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Carsey, Children's Alliance: NH Schools Expel Less, Suspend More Than National Average
DURHAM, N.H. – A new analysis of student discipline in New Hampshire schools in the 2007-2008 school year shows that out-of-school suspension rates are higher and statewide expulsion rates are lower than the national average. The report, by the Carsey Institute at the University of New Hampshire, also finds that schools reporting the highest rates of suspensions and expulsions are the smallest in the state and have the highest percentage of students in poverty.

Commissioned by the Children’s Alliance of New Hampshire, this report was released yesterday (Oct. 26, 2009) at the 12th annual Children’s Summit in Concord. It is the first in a collaborative series of briefs between the Children’s Alliance and the Carsey Institute focusing on adolescent issues in New Hampshire.

“The school data are compelling as concerns emerge about the overuse of suspension and expulsion in our public schools in the wake of post-Columbine legislation,” says report author Barbara Wauchope, research associate professor and director of evaluation at the Carsey Institute.

“While tough zero-tolerance policies at schools protect people and property, they are increasingly criticized for leading to student misbehavior, declines in academic performance, and rising drop-out rates,” says Ellen Fineberg, president of the Children’s Alliance. “Report findings and recommendations like these will help to inform the Children’s Alliance’s advocacy efforts.”

Analyzing the causes for these suspensions and expulsions, the report finds a high percentage of schools — almost 60 percent — categorize the reason for these incidents as “other” rather than under one of the specific serious offenses listed, such as drug or weapons use. “This high percentage of incidents reported without explanation raises questions about why students are being removed from their normal classroom environment to spend days, or possibly weeks, being denied their right to an education,” says Wauchope.

Additional key findings in the report:

- In the 2007-2008 school year, a total of 486 New Hampshire public schools reported 16,743 out-of-school suspensions, 11,531 in-school suspensions, and 84 total
expulsions.

- Schools from all grade levels report in-school and out-of-school suspension and expulsions.
- High schools account for more than half of all suspensions and 83 percent of expulsions.
- Both high schools and elementary schools report more out-of-school than in-school suspensions. Almost one-half of the suspensions reported in elementary schools are out-of-school.

The report, “Student Discipline in New Hampshire Schools,” is available to download at http://www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu/publications/PB-Wauchope-studentdiscipline.pdf. It was funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Kid’s Count program.

The Carsey Institute conducts policy and applied research on vulnerable families and on sustainable community development, giving policy makers and practitioners the timely, independent resources they need to effect change in their communities. Learn more at http://carseyinstitute.unh.edu/.

The Children’s Alliance of New Hampshire promotes policies and practices that enable all children to lead healthy and productive lives and to reach their full potential. Learn more at http://www.childrennh.org.

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