
new **futures**→
KIDS COUNT



NEW HAMPSHIRE
KIDS COUNT DATA BOOK

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Foreward

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

Public investment is necessary to protect and support children and families across New Hampshire. New Futures values the health and economic well-being of all Granite State children and their families. While New Futures applauds New Hampshire's continued national ranking among the top states for child well-being, we equally urge a demonstrated commitment from lawmakers to support opportunities for a healthy and bright future for all children.

The future of the Granite State depends on building healthy children and supporting families to thrive today. State-level data ranks New Hampshire in the top tier of state for overall child well-being. However, additional data indicators reveal inequities that show that not all of our children have the same opportunity for a strong start.

The existence of vast regional differences, a rapidly diversifying state, substance use and mental health crises, and the long term impacts of the pandemic on our state's children will demand swift action by our lawmakers.

Creating conditions that reduce the impacts of this trauma and promote healthy brain development in our young children is paramount. Our legislators should be looking to address these inequities by supporting policies proven to support health outcomes, including increasing access to high quality early care, education, and voluntary home visiting programs; supporting a robust system of family resource centers; sustaining a strong system of care for children's behavioral health; and deep investment in primary prevention programs.

When our systems provide opportunities for all, we, as a community, collectively benefit. Investments in children and families now will help sustain communities across the state, growing the workforce and supporting the Granite State economy for generations to come. We look forward to working with advocates and lawmakers to keep New Hampshire a great place to live, work, and raise a family.

Thank you for your continued dedication to New Hampshire's kids.

Rebecca Woitkowski

New Futures Kids Count Director

About New Futures Kids Count

New Futures Kids Count is a program of New Futures focused on collecting and disseminating critical and reliable state-level data, policy recommendations, and tools for legislators, public officials, and advocates to advance policies which help keep Granite State kids and families healthy.

New Futures Kids Count aims to build statewide advocacy capacity in the Early Childhood field by using this critical data to advocate for strong and proven policies for the future health and prosperity of New Hampshire's children.




New Futures is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that advocates, educates and collaborates to improve the health and wellness of all New Hampshire residents.

Our work centers on building advocacy capacity in the state of New Hampshire, and we recognize that coordination and partnerships with stakeholders are crucial to keeping New Hampshire healthy. Therefore, we collaborate with and provide support and training for mission-aligned nonprofits to advance evidence-based health policy.



 *New Futures staff provides training on advocacy at a statewide early childhood conference.*

 *Pediatric residents from Dartmouth Health met with lawmakers to discuss their experiences working with New Hampshire children and families.*



About the Data Book

KIDS COUNT, a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, is a national effort to track the status of child well-being in the United States. By providing policymakers and advocates with data on child health and well-being, KIDS COUNT aims to enrich local and state-level discussions around policy change to ensure all children are healthy and thriving.

As the New Hampshire KIDS COUNT grantee, New Futures Kids Count is charged with releasing periodic reports, including an annual Data Book, regarding the health and well-being of children and families in New Hampshire.

This Data Book examines key child well-being indicators, statewide and by county. Along with providing raw data, the Data Book includes key takeaways and policy recommendations to provide a framework for state policy that will support children and families.

The KIDS COUNT Data Center provides reliable national and state-level data to help advocates understand key trends in children's health and well-being.

The website allows users to:

- Create custom reports with NH data,
- Compare data between different states and counties, and
- Design graphics to use in advocating for the health and wellness of NH's children.



Early Childhood & K-12 Education

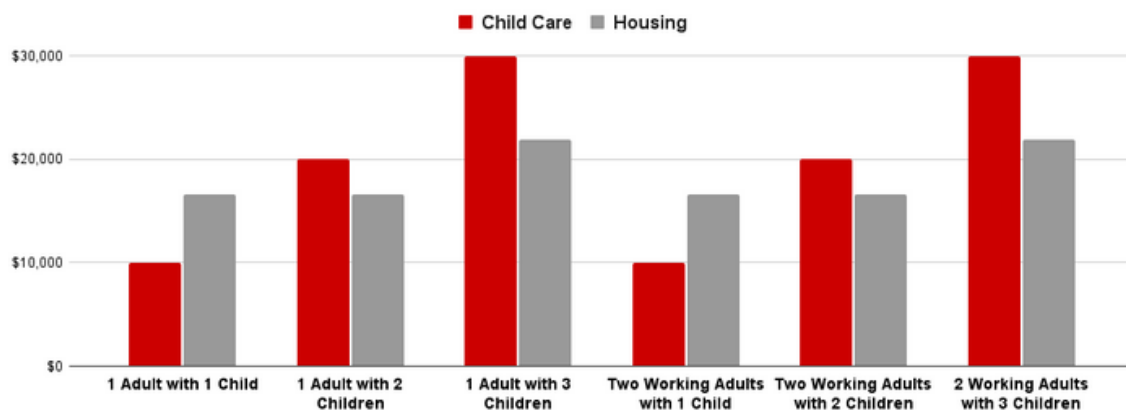
High-quality education is crucial to providing a strong foundation on which children's brains can develop. Research shows that a young child's brain development sets the trajectory for future success.¹

It is especially important for children facing adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), like domestic violence, abuse, neglect, or parental substance use, as they are more likely to have health and wellness problems later in life. Strong early intervention, such as enrollment in high quality early education programs, can stave off future negative consequences for children experiencing these toxic stressors.²

Beyond the early years, research also tells us that continued supportive environments in K-12 classrooms help children reach their full potential. When our children start off strong and are given the education that they need to thrive, New Hampshire's future is secure.

Child Care

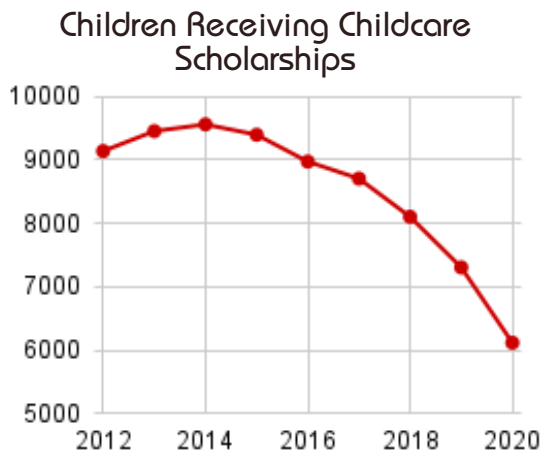
Yearly Cost of Child Care and Housing in New Hampshire



Source: 2022 MIT Living Wage Calculator, Typical Expenses, New Hampshire

Affordable, accessible childcare is critical to the health and economic success of New Hampshire families. In 2021, 72 percent of children under age 6, and 71 percent of children ages 6-12 had all available parents in the civilian labor force.³ However, childcare can be very expensive for working families. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), childcare is considered affordable when it costs families no more than 7% of their household income. New Hampshire's average cost of care far exceeds that threshold. For example, the cost of infant care averages \$14,425 per year in center-based care.⁴ This means that the cost of care for one infant would consume over 37% of a single parent's income in New Hampshire, where the median income of a single mother is \$34,976.⁵ Bigger households also struggle in New Hampshire, where median income for two-parent families is \$119,313.⁶ In such households, childcare for one infant still consumes 12% of family income.⁷

Income-eligible families can access New Hampshire Child Care scholarship program.⁸ The program supports working caregivers by reducing the cost of care based on a six-tiered structure and care can be provided in both home and center-based locations. The program does not fully cover the costs of child care. It currently serves families up to 220% of the federal poverty level with scholarship amounts determined by both income level and family size.⁹ For example, A single mother with one child, at median income of \$34,976, would qualify at the highest tier and lowest level of benefit.

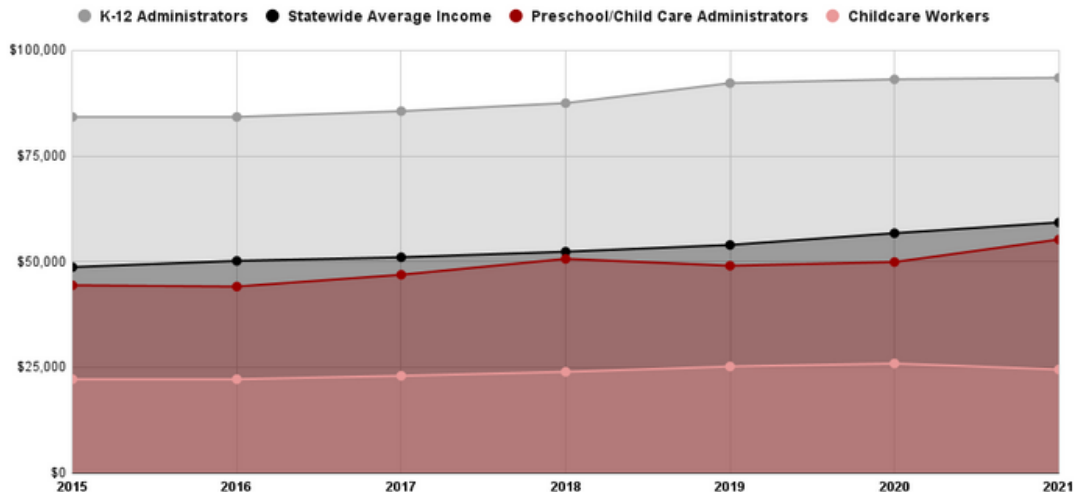


Source: NH Child Well-Being Data Hub, Early Learning, Children Receiving Scholarships 2012-2020, nhchilddata.org

Child Care scholarship is a critical program that is supported by state and federal funds, but it does not serve all families and does not reduce all financial barriers to accessing care. Additional support is necessary to secure a strong childcare system in New Hampshire. Lawmakers should consider recommendations to improve accessibility, enrollment and utilization of the scholarship program and how to best support the child care workforce.¹⁰

Given New Hampshire's high median income, severe work force shortages, and the deep impacts of substance use and mental health crises, it is imperative that our state supports a system where every parent can access childcare if they want it in the setting that best suits their families' needs.

Child Care Workforce



Source: NH Child Well-Being Data Hub, Early Learning, Child Care Program Staff Salaries 2015-2021, nhchilddata.org

Child care professionals not only nurture the social and emotional development of children who will be New Hampshire's future but these professionals are the cornerstone that empowers working families to thrive and enables the Granite State economy to flourish.

All families have different child care needs influenced not only by income but also by the caregivers' occupation, where the family lives, the age(s) of children, educational or behavioral supports required, and other cultural considerations.¹¹ New Hampshire's child care system is reflective of the diverse needs of families. Families are served through a system which includes both private and non-profit providers, licensed programs, licensed-except programs, home-based child care providers, employer-sponsored child care, and informal care from friends and neighbors.

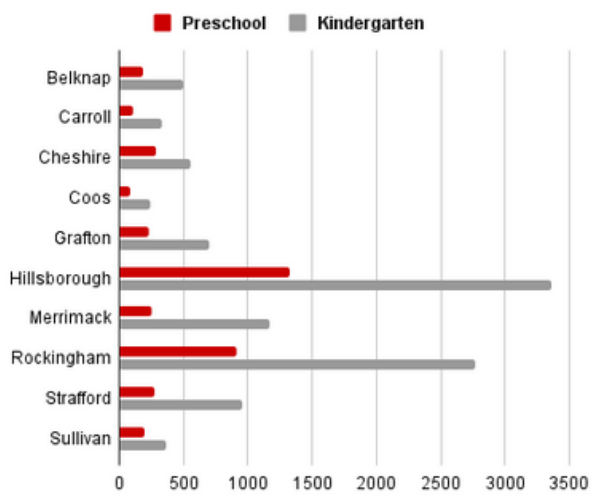
Despite the vital role child care professionals play in our state, wages remain low and the industry struggles with workforce recruitment and retention. The cost of providing quality care is high and there is currently no state or federal funds to subsidize the costs. Federal investments into child care during the COVID-19 pandemic stabilized the New Hampshire market. There is ample opportunity for lawmakers to consider existing recommendations on how to sustain, improve and grow a strong child care system for New Hampshire families. Without policy change and investment, the child care industry will continue to teeter on the edge of crisis.

Preschool & Kindergarten

High-quality early education programs from ages 0 to 5, including preschool and kindergarten, help set the stage for future skill development, health, well-being, and learning.¹² Children in high quality preschool programs, for example, experience benefits in later childhood, including advanced education skills in language, literacy, and math; better social and emotional outcomes; and improved health. Preschool attendance has also been linked to positive effects on adolescent and adult outcomes, including reduced teen pregnancy, higher graduation rates, greater educational attainment, increased earnings, and lower crime rates.¹³

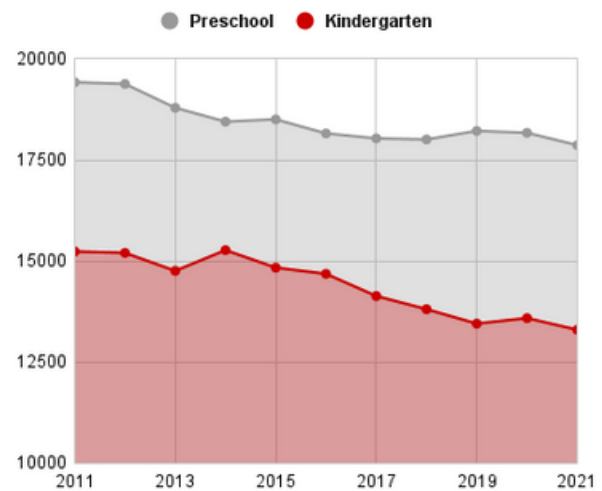
Not all young children have access to or attend early education programs. Under COVID-19, New Hampshire saw an increase in parents opting their children out of public and private preschool, kindergarten, or both.¹⁴ There were 36 percent fewer children attending preschool in 2021, as well as 14 percent fewer attending public kindergarten.

Enrollment in Preschool and Kindergarten by County, 2021-2022



Source: NH Department of Education

Total Enrollment in Preschool and Kindergarten in New Hampshire

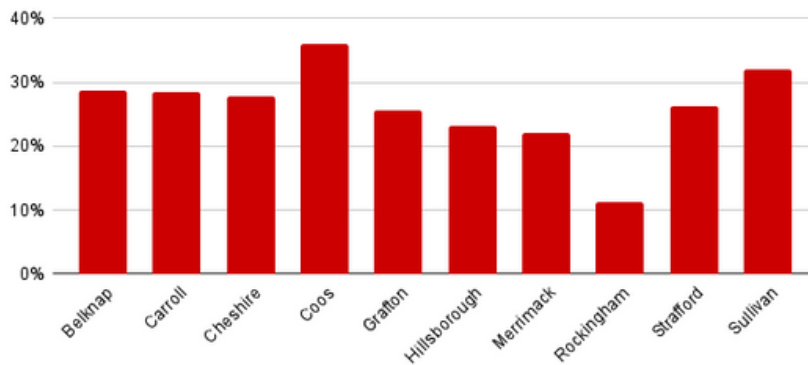


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2021 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

New Hampshire school districts are required to offer at least part-time voluntary kindergarten to all resident children aged 5 and up, but there is no requirement for full-day kindergarten. In 2018, the State directed kindergarten programs to be designed on a play-based model.¹⁵ The following year, state funding changes provided support to districts that chose to adopt full day kindergarten. Still, many districts have not adopted full-day kindergarten, leaving local families behind.¹⁶

The availability of state-funded public education for preschool-aged children varies from state to state. Currently, New Hampshire is one of just six states nationwide that has not implemented any state-funded preschool for children ages 3 and 4.¹⁷ The lack of universal public full-day kindergarten and absence of state-funded preschool creates both regional and socioeconomic barriers in access to early care and education for New Hampshire's children.

School Lunch



Percent of Students Eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch by County, 2021 - 2022

Source: NH Department of Education, Bureau of Education Statistics

School lunch is critical to student health and well-being, especially for low-income students, who often depend on school to provide the nutrition they need to learn.¹⁸ Research shows that receiving free or reduced-price school lunches reduces food insecurity and obesity rates, and improves health outcomes and classroom performance.¹⁹

Childhood hunger has been increasing across New Hampshire at a time when rising costs make it harder not only for families, but for local communities and nonprofits to respond adequately to rising needs. At the end of 2022, it was estimated that nearly 192,000 households with children reported have insufficient food.²⁰ Despite efforts, many eligible children are not enrolled in critical programs like free and reduced-price school lunch.

New Hampshire should consider participating in Medicaid Direct Certification in order to help combat childhood hunger. Medicaid Direct Certification (MDC) provides automatic enrollment in school meal programs for those children already receiving Medicaid and who qualify for school meals due to family income, without requiring a separate application. The program not only helps address food insecurity but reduces administrative burdens.²¹

Key Takeaways

Policy Recommendations



High-quality early education helps develop a child's social-emotional skills and self-regulation. Children who participate in high-quality early learning do better in school.



Invest and support strategies that improve families' access to child care through New Hampshire's child care scholarship fund.



Enrollment in public preschool and kindergarten is declining and differs drastically among counties, leading to a gap in opportunity among our young children depending on where they live.



Invest in state-funded mixed delivery preschool which will give more NH children access to early education.



Food insecurity is an issue in New Hampshire that can negatively impact a child's health and learning



Implement Medicaid Direct Certification to combat childhood food insecurity

Children's Health and Wellness

For the state to thrive, it must support the overall health and wellbeing of communities and individuals. Access to affordable, quality health care is of critical importance to ensure that children receive the preventive care and treatment that they need to engage with their peers, schools, and communities.

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), like substance use in the household, poverty, parental mental health concerns, or family violence, can undermine a child's health and lead to significant negative health outcomes.²² There is a strong correlation between ACEs and substance use and misuse in adolescence, which can lead to long-term, negative consequences on individuals and communities.

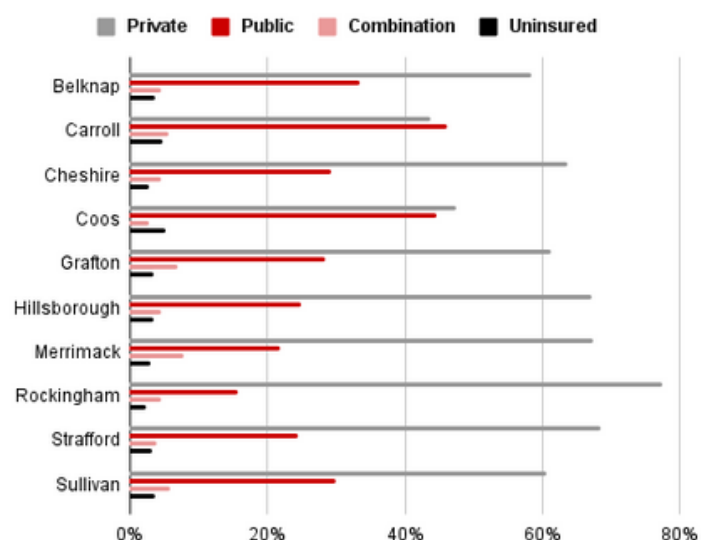
Health Care

Children with health insurance are more likely to get the health care they need, identifying and addressing health issues early and often.²³

In New Hampshire, 4.4% of children aged 6 to 18 do not have health insurance. This rate remained stable during the pandemic due to continuous coverage protection that barred children insured by Medicaid from being disenrolled during the COVID-19 public health emergency. Many eligible children may lose health insurance when the public health emergency expires.

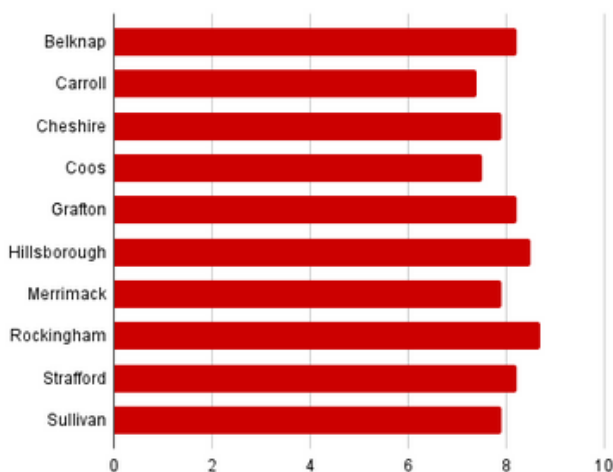
As discussions around the Affordable Care Act, Medicaid expansion, and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) continue, it is important to consider the large share of children who benefit substantially from these programs.²⁴

Children's Health Insurance Coverage by Type, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Preterm Birth Rate by County, 2017 - 2020 Average



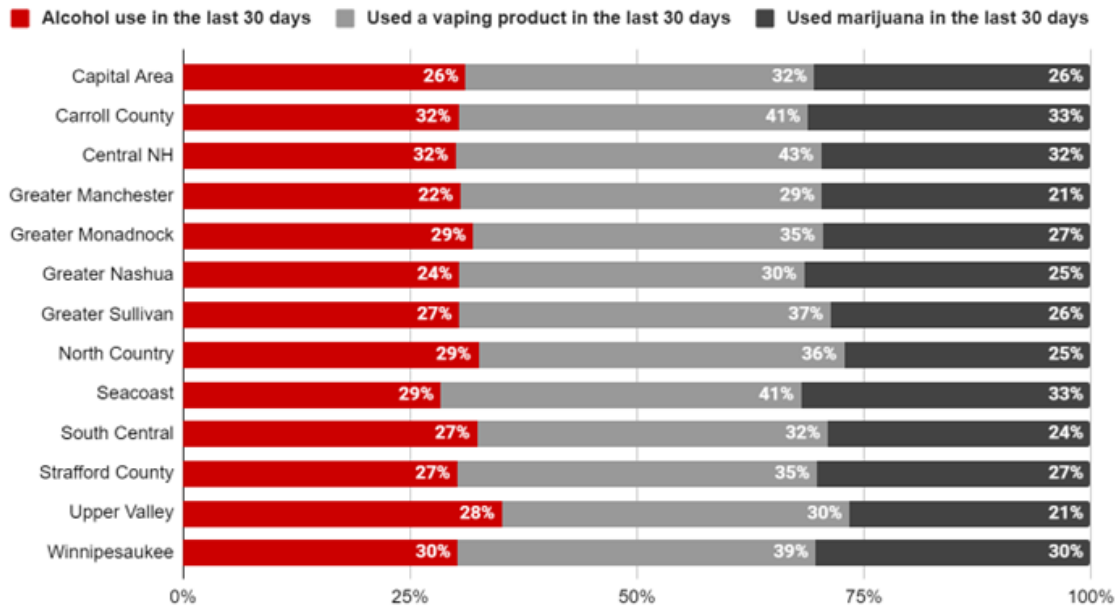
Source: National Center for Health Statistics, final natality data. Retrieved from www.marchofdimes.org/peristats

Advanced maternal age, smoking, obesity and birth spacing are all causes of preterm birth in New Hampshire. Other factors contributing to preterm birth include: infection, diabetes mellitus, hypertension, late or no prenatal care, substance use, and social determinants of health.²⁵ With the prevalence of substance use disorders in NH, a portion of these premature births are opiate related. Giving moms and babies access to health care, substance use treatment, and home visiting program, can help to lower these rising preterm birth rates.

Youth Substance Use

Substance use during adolescence, a critical time in brain development, can cause long-term, potentially permanent, changes to the brain. Adolescent substance use, including alcohol, marijuana, and nicotine, has been associated with impairment in cognitive functioning, increased risk of future substance use disorders, elevated rates of school dropout, a greater risk of developing psychotic illnesses, and an increased rate of engaging in risky behaviors.²⁶ Given New Hampshire's ongoing addiction crisis, it's imperative that we focus on preventing youth substance use to protect our kids and keep New Hampshire healthy for generations to come.

Student Substance Use in the Last 30 Days, 2019



Source: NH Department of Health and Human Services, 2019 Youth Behavioral Health Survey

Key Takeaways



Children with health insurance are more likely to get the health care they need. Over 24 percent of NH children have access to health care thanks to a public programs.



Premature birth rates are rising in NH. Home visiting programs can provide support for parents and infants to mitigate potential negative health outcomes.



According to the 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 26.1% percent of NH students have used marijuana at least once in the last 30 days, which can have long-term negative impacts on brain development.

Policy Recommendations



Ensure access to health care for thousands of Granite Staters by reauthorizing Medicaid expansion.



Expand post-partum Medicaid coverage to twelve months to prevent the loss of critical healthcare to caregivers in a child's first year of life.



Invest in evidence-informed substance misuse prevention programs to promote adolescent well-being and reduce treatment costs.



Fund Multi-Tiered System of Support for Behavioral Health and Student Assistance programs sustainability to ensure children have access to behavioral health resources in schools.

Economic Security

Children and families with access to stable housing, adequate health care, and healthy meals have better long-term wellness outcomes. Communities with lower rates of poverty have increases access to community supports, healthy food, more abundant outdoor experiences, safer streets, and, in turn, improved outcomes for their youngest residents regardless of their own household income.²⁷ In order to maintain New Hampshire's advantage, we must focus on ensuring economic security for all families.

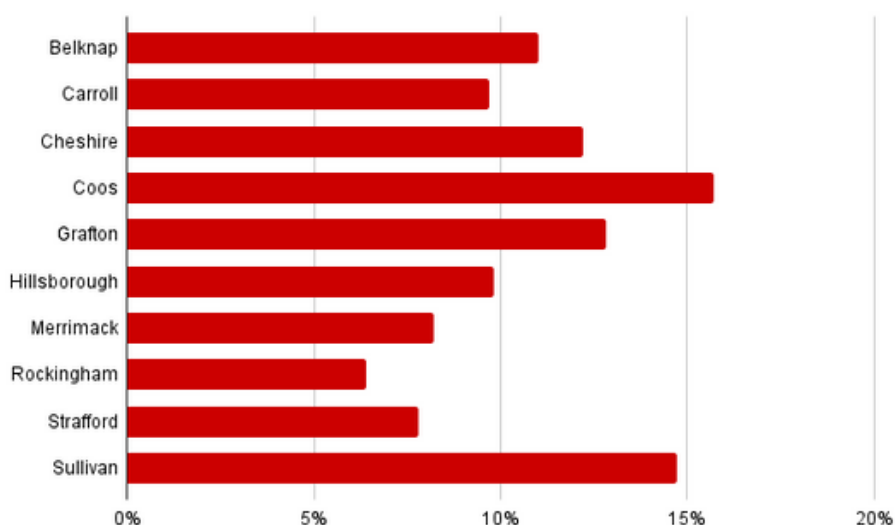
Child Poverty

Growing up in poverty is one of the greatest threats to healthy child development. It increases the likelihood that a child will be exposed to factors that can impair brain development and lead to poor academic and health outcomes.²⁸ The risks posed by economic hardship are most significant among children who experience poverty when they are young and those who experience persistent and deep poverty.

The official poverty threshold in 2022 was \$27,750 for a family of two adults and two children, however, this is widely considered an inadequate measure of family need. Other poverty measures, such as the Supplemental Poverty Measure, aim to better understand poverty by taking into account other sources of income, expenses, and adjusting for differences in the cost of living across the nation. New Hampshire's cost of living (\$51,760) is 86.5% higher than the official poverty threshold,²⁹ which puts many children and families living in or near poverty. Living in or near poverty can also adversely impact children's life course trajectories.³⁰

Children in poverty will especially benefit from programs that promote a healthy brain architecture, such as quality child care, home visiting, and other community-based services and supports.³¹

Percent of children in New Hampshire Living Below the Poverty Level, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

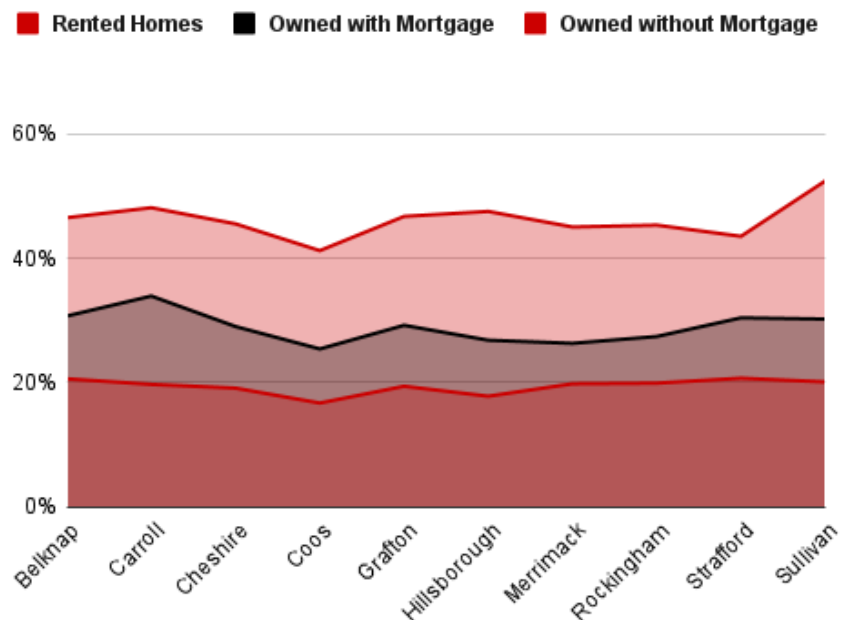
Housing

Housing costs are one of the largest financial burdens that families face. Households where more than 30 percent of income goes to owner costs or gross rent are considered cost burdened. High housing costs can make it difficult for families to afford necessities like food, clothing, transportation, child care, and medical care.³¹

Housing cost burdens can lead to housing insecurity, which is detrimental to children's overall health and well-being. Poor housing conditions can lead to health problems and developmental delays.³² Children who move frequently due to unstable housing are less successful in school, are at higher risk for behavioral issues, and have less access to health care and services.³³

In New Hampshire, home buying prices have risen steadily since 2012 with the median home price rising to \$395,000 in 2021 and over \$400,000 in 2022,³⁴ creating an affordability and availability crisis, particularly among the first-time homebuyers that are essential to a strong workforce and economy.³⁵

Share of Homes That Are Housing Cost-Burdened by County, 2021






Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates

Key Takeaways

-  According to official poverty measure estimates, 9 percent of NH children are living in poverty. This is not the most accurate level of financial need, so we can assume more children are suffering from poverty's detrimental effects.
-  Over 46 percent of those living in rented homes in NH are spending 30% or more of their income on housing costs.
-  Growing up in poverty is one of the greatest threats to healthy child development, and therefore, to a healthy future for our state.

Policy Recommendations

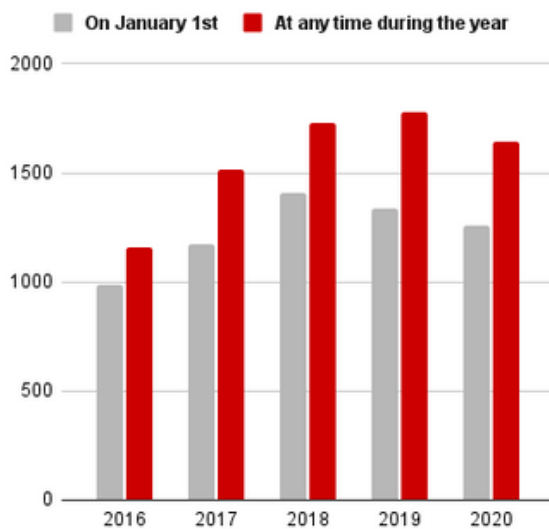
-  Implement policy recommendations that reduce the "Cliff Effect" for New Hampshire Families. The "Cliff Effect" are situations in which increases in earned income lead to decreases in net resources for households.
-  Incentivize investment in building affordable homes by increasing support for the Affordable Housing Fund.
-  Support policy change that enables all families to access affordable child care

Safety & Wellbeing

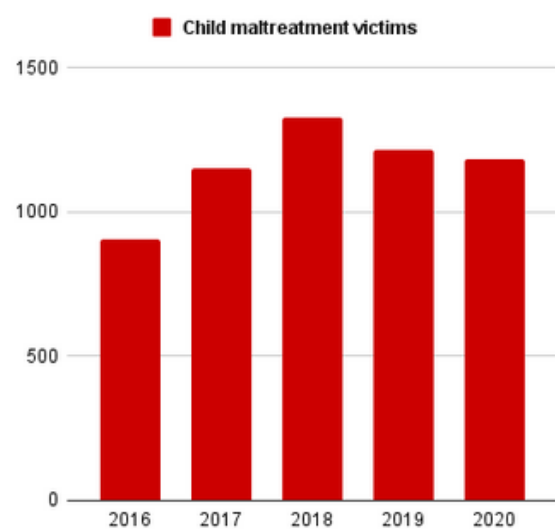
Promoting the safety and well-being of children is imperative to keep New Hampshire a great state to live and raise a family. When communities are safe and have quality supportive services, families and children are more likely to thrive. A safer future for our children will require preventing and mitigating toxic stress, which can be caused by child abuse and neglect. Toxic stress can damage developing brain architecture and lead to lifelong health and wellness problems.³⁶ Joining together to keep our children safe and healthy is morally and financially imperative for New Hampshire.

Child Protection

Children in Out-of-Home Placements by Year



Children Maltreatment Victims by Year



Source: NH Department of Health and Human Services, Division for Children, Youth and Families, DCYF 2020 Data Book

New Hampshire is responsible for protecting children from abuse and neglect while striving to preserve the family unit.³⁶ New Hampshire's child welfare system continues to be challenged with increasing pressures added during the pandemic.

The Granite State must continue to prioritize investments not only in programs that support children after the occurrence of abuse or neglect but also in primary prevention programs that aim to prevent abuse from ever happening. To do this, we must make sustained investments in initiatives that provide two-generational support for families and strive towards goals of reducing risks to children, improving parenting skills, and strengthening social support networks for families.³⁷

Supporting a strong child welfare system mean supporting strong families from the start.

Home Visiting

Prenatal and early childhood home visiting programs provide services to families in the home or in other preferred community settings to support maternal, child, and family health, and to prevent adverse childhood experiences. Home visiting programs improve maternal and infant health outcomes, positive parenting practices, family economic self-sufficiency, and school readiness.³⁸ Home visiting has also been found to reduce child maltreatment.³⁹ While home visiting programs are proven to help improve maternal and child health outcomes, not all families in need can access services. Due to its proven impacts, states are looking to develop home visiting programming plans which offer universal access to any family.

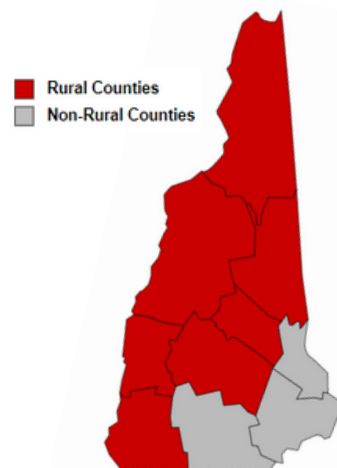
In New Hampshire, many families have access to home visiting at Family Resource Centers. Family Resource Centers are a network of community-based, non-profit organizations located throughout the state; all of which provide an array of family-strengthening programs and supports such as home visiting, parent education, Kinship Navigation, Resource Navigation, youth programs, playgroups, early supports and services, developmental screening, childcare, and concrete supports.⁴⁰ Despite the critical role Family Resource Centers play in supporting families, the system does not have consistent, comprehensive funding.

MIECHV Home Visiting in New Hampshire in 2021

Participants: 900
Households: 380
Home Visits: 5,211

- 65.5% of households served were low income
- 5.1% of households included a pregnant enrollee under age 21

Source: Data and design from US HRSA, Maternal and Child Health, 2021 New Hampshire Home Visiting State Fact Sheet



Key Takeaways

- ✓ 86.3 percent of NH mothers enrolled in HFA home visiting received a postpartum visit with a healthcare provider within 8 weeks of delivery. Appropriate postpartum care can significantly reduce maternal death
- ✓ 78.1 percent of caregivers enrolled in HFA home visiting were screened for depression within 3 months of enrollment or within 3 months of delivery. Research shows that postpartum depression can be associated with a number of adverse outcomes for both the mother and infant

Policy Recommendations

- Invest in comprehensive funding for a statewide system of Family Resource Centers that give communities access to services that strengthen families.
- Develop a plan to implement universal access to voluntary home visiting for all NH families
- Prioritize infant and early childhood mental health and support healthy emotional development.

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