



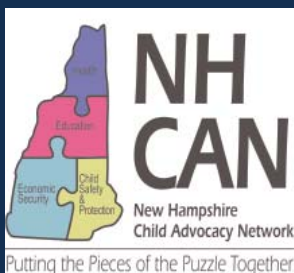
2007 Priorities for New Hampshire's Children

All of
New
Hampshire's
children should have
the opportunities
they need to grow
and learn.

From health care, to quality education, to a thriving economy, promoting and preserving the well being of children is an essential part of maintaining New Hampshire's quality of life.

It is this quality of life that provides the true New Hampshire Advantage.

New Hampshire has made strategic investments to support healthy communities, an educated workforce, and a thriving economy, and these investments have paid off. We must continue to make smart choices so that the future of our state is one of opportunity, prosperity and quality of life for all New Hampshire families.





Promoting opportunity and quality of life is the foundation of the New Hampshire Advantage. Supporting access to health care, quality public education, and economic opportunity has enabled New Hampshire families and communities to thrive.

The 2007 Priorities for New Hampshire's Children reflect the consensus of over 100 New Hampshire Child Advocacy Network (NH CAN) partners and advisors, and recommends policy and budget choices that will ensure our quality of life, and maintain the New Hampshire Advantage.

Responsible government promotes opportunity for all residents, and a responsible state budget reflects state investments in those opportunities. To maintain our high quality of life, we must support a state budget and policies that ensure opportunities for all children and families, including the most vulnerable. That is why a responsible state budget is the foundation of NH CAN's 2007 Priorities for New Hampshire's Children. By creating a state budget that reflects our commitment to opportunity and prosperity, New Hampshire CAN maintain and nurture the New Hampshire advantage.

All of New Hampshire's children should have the health care they need to grow and learn.

Healthy children do better in school and in life, and children's health coverage makes the difference between a healthy child and one with unmet needs. In 2007, Congress will reauthorize the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). Federal reauthorization provides an opportunity to ensure that all children have access to affordable, quality health insurance coverage. New Hampshire has made significant gains in child health by invest-

ing in our state's Medicaid and SCHIP programs, known as Healthy Kids. That is why protecting and advancing Medicaid and SCHIP is a top priority for 2007. Together we CAN do more, not less, for our children by preserving Medicaid and fully funding SCHIP.

Good oral health is an essential part of overall health. Untreated childhood oral disease, including tooth decay, can lead to lifelong health problems such as respiratory and heart disease. Tooth decay affects five times more children than asthma, and can lead to poor nutrition, school absences, and limits success now and later in life. Common sense solutions, such as routine dental examinations, sealants, and fluoride supplements can prevent tooth decay. By increasing the reimbursement for these routine dental procedures under the Medicaid program, more vulnerable children will have access to important preventative care. That is why supporting an increase for Medicaid dental procedures is a priority for 2007. Together, we CAN give our children a healthy start and a bright future.

All of New Hampshire's children should have the opportunity to live free of poverty.

All parents want to adequately provide for their children; family assistance programs should help achieve that goal by fostering long-term self-sufficiency. Ten years of state and national evidence shows that state assistance works best when it focuses on positive, permanent self-sufficiency. New changes to state law focus instead on participation rates, which don't indicate long-term success. We know what works: flexible state programs that focus on the real obstacles to employment. That is why monitoring the changes to the law and educating the public and policy makers about the roots of poverty is a top priority for 2007. Together, we CAN return the focus to positive, permanent change that allows families to attain self-sufficiency.

When parents work hard and play by the rules, they

should be able to provide for their family's basic needs. That is why fair wages are a family value: they contribute to strong, self-sufficient families and communities. Unfortunately, even working hard and playing by the rules is not benefiting New Hampshire's low income families; structural changes in the economy mean that many families work hard at jobs that don't allow them to move out of poverty. A higher minimum wage helps hard-working families make ends meet. States across the country have found that raising the minimum wage results in a decrease in unemployment, and businesses report less turnover, rising productivity, and increased profits. That is why raising the minimum wage is a priority for 2007. Together, we CAN support strong families, strong businesses, and a strong economy.

All of New Hampshire's children should be prepared to join an educated workforce and thriving economy.

Because children begin learning as soon as they are born, a warm and stimulating environment is part of a strong foundation for their future learning. Quality childcare provides this foundation, and allows parents to support their families, knowing their children are well cared for. Today, many working families in NH cannot afford quality childcare and still make ends meet. Fortunately, quality care can be a reality for working families through statewide initiatives that increase the accessibility of stimulating early care. That is why supporting working families' access to quality childcare is a top priority for 2007. Together, we CAN lay a strong foundation for our children's future learning.

When we invest in quality public education, we invest in a prosperous future for our children and our state. This year, New Hampshire has a valuable opportunity to assure that future by focusing on the quality of education in public schools today. That is why constitutionally defined adequacy is a priority for 2007. Together, we CAN protect all children's right to a quality public education, and find compromise on a credible definition of adequacy.

When every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential, we all benefit. Unfortunately, not all students receive the supports and services they need to succeed. New Hampshire students with disabilities consistently experience poor educational outcomes. Nearly 30 percent of ninth graders with

disabilities will not graduate from high school. In order to combat this trend, we must address the severe and chronic shortage of special education teachers and personnel. That is why supporting the creation of an Executive Commission to address these shortages is a priority for 2007. Together, we CAN ensure that all children in NH receive a high quality education.

All of New Hampshire's children should live in homes that support their best interests.

State laws should make it easier for parents to focus on their children's best interests, especially in contested family matters. Some bills propose a "one size fits all" approach to child support guidelines that don't acknowledge the variety of NH families, and would shift the focus from the best interests of the children to the desires of the parent. Protecting the "best interests of the child standard" will help families keep the focus where it belongs: on the children. That is why flexible child support guidelines which focus on the children is a top priority for 2007. Together, we CAN help parents do what's best for their children, and maintain our focus on the best interests of the child.

Every home should be a safe place. But the remains of banned lead paint make many NH homes a dangerous place for children. Lead-exposed children are more likely to drop out of school, to require special education, and to get into trouble with the law- and the current lead laws don't go into effect until after children have been poisoned. Fortunately, supporting policies that prevent child lead poisoning can solve the lead crisis. That is why lead poisoning prevention is a priority for 2007. Together, we CAN safeguard our children's future with lead-free homes.





Partners

American Federation of Teachers- NH
 Alliance for Better Child Care
 American Friends Service Committee
 American Lead Poisoning Help Association (ALPHA)
 Bi-State Primary Care Association
 CASA of NH
 Casey Family Services
 Cedarcrest Center for Children With Disabilities
 Child and Family Services of NH
 Clean Air Works for New Hampshire
 Concord Children's Initiative
 Concord Substance Abuse Coalition
 Council for Children & Adolescents with Chronic Health Conditions
 Crotched Mountain Foundation
 Dartmouth Toxic Metals Research Program
 Disabilities Rights Center, Inc.
 Early Childhood Collaborative of Sullivan County
 Early Learning NH Endowment for Health

Episcopal Diocese of NH Families First of the Greater Seacoast
 Families for Justice
 Family Support NH Franconia Children's Center
 Girl Scouts of Swift Water Council
 Granite State Federation of Families
 HUB Family Resource Center
 Franklin Pierce Institute for Health, Law & Ethics
 Kearsarge Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
 Lakes Region Child Care Services
 Londonderry High School PTSA
 Makin' It Happen Coalition
 NAFI NH- NH CAN SC
 NAMI New Hampshire
 Nashua Soup Kitchen & Shelter, Inc.
 National Congress for Fathers & Children - NH Chapter
 New Beginnings - A Woman's Crisis Center
 New Futures, Inc.
 NH Children's Trust Fund
 NH Public Television
 NH Association of Educators of Young Children

NH Association of Family and Consumer Sciences
 NH Child Care Resource & Referral Network of NH
 NH Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence
 NH Coalition for Oral Health Action
 NH Community Loan Fund
 NH Council of Churches
 NH Dental Hygienists Association
 NH Dental Society
 NH Head Start State Parents Association
 NH Health Kids
 NH Healthy Schools Coalition
 NH Legal Assistance
 NH Pediatric Society
 NH Parent-Teacher Association
 NH School Administrator's Association
 NH School Counselor's Association
 NH School Nurses' Association
 NH Women's Lobby
 Orion House, Inc.
 Parenting New Hampshire
 Parents as Teachers of Sullivan County
 Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG NH)
 PlusTime NH
 Richie McFarland Children's Center
 Riverbend Parent-Child Centers
 Safe Kids NH
 Second Start
 Somali Development Center, Inc.

Spaulding Youth Center
 The Grapevine Family & Community Resource Center
 The Jordan Institute
 The Sad Café (Stepping-stone Music Opportunities, Inc.)
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