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What NH Community Advocates Had to Say about the NH Kids Count 2015 Data Book

Kathleen Abate

Granite State Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, Youth Move

Who does your organization work with?

The GSFFCMH and Youth MOVE work with children and youth with emotional and behavioral challenges and their families. Typically we consider this to be birth through a "transition age" of 26. These children, youth, and their families are from all races, creeds, and socio-economic groupings and the services and supports they receive are variable at best, silo'ed, fragmented, and difficult to access at worst.

Families and schools at times have had to plead to be found neglectful or in some cases have their children arrested in order to attempt to have their needs met. Frequently, this adds another expensive and intrusive public system to the mix without meeting the original need and in fact cutting children and youth off from the things we know enhance resiliency.

What does this data tell you about this population?

There is not a single data point that does not impact or reflect the families and youth we support. It is good to know that we are improving in some areas, such as holding ground on reduced dropout rates and using voluntary pathways to CHINS as opposed to forcing arrest for our most challenged youth. At the same time, it is disheartening to know how fragile some of our public lifelines are and how many children and youth are vulnerable.

In what way is this data helpful to you?

I use the Kids' Count data in community conversations both at a personal and professional level to inform people and to try to decrease widely held stigmatizing myths about folks who receive certain kinds of support. I also refer frequently to Kids'

Count data when grant writing or thinking about strategic direction/strategic partnerships with my board of directors.

Amadou Hamady

International Institute of New Hampshire

Who does your organization work with?

The International Institute in Manchester, New Hampshire resettles refugees into the Manchester and Nashua areas and provides the necessary services to help these individuals become self-sufficient.

What does this data tell you about this population?

This outstanding compilation of data on 2015 NH Kids Count book is very timely. All of us in the social service field, schools, private and public services need to be aware of these findings and adapt our service delivery to meet the need of all children in NH. Moreover, the data provides information and indicators about children at risk and the possible services in which they can be involved with in the state of New Hampshire. The majority of the research information pointed to Nashua and Manchester having high populations and statistics, likely due to the growing diversity within the two cities.

In what way is this data helpful to you?

This report provides extremely valuable data and interesting facts about the cities we work in. For example, under the child care capacity findings- we see that the number of family based child care programs is significantly less than the number of child care centers. Knowing this, it could be a great resource to look into so that more alternatives and new opportunities are put in place to address the gap. Another example, under the limited English proficiency data finding- students with limited English proficiency (anything less than very good) have a 68% graduation rate from a 4 year high school; significantly lower than the English speaking population which has a 86% graduation rate. We can use this information to potentially focus our School Programs in addressing this lower percentage and working towards these students graduating at a higher rate.

Kathleen Murphy

Superintendent of Schools, Hampton

Who do you work with?

As Superintendent of Schools and working on behalf of the children and families in Hampton, it is crucial that I have at my fingertips up-to-date and pertinent data to use and share with all of the stakeholders in the school district as well as in the community at large.

What does this data tell you about this population?

This report helps to identify the gaps that occur in the district with respect to those who live comfortably and those who live at poverty levels and may be homeless. Even though there are positive signs of change identified in the report, the indicators in some cases bring new issues to light. There is still much work to be done in the area of early learning in order to level the playing field for three and four year olds as they enter full day kindergarten. In addition, as a community, county and state we must continue to assist those who face behavioral challenges by making it easier to access services. Each year the governing body of the district, the school board, sets goals for the school district, the information from the Kid's Count Report assists the members of the board in defining and targeting the areas that need improvement. As the district changes in population and ethnic shifts occur the data will provide the leaders with time to develop strategic plans for the future needs in the district.

In what way is this data helpful to you?

Lastly, the report helped to validate much of the work currently underway, such as the importance of evidence based programs to address bullying and cyberbullying as well as the impact of substance abuse on children's lives.

Michelle Wangerin

Youth Law Project Director

New Hampshire Legal Assistance

Who do you work with?

New Hampshire Legal Assistance's Youth Law Project provides civil legal advocacy to children at risk of juvenile justice involvement and school exclusion.

What does this data tell you about this population?

The data presented as a whole reflects what we see affecting New Hampshire's youth. Unfortunately, geography matters. For instance, in areas lacking effective community based services for children, there is an increase in the out of home placement rate. Similarly, some school districts do a better job assisting children with disabilities to graduate high school than others. In our experience, the school districts with lower graduation rates for students with disabilities are the same school districts that often use high rates of exclusionary discipline. This suggests that there may be a correlation between the two data points that is worth further investigation. Overall the data reflects our experience that keeping children in school with access to community based services leads to better outcomes for New Hampshire youth.