

Governor's Kids Cabinet and UNH Create New Adolescence Resource Center to Focus on Improving Well Being of State's Youth

By [Sharon Keeler](#)
UNH News Bureau
603-862-1566

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CONCORD, N.H. -- Members of Gov. Jeanne Shaheen's Kids Cabinet and representatives of the University of New Hampshire announced at a press briefing in Concord today the creation of a new Adolescence Resource Center that will focus on improving the health and well being of the state's youth.

The center will be funded by a \$194,459 SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) grant, made possible by the work of the Kids Cabinet and awarded to the university for planning and implementation. It is affiliated with the New Hampshire Institute for Health Policy and Practice, which develops and disseminates information to improve the health and well being of the citizens of New Hampshire.

"Providing our young people with the best possible start is critical to the future of our state. The Adolescence Resource Center will continue the important work of the Kids Cabinet in bringing together parents, local communities, nonprofit organizations and state government to develop innovative solutions to the challenges facing our young people," Gov. Shaheen said.

Kristine Baber, UNH associate professor of family studies, will direct the center and is also director/principal investigator of the project grant.

Executive committee members include Nicholas

Donahue, commissioner, N.H. Department of Education; Kay Jankowski, instructor in psychiatry, New Hampshire-Dartmouth Psychiatric Research Center; Ned Helms, director of the New Hampshire Institute for Health Policy and Practice, headquartered at UNH; James McCarthy, dean of UNH's School of Health and Human Services; and Kathy Sgambati, acting commissioner, N.H. Department of Health and Human Services.

"As a public land grant university, we are committed to using the resources of the university to improve the well being of New Hampshire's residents," UNH President Ann Weaver Hart said. "What better way to fulfill our mission than to enhance the intellectual and practical resources available to those interested in helping adolescents."

In 1998 Gov. Shaheen formed the Kids Cabinet, bringing together officials from the highest levels of state government to focus on improving the lives of New Hampshire's children. One of the cabinet's mandates is to help adolescents live healthier lives.

UNH's Adolescence Resource Center is being created to extend this mission beyond government and into academia, the public and private sectors.

"Adolescence is a wonderful -- and challenging -- time for young people, their families and their communities," said James McCarthy, dean of UNH's School of Health and Human Services, where the center will be physically located. "Anyone who has adolescents or who has worked with them knows that successfully managing the transition from child to adult requires all the resources communities, families and young people have. The Adolescence Resource Center will contribute to New Hampshire's efforts to improve adolescent health and well being by providing access to better information on adolescence, and enhanced training to those people in agencies that work with youth."

In addition, Baber said the center will work to link the people and agencies that work with youth to maximize collaboration and the most efficient use of resources. The center also will provide research-based information about adolescents and recommend "best practices for supporting their healthy development and successful

transition to adulthood.

"We'll identify and address the particular social, educational, political, and economic barriers that exist," Baber said, "and will support efforts that engage youth in health- and competence-enhancing behaviors, as well as those that work to reduce behaviors that are risky and health compromising. We hope to include youth as partners in this work and involve them in the activities of the center."

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