



**BELKNAP COUNTY  
CITIZENS COUNCIL ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

*"Helping Belknap County be a safe community where  
children and families can live with dignity and respect."*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Belknap County Citizens Council Seeking Applicants**

LACONIA: Residents of Belknap County interested in building a positive environment for children and families in Belknap County are urged to apply for membership with the Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families. The Citizens Council is a county department focusing on comprehensive planning, advocacy, networking, and resource development that will support family life in Belknap County.

"Four positions on our 21-member Council will be available in January 2003," says Council Executive Director, Alan Robichaud, explaining that applicants from Barnstead and Gilmanton, Alton, Meredith, New Hampton, Sanbornton and Tilton will be given priority in order to achieve balanced representation from throughout the County.

Application deadline for terms that begin in January 2003 is October 31. All applicants will be interviewed and appointed by the County Commissioners before the Council's Annual Meeting in January 2003.

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The Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families is an extension of the former Belknap Juvenile Justice Initiative, an ad-hoc task force charged with recommending systemic change to the county’s system of juvenile justice. Following two years of study, this Task Force suggested that the county adopt a broad view approach to juveniles by encompassing all that influences their behaviors under the umbrella of “Community Justice”.

“Community Justice,” according to Robichaud, “is a philosophy that is quickly gaining credibility around the country.” He says it is “a comprehensive citizen-based approach to community problems affecting children and families”.

Community Justice has three major themes that operate together in an integrated manner. All equally important, each of the three components relies on active participation of community citizens. The first component uses the principles of Restorative Justice to guide how criminal acts are handled by the justice system and the community. The second component stresses the value and priority of prevention strategies, and the third utilizes best practices of Community Development to blend together the efforts of professionals and citizens in a shared responsibility for social order.

Says Robichaud, “The Citizens Council is responsible for gathering community input and preparing a countywide comprehensive plan with prioritized action steps so that Belknap County will be a place where children and families can live safely with dignity and respect.

“We are looking for those committed individuals who represent the economic, cultural, educational, social, and geographical diversity of the Lakes Region and who are willing to work together to improve life for children and families in this county.”

For more information and for application materials, visit [www.bccj.org](http://www.bccj.org) or call 528-3185.