



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Endowment for Health Announces Major, New Funding Initiative**

The Endowment for Health, New Hampshire's largest health foundation, has announced a new initiative directed at improving the mental health of New Hampshire's children and their families.

"Our mental healthcare system for children is seriously challenged," says Kim Firth, program director for the Endowment for Health, who oversees the new emphasis on children's mental health. "New Hampshire is facing a shortage of child psychiatrists and mental health centers are underfunded and unable to increase access to families who need their services."

"In New Hampshire, one in five children has a diagnosable mental health disorder," says Stephen Norton, executive director of the New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies (NHCPPS). According to research that NHCPPS conducted, New Hampshire has the lowest per capita rate of child psychiatrists in Northern New England. "We have less than one child psychiatrist for every 10,000 children," says Norton.

Failure to treat mental health issues can have lifelong effects on children, according to Dr. Joffree Barnett, associate professor of child psychiatry at Dartmouth Medical School. "These children struggle to establish and maintain normal relationships. They often suffer from hindered academic performance, inhibited future employment opportunities, and overall economic vulnerability."

Why is the Endowment for Health tackling children's mental health now? "We knew from our annual listening sessions and our grantmaking experience over the last six years that children with mental health issues are a vulnerable and underserved population," says Firth.

To understand the issues facing families dealing with mental illness, the Endowment looked to the National Alliance on Mental Illness in New Hampshire, which conducted a series of focus groups and surveys. "The most important thing we learned is that parents and caregivers want to be involved in improving mental health care services," says Michael Cohen, executive director of NAMI. The research also found that mental health services and supports are not available in all New Hampshire communities, insurance coverage (public or private) is a major barrier for families, and middle class families—those who

| don't qualify for a sliding scale or public benefits assistance—struggle with the financial impact of co-pays for medication and office visits.

| To address the issues surrounding children's mental health, the Endowment plans to work in collaboration with NH's nonprofit organizations and the children's mental health care delivery system in a 5-year, multi-million dollar effort, which will focus on three areas: integrating mental health care into systems that serve children (such as primary care settings and schools); promoting high-quality, research-based interventions that incorporate science into practice; and advocating for a stronger system to deliver children's mental health services.

"The Endowment has an obligation to invest our resources in improving the existing delivery system for mental health," says Firth. "We cannot miss the opportunity to build on the leadership emerging from the field on this important issue."

*The Endowment for Health was established in 1999 and is the state's largest health foundation. Since 2001, the Endowment has awarded 498 grants to 192 organizations, totaling more than \$22 million to support a wide range of health-related programs and projects in New Hampshire. For more information, visit [www.endowmentforhealth.org](http://www.endowmentforhealth.org)*