



# State of New Hampshire

---

Office of the Child Advocate

Moira O'Neill  
Director

**Contact: Moira O'Neill, Director  
603-271-7773, Moira.O'Neill@nh.gov**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** – September 24, 2019

## **New Hampshire Child Advocate's Working Group on Juvenile Justice convenes an open forum on Building Effective Systems for Children**

**Concord NH:** An open forum is scheduled on the topic of Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST), a widely proven model of care for children at risk for juvenile justice involvement. It will be held at the Legislative Office Building, Room 210, Friday, September 27, 2019 at 11 a.m.

This educational opportunity features MST-Services, the licensing organization for a model with substantial evidence basis for success in preventing out-of-home care and re-arrests. MST also has successful programs for children at risk of abuse and neglect and those with parents who struggle with substance use. Instituting MST was a key recommendation for New Hampshire made by representatives of the national organization Youth Correctional Leaders for Justice who spoke at a June forum.

Moira O'Neill, director of the Office of the Child Advocate, said her office's research on effective interventions for children at risk identified MST as a potentially effective resource to New Hampshire. "The Division for Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) and the Courts, have too few options to keep children out of the system and limited means to intensively support families," O'Neill said. "Other states have been doing that through the use of MST and they have experienced significant return on investment." O'Neill cautioned stakeholders to ask tough questions and ensure all programmatic decisions fit New Hampshire's unique needs. "We have to start somewhere", O'Neill said, "and if we can save money, see children do better, faster, and at home with their families where they belong, then we are making good decisions on their behalf."

The director encouraged state agency personnel, providers, families and policy makers to attend and vet a promising program for New Hampshire's children at risk.

The Child Advocate's Juvenile Justice Working Group was convened at the recommendation of The Committee to Study Alternatives to the Continued Use of the Sununu Youth Services Center Facility, HB 1743, chapter 355:7, Laws of 2018.

Pursuant to NH RSA 170-G:18, the Office of the Child Advocate provides independent oversight of the Department for Children, Youth and Families to assure that the best interests of children are being protected.

###