



OCA Advocacy Updates in Brief

COVID-19- As of July 31, 2020, New Hampshire had 12 COVID-19-positive youth in care.

Outreach- The Office is utilizing its social media platforms on Facebook, Twitter and our website to promote and inform on our initiatives as well as highlight other federal, state and community programs and events. Make sure to follow us! In addition, staff serve on the Youth Homelessness subcommittee, Perinatal Substance Exposure Task Force, Workforce Development Network Leadership Team, NH AG's Child Abuse Taskforce, Granite State Children's Alliance board, Child Fatality Review Committee, and the US Ombudsman Association Conference Planning Committee.

Safety Science- Casey Family Programs is generously continuing support for the OCA to work with Collaborative Safety, LLC to hone skills for system evaluation with the System Learning Review (SLR) model. This year they will also provide guidance for examining system responsiveness to children with developmental disabilities, conducting Human Factors Debriefing, writing safety-sensitive reports, and engaging children with developmental disabilities. Additionally, this gift will provide resources to support the development of an SLR model and engagement strategy for a youth-led system evaluation initiative.

Juvenile Justice- The Youth Engagement project is organizing outreach meetings to recruit youth experts for guidance in juvenile justice transformation and self-advocacy.

Child Protection- An addendum to System Review 2019-01 Restraining and Secluding Children will be released by late August 2020.

OUR WORK

388 cases in process

2900+ cases closed

OUR IMPACT

3300+ cases

Since our inception

Policy Watch



HB 1162 was signed into law on July 20, 2020

AN ACT relative to adoption and parentage; the office of the child advocate; reimbursement of court ordered services for juveniles; the legal representation of children in the juvenile justice system; the best interest of the child under RSA 169-C and the duties of the oversight commission on children's services; insurance coverage for children's early intervention services; expanding the family-centered early supports and services (FCESS) program to children under the age of 3 who are born substance-exposed; the child abuse and neglect central registry; establishing a kinship navigator program; missing children; dispositional hearings under RSA 169-B; and the rebuttable presumption of harm under the child protection act. Child Advocate Moira O'Neill described the bill as monumental for children.

HB 1582 was signed into law on July 28, 2020

AN ACT relative to free tuition at colleges and universities for children of veterans who are totally and permanently disabled; programs to aid veterans' access to employment, housing, health care, and college degrees; educational assistance for members of the New Hampshire national guard; tuition waivers for children in state foster care or guardianship; and prohibiting higher education institutions from discriminating on the basis of military, law enforcement, or veterans status.

HB 1558 was signed into law on July 29, 2020

AN ACT relative to discipline of students, addressing students' behavioral needs; kindergarten funding; violence in schools; policies for students with head injuries; child sexual abuse prevention education and training; authorizing the issuance of bonds or notes by a municipality; adding the chancellor of the university system of New Hampshire to the department of business and economic affairs council of partner agencies; change of school or assignment due to manifest educational hardship; school board expenditure of year-end fund balances; a children's system of care; student wellness; and criminal background checks for bus drivers.

HB 1245 was signed into law on July 29, 2020

AN ACT adopting omnibus legislation concerning state agencies removes an obsolete reference to appeal of the probate court's decision regarding the termination of parental rights. The bill provides appeals in such cases shall be to the supreme court; Amends membership, duties and exemption of the child fatality review committee; Provides that children of members of the armed forces may retain New Hampshire residency for driver's s during parent's active deployment; Increases the age for sales and possession of tobacco products; Clarifies behavioral health services for children and revises notifications of discharge for certain individuals.



Upcoming Events & Trainings

- Aug 18** → **NH Human Trafficking Collaborative Task Force Online Training: Service Provider Focus, Pre-registration required**
- Aug 20** → **Dartmouth-Hitchcock & Child Parent Psychotherapy Learning Collaborative Info Session: Virtual Info Session. RSVP to Logan.V.Seely@hitchcock.org**
- Aug 20** → **NASW NH through Dartmouth Hitchcock- The Journey to Use Meds Optimally to Support Recovery webinar Register for Zoom link**
- Aug 25** → **The Upper Room- Grandparenting a Second Time Around (PASTA). To learn more**
- Sept 16** → **NH CASA Online training**
- Sept 22** → **NH Human Trafficking Collaborative Task Force Online Training: For anyone, 7-8:30pm. Pre-registration required**
- Sept 23** → **NASW: Recognizing and Responding to Youth Suicide Risk During COVID-19 live webinar Information and Registration**
- Sept 24** → **2020 Child Welfare Virtual Expo (CWVE): Strengthening Families Through Prevention and Collaboration For more information**
- Sept 25** → **Oversight Commission meeting: TBD 8:00 am**
- Oct 6-8** → **CWLA Virtual Summit- Advancing Racial Justice, Equity, and Inclusion for Children and Families. Register**

A message from the Child Advocate:

The year 2020 will be examined by historians, social scientists and head-scratching parents for decades to come. Did we do the right thing? Should we have gone back to work, back to school, or worn a mask? Is the COVID-19 pandemic an adverse childhood experience? How will children grow and how will they be in years to come after this experience, this economy, this political divisiveness? These are all tough questions and decisions. We know from safety science, the science of evaluation the OCA employs in system reviews, that every decision you make is the right decision because it was the decision you made at the time with the information you had. So arm yourself with information. COVID-19 is a virus and it spreads via droplets from exhalation. Wear a mask and wash your hands. Teach your children to wear masks and wash their hands. Many people have doubts about what children can endure. But in the 2-year World War II German bombing of London, Great Britain, bulky gas masks were mandatory and every child left for school in the morning carrying one. Children acclimate as long as they feel a sense of belonging and value to their families and communities. Their resilience depends upon our consistent caring for them. Make your decisions based upon the facts and your comfort level. If because of a child protection of juvenile justice concern you are separated from your child, keep in touch or make sure someone your child knows and trusts is in touch routinely, every day, encouraging and caring. If you do not have a child but want to make a difference, consider [being a foster parent](#), even for short periods of time as a respite provider if you cannot make a long term commitment; volunteer for [CASA](#) to connect and protect a child while in care; donate to children's services or after school programs; or simply say hello to children you encounter in the course of your day. Ask them how they are doing in these difficult times. Offer them a reason to know they belong and are valued. As cliché as it sounds, be the reason a child smiles today.

The OCA is excited to share that it is changing. With the signing of HB 1162 we will be expanding our reach to all children receiving state services. This means we can advocate for them long before they are abused, neglected or adjudicated. In the coming weeks we will be translating what that means and sharing with you. We will also be working hard to engage young people to give us their voices directly as we seek to improve New Hampshire's children's services and supports. Stay tuned for additional OCA outreach and education on our expanded Mission and youth advocacy work. In the meantime, be safe and keep well. As always, it is a great privilege for me and my staff to serve the children of New Hampshire.

Contact us

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