

NH Department of Health and Human Services State Opioid Response (SOR) Grant

The needs are great regarding the opioid issue in NH. Issues related to prevention, treatment, support services, and rehabilitation are complex, and the impact of substance misuse on families is substantial and long-term. As a result, it is important not to overlook the needs of the children living with parents suffering from addiction as comprehensive plans are designed. There is an increasing number of children in NH households who are removed from parental care and placed in the sole care of relatives or grandparents. UNH Cooperative Extension (UNHCE) is particularly interested in the issue of grandparents raising grandchildren. In NH, as of 2017:

- “8,000 (3%) children live with a relative with no parent present.”
- “17,593 (6.5%) children under 18 live in homes where householders are grandparents or other relatives.”
- “6,716 grandparents are householders responsible for their grandchildren who live with them.” *

UNHCE has a history of working with relatives/grandparents as parents. For a number of years we provided leadership in NH through our work with the *Brookdale Foundation Group* and the *Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP)*. Our organization has the statewide infrastructure *Brookdale* considers ideal for this type of program leadership/support, and they have expressed interest in our taking on this role again. Given the current needs in NH, we feel it is important to increase our efforts in this area. We are aware there is already some attention being given to this issue through *Family Support NH* and individual *NH Family Resource Centers*. Our goal would be to compliment and support this work. A widely used program in NH that UNHCE has promoted in the past is the *Parenting a Second Time Around (PASTA)* curriculum developed by Cornell Cooperative Extension. We also recently held two forums in NH where Cooperative Extension partners from West Virginia shared their *Healthy Grandfamilies* program.

At the federal level, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has been charged to work on responses to the opioid crisis in rural areas. Within the USDA, this responsibility has largely fallen to the Centers for Rural Development and Cooperative Extension. On July 9, 2018, President Trump signed into law The Supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Act, which will establish a Federal Advisory Council. Hopefully, this will result in additional resources being made available to relative caregivers. In June 2017, Governor Chris Sununu signed House Bill 629 into law. This bill gives legal preference to grandparents in guardianship cases where substance abuse is involved, and it also established a commission to study grandfamily issues.

It is apparent that relatives and grandparents raising children is a critical issue, both at the federal and state level. Children being raised in families where addiction is present face uncertain futures, often experiencing adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). UNH Cooperative Extension could potentially assist with work related to grandfamilies by:

- Reviewing available research/evidence based curricula that have demonstrated impact.
- Networking with current providers of relatives/grandparents as parents programs in NH and serving in a statewide training and coordination role.
- Developing and implementing a system of support following the completion of a grandfamily program series, such as connection with a social worker and the establishment of support groups.

Should DHHS determine that grandfamilies issues be included in the State Opioid Response Grant, UNH Cooperative Extension would be a willing partner.

*Grandfamilies. (May 2017). GrandFacts: New Hampshire State Fact Sheet for Grandfamilies [Fact sheet]. Retrieved from <http://www.grandfamilies.org/Portals/0/State%20Fact%20Sheets/Grandfamilies-Fact-Sheet-New-Hampshire.pdf>

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