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Introduction

In January of 2020, New Hampshire Children’s Trust launched the Family Support Data System (FSDS), built on a QuickBase® platform, to:

1. Provide the only uniform data platform for Family Resource Centers (FRCs) across New Hampshire.
2. Elevate and celebrate, through data, the scope, impact, and importance of FRCs as a sector.
3. Expand FRC reporting on new and existing state-funded initiatives, as well as local programming, via a consolidated and streamlined process.

In its role as the Facilitating Organization for NH Family Resource Centers, New Hampshire Children’s Trust promotes coordinated outcome measurement and continuous quality improvement within and across family strengthening programs. A common data platform, standardized data collection, and the integration of existing data silos (where possible) are all important functions for New Hampshire’s network of Family Resource Centers.
In 2022, Family Resource Centers (FRCs) around the state provided more than 60,000 hours of services and support to 12,065 individuals in 4,946 families. While groups and classes are offered to the community and open to the public through every FRC, some families also need more individual support. The collective assessment of those families indicates that many families struggle with basic needs that, when addressed, contribute to the stability of the family, reduce stress, and produce better environments for children. Some of these basic needs include childcare, access to food, housing, utility payments, transportation, dental care, and mental and behavioral health.

Family Resource Centers provide opportunities to build parental resilience in the face of challenges, to connect with other people and resources, to garner tangible and economic supports that bolster stability, to increase their knowledge of parenting and child development, and to help children develop socially and emotionally.

All of this begins, however, with ensuring that families’ basic needs for safety and security are met. Most reports to DCYF are for the concern about the neglect of children rather than abuse. To what extent, though, are parents neglecting their children as opposed to facing challenges associated with poverty and lack of resources? And in such cases, isn’t there a better way to support these families?

Finally, what could New Hampshire save, in terms of money and misery, by working with families as early and as far “upstream” as possible? This data report explores these questions to reinforce the importance of providing safe and nurturing environments where our state’s children and families can thrive.

1. These numbers include data from the FSDS and data reported by FRCs collected in other data platforms. The hours of encounters also include an adjustment for two FRCs that do not track encounter data in the FSDS.
What are the Needs of Families?

Concrete supports for parents (including food, housing, health care, and clothing) are a protective factor that promotes the well-being of children and families and helps prevent child abuse and neglect. When families initially visit their local FRC, support staff administer concrete needs assessments to help identify their immediate needs.3

Of the 1,319 families who completed a concrete needs assessment4 during 2022,

1 in 3 Families
reported not being able to pay for these essential needs during the previous month:

- Groceries and Food (includes baby formula & diapers)
- Utilities or Bills (includes electric, heat, & phone)
- Rent or Mortgage
- Transportation (includes gas and car repairs)

Percent of families who experienced specific hardships during the past year:

- Delayed Medical Treatment: 33%
- Unemployed: 27%
- Co-Housing to Reduce Costs: 19%
- Lost Transportation: 16%
- Homeless: 14%
- Eviction from Housing: 10%

Struggling to pay for basic concrete needs like food, housing, and health care can increase parental stress and the risk factors associated with child maltreatment.3

FRCs also assess families across a broader range of topics that affect family stability and functioning to help determine which economic and family strengthening supports and services would be most beneficial for them. When a need is identified, its urgency is also identified as: **URGENT** (needs within 1 week), **IMPORTANT** (needs within 1 month), or identified as a need within the next 6 months.

**Topic areas assessed include:** Housing, family life, health, income and documentation assistance, employment and education, legal, transportation, and other concrete needs. All needs by topic area are included in charts on pages 7 and 8 of this report.

**1 in 2 Families** needed or anticipated needing help applying for public benefits and paying for utilities within 6 months.
- Additionally, **40-50%** of families needed parenting support and help paying for housing, fuel, healthy food, clothing, and diapers and formula.

**1 in 3 Families** needed parenting support and help applying for public benefits **within 1 month**.
- Additionally, **25-35%** of families needed mental health services, housing stability, family communication support, and social connections.

**1 in 6 Families** needed help applying for public benefits and housing assistance **within 1 week**.

The chart below includes NH families’ top 15 reported needs in 2022 ranked by combined urgent and important needs.

- Parenting Support
- Benefits Applications
- Housing Assistance
- Utilities
- Mental Health
- Healthy Food
- Housing Stability
- Clothing
- Diapers or Formula
- Family Communication
- Kinship Support
- Fuel Assistance
- Social Connections
- Personal Vehicle
- Temporary Housing

**Urgent** | **Important** | **Needs within 6 Months**
---|---|---
**1 Week** | **1 Month** | **6 Month**
Service touchpoints (encounters) offered by FRCs fall into one of five major goal areas: parent education, social interaction, early childhood support, economic success and family functioning/health/resilience:

For **groups and classes**, social interaction (45%) and parent education (27%) constituted the majority of encounters and attendees.

For encounters with **single families** (e.g., case management or home visiting), family functioning/health/resilience was the focus of nearly 75% of the encounters.

When focusing attention on the provision **Family Functioning/Health/Resilience**, the following topics were covered most often:

- **Family Advocacy**
- **Life Skills**
- **Communication Skills**
- **Behavioral & Mental Health**
- **Self Care**
- **Health (Dental, Primary, Specialty)**
**Direct Economic Supports to NH Families**

**The Trestle Fund**
New Hampshire Charitable Foundation (NHCF), NHCT, and NH’s Family Resource Center Network established a partnership to support the growing number of families experiencing financial hardship. **The Trestle Fund**

**Concrete Supports for NH Families pilot project**, launched statewide in January 2022, provided low-barrier financial assistance to NH families in need. The total budget for the pilot project was $650,000.

**77%** of Trestle Fund dollars supported families with housing, transportation, and childcare in 2022.

1 in 3 families in the U.S struggles to afford diapers for their babies, according to a frequently cited study on diaper needs in the U.S. published in 2013 in Pediatrics.6

**41%** of NH families needed assistance paying for diapers and formula in 2022, according to data compiled in the Family Support Data System.

**Baby2Baby** is a Los Angeles-based non-profit that provides essential items to low-income children and families across the U.S. In 2022, NHCT partnered with Baby2Baby to distribute bulk shipments of diapers, wipes, and formula through the NH FRC network. These essential supplies were then distributed to low income NH families at no cost. During the year, NHCT coordinated 46 distributions to FRCs with a total of 53,625 diapers, 1,907 packs of wipes, 85 cases of formula and 450+ toy sets for infants and toddlers.

**Baby2Baby** In 2022, FRCs distributed:

- **53,625** Diapers
- **1,907** Packs of Wipes
- **85** Cases of Formula

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NH Family Outcomes

Families report improvements after receiving supports and services from FRCs

Of the families in service in 2022 that completed a Protective Factors retrospective survey, more than half of caregivers reported improvement in the following areas, with the highest rates of improvement featured to the right:

- Family functioning/resiliency
- Social supports
- Nurturing and attachment
- Caregiver/practitioner relationships

Impact limitations

While the caregiver retrospective survey results suggest strong improvements in family functioning and social supports for families that receive services and supports from FRCs, it is currently not possible to make direct correlations between FRC activity and NH child welfare system reports of child maltreatment. However, the FSDS shed important light on the concrete needs of children and families across the state.

Opportunity from prevention

Recent studies confirm that providing economic support to families can:

- Produce positive outcomes for children’s health, safety, educational attainment and workforce preparedness;
- Build the resilience of children and families by helping them to better weather challenges; and
- Significantly reduce involvement with child welfare, reduce the number of children entering foster care, and offer significant savings to federal, state, and county budgets;

Providing economic supports to families is a primary prevention strategy to reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect.

Urgency By Need

**Housing**
- Utilities
- Housing Assistance
- Fuel Assistance
- Housing Stability
- Temporary Housing
- Home Repairs
- Furniture
- Safety Equipment

**Family Life**
- Parenting Support
- Childcare
- Child Development
- Family Communication
- Social Connections
- Kinship Support
- Support with DCYF

**Medical Expenses**
- Dental Care
- Mental Health
- Health insurance
- Disabilities
- Primary Care
- Health Care Specialists
- Substance Use Treatment
- Pregnancy

**Income and Documentation Assistance**
- Benefits Application
- General ID
- Savings/Debt Mgmt
- Tax Prep
- Immigration
Urgency By Need Continued

Other Concrete Supports
- Healthy Food
- Clothing
- Diapers or Formula
- School Supplies

Employment and Education
- Job Search
- K-12 Education
- Early Education
- Job Training
- Skill Development
- High School Equivalency
- Tuition Assistance

Legal Expenses
- Family Law
- Evictions
- Public Benefits
- Civil Rights
- Restraining Order

Transportation
- Public Transit
- Personal Vehicle
- Driver License
What could NH save, in terms of money and misery, by working with families as far upstream as possible?

Reaching families early, providing them a stable foundation upon which to build stability and strength, providing safe and nurturing environments where families and children can thrive?

Further, how can we best disentangle “neglect” from “poverty”?

According to the ACF Child Maltreatment Report for 2020, NH had 1,182 children with substantiated cases of child abuse or neglect. Of these, 1,010 were substantiated for neglect (85%).

The lifetime cost of a single victim of child abuse and neglect is estimated to be $830,928 according to “The economic burden of child maltreatment in the United States, 2015”, a research article in the International Journal of Child Abuse and Neglect and vetted by the CDC.

Using these statistics, the lifetime economic burden associated with just one year (2020) of substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect in NH is $982 million.
Notes