



**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 Receives Juvenile Accountability Grant

LACONIA: Dan Collis, Belknap County Sheriff, announces the receipt of grant funds from the New Hampshire Division of Juvenile Justice Services to launch a J.O.L.T. (Juvenile Offender Locator Team) Program in Belknap County. Designed to improve the safety of communities by promoting accountability of its juvenile offenders, the J.O.L.T. Program tracks the behavior of selected offenders through unannounced visits to their homes by teams of law enforcement and juvenile probation and parole officers.

According to Sheriff Collis, who administers J.O.L.T. funds awarded to the Sheriff's Department, Belknap County now has several specially trained J.O.L.T. teams who are monitoring about 30 juveniles each month through random stops in their homes and neighborhoods. Each J.O.L.T. team - consisting of one Juvenile Probation and Parole officer (JPPO) from the Laconia DHHS District Office and one law enforcement officer from either the Belknap County Sheriff's Department or the Laconia Police Department - checks the compliance of selected juveniles with their court-ordered curfews, home detention, or conditional release. J.O.L.T. visits also usually include conversations with parents and guardians and opportunities to coach them in their supervisory role in the home. Violations of court orders by these juveniles are immediately reported to the Laconia District Court by the J.O.L.T. Teams.

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While the Belknap County J.O.L.T. Program is one of 36 such J.O.L.T. programs in NH, “it is unique, as this is the first program to cover an entire county,” says Jay Apicelli, JPPO Supervisor in the Laconia District Office and the primary contact for program design and implementation. Modeled after a similar initiative in Boston called “Operation Night Light”, this joint venture of county and municipal police with probation/parole personnel “maximizes the skills and job mandates of both partners and allows for a more efficient monitoring of each juvenile”.

“Our J.O.L.T. is working wonderfully,” continues Apicelli. “Everyone benefits!”

Apicelli explains that the “juvenile is held accountable; parents feel supported; and the taxpayer sees that a credible, community-based monitoring process is in place, one that hopes to avoid expensive residential placements.”

The Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families, a County department created in January 2002, played a central role in developing the proposal for this project. They continue to provide leadership for a network of juvenile justice professionals who are writing a countywide crime enforcement plan for juveniles.

The Citizens Council has been charged by the County Commissioners to expand the reach of programs and services for children and families. “One way to do that,” says Alan Robichaud, Executive Director, “is to share resources and capture the collective wisdom of the professionals and volunteers who work with children and families on a daily basis.”

The Belknap County J.O.L.T. Program is part of a growing continuum of options for habilitating Belknap County youth who are out of step with societal norms. Also included in this continuum are mentoring, court diversion, Belknap County Restorative Justice, Juvenile Drug Court, and residential placements.