New Hampshire Child Care Advisory Council
c/o Administrator, Child Development Bureau and
Head Start Collaboration
Department of Health and Human Services,
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www.dhhs.nh.gov/dcyf/cdb/index.htm

New Hampshire Child Care Advisory Council
2022-2023 ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

The Advisory Council on Child Care was created through legislation (RSA 126-A:17) in 1995 to serve as an advisory body to the Commissioner of Health and Human Services and to inform and communicate with the legislature, the Commissioner of Education and the Governor on any issue related to childcare in New Hampshire.

The purpose of the NH Child Care Advisory Council is to:

- further the development of quality & affordable child care;
- provide a forum for groups concerned with child care and related services;
- advise the Commissioner of the Department of Health and Human Services on policies and legislation regarding child care;
- communicate with the Governor and the Commissioner of the Department of Education on early childhood initiatives and needs; and
- advise the Bureau of Child Development Bureau and Head Start Collaboration on priorities.

More information can be found at this link: http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/dcyf/ccac.htm

In the past year, the NH Child Care Advisory Council (NH CCAC) has been in the forefront of early educational activities statewide by;

- holding bi-monthly in person meetings bringing together stakeholders from across the state to disseminate information, inform about initiatives and share valuable resources;
- co hosting bi-weekly virtual meetings that are regularly attended by over 100 participants across the state. At these meetings stakeholders share information and discuss ways to tackle problems, as well as offer information about supports that are available throughout the state;
- convening a background check taskforce to ensure that child care businesses can secure more timely background checks;

- collaborating with the department of safety establishing state wide fingerprinting “pop-ups”. These “pop-ups” streamlined the fingerprinting process and in the majority of cases allowed candidates to enter the workforce faster;
- working closely with state leaders in groups such as the Quality Recognition and Improvement System (QRIS) leadership taskforce and the B-8 quadrant of the Council for Thriving Children;
- meeting monthly with DHHS leadership to flag issues that are occurring and to streamline solutions;
- advising state Senators, Representatives, and advocates to support bills that will strengthen early education, grow the workforce, and support families statewide;
- attending the new legislative workgroup that considers child care bills and offers answers to questions that have arisen during those meetings.

It’s no secret that nationwide childcare teachers are woefully underpaid, and parents cannot afford skyrocketing child care tuition. The current childcare system is unsustainable.

A Child Care Strengthening Plan has been developed, which grew out of the 2022 Senate Bill 446 that directed NH DHHS to “develop a plan relative to fostering sustainable childcare opportunities for working families and businesses, with a purpose to advance solutions to stabilize New Hampshire’s childcare workforce, which benefits all industries, working families and the children and youth in their care”. The plan uses a multi-pronged approach to solving the statewide childcare crisis, including workforce supports, financial grants for facilities, and making childcare more affordable for working families. The NH Child Care Advisory Council is encouraged by the DHHS plan to strengthen child care systems across the state, and we look forward to working with the department to help support these initiatives. We truly appreciate the time and consideration DHHS leadership put into this plan.

One frustration we have encountered, however, is that DHHS will not share their proposed budget for this project despite requests, which makes it hard for the NH CCAC to fully endorse the plan. It will be difficult for the NH CCAC to support any proposal that does not help lead to higher wages for childcare workers. According to the Hunt Institute, in 2023 it is projected that ***all*** industries will pay more and offer better benefits to their employees than the childcare industry. In addition, Vermont, Massachusetts, and Maine have all implemented plans to increase the wages of their childcare providers, which has led many teachers in border towns to leave the state in order to stay in the field and make a livable wage. The NH CCAC is deeply concerned that we have barely begun to see the effects of the state child care workforce crisis.

In response to the needs of the current and future workforce the NH CCAC is currently facilitating a biweekly meeting with a group of stakeholders to do a deep dive into the wages of childcare workers. The first meeting of the month is informative, with a focus on how other states are funding childcare. The second meeting of the month is divided into two workgroups, with one group investigating funding opportunities and the second group devising a reasonable wage scale. These meetings are open to all who wish to participate and often involve leaders from other states who can share their experiences in this work. ***The NH CCAC sees the child care workforce crisis as the most important priority we have because, as the workforce behind the workforce, it will impact every other business in the state.*** For every child care teacher who is hired or retained, 8 parents can go to work; for every teacher lost, 8 parents may leave the workforce. If we cannot get child care workers to reenter, and stay, in the field the results will be detrimental, as all other businesses rely on childcare availability for their own workforce.

Above all else, the most important work the NH CCAC continues to accomplish is to listen to the childcare field and share what is heard, as it is our mission to be the voice of the NH providers. It is only

by paying attention to the work on the ground that child care in New Hampshire will survive and prosper. New Hampshire can work to implement many initiatives however if these proposed plans don't address the immediate needs of the providers the industry will continue to struggle.

Thank you for your support of child care programs and the families we serve,

Marianne Barter, Chair

Shannon Tremblay, Vice Chair

Lisa Doyon, Secretary

Anne Grassie, Past Chair

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