

## Ensure a home for every child with rental supports for vulnerable families

### Issue Overview

The vitality of New Hampshire in the future depends on the strong communities we build today. Making sure that everyone has a long-term stake in their community is one of the best ways to ensure success for everyone. Experts have observed that when families own their own homes or live in stable housing, communities are strengthened and stabilized in a number of ways. Economists call this the Stakeholder Effect. For the second year in a row, NH CAN has made legislation that provides housing support for families an urgent priority.

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, known as TANF, provides basic assistance and education to New Hampshire's most vulnerable families. When a legislative Task Force on TANF reviewed the cash grant a family received, it found that "TANF Grants are insufficient to provide safe, stable housing for children and families." The report formally recommends to the Governor and Legislature that the state... "provide additional housing assistance to at least those families that do not have federal housing subsidies or supplemental income."<sup>1</sup>

In NH, the monthly cost of rental housing generally exceeds the entire cash grant that a family receives through TANF. In fact, in the

state's four southern counties where some 72% of the TANF population resides, the average TANF grant is \$200-\$250 less than the monthly cost of the least expensive two bedroom apartments.

Families are expected to use their TANF funds to cover more than their housing costs. But, in an attempt to avoid homelessness, families often put their entire TANF funding towards rent, leaving no money for everyday needs such as toothbrushes, band-aids and dishwashing liquid—all items that impact the health and well being of a child and his/her family.

Children with consistent, stable housing are more likely to grow up healthy, well educated and prepared for future success. In this time of recession, the need for human services will only increase. We must stand together and find solutions to provide basic needs, especially housing, to our youngest and most vulnerable citizens. Every NH child deserves a home.



### Proposed Solution

The Task Force on TANF recommends the funding of a housing voucher program through the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Service's Division of Family Assistance. HB 658 FN authorizing the issuance of a supplemental monthly rent voucher worth \$250 to qualifying families as determined by Division of Family Assistance was

*The New Hampshire Child Advocacy Network (NH CAN) is a statewide, nonpartisan network of child-serving organizations working to improve the well-being of New Hampshire's children by driving government policy, changing budget priorities and inspiring community action. Each year, a consensus of nearly 100 NH CAN partner organizations and advisors develop a collective set of Priorities for New Hampshire's Children, a plan of action for the legislature, state leaders, state agencies and communities that is shared across the Granite State.*

# 2009 Priorities for New Hampshire's Children

# 2009 priorities

filed on behalf of the House Health, Human Services and Elderly Affairs Committee by Tom Donovan, Vice Chair of that Committee.

Over the past year, significant progress has been made towards funding a supplemental rental voucher. DHHS Commissioner Toumpas has requested \$3 million a year to fund the program over the 2009-2010 biennium in the Department's maintenance budget submitted to Governor Lynch.

## Call to Action

The maintenance budget will be subject to deep cuts this year. Legislators and citizens interested in child wellbeing should track this bill and its money line, addressing the need for the funding in committee. Citizens can also support these initiatives with calls to their legislators and the Governor's office.

## Reference

- 1 Final Report of the Task Force to Study Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF); (HB 461, Chapter Law 247:1, Laws of 2006)

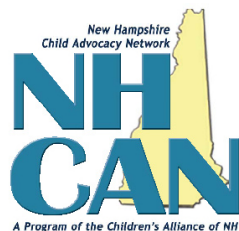
## Find out More

*Families for Justice* is the lead NH CAN partner for this Priority. Contact Sara Dustin by leaving a message at (603) 746-4817 or email [dmmnantque@aol.com](mailto:dmmnantque@aol.com).

*The Way Home*, which offers homeless prevention services and maintains a full service residential shelter, can be found at [www.hud.gov/local/nh/homeless/2002-09-20.cfm](http://www.hud.gov/local/nh/homeless/2002-09-20.cfm)

The NH Housing Authority is a superb resource. Call them at (603) 472-8623.

The NH Department of Health and Human Services' web site supplies a wealth of 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 recent data contact the Division of Family Assistance at (603) 271-4580.



**Children's Alliance of  
New Hampshire**

**Raising Our Voice for Children**

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

For more information on the 2009 Priorities for New Hampshire Children, please visit [www.ChildrenNH.org](http://www.ChildrenNH.org)  
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