also maintains an online site with these and additional child indicators that can be accessed at our website www.childrennh.org.

The Children's Alliance suggests that when compiled and examined, these data will enable all of us — policy makers, advocates, community leaders and all those who work on behalf of children — to understand the areas where we need to improve. We urge the use of this information to help set priorities, identify strategies and monitor changes in the well-being of children in the Granite State. There are places, however, where you will read that we lacked adequate data to provide a comprehensive picture of child wellbeing. We encourage all organizations serving children, both public and private, to collect more extensive data.

New Hampshire is a prosperous state.

It consistently ranks among the top states in per capita income and economic growth, while it ranks among the bottom states in tax burden. It has a high quality of life for most of its citizens — including its children. But as this report is being written, the very principles on which New Hampshire life has been built are being questioned and, perhaps, reconfigured. We recognize that the New Hampshire's government is struggling to balance our budget and also to responsibly provide for Granite State children and their families. If we don't continue to offer children the services they need to grow into healthy, contributing adults, we will compromise the future of our state.

