

## Citizens Council Receives Juvenile Justice Grant

LACONIA: The Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families has received a grant of \$47,710. from the NH Division for Juvenile Justice Services ( DJJS) to strengthen data collection among the providers of services to juvenile delinquents in Belknap County. These Title V federal funds from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention are channeled through the NH State Advisory Group - NH DJJS and will be used in Belknap County to track costs and outcomes from services and programs provided to youth involved with the court system.

Belknap County does not operate a single system of juvenile justice. “Instead,” says Alan Robichaud, Executive Director of the Citizens Council, “youth who commit offenses are managed by a variety of agencies and organizations. Most of these programs are at least partially supported by taxpayers. The challenge has always been to keep everyone - including the taxpayers – informed as to the effectiveness of these services.”

Robichaud explains that the role of the Citizens Council is not to provide direct services to clients



but rather to facilitate communication and coordinate efforts among a variety of networks of professionals that do offer services to children, youth, and families.

“One of these networks,” he says “is the Juvenile Justice Advisory Council (JJAC), created in 2001 to promote communication and

School representatives from around Belknap County are active members of the Juvenile Justice Advisory Council (JJAC). Two faculty members at Laconia Memorial Middle School (L-R, foreground) Rebecca Noe and Carol Ginnetti talk together after a recent JJAC meeting. Shown in background are (L-R) Jena Vincent of NH Child and Family Services and Lisa Marie Sposta of Youth Services Bureau.

collaboration among juvenile justice professional providers, lay citizens, and volunteers.” JJAC members have been working together for more than five years to address the challenges and barriers that are part of a decentralized system, explains Robichaud. Under the leadership of retired school superintendent, Andre Paquette, JJAC produced the first Report Card on the Belknap County Juvenile Justice system in June of 2006. Benchmarks and indicators around the principles of Restorative Justice including victim restitution, community service, and offender competencies were included in this report.

“But, we still need to streamline and automate the collection of data so that we can accurately track progress from year to year,” adds Robichaud. He explains that these grant funds from NH DJJS will be used to create a shared collection process and offer technical assistance and training to providers.

The Citizens Council has contracted a team of consultants from the Plymouth area: Stephanie J Halter, ABD; Danielle McDonald, PhD, and Scott Meyer, PhD. All three are professors at Plymouth State University and “their combined skills in data management, juvenile delinquency and victimology, staff training and development, and program evaluation design will help us move to a more unified collection and reporting system.”

JJAC and the Citizens Council expect to produce a second Report Card in mid 2007 that will “not only make comparisons from last year, but may also add some new indicators so that taxpayers can better understand how juvenile crime is managed in Belknap County.”

The Citizens Council, with a mission of promoting the principles of Community Justice so that children and families can live safely in Belknap County with dignity and respect, meets monthly. Its affiliate, JJAC, also meets monthly. All meetings are open to the public. One may contact the Council office at 528-3185 or visit their website, [www.bccj.org](http://www.bccj.org), for further information.