# A Resource Guide for New Hampshire Relative Caregivers

New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services
Division for Children, Youth and Families
Bureau of Elderly and Adult Services
Division of Family Assistance

Lutheran Social Services of New England

Granite State College

&

UNH Cooperative Extension, New Hampshire Relatives As Parent Program

# A Resource Guide for

# New Hampshire

# Relative Caregivers

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# Introduction

Relative care families are everywhere. More than six million children across the country—that is approximately one in 12—are living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives who have stepped forward to care for them because parents were either unable or unwilling to raise them.

A relative care situation can happen when parents:

- are unwilling or unable to care for their child full time;
- cannot provide their child with a safe, appropriate environment;
- are deceased; or
- are separated from their child for long periods—either by choice or circumstance (e.g. substance abuse, incarceration, mental or physical illness, or military deployment).

In New Hampshire, there are more than 10,000 children living in grandparent-headed households. Over 4,500 grandparents reported that they were responsible for their grandchildren who were living with them. There are over 2,300 children living in households headed by other relatives. Of the children living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives in New Hampshire, more than 4,000 are living there without either parent present.

Children and their caregivers are often eligible for state and federal benefits; however, finding those benefits can often be confusing and frustrating. This booklet can guide you in the right direction, help you ask the right questions, and help you find the answers you need. It was developed in partnership with the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services' Division for Children, Youth and Families, Division of Family Assistance, Bureau of Elderly and Adult Services, UNH Cooperative Extension, NH Relatives As Parents Program (RAPP) and Lutheran Social Services of New England.

***Relative care in New Hampshire is when an adult relative (other than a parent) cares for a child under the age of 18 on a temporary or permanent basis. The relative is related by blood, marriage or adoption and is most often a grandparent; but can also be an aunt, uncle, sibling (including step-sibling), cousin, niece, or nephew.***

# Frequently Asked Questions From New Hampshire Relative Caregivers

Many relative caregivers need help determining what options are best for them and the children involved. Relative caregivers may have many questions as they take on this new role. Do I need an attorney? Should I go to court to obtain legal guardianship? What if the birth parent does not agree? Can I register the child for school? Is there financial help to assist with the child or children? Can the birth parent take the child from me at anytime? Here are some of the most frequently asked questions.

***My grandson just came to live with me. How do I get him health insurance?***

You should call your local Division of Family Assistance (DFA) Office (See page 25 for locations and phone numbers). Any person who has a related child living with them can get New Hampshire Healthy Kids health insurance regardless of their income (see page 15 and 16 for information on the Healthy Kids Program).

***My granddaughter has been living with me for three weeks and I don't know where her mother is. I want to contact the State so this can be investigated. This has happened too many times and it's not fair to my granddaughter or me. Who do I call?***

You may call the NH Abuse and Neglect Central Intake Number at 1-800-894-5533. A phone interview will take place so your granddaughter's safety can be assessed. If it is determined that the child is at risk for abuse or neglect, someone from your local Division for Children, Youth and Families (DCYF ) office will contact you to meet with you and your granddaughter as part of the investigation.

***I have guardianship of my nephew. I heard that there is more support available to me if I am a licensed foster parent. Is this true?***

Yes. There are resources available to foster parents, provided by the State, that may not be available to other relative caregivers. However, in order to receive additional State supports, the child needs to be in foster care. Your nephew, therefore, would need to be in the custody of the State of New Hampshire in addition to you becoming a licensed foster parent. What that means is that the State placed him with you due to abuse and neglect allegations against his parent(s). If you have your nephew through an arrangement with his birth parents or family court and DCYF is not involved, then foster care supports are not available to you, as he would not be considered a child in foster care. If you have concerns regarding abuse and/or neglect, which includes abandonment, you should call the abuse and neglect number at 1-800-894-5533 to report your concerns for the child.

***My niece is living with me because her mother is incarcerated. I have guardianship. Is there any financial assistance available to help me?***

You are eligible to receive Cash Assistance through DFA's Family Assistance Program on behalf of the child, regardless of your income, that comes in the form of a check two times a month (see page 13 for an explanation of FANF benefits).

***I have been caring for my grandson over the summer and I need to enroll him in school. The school says that the parent must enroll him, but I don't know where she is. What do I do?***

In order for you to enroll your grandson in school, the school requires that you have legal guardianship (see page 6). This also applies to medical and dental care. You can go to your local Family Court and apply for "Legal Guardianship." This will allow you to sign for permission for both educational and medical services. If you are not willing or able to get legal guardianship of your grandson, you may call the NH Abuse and Neglect Central Intake Number at 1-800-894-5533 to report your situation and concerns about your grandson's parent(s).

***My 4-year-old granddaughter lives with me and needs child care. Is there any help?***

Yes. You may contact your local New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services District Office (page 25) to apply for assistance. Child care assistance may be available to eligible relative caregivers who have legal guardianship or custody and employed full-time (see page 20). You may also contact the New Hampshire Child Care Resource and Referral Network. See page 21 to find a location near you.

***DCYF placed my nephew with me. I don't know if I should become a licensed foster parent or not. I'm his aunt, not a foster parent. This feels a little odd to me. I'm not sure what to do.***

It is important that you make an informed decision regarding becoming a foster parent. You are encouraged to contact the Resource Worker at DCYF to explore your options. Ask your caseworker for the name and number of the DCYF Resource Worker or see page 25 of this guide for a listing of DCYF offices and phone numbers. There are resources available to foster parents that are not available to relative caregivers to assist you in supporting your nephew. Your relationship as his aunt will continue while being a licensed foster parent. You would also be considered a "child specific" foster home because you would only be getting licensed for your nephew. You can also contact the NH Foster and Adoptive Parent Association (NH FAPA) at 603-525-4165 to talk to a foster parent who will be happy to answer your questions.

***I'm at the end of my rope. My grandson's mother is incarcerated and his father (my son) makes nothing but empty promises to him. I've been his full-time parent for six months now. Our relationship has changed. My grandson always acts out after he sees his father, or worse if his father doesn't show up for a visit. I don't know how to deal with all this stress. Is there any help out there?***

Yes. Remember you are not alone! There are many other relatives in New Hampshire who are going through this exact situation. You are encouraged to attend a relative support group in your area where you will meet others who can help you, offer support and share experiences. Turn to page 10 for a listing of local support groups or contact NH Relatives as Parents at 603-796-2151 x 314 or www.nhrapp.org. You may also want to seek counseling services for you and your grandson at your local community mental health center (see page 17 for local listings). Lastly, Family Support NH offers community based family resource centers and family support programs throughout the State. See page 21 for a listing of Family Resource Centers.

***I've had my 6-year-old grandson for three weeks. The last time his mother dropped him off with me, I didn't hear from her for three months. She has some untreated mental health issues and is currently homeless. A friend told me I should get guardianship. Why should I do this?***

Having legal guardianship of your grandson would give you the right to sign for certain things like medical and educational services. Without this, you might not be able to enroll him in school or get routine medical care. It also creates a legal relationship between you and your grandson that can only be ended by the court. This would also prevent his mother from just showing back up and taking him without your approval (see page 6).

***I'm 64 years old and caring for my two grandchildren who are ages eight and six. I need a break. They are so energetic. I just need a night off here and there. Any suggestions?***

Yes. The NH Family Caregiver Support Program offers respite grants for grandparents and other relative caregivers who are 55 years of age and older. The respite grant funds help to provide occasional breaks for relatives by paying for child care, camp, structured after school activities, or homemaker services. You make the arrangements. You may contact ServiceLink for an application at 1-866-634-9412. If the child you are caring for is receiving counseling or mental health services through the Community Mental Health Center, you may be eligible for respite through its program. See page 17 for a listing of Community Mental Health Centers near you. You can also attend a Grandparent as Parents support group where you can meet other people in your situation that may be able to help you. Go to page 10 for a listing of local support groups or contact NH Relatives as Parents at 603-796-2151 x 314 or www.nhrapp.org.

***What do I need to do to adopt my grandson? His mother is deceased and his father is in jail. I have been raising him for the past five years.***

In order to adopt your grandson, the birth parents need to surrender their parental rights or have their parental rights terminated through the family court system. You may want to consult with an attorney for this process. See pages 7 and 11 for information regarding adoption and legal resources.

***What is the difference between adoption and guardianship?***

When you adopt, you assume full legal, physical and financial responsibility for the child, just as though you had given birth. Adoption is permanent and means the birth parents no longer have any rights to the child. Guardianship is temporary and allows you to sign permission for treatment of medical, dental, educational and therapeutic services for the child. With guardianship, the parent of the child can contact the court at anytime and request the return of the child. See pages 6 and 7 for more information.

***My daughter has recently informed me that she has had to call the police on my 14-year-old granddaughter for running away and skipping school. The police informed her that they were filing a "CHINS" petition and she may be placed out of the home. What does this mean and where will she be placed?***

A CHINS means a Child In Need of Services. CHINS petitions are usually filed by a school official or police officer to address specific behavioral problems of youth under the age of 18. The allegation cannot include a delinquent or criminal act. This petition brings the child in front of a judge who can order placement outside of his or her parent's home as a last resort. Services, such as counseling for the family and tracking services for the youth, are generally attempted first. If a juvenile's behavior is considered safe but the difficulties in the family prevent him or her from remaining in the home, relatives can be considered as a placement option. The judge could decide to place a child with a relative, foster home, group home or other form of institutional care (see page 7 for further information about Juvenile Justice).

# How a Child Comes into a Relative's Care
# Legal Arrangements

In New Hampshire, when parents are not caring for their children, there can generally be four types of relative care arrangements; each of which provides different levels of assistance, rights and responsibilities. These types of arrangements include:

- Informal
- Legal Guardianship
- Foster Care
- Adoption

## Informal Arrangement

An informal arrangement is when a relative is raising a child without the involvement of a court or child protection agency. Some relatives take a child into their home without any legal arrangement. This is known as informal care.

Many relative caregiver placements begin as an informal arrangement. The informal arrangement does not legally transfer any of the rights and responsibilities from the parents to the caretaker. This arrangement sometimes happens when grandparents or other relatives simply assume responsibility for caring for children and the parents agree. In this situation, the parents retain all parental rights regardless of how involved the relative is in providing the child with school, clothing and shelter.

Because the law does not recognize informal caretaker arrangements, problems may arise. The caretakers may find themselves without the legal ability to enroll the child in school, to consent to needed medical treatment, or to transport the child into or out of the country. At anytime, one or both parents can take the child back if there is no court involvement.

## Legal Guardianship

Grandparents or other caretakers can acquire the legal right to custody of a child and the right to make certain decisions for a child through the creation of a legal guardianship. In New Hampshire, this is done in Family Court (see page 12 for a listing of Family Court locations).

Legal guardianship for children can be granted with the consent of the parents. However, if the parents are incapable or unfit, guardianship may be granted over the parent's objection. Usually, the Family Court grants the legal guardian the ability to make important decisions for the child along with custody, which means the guardian (you), can enroll the child in school and consent to medical treatment. This also means the birth parent cannot take the child without your permission.

You, as the guardian, would be responsible for the care and upbringing of the child while the child is in your care. Once the court grants you "guardianship" of the child, he or she may be added to your insurance. If this is not possible, the child can be eligible for insurance through New Hampshire's Healthy Kids Program (see page 15). Legal guardianship is not a permanent arrangement. If you were to pass away, care of the child would return to the parents. The guardian can also ask the court to end "guardianship" so the child can return to the parents. The parents may request to visit with the child and at anytime they may request the Family Court to end the guardianship. If the court were to grant this, the care of the child would return to the parent.

Sometimes a parent may write a letter and get it notarized, giving a relative or friend "power of attorney" or granting permission for the child to get medical care if needed. It is important to know that this is not a legal document and cannot be used to get medical treatment or enroll the child in school.

## Foster Care

In New Hampshire, when a child is determined unsafe in his or her home because of abuse or neglect, the court may remove the child from his or her parents' care at the request of the police or DCYF. If the parent has not identified a relative at the time of removal, the child may be placed in a licensed foster home. See page 23 for more information on DCYF and Foster Care.

Sometimes an older child or youth will become involved with the State through the Division for Juvenile Justice Services (DJJS) because he or she has either committed a delinquent act or is considered to be a Child in Need of Services (CHINS) due to chronic and habitual misbehavior. In these cases, the youth has been adjudicated delinquent or is a "CHINS" (see page 5 for more information regarding a CHINS petition) and is assigned a Juvenile Probation and Parole Officer (JPPO). It is important to note that a juvenile who commits a crime at age 17 or older will be charged as an adult through the court system.

New Hampshire courts have the authority to remove juveniles from their homes and place them in various levels of care. Placement can include a relative's home, foster home, group home, residential treatment facility, and even a secure environment. Parents are required to work towards reunification with their child.

The juvenile must abide by court ordered rules and is often placed on a status called Conditional Release. The role of the JPPO is to monitor the juvenile's compliance with these rules. Court orders range from a referral to a diversion program, daily attendance at school, counseling, drug testing, community service, to placement outside the home. The assigned JPPO is your contact person and the individual responsible to manage the youth's case.

If you take a relative child into your home who is involved with the Division for Children, Youth and Families or Division for Juvenile Justice Services, you will be asked to participate in an interview and local police and criminal records checks.

## Adoption

Adoption is when the Family Court grants full custody and guardianship of the child to the adopting relative caregiver. Relative adoptions are a permanent and legal arrangement. Before an adoption petition can be filed, however, the parents must either voluntarily surrender their parental rights through the court process or the court must terminate their parental rights. An attorney is not a necessity for either process but is recommended.

Several forms and documents are required when adopting a relative child. One such document is an approved adoptive parent home study from a licensed child-placing agency. The adoptive parent home study may be waived in relative adoptions under certain circumstances. One such circumstance is that the child has resided with the adopting relative for three years or more. All adoptions are handled through the court and may involve attorneys and licensed child placing agencies (call 211 for a list of child placing agencies).

Required information and forms can be obtained on the New Hampshire Judicial Branch Self-Help Center.

# General Resources

**New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)**, See page 25 for list of DHHS District Offices offices http://www.dhhs.nh.gov (1-800-852-3345 toll-free in-State) (NH Relay) 7 -1-1.

- Division for Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) 1-800-852-3345, www.dhhs.nh.gov/DHHS/FCADOPTION/default and the Relative Care Specialist, 603-271-7338.

- Bureau of Child Protection, Central Intake – To report suspected child abuse or neglect call 1-800-894-5533.

**211 New Hampshire** - Dial 211 or visit www.211nh.org to search for local, regional, statewide, and national resources. 2-1-1 is an easy to remember telephone number that connects callers, at no cost, to information about critical health and human services available in their community. Dial 211 from anywhere in New Hampshire. 1-866-444-4211 from outside New Hampshire. Services can also be accessed at www.211nh.org.

**Servicelink Resource Center** is a statewide network of locally administered, community-based resources for seniors, adults with disabilities, and their families. This is a free service available to anyone who needs assistance, advice or help with an issue relating to a senior member or disabled adult living in your community. Check out their website to search their resources or contact staff for personalized services. www.nh.gov/servicelink/ 1-866-634-9412.

**Parent to Parent of New Hampshire** is a statewide network of families who have children with special needs. This organization connects families to other families who understand the issues and provides referral and support services. Their website focuses on web supports available for families and lists support opportunities in New Hampshire. http://www.parenttoparentnh.org/, 1800-698-LINK.

**NH Family Voices (NHFV)** assist families in negotiating supports and systems on a one-to-one basis as well as through its workshops. It also has a free lending library of over 1,500 titles of books, videos, and audiotapes with a specialty in children's books on specific conditions and disabilities, sibling relationships, behavior and social issues. http://www.nhfv.org/ Call 1-800-852-3345 X 4525 or (603) 271-4525 or email at nhfv@yahoo.com.

**NH Family Resource Connection** is a special program of the New Hampshire State Library to make available information on all aspects of raising healthy children, especially young children with special needs. Through the website you can search their free lending library, an online Directory of Children's Services, and a Family & Youth Development Calendar. Books are available on relative care, foster care and adoption. http://www.nh.gov/nhsl/frc/ ~ email: FRC@dcr.nh.gov or New Hampshire residents can call 1-800-298-4321. See page 25 for a list of recommended books for relative caregivers.

**New Hampshire Relatives as Parents Program (NHRAPP)** is a program of the UNH Cooperative Extension and offers a web resource for New Hampshire relative caregivers: Grandparents and other relatives raising or helping to raise relative children. The website provides information on local support groups; making ends meet, getting legal and financial help and meeting the needs of your family. Call 603-796-2151 x 314 or go to www.nhrapp.org.

**Family Support NH** is a statewide coalition of community-based family resource centers and family support programs dedicated to improving the lives of New Hampshie families. Contact Family Support NH for a center or program in your community at www.fsnh.org.

## Family Resource Centers

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Child and Family Services of NH**<br>464 Chestnut St.<br>Manchester, NH 03105<br>615-518-4000/800-640-6486<br>www.CFSNH.org<br>Covers Manchester, Littleton, Salem and Concord. | **Concord Heights Neighborhood Family Center** - Dame School<br>Canterbury Rd. Concord, NH 03301<br>603-225-0832<br>www.Concord.k12.nh.us/comm/dam/dame.html | **The Family Center of Greater Peterborough**<br>PO Box 207, 46 Concord Street<br>Peterborough, NH 03458<br>603-924-6306<br>www.TheFamilyCenter.us |
| **Families First Health and Support Center**<br>100 Campus Dr. Portsmouth, NH 03801<br>603-422-8208<br>www.familiesfirstseacoast.org | **NH Developmental Disabilities Council**<br>21 Fruit Street, Suite #22<br>Concord, NH 03301<br>603.271.3236<br>www.nhddc.org | **Family Education Collaborative**<br>YWCA – Manchester<br>72 Concord St. Manchester, NH<br>603-624-4765<br>www.ywcanh.org |
| **Children Unlimited, Inc**<br>182 West Main St. Conway, NH 03302<br>603-447-6356<br>www.childrenunlimitedinc.org | **Monadnock Family Resource Center**<br>30 Washington St Keene, NH 03431<br>603-357-6870<br>www.mfs.org | Family Education Collaborative<br>**UNH Cooperative Extension**<br>213 Petee Hall, Durham, NH 03824<br>603-862-7008<br>www.extension.unh.edu |
| **Family Resource Center of Central NH**<br>635 Main St. Laconia, NH 03246<br>603-524-1741<br>www.lrcs.org | **The Diana Love Center for Children & Families**<br>Good Beginnings of Sullivan County<br>169 Main St. Claremont, NH 03743<br>603-542-1848<br>info@dianalovecenter.org<br>www.goodbeginnings.net | **Franklin Family Resource Center**<br>105 Loudon Road, Building 2<br>Concord, NH 03301<br>603-224-8909<br>www.caseyfamilyservices.org |
| **Family Resource Center of Gorham/Berlin**<br>123 Main St. Gorham, NH 03581<br>603-446-5190<br>www.frcberlin-gorham.org | **The Children's Place and Parent Education Center**<br>PO Box 576, 27 Burns Avenue<br>Concord, NH 03302<br>603-224-9920<br>www.tcpnh.org | **Whole Village Family Resource Center**<br>258 High St. Plymouth, NH 03264<br>603-536-3720<br>www.wholevillage.net |
| **Good Beginnings of the Upper Valley**<br>PO Box 5054, W Lebanon, NH 03784<br>603-298-9524<br>www.goodbeginnings.net/uppervalley | **Parent to Parent of NH**<br>Special Needs Support Center<br>12 Flynn Street, Lebanon, NH 03766<br>603-448-6311 or 1-800-698-5465<br>www.p2pnh.org | **The Grapevine Family & Community Resource Center**<br>PO Box 637, Antrim, NH 03440<br>603-588-2620<br>www.antrimnh.org |
| **HUB Family Resource Center**<br>23 Atkinson St Dover NH 03820<br>603-749-9754<br>www.hubfamilies.org | **Riverbend Parent-Child Centers**<br>PO Box 2032 Concord, NH 03302<br>603-226-7505<br>www.riverbendcmhc.org | **NH Child Advocacy Network**<br>603-225-2264<br>www.childrennh.org/nhcan.php |
| **The Upper Room- A Family Resource Center**<br>36 Tsienneto Rd. Derry NH 03038<br>603-437-8477<br>www.urteachers.org | **White Birch Community Center**<br>PO Box 2035, 51 Hall Avenue<br>Henniker, NH 03242<br>603-428-7860<br>www.whitebirchcommunitycenter.org | |

# Support Groups

***Dates and times are subject to change please check the NHRAPP website www.nhrapp.org, NH211 or contact the group listed below for current and up to date information.***

## Belknap County

Grandparents as Parents, held at Giggles and Grins Family Resource Center, 20 Canal Street, Laconia. The group meets on the first Monday of every month from 12:00 - 1:30 pm. A light lunch is provided. Contact: 603-524-2610 or 524-8811 x 175 for more information.

## Cheshire County

Off Our Rockers, sponsored by the Parenting Outreach Project of Monadnock Family Services, meets twice a month at 64 Main Street in Keene. Contact 603-283-1562 for more information.

## Hillsborough County

Grandparents as Parents Support Group held at YWCA, 72 Concord Street, Manchester. The group meets every other Thursday night from 6:00 -7:30 pm. Registration is not required. Free educational and support group for grandparents and relatives raising children. Child care and dinner are provided at every meeting. See our events calendar for dates, or for more information contact 625-5785 or info@ywcanh.org.

Grandparents & KinsCare Support Group held at Crossway Christian Church, 125 Northeastern Boulevard, Nashua. The group meets on the second and fourth Thursday of each month, dinner 6:00 - 6:30 pm. Contact 518-4218 for dates and times.

Grandparents As Parents Support Group is held at Child and Family Services, 464 Chestnut Street, Manchester. The group meets the 3rd Tuesday of the month starting at 6:00 pm. Child care and supper are available. Contact 603-627-1583 for more information and to reserve a spot.

## Merrimack County

The Grandparents as Parents Support Group is for grandparents who are caring for their grandchildren. Contact Dame School at 603-225-0830 for more information.

Relatives as Parents Gathering - Franklin Methodist Church, 88 Franklin Street, Franklin. Contact 603-934-3170 for more information.

## Rockingham County

Grandparents as Parents Support Groups; sponsored by Salem Family Resources. Contact 603-898-5493 for more information.

## Strafford County

GRASP: Grandparents Are Special People meets once a month at the HUB Family Resources Center, Located at the McConnell Center, 61 Locust Street, Dover. Call 603-749-9754 for more information.

# Legal Sources

The following resources may be able to advise you about your legal options and/or assist you in locating a suitable attorney:

### New Hampshire Legal Assistance (NHLA)

NHLA is a non-profit law firm offering legal services in civil matters to seniors and eligible low-income persons. NHLA provides high quality legal services to vulnerable low-income people, ranging from simple legal information and advice to vigorous and thorough representation in all of New Hampshire's courts and before many of the local, state and federal agencies.

NHLA serves all of New Hampshire from seven offices across the State. Office hours are 8:30 am to 5:00 pm Monday through Friday. Each office has an 800 number as well as a local number that can be located in your local phone directory.

**NHLA**

| Office | Phone number |
|---|---|
| Berlin | 1-800-698-8969 |
| Claremont | 1-800-562-3994 |
| Concord | 1-800-921-1115 |
| Littleton | 1-800-548-1886 |
| Manchester | 1-800-562-3174 |
| Nashua | 1-800-517-0577 |
| Portsmouth | 1-800-334-3135 |
| **Other NHLA contact information** | |
| Senior Citizens Advice Line | 1-888-353-9944 or (603) 624-6000 |
| TTY | 1-800-634-8989 or (603) 206-2299 |

### Legal Advice and Referral Center www.larcnh.org (603-224-3333)

The Legal Advice and Referral Center provides legal services to low income people in New Hampshire in the areas of housing, family law, consumer law, public benefits and related matters through telephone advice and counsel, brief service and direct representation.

### Free legal aid NEW HAMPSHIRE

http://www.usattorneylegalservices.com/free-legal-aid-New-Hampshire.html

### New Hampshire Bar Association Pro Bono Referral Program

112 Pleasant Street Concord NH 03301 Phone: 603-224-6942 and 800-639-5290 Fax: 603-224-2910

Federal income tax disputes: 603-228-6028

Free legal information over the phone: 800-868-1212

Free legal advice in civil matters for senior citizens 60 and older: 603-624-6000 and 888-353-9944

**New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Child Support -** Call 1-800-786-3214 (TTY 1-800-253-0191) for help finding missing parents, establishing paternity, and establishing child and medical support orders. See page 25 for a District Office near you.

# New Hampshire Family Courts

## www.courts.state.nh.us

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **BELKNAP COUNTY** | **Laconia Family Division**<br>26 Academy St<br>Laconia, NH 03247-3639<br>**Phone** : (603) 524-7755 | |
| **CARROLL COUNTY** | **Conway Family Division**<br>E. Conway Road, Rt. 302<br>North Conway, NH<br>**Phone**: (603) 356-7710 | **Ossipee Family Division**<br>Carroll County Courthouse<br>96 Water Village Road - Box 2<br>Ossipee, NH 03864<br>**Phone**: (603) 539-4561 |
| **COOS COUNTY** | **Berlin Family Division**<br>650 Main Street, Suite 100<br>Berlin, NH 03570-2476<br>**Phone**: (603) 752-3160<br><br>**Lancaster Family Division**<br>55 School Street, Suite 201<br>Lancaster, NH 03584<br>**Phone:** (603) 788-4485 | **Colebrook Family Division**<br>17 Bridge Street, P.O. Box 5<br>Colebrook, NH 03576-0005<br>**Phone**: (603) 237-4229 |
| **GRAFTON COUNTY** | **Lebanon Family Division**<br>38 Centerra Parkway<br>Lebanon, NH 03766-0768<br><br>**Littleton Family Division**<br>134 Main Street<br>Littleton, NH 03561 | **Haverhill Family Division**<br>3785 Dartmouth College Highway, Box 9<br>N. Haverhill, NH 03774<br><br>**Plymouth Family Division**<br>26 Green Street<br>Plymouth, NH 03264 |
| **HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY** | **Goffstown Family Division**<br>329 Mast Road<br>Goffstown, NH 03045<br>**Phone**: (603) 627-2211 | **Manchester Family Division**<br>35 Amherst Street<br>Manchester, NH 03101-0456<br>**Phone** : (603) 624-0015 |
| **MERRIMACK COUNTY** | **Concord Family Division**<br>32 Clinton Street<br>Concord, NH 03301<br>**Phone:** (603) 271-0630<br><br>**Franklin Family Division**<br>7 Hancock Terrace<br>Franklin, NH 03235-0172<br>**Phone:** (603) 934-3290 | **Henniker Family Division**<br>41 Liberty Hill Road<br>Henniker, NH 03242<br>**Phone:** (603) 428-3214<br><br>**Hooksett Family Division**<br>PO Box 16387<br>Hooksett, NH 03106-6387<br>**Phone:** (603) 485-9901 |
| **ROCKINGHAM COUNTY** | **Brentwood Family Division**<br>10 Route 125, Brentwood, NH<br>**Phone:** (603) 642-6314 or (603) 642-6371<br><br>**Derry Family Division**<br>10 Courthouse Lane<br>Derry, NH 03038<br>**Phone:** (603) 421-0077 or (603) 421-0088 | **Portsmouth Family Division**<br>111 Parrott Avenue, Portsmouth, NH<br>**Phone:** (603) 433-8518 or (603) 436-5039<br><br>**Salem Family Division**<br>35 Geremonty Drive<br>Salem, NH 03079<br>**Phone:** (603) 893-2084 |
| **STRAFFORD COUNTY** | **Dover Family Division**<br>25 St. Thomas St.<br>Dover, NH 03820<br>**Phone:** (603) 743-5760 | **Rochester Family Division at Strafford Co. Bldg**<br>259 County Farm Road, PO Box 799<br>Dover, NH 03820-0799<br>**Phone:** (603) 742-5341 |
| **SULLIVAN COUNTY** | **Claremont Family Division**<br>1 Police Court<br>Claremont, NH 03743-0313<br>**Phone:** (603) 542-6064 | **Newport Family Division**<br>55 Main Street<br>Newport, NH 03773-0581<br>**Phone:** (603) 863-1832 |

# Financial Assistance

Many grandparents and other relative caregivers are living on limited income. The added expense of raising a child or an additional child makes it even harder to make ends meet.

**Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/**
**Division of Family Assistance (DFA) http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dfa/index.htm**

Relative Caregivers can contact the DHHS DFA office closest to them (see back cover for address listings) to ask for an application and an appointment to see if they or the children they are caring for qualify for TANF Cash Assistance, childcare scholarships, emergency assistance or food stamps. Applications for Assistance and other forms can also be found online at http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dfa/forms.htm

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (TANF)* provides cash assistance to eligible children living with a non-parent caretaker relative through the Family Assistance Program (FAP)*. http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dfa/tanf/family.htm

***Please note- Cash Assistance available to relative caregivers may also be referred to as FANF, TANF, FAP, a child only grant, a non-parent caretaker relative grant and/or Payee Relative.**

The amount of assistance varies depending on the child and the family's situation. The income of a relative caregiver may be ignored in order to provide assistance for children. DFA will consider any income/resources the child receives and the caregiver's housing costs associated with caring for the child. The chart below provides an example of how DFA may determine a FANF child only grant for a child living with a relative:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Begin with Basic payment allowance for 1 child. | $171 | The basic payment allowance is a standard amount based on the number of children and set by Department rules. $171 is the standard amount for one child. For each additional child the amount increases by $67. This means the standard amount for 2 children is $238 and for 3 children it is $305. |
| Add housing costs attributed to the children (up to a maximum of $368 per household). | +$368 | You will be asked to provide the " housing costs" or "rent" for the child or children who live with you when you attend an eligibility interview. You may not know exactly what portion of your expenses are the children's, but you can provide an estimate as best you can. |
| Subtract any income the children receive. | $0 | Examples: Child Support, Social Security Survivor's Benefits. If the children in this example had income it would reduce their grant amount. |
| The grant amount the children qualify for | =$539 | This is the grant amount for 1 child in this example. The grant is issued semi-monthly, so this relative would receive $269.50 on the 15th and 30th of each month. * |

The grant amount increases an average of $67 for each additional child in the household. For instance, if you have two children, the total grant amount would be $606 and you would receive a check for $303 on the 15th and the 30th.

DFA uses one application for all its programs. You can download the Application for Assistance online at http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dfa/documents/assistance.pdf. If you have questions about the application, talk to a worker about how to fill it out. You do not have to report your income on the form. However, if you would like to receive additional reimbursement for housing expenses, you will be asked to report the amount of your housing costs since the child has come to live with you (see above chart for an explanation of housing costs).

Before you can be eligible for cash assistance through FANF, you are required to complete a child support application. This allows the State of New Hampshire to pursue child support from the child's parents. A "good cause waiver" of this requirement is available if seeking support would endanger you or the child. Ask your Worker about the guidelines for claiming good cause if that is a concern in your case.

## Social Security

If the child you are caring for has a physical or mental disability, you may qualify for financial assistance through the Social Security Administration (SSA). Children who have a deceased, retired or disabled parent may be eligible for monthly SSA benefits. Call 1-800-772-1213 for more information or go to **http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/deathbenefits.htm**

## The National School Breakfast/Lunch Program

This program makes it possible for schools to serve nutritious breakfast and lunches to students each day. If your child is receiving Cash Assistance through FANF, he or she is also eligible for this program. For eligibility information, contact your local school food service or the New Hampshire Department of Education at 603-271-3646 or 1-800-852-3345.

## Community Action Agencies

The six Community Action Agencies (CAA) in New Hampshire provide a variety of services to help ensure that the basic needs of our State's residents are met.

- **The Fuel Assistance Program**

The Fuel Assistance Program provides income eligible households with assistance paying energy bills during the winter season.

- **Women, Infants and Children (WIC)**

WIC provides food vouchers, health screenings, nutrition counseling and other services. Children up to age five who are receiving Healthy Kids Gold are eligible to receive WIC benefits as well as children in the temporary custody or guardianship of relatives. It's important to know when applying for WIC that the child must be present for the appointment. **http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dhhs/wic**.

## Community Action Agencies

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Belknap and Merrimack<br>www.bm-cap.org | Concord 224-6880<br>Franklin 934-3444<br>Meredith 279-4096<br>Suncook 485-7824<br>Warner 456-2207<br>Laconia 524-5512 | Belknap-Merrimack CAP<br>2 Industrial Park Dr.<br>PO Box 1016<br>Concord, NH 03302 |
| Coos, Carroll, and Grafton<br>www.rcaction.org | Lebanon 448-4553<br>Lancaster 788-4477<br>Littleton 444-6653<br>Plymouth 536-8222<br>Berlin 752-3248<br>Woodsville 747-3013<br>Colebrook 237-8168<br>Tamworth 323-7400 | Tri-County CAP<br>30 Exchange St<br>Berlin, NH 03570 |
| Rockingham<br>www.rcaction.org | Portsmouth 436-3896<br>Salem 898-8435 | Rockingham CAP<br>7 Junkins Ave<br>Portsmouth, NH 03801 |
| Hillsborough<br>www.snhshome.homestead.com | Manchester 647-4470<br>Nashua 889-3440<br>Hillsboro 464-5835<br>Peterborough 924-2243<br>Greenville 878-3364<br>Milford 673-0756 | Southern NH Services<br>PO Box 5040<br>Manchester, NH 031078 |
| Strafford<br>www.straffcap.org | Farmington 755-9305<br>Milton 652-9893<br>Rochester 332-3963<br>Dover 749-1334 | Strafford CAP<br>PO Box 160<br>Dover, NH 03820 |
| Cheshire and Sullivan<br>www.scshelps.org | Keene 352-7512 or 352-7513<br>Claremont 543-0148 or 542-9528 | Southwestern Community Services<br>69 Z Island St<br>NH 03431 |

The **NH Family Caregiver Support Program** contracts with the ServiceLink Resource Centers to provide information, education and access to local services such as support groups and respite services. The program serves family caregivers of adults with disabilities, as well as grandparents and relatives 55 years of age or older raising a child in the absence of the biological parents. Respite grants are available to eligible caregivers related by blood, marriage or adoption. **Please Contact Servicelink at 866-634-9412.**

# Keeping Children Healthy

When the child of a relative moves into your home, one of your immediate concerns will be how to arrange and pay for the child's health care. Fortunately, help is available to take care of the child's medical needs through Healthy Kids, a State funded program. Healthy Kids does not depend on the caregiver's income.

When the child comes to your home, you may already know about his or her health. If you don't know, ask the caseworker or parent (if appropriate) about the child's medical status and if he or she has allergies and/or takes any medications. Ask who the child's doctor is and whether there are any appointments already scheduled. For medications, call the prescribing doctor to confirm that the child should be taking them.

When children are placed in the State's custody, they are required to have a physical examination within three days and are checked for signs of abuse or neglect to determine any needs for immediate care or attention.

Health care for children includes:

- Complete medical exams
- Eye, hearing, and lab tests
- Blood lead level test
- Developmental and mental health assessments
- Immunizations
- Dental care
- Treatment for condition or illness
- Health education
- Family planning services
- Medicine, supplies, medical equipment, and appliances (wheelchairs, etc.)
- Transportation to medical appointments, including public transportation and car mileage
- Emergency ambulance transportation to a hospital
- Prenatal care for pregnant youth

## Health Care Coverage for New Hampshire Children

### NH Healthy Kids

The child you are caring for may be eligible for a State health insurance program called Healthy Kids. A range of services is covered for medical, dental, therapeutic, family support or other restorative needs.

### Eligibility for Healthy Kids

You may apply for Healthy Kids in the following situations:

- If your relative child already receives FANF Cash Assistance, he or she is already eligible for Healthy Kids. You should have received a Healthy Kids Card in the mail. If you do not receive a card, contact your local DHHS District Office to request one.

- If your relative child is not receiving FANF Cash Assistance, you can still apply for him or her separately.

### Applying for Healthy Kids

Call 603-228-2925 ( or 1-877-464-2447 Toll-Free in New Hampshire) and request a mail-in application or go on-line at **www.nhhealthykids.com** and print off the application for Healthy Kids (form 800P). Complete the application according to the directions attached and mail it to the Healthy Kids Central office.

After the application is approved, you will receive a benefit card. When you take the child to an appointment, give the card to the health care provider (or pharmacist for medications) for payment of bills.

### Re-Certification for Healthy Kids

At the end of 12 months, you will need to fill out and mail a re-certification form for Healthy Kids Gold to continue for the child.

## Health Related Financial Resources

### Transportation Reimbursement for Medical Appointments

If a child in your care is receiving Healthy Kids Gold, you can be reimbursed for travel miles to medical and dental appointments. This includes trips to the pharmacy to pick-up prescriptions. The forms are available in your local DHHS District Office or you can call the Medicaid transportation Coordinator at 1-800-852-3345 x 3770 for enrollment and reimbursement forms. The medical provider, usually a nurse or pharmacist, must sign for each trip. This is proof of the appointment or trip to the pharmacy. Each form has directions on the back.

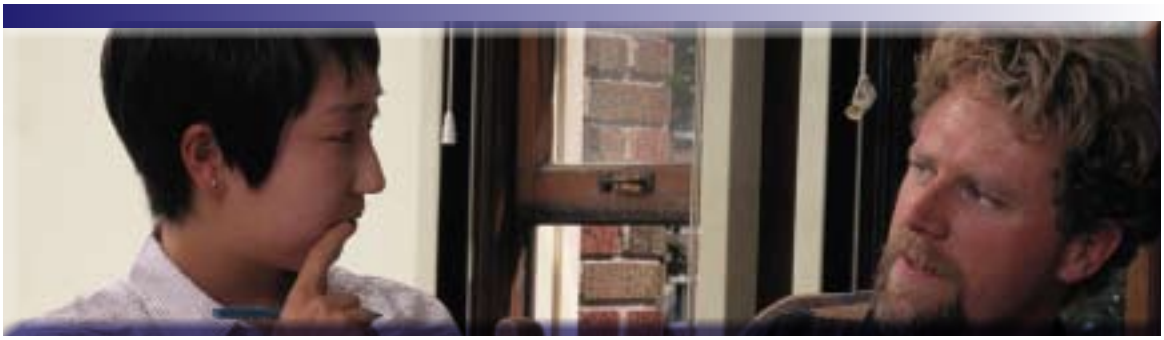
### Health Insurance Premium Payment (HIPP) Program

http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/DHHS/MEDICAIDPROGRAM/hipp.htm

HIPP allows Medicaid eligible individuals and families who have access to private health insurance to maintain that coverage as long as it is cost effective. The HIPP program pays the premiums for private coverage when the health care costs incurred by those persons would be paid at a greater expense through Medicaid. Contact 1-800-852-3345 for more information.

## Mental Health Support

Mental health services are not just for people with severe mental illness. These services can also be a helpful way for caregivers and the children in their care to strengthen their relationship and to get some advice and guidance from a qualified provider. The stresses of caring for a child, along with the emotional and financial pressures of everyday living, can be overwhelming. The children may have a variety of problems stemming from the loss of their parents. In some situations, the children may have been traumatized from abuse or neglect. Just talking about it with a professional may offer help and support.



Children's reactions to traumatic experiences may be difficult to predict and can depend on the child's development, age, temperament, previous experiences with grief/loss, degree of exposure to the event and their relationship with the people who are affected. There are mental health services designed specifically for young children and adolescents who are having problems communicating, adjusting, or recovering from traumatic experiences. Respite care may be available for eligible children.

In New Hampshire, there are various options for mental health support. There are Community Mental Health Centers [CMHCs] in every part of the state. Services provided by CMHCs include: 24-hour Emergency Services, Assessment and Evaluation, Individual and Group Therapy, Case Management, Community Based Rehabilitation Services, Psychiatric Services, and Community Disaster Mental Health Support. All CMHCs have specialized programs for adults, children, and families. The Community Mental Health Centers also provide services and referrals for short term counseling and support.

There are also private therapists who may be able to assist you. In order to find out about private therapists in your local area, call 211.

## Community Mental Health Centers

| |
|---|
| **Northern Human Services**, 87 Washington St. Conway, NH 03818 |
| **Local Number:** 603-447-3347 **Fax:** 603-447-8893 **http://www.northernhs.org/** |
| |
| **West Central Behavioral Health,** 9 Hanover Street, Suite 2 Lebanon, NH 03766 |
| **Local Number:**(603) 448-0126 **http://www.wcbh.org/** |
| |
| **Genesis Behavioral Health,** 111 Church Street, Laconia NH 03246 |
| **Local Number:**(603) 524-1100 **http://www.genesisbh.org/** |
| |
| **Riverbend Community Mental Health:** 278 Pleasant St. Concord, NH 03301 |
| **Local Number:**(603) 288-1600 **http://www.riverbendcmhc.org/** |
| |
| **Monadnock Family Services:** 64 Main Street, Suite 301 Keene, NH 03431 |
| **Local Number:**(603) 357-6878 **http://www.mfs.org/** |
| |
| **Center for Life Management:** 10 Tsienneto Road, Derry NH 03038 |
| Local Number:(603) 434-1577 **http://www.centerforlifemanagement.org/** |
| |
| **Mental Health Center of Greater Manchester:** 401 Cypress Street Manchester, NH 03103 |
| **Local Number:**(603) 668-4111 **http://www.mhcgm.org/** |
| |
| **Greater Nashua Mental Health Center at Community Council:** 7 Prospect St. Nashua, NH 03060 |
| **Local Number:**(603) 889-614 |
| |
| **Community Partners: 113 Crosby Road, Suite 1. Dover, NH 03820** |
| **Local Number:**(603) 749-4015 **http://www.bhdssc.org/** |
| |
| **Seacoast Mental Health Center,** 1145 Sagamore Ave, Portsmouth, NH 03801 |
| **Local Number:**(603) 431-6703 **http://www.smhc-nh.org/** |

# Education

For many relatives caring for children, school issues can be overwhelming. Classrooms have changed and teacher expectations are different. Homework begins at a young age and the use of computers and other technologies may be confusing to some. On top of all this, certain subjects, particularly math, are taught in ways that may be foreign to some caregivers. Fortunately, there are resources available to help grandparents and other relatives as children go through school.

One of the factors for students to be successful is a team approach between school staff and family members. It is important to communicate regularly with teachers and others in the school who are involved with the student. Having some background information can help teachers better understand your child. The amount of information appropriate to share with the school is unique to each family. The team approach to education seems to work best for most families.

If a child has special academic needs and/or emotional issues that interfere with learning, the child may be eligible for special education services. An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or a 504 plan is written with the educators and caregivers working as a team. The school district staff will be able to guide caregivers on the necessary policies and procedures. Paperwork and meetings can sometimes be overwhelming, so it's important to ask questions and clarify what services your child will receive. Advocates who can help the family through the process and attend meetings with family members can be very helpful.

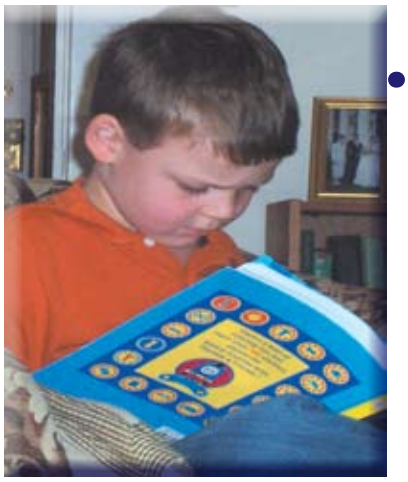
## Educational Resources

### Early Supports and Services

This program is for children birth through age two who have a diagnosed condition and are experiencing developmental delays or are at risk for developmental delays if supports and services are not provided. Programs are run through local area agencies. For more information, contact the NH DHHS, Bureau of Developmental Services, http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dcbcs/bds/earlysupport/index.htm .

### Even Start

This program joins adult, parenting, and early childhood education into a family literacy program. Even Start offers educational services primarily to children from birth through age seven and their caregivers. For more information, contact the New Hampshire Department of Education, Even Start Family Literacy Program Office, 271-2273, or go to http://www.ed.state.nh.us/education/doe/organization/instruction/boip/TitleI.htm#TitleIB.



## Head Start Programs

- Belknap and Merrimack County-Belknap/Merrimack Head Start: 225-3295.
- Early Head Start: Laconia: 528-5334
- Carroll-Tri-County Head Start: 752-7138
- Cheshire-Southwestern Community Services Head Start: 352-7512
- Coos-Tri-County Head Start: 752-7138
- Grafton-Tri-County Head Start: 752-7138
- Hillsborough-Southern NH Services Head Start: 668-8010
- Early Head Start: Concord: 224-6492
- Rockingham-Rockingham County Head Start: 431-2911
- Strafford-Strafford County Head Start: 335-8633. Early Head Start: 335-3611
- Sullivan-Southwestern Community Services Head Start: Keene: 603.352.7512 x 4160
- Claremont: 603.542.9528 x 4160

**New Hampshire Children's Trust Fund** offers prevention and advocacy programs and trainings for families. For more information, please go to http://www.nhctf.org/index.html, 603-224-1279.

**New Hampshire Parent Information Center (PIC)** works with families of children with special needs and learning difficulties. They help families advocate for and better understand their children's needs, identify and use community supports and have a stronger voice in shaping systems that affect their children and families. PIC also runs a volunteer advocacy program. Contact them at 800-947-7005 or 603-224-7005, www.parentinformationcenter.org .

**New Hampshire Department of Education (NH DOE)** - Visit NH DOE's website for other education information - http://www.ed.state.nh.us/education/ or call (603) 271-3494

**New Hampshire Disabilities Rights Center (DRC)** provides information, referral, and advocacy for children with disabilities who have problems with special education, obtaining appropriate benefits and services, and other issues. Contact them at (603) 228-0432 or 1-800-834-1721 or go to http://www.drcnh.org/index.htm

**NH State Parent Information and Resource Center, (NH State PIRC)** is a US Department of Education-funded program aimed at improving student academic performance by increasing parental involvement in children's education and promoting school-family-community partnerships. NH State PIRC offers free workshops, publications, toolkits, newsletters, tip sheets, and support to parents, PTA's schools, school districts, and community organizations. It offers a toll–free Parent Helpline 1-866-9NHPIRC. The website is www.nhpirc.org.

**Free and Reduced School Breakfast/Lunch** - http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/lunch/, is federally funded by the National School Breakfast/Lunch Program, which makes it possible for schools to serve nutritious breakfast and lunches to students each day. If your child is receiving FANF Cash Assistance through DFA, he or she is also eligible for this program. For eligibility information, contact your local school food service or the NH DOE at 603-271-3646 or DFA at 1-800-852-3345 x 4328.

# Child Development and Early Care

Many grandparents and other relative caregivers often worry about finding the right child care program for the children they are raising. Children grow and develop differently and at their own pace. The early years are a critical time in a child's development and an important time for caregivers to have accurate information and consistent support close at hand. Knowing that families are central to the lives of children and that parents and caregivers know best what they want for themselves and their children, New Hampshire is committed to helping families get the supports and services they need.

A family's choice for care is based on many different factors that may include the following:

- Cost
- Location
- An available space
- The person or teachers giving care
- Environment
- Curriculum or philosophy of education
- Parent involvement
- The child's own needs or temperament.

## Child Development Bureau

**Child Development Bureau**
**Division for Children Youth and Families**
**New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services**
**129 Pleasant St.**
**Concord, NH 03301**
**http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/DHHS/CDB/default.htm**
**1-800-852-3345 (NH Relay) 711**

The Child Development Bureau contracts with several agencies to provide resource and referral services for child care in their communities. Relative Caregivers can use these agencies to obtain lists of child care providers who ask to have their names made available to families seeking child care. All types of child care for all ages of children are represented, including accredited licensed child care, licensed center based care, licensed family homes and license-exempt family homes.

Through the scholarship program, relative caregivers may apply for payments to subsidize the cost of child care when needed to look for work, remain employed, or participate in training.

***How can eligible relative caregivers receive help paying for child care expenses?***

The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Family Assistance determines eligibility for child care scholarships. Please go to page 25 to find a location near you. If eligible, relative caregivers may be able to receive financial assistance to pay for some of the costs of child care. Relative caregivers must have proof of legal custody or guardianship and be employed or attending an approved training or education program that leads to a career up to an Associate Degree to be eligible. Please note, even if you are eligible you may be on a waiting list for child care.

## New Hampshire Child Care Resources and Referral Network (NHCCR&R)

http://www.nhccrr.org/index.cfm

The NHCCR&R Network is composed of community based Child Care Resource and Referral programs. These programs educate and support families, providers and the community regarding child care issues.

### NHCCR&R Network

| |
|---|
| **Berlin/Littleton;** |
| White Mountains Community College 2020 Riverside Drive Berlin, NH 03570-3799 |
| **Phone Number:** 1-800-445-4525 Local **Number:** (603) 752-1113 x1462 Fax: 603-752-6335 |
| |
| **Claremont** |
| Family School Connections CCR&R 169 Main Street Claremont, NH 03743 |
| **Toll-Free Number:** 1-877-212-7267 Local **Number:** 603-543-4295 Fax: 603-542-0275 |
| |
| **Concord** |
| Easter Seals 1 Garvin Falls Rd Bow, NH 03304 |
| **Toll-Free Number:** 1-800-307-2737 x8286 **Local Number:** 603-226-3791 **Fax:** 603-226-2540 |
| |
| **Conway** |
| Lakes Region Community Services PO Box 225 Madison, NH 03849 |
| **Toll-Free Number:** 1-866-261-7555 **Local Number:** 603-367-9800 **Fax:** 603-524-0288 |
| |
| **Keene** |
| Easter Seals CCR&R 12 Kingsbury St Keene, NH 03431 |
| **Toll-Free Number:** 1-800-307-2737 x8138 **Local Number:** 355-4341 **Fax:** 358-3947 |
| |
| **Laconia** |
| Lakes Region Community Services PO Box 509, 67 Communications Drive Laconia, NH 03247 |
| **Toll-Free Number:** 1-800-649-8817 x 174 **Local Number:** (603) 528-0274 **Fax:** 603-524-0288 |
| |
| **Manchester** |
| Easter Seals 555 Auburn Street Manchester, NH 03103 |
| **Toll-Free Number:** 1-800-870-8728 **Local Number:** 621-3512 **Fax:** 603-625-1148 |
| |
| **Nashua** |
| Southern NH Services, Inc. CCR&R 134 Allds St Nashua, NH 03060 |
| **Toll-Free Number:** 1-877-211-0723 **Local Number:** (603) 889-3440 x39 **Fax:** 603-889-0945 |
| |
| **Rochester** |
| Rockingham Community Action Child Care Services Strafford County 652 Central Ave Dover , NH 03820 |
| **Toll-Free Number:** 1-800-913-1912 **Local Number:** (603) 516-1190 |
| |
| **Salem/Portsmouth** |
| Rockingham Community Action Child Care Services 8 Centerville Drive Salem, NH 03079 |
| **Toll-Free Number:** 1-800-310-8333 **Local Number:** (603) 893-8446 **Fax:** 603-893-8413 |
| |

# About The Division for Children, Youth and Families (DCYF)

DCYF's role is to protect children and help families. Sometimes a child must be removed from his or her own home because it is not safe to be there. DCYF becomes involved in a situation like this when an individual calls the State's central intake number to report child abuse or neglect. When a valid report is received and DCYF determines that the report must be examined, the Division must investigate the situation to assess whether the information in the report is factual and whether the child is safe or unsafe in the home. Even when the child is determined by DCYF to be safe, the agency may offer services to the family to assist them. DCYF will intervene to keep the child safe at home or in an informal placement with a relative or family friend for a very short time. If the child is still in danger or the family is unable or unwilling to create an effective safety plan, DCYF can recommend to the court that the child be removed from the home.

When a child needs to be removed from his or her home immediately, a caseworker from DCYF may contact you right away. You could be the relative who called the intake number or you might be someone the family suggests as a placement resource when the child's safety plan is being developed. In any event, a caseworker may ask if you are willing to take the child or children into your home temporarily. The caseworker must give you information about your options and answer your questions. If this is an emergency, you could be asked to make a quick decision.

If you take a child into your home, DCYF will want to make sure that you and anyone else living in your home are safe to be around children. You will be asked to participate in an interview and undergo a local police check and criminal record check. DCYF caseworkers may or may not stay involved with you. This depends on whether the child returns home quickly, and whether you become a foster parent, a relative care provider, or a guardian of the child.

**Getting involved with DCYF…Yes or No?** Relatives may be concerned about getting involved with DCYF and may not want to be involved with a state agency. This is understandable, but keep in mind that DCYF is the agency that is required by law to intervene and provide services that will help keep children safe. DCYF is required to have contact with children who are placed outside of the home because of abuse, neglect or maltreatment and to have contact with those who are caring for them on at least a monthly basis.

There are many benefits to being involved with DCYF. The child's parents can get services to help them reunify with their children. Children can get services they need, such as counseling or health care. Relative caregivers may be eligible to receive services to help care for the child, such as transportation and respite care.

If you become a licensed foster parent, you may receive additional foster care payments to help you care for the child. Relative caregivers who are not licensed may receive financial assistance through the Division of Family Assistance (see page 13). However, they cannot receive foster care payments from the State. If you need assistance and are interested in becoming licensed, ask the DCYF caseworker assigned to support you and your relative child about becoming a licensed provider.

**Before you make a decision about the type of arrangement to pursue**, learn all you can about the various options available to you.

- Find out how each option will affect you and your family, especially the financial and other assistance that might be available to help you care for your relative child.
- Consult a family attorney; he or she can help you understand the implications of each option.

## Relative Care, Foster Care and DCYF

Every year, thousands of New Hampshire families struggle with issues that bring them to the attention of DCYF. Parents may lack the skills or resources they need to care for their children appropriately and to keep them safe from harm; they may be struggling with substance abuse, physical illness, or mental health issues; or they may be parenting the only way they know how. Other variables that may lead to child abuse or neglect can include the loss of employment, inappropriate relationships, lack of affordable housing and/or incarceration.

Foster Care is one option when DCYF is involved and seeks to find a safe alternative home to provide for day-to-day care, nurturing, supervision, and parenting for a child. By law, the State of New Hampshire must make efforts to identify and notify all adult relatives of a child within 30 days of a child going into placement. If a family relative is not available or not appropriate, the child may be placed in a licensed foster home.

When a grandparent or other relative is identified as an appropriate caretaker for a child in State custody, he or she can become licensed by DCYF to provide foster care for the child. While this is not a requirement, it is strongly recommended that they become a licensed relative foster home as they may receive additional financial assistance as well as additional support services.

A relative foster parent receives reimbursement for the care of the child. A child in foster care is entitled to various services and programs that may not be available in a private guardianship arrangement. All children in foster care have an assigned, Child Protective Social Worker (CPSW) who is responsible for the child's case plan. The foster parent is an important part of the case plan for the future of the child, that seeks, in the beginning, to reunify the child with the parents.

To become a licensed foster home, relative providers must complete the basic application process required by all licensed foster parents. This includes 26 hours of foster parent education, references, medical statements, financial information, an autobiography, copies of birth certificates and a marriage certificate, if applicable. Criminal background checks and fingerprinting are also required. The home must be determined to be safe, and both a town health and fire inspection is required. A telephone in the home is also required.

As a relative care provider you will be asked to be involved in several aspects of the case plan. The case plan is a course of action that includes services and timeframes for issues to be resolved. The parents and DCYF agree upon the plan and work together. This may involve getting the child to and from appointments, helping with family visits, and participating in the development of the case plan. You will be notified of regular three, six, nine and 12 month case plan reviews and court hearings. You, as a relative caregiver, may choose to participate in the planning of services for the child.

As the court case moves forward and case planning efforts occur, different outcomes are possible. The court may reunify the child with his or her parents. The court may determine that the parents are unable to resume parenting and a more permanent care-taking situation for the child will be sought. This may result in legally terminating the parents' rights (called a Terminating Parental Rights [TPR] proceeding), which results in freeing the child for adoption. Another option is mediated adoption. Each case is decided on its own unique set of facts and circumstances.

## Adoption and DCYF

The court will determine if a child can be adopted and, if the child has resided with you for more than six months, you may be asked to consider adoption to provide him or her with a permanent home. As previously mentioned, if you adopt a relative child, you become his or her legal parent with all the rights and responsibilities of a parent. Before an adoption can take place, a child's parents must either:

- surrender their parental rights;
- participate in a Voluntary Mediated Agreement;

  or
- the court must terminate their parental rights.

A Voluntary Mediated Agreement is an opportunity for all parties to actively participate in creating a plan of adoption for the child, particularly older children who have a significant relationship with their birth parents When it is in the child(ren)'s best interest, an on-going connection with the birth parent(s) is invaluable to children growing up in an adoptive family. This is when the adoptive parents consider post-adoption sharing of information and/or contact between the child they are adopting and his or her birth family. It is often a good option for relative adoptions and it can work if the adopting relatives have a good relationship with the parents and remain focused on the child's best interests. It is especially beneficial if the child has a good relationship with a birth parent, wants to continue it, and/or has siblings still living with that parent with whom he or she wants to stay in touch. This is not appropriate if ongoing contact could expose the child to further risk of harm.

Adoptions take place in Family Court. When the court issues a final order of adoption, the adopting relative caregiver has the same rights, privileges and obligations as if the child had been born to them. Once the adoption occurs the birth parent(s) no longer has any legal rights or responsibilities with respect to the child. Children with special needs may qualify for adoption assistance, which can include the reimbursement of one-time adoption expenses, medical benefits, monthly payments, and the payment of special services. One must apply and be approved for adoption assistance before finalizing the adoption. To find out if your child qualifies for assistance, ask the worker finalizing the adoption or call the DCYF Adoption Supervisor at 1-800-852-3345.

## Post Adoption Resources

DCYF offers Post Adoption Services to assist families with questions, concerns and special issues that may occur as a family grows and matures. Call 1-800-852-4435 to access Post Adoption Services.

## Related Websites

- Adoption in New Hampshire Reference Manual

  http://www.courts.state.nh.us/probate/referencemanual.pdf
- Frequently Asked Questions About Adoption in New Hampshire

  http://iaatp.com/docs/FAQs-NH.pdf
- Keeping the Family Tree Intact Through Kinship Care

  http://www.adoptiononline.com/aeckinship.html
- Child Welfare Information Gateway

Adoption http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/adoption_gip_one.cfm

**New Hampshire Foster and Adoption Parent Association** (NH FAPA) is a nonprofit 501 c3 organization formed to provide support and information to foster and adoptive families throughout the State. Monthly support groups are held in each County. Call 603-525-4165 or go to www.nhfapa.

## Granite State College

DCYF has contracted with Granite State College to provide education and training to foster and adoptive parents, childcare staff of residential facilities in New Hampshire, non-licensed relative caregivers and DCYF staff. All classes award Continuing Education Units, are free-of-charge to participants and are held in different locations throughout the State. Check out the website.

http://www.granite.edu/academics/noncredit-and-training/foster-parent-training/

## Recommended Reading for Grandparents and Relatives

- ***Grandparents as Parents: A Survival Guide for Raising a Second Family*** by Sylvie De Toledo
- ***Grandparent Power!: How to Strengthen the Vital Connection Among Grandparents, Parents, and Children*** by Arthur Kornhaber
- ***Raising Our Children's Children*** by Deborah Doucette-Dudman
- ***Second Time Around: Help for Grandparents Who Raise Their Children's Kids*** by Joan Callander
- ***The Essential Grandparent: A Guide for Making a Difference*** by Lillian Carson
- ***The Ties That Bind (Parental Substance Abuse & Kinship Care)*** by Naomi Weinstein & Marianne Takas
- ***To Grandma's House We - Stay: When You Have to Stop Spoiling Your Grandchildren and Start Raising Them*** by Sally Houtman
- ***Understanding Your Special Needs Grandchild: A Grandparent's Guide*** by Clare B. Jones
- ***Robert Lives with His Grandparents*** by Martha Whittemore Hickman

# New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services District Offices

**State Office**
Thayer Building
129 Pleasant Street
Concord NH 03301
(603) 271-4455 (800) 852-3345 (FAX) 271-4729

**Maggie Bishop, Director**
Bob Boisvert, Administrator

**Berlin District Office**
650 Main Street Suite 200
Berlin NH 03570-2463
(800) 972-6111 (FAX) 752-2230
DCYF, DFA, BEAS, OCSE
**(603) 752-7800**

**Claremont District Office**
17 Water Street
Claremont NH 03743
(800) 982-1001 (FAX) 542-1707
DCYF, DFA, BEAS, OCSE
**(603) 542-9544**

**Concord District Office**
40 Terrill Park Drive
Concord NH 03301-1025
(800) 322-9191(FAX) 271-4085
DCYF, DFA, BEAS, OCSE
**(603) 271-6200**

**Conway District Office**
73 Hobbs Street
Conway NH 03818-6188
(800) 552-4628 (FAX) 447-3588
DCYF, DFA, BEAS, OCSE
**(603) 447-3841**

**Keene District Office**
809 Court Street
Keene NH 03431-1712
(800) 624-9700 (FAX) 355-1542
DCYF, DFA, BEAS, OCSE
**(603) 357-3510**

**Laconia District Office**
65 Beacon Street West
Laconia NH 03246
(800) 322-2121 (FAX) 524-1088
DCYF, DFA, BEAS, OCSE
**(603) 524-4485**

**Littleton District Office**
80 North Littleton Road

Littleton NH 03561-3814
(800) 552-8959 (FAX) 444-0782
DCYF, DFA, BEAS, OCSE
**(603) 444-6786**

**Manchester District Office**
195 McGregor St
South Tower, Suite 110
Manchester NH 03102-3762
(800) 852-7493(FAX) 624-4014
DCYF, DFA, BEAS, OCSE
**(603) 688-2330**

**Southern District Office**
3 Pine Street Extension
Suite Q
Nashua NH 03060 -3213
(800) 852-0632 (FAX) 889-9639
DCYF, DFA, BEAS, OCSE
**(603) 883-7726**

**Seacoast District Office**
50 International Drive
Portsmouth NH 03801-2862
(800) 821-0326 (FAX) 433-8393
DCYF, DFA, BEAS, OCSE
**(603) 433-8326**

**Rochester District Office**
150 Wakefield St Ste 22
Rochester NH 03867-1309
(800) 862-5300 (FAX) 332-8984
DCYF, DFA, BEAS, OCSE
**(603) 332-9120**

**Salem Branch Office**
154 Main Street
Salem NH 03079-3191
(800) 852-7492(FAX) 890-3909
DCYF - Telework Team, DFA
**(603) 893-9763**

**DCYF**- Division for Children, Youth and Families
**DFA**-Division of Family Assistance
**BEAS**-Bureau of Elderly and Adult Services
**OCSE**- Office of Child Support Enforcement

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