

# Priorities for New Hampshire Children | 2015

## **ECONOMIC SECURITY PRIORITY: Educate Our Legislators about TANF, Food Stamps, and EBT**

*Priority Leaders: MaryLou Beaver, Family Assistance Advisory Council; Every Child Matters in NH and Keith Kuenning, Child and Family Services*

### **BACKGROUND**

Over the course of the last eight years there have been no less than twenty pieces of legislation<sup>1</sup> dealing with the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Program (TANF), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP or Food Stamps), and Electronic Benefits (EBT) cards. Since 2006 there have been several study committees and a legislative task force established to study these programs and issues. It became evident during these discussions that there is a general misunderstanding about how the programs are run, who is eligible for them, where the funding for them is obtained, and both the federal and state rules and regulations.

During the same time period we have seen the child poverty rate in the state increase and the need for Food Stamp assistance grow exponentially. Cuts were made to the TANF program so that fewer families are now eligible and legislators regularly submit bills that make access to these programs and their safety net features more difficult.

One thing remains the same, however, TANF families are living in poverty and the children in those families are being left behind. Federal guidelines define poverty for a family of two adults and two children as having an income of less than \$24,000 year. Numerous studies show that children who grow up in poverty are more likely to suffer from poor health, developmental delays, behavioral problems, and lower academic achievement.<sup>2</sup>

As of September 2014, there were 3,200 open TANF cases which included 4,824 children residing in the household. There were 52,288 open Food Stamps cases which included 44,981 children relying on this program for their daily nourishment. The maximum TANF grant in New Hampshire is now approximately 40% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL).<sup>3</sup>

### **THE OPPORTUNITY**

The Family Assistance Advisory Council, Every Child Matters in New Hampshire, and Child and Family Services of NH will conduct educational and informational sessions with members of the NH Legislature. Through presentations to committees, groups of interested legislators, and a Spring Conference for legislators and other policy makers, we look to instill a better understanding of these programs and the families served by them.

We hope that by educating policy makers about the effects of poverty on child development, the obstacles that low-income people face, and the pathways to opportunity, future policies will ensure that every Granite Stater is moving in the same direction. The future of New Hampshire depends on ensuring that all people have opportunities to succeed.

### **TAKE ACTION**

Investing in low-income families to ensure that they have the means to provide the basic necessities to help healthy, productive children grow and develop is an investment in New Hampshire's future. NH CAN Partners can educate our policy makers and the public about programs that help ensure all Granite State children thrive.

**nh can**

nh kids count coalition

[nhkidscount.org](http://nhkidscount.org)

## REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

1. NH General Court – Advanced Bill Status Search Years 2008 – 2014 [www.nh.gov](http://www.nh.gov)
2. Department of Health and Human Services Division of Family Assistance.
3. Cognitive and Emotional Outcomes for Children in Poverty [www.corwin.com/upm-data/17259\\_Chapter\\_18.pdf](http://www.corwin.com/upm-data/17259_Chapter_18.pdf)
4. Department of Health and Human Services Division of Family Assistance, “Income Limits by Program,” at <http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dfa/documents/incomelimits.pdf>
5. Department of Health and Human Services Division of Family Assistance, online publications page, at <http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dfa/publications.htm>

## PRIORITY LEADER

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New Hampshire Kids Count is dedicated to improving the lives of all children by advocating for public initiatives that make a real difference. We ensure that laws, policies, and programs in the Granite State are effective and improve kids' lives.

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