

Belknap County Households Mailed Juvenile Justice Report

December 5, 2007

LACONIA: The second annual report to the community on the juvenile justice system in Belknap County was recently mailed to every household in Belknap County. Prepared and distributed by the Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families, this eight-page publication describes progress towards specific restorative justice indicators and expands on the first Report Card issued in June 2006.

In developing this report, the Citizens Council collaborated with the four separate programs that manage juveniles: the Youth Assistance Program, Youth Services Bureau, the Belknap County Restorative Justice Program, and Juvenile Probation and Parole, Laconia District Office, NH

Division of Health and Human Services. Each of the four programs completed a uniform Case Closing Form for each juvenile exiting services.

Data from the 2006 Case

Closing forms were compiled and interpreted by a Citizens Council committee with assistance from the Halter, McDonald and Meyer Consulting Group from Plymouth who were hired for this task through grant funding from the State Advisory Council of the NH Division of Juvenile



Jeannie and Will Malone, recent retirees who have re-located from Pennsylvania to Laconia, review the recently distributed Belknap County Juvenile Justice Report. Jeannie, a former school guidance counselor, and Will who was a business owner, have worked professionally and as volunteers with youth. The Malones are now exploring potential volunteer opportunities for their talents in the Lakes Region. The report they are reading describes several youth and family oriented organizations that welcome volunteers.

Justice Services. Over the past year, this consulting group has also converted the Case Closing Form to a computer database and trained staff of the four providers in its use.

Belknap County is the only county in New Hampshire and one of only a handful of places across the country that captures consistent performance measures and then shares them with the community. The Citizens Council in partnership with the numerous members of the Belknap County Juvenile Justice Advisory Council uses this data to shape juvenile justice programs in the county and to support requests for grant and taxpayer funds.

In addition to specific data, this report also has real life stories of youth served by the juvenile justice system, background information on the Citizens Council, short explanations of Community and Restorative Justice principles, and a description of the current sanction levels in the Belknap County system of juvenile justice system.

Says Alan Robichaud, Executive Director of the Citizens Council, “The report shows that citizen participation in the rehabilitation of juvenile offenders right here in the county helps to avoid the more restrictive and costly placement services such as the Sununu Youth Services Center (SYSC) in Manchester.” Robichaud explains that the cost of housing a juvenile at SYSC is now \$370. per day, “significantly higher than using the lower sanction levels that keep juveniles here at home.

“Many communities that are now assessing their financial support for these local court diversion programs will want to carefully read this report so they can better understand how their taxpayer dollars are being used,” adds Robichaud. “If we can’t decide how to fund these early diversion and prevention programs, we will have no choice in ultimately paying these huge out-of-county placement costs.”

The Citizens Council will be offering information forums for taxpayers in early 2008 that will explain more about the juvenile justice system in Belknap County. This current juvenile justice report card and other reports are now available on the Council’s website, www.bccj.org. Additional copies are also available at the Council office at One Mill Plaza in downtown Laconia, or by calling 528-3185.