



# State of New Hampshire

---

## Office of the Child Advocate

Moira O'Neill  
Director

**Contact: Moira O'Neill, Director, 603-848-0413, [Moira.O'Neill@nh.gov](mailto:Moira.O'Neill@nh.gov)  
Emily Lawrence, Associate Director and Counsel, 603-271-7778, [Emily.Lawrence@nh.gov](mailto:Emily.Lawrence@nh.gov)**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** – October 11, 2019

### **Child Advocate responds to first Annual DCYF Data Book release.**

**Concord:** Today the New Hampshire Division for Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) released its first Annual Data Book. The Office of the Child Advocate applauds any effort DCYF makes to quantify the needs of children and families and the efforts of the department.

In general, while the initial view of the data is promising, what the data book tells us is DCYF still has an enormous task before it and not enough resources.

Numbers of intakes and assessments continue to rise. The workload for assessment workers has dropped significantly over the past few years but 40-44 cases is still far from the recommended standard of 12-15. Moira O'Neill, Director of the Office of the Child Advocate states, "We have seen the impact of that overload in our System Learning Reviews - assessments with only minimum collateral contacts, referrals not followed up, incomplete documentation." The recently passed SB 6 should significantly address the pressures on caseworkers with 57 new hires in the next two years. Since the bill was passed, with funding allocated for SB 6 in July, it has been reported to us that DCYF has hired 31 caseworkers. Some of those were for non-SB 6 positions; however only 18 of the 27 positions allocated by SB 6 for this fiscal year have been filled."

O'Neill pointed out that the data demonstrating that the number of children leaving the system is outpacing those coming into placement is encouraging on the surface. However, we need to examine closely why children are leaving the system and how prepared they are to go. The Office of the Child Advocate has seen a trend in 18-year olds leaving the system without comprehensive transition plans. It would also be helpful to have the data on adoptions broken down by children's age, and destination. "Without the data on age we don't know who is not being adopted," O'Neill stated. "It would be helpful to know how many teens age out with the Teen Independent Living Aftercare Program, Extended Care Services or other programs to support them." In addition, "Knowing the numbers regarding children's placement status in foster homes, kinship care or residential should help DCYF plan for better supporting all families who take children into their homes and lives." O'Neill stated.

The Office of the Child Advocate will closely review the Data Book and the meaning behind the data. Ultimately, having a good picture of the breadth of DCYF's responsibilities is helpful for planning and resource allocation. O'Neill says she still has questions. "When children do come into care, the data that would be most meaningful is that which tells us, are those children okay when they leave DCYF care? Are they better? Are they safe? That is the data the Office of the Child Advocate is interested in." It is also crucial that we continue to identify why children come into care in the first place. There is a critical need to look upstream for ways to better support families so children never come to protective or juvenile services.

###