



# State of New Hampshire

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Office of the Child Advocate



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Director

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**Child Advocate announces a “new Office of the Child Advocate” of law in effect September 18, 2020.**

**Concord, NH-** The Child Advocate released a briefing today outlining expanded jurisdiction in the new mandate of the Office of the Child Advocate pursuant to RSA chapter 21-V. Under a new logo image of the sun rising over the state of New Hampshire, Child Advocate Moira O'Neill said, “The new law expands OCA services to all children who receive help from the state. No longer will we have to wait for children to be abused, neglected or adjudicated before the Office can help them.”

The Office first opened in February 2018. At that time, RSA chapter 170-G:18 established the Office to provide independent oversight of the Division for Children, Youth and Families (DCYF). RSA 21-V expands the Office’s oversight to include any department, commission, board, institution, bureau, or office of the state, as well as other public and private organizations providing services to children under a contract or agreement with an executive state agency. The Judicial Council and any entity for which the Council provides services, including court appointed special advocates or CASA GAL, is an exception.

O'Neill said the expansion to assist children before they encounter DCYF child protection and juvenile services brings the Office’s mission into alignment with child welfare reform efforts in the state and across the country. “It is now abundantly clear,” O'Neill explained, “that children, families and state systems themselves, do better when the emphasis is on pro-active, preventative initiatives before children are in trouble. We will now bring children’s voices to the table in the dialogue on prevention services and family supports.”

The Child Advocate’s briefing outlines operations of the Office in three service areas: Review and investigation of complaints, incidents and systemic concerns; Collaboration, advice and recommendations for system improvements; and Education, engagement, and outreach for assisting with system navigation, self-advocacy and learning about children and best practices.

Pursuant to NH RSA chapter 21-V, the Office of the Child Advocate provides independent oversight ensure that children involved with an agency, and in particular, children served by the child welfare or juvenile justice systems, receive timely, safe, and effective services and that their best interests are being protected.

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