



RAISING NEW HAMPSHIRE

Raising New Hampshire

Changing the conversation about the early years

A DISCUSSION GUIDE



Raising New Hampshire: The Early Years is a co-production of NH Public Television and the Endowment for Health. This 30-minute film examines the importance of health, early learning, and family support — all necessary components of a comprehensive early childhood system. Inspired by the national documentary series, *The Raising of America*, the New Hampshire program provides the local angle on systemic gaps and innovative solutions that could, if we work together and take action, create a better future for all New Hampshire children.

The film is available free of charge from New Hampshire Public Television website: www.nhptv.org/raisingnh

**THE RAISING
OF AMERICA**
EARLY CHILDHOOD AND THE FUTURE OF OUR NATION

The Raising of America, a five-part documentary series by California Newsreel, reframes the way we look at early childhood health and development. The series explores a range of questions: Why are so many children in America faring so poorly? What are the consequences for the nation's future? How might we, as a nation, do better? The series investigates these questions through different lenses: What does science tell us about the enduring importance of early life experiences on the brain and body? What is it like to be a parent today? And what policies and structures help or hinder the raising of healthy, happy and compassionate children?

The complete series is available for purchase on the national website: <http://www.raisingofamerica.org/>. The website also contains trailers for each episode, discussion guides, resources, and more.



Raising New Hampshire

Changing the conversation about the early years

As New Hampshire strives to grow its economy and strengthen its competitive viability, our policies must support the next generation of leaders. Who are they? They are our youngest children. We now know that raising this next generation of talent depends on creating a supportive system for them now — while they are still babies and toddlers. Why? A wide body of research proves that early experiences build the architecture of the maturing brain, establishing a sturdy or fragile base for all learning, health and behavior.

So, how do we ensure that every child gets a strong start? The key to forming strong brain architecture is the “serve and return” relationships young children have with supportive adults in their lives. When children reach out for connections and communications with adults — and adults reciprocate — this back-and-forth process literally wires the brain with the connections needed for healthy development.

Public policy has not kept pace with the science of early brain development and the shifting societal demands

on families with young children. Nearly 70 percent of families with children under age six have both parents in the workforce¹. There is a misalignment between our policies, programs and systems and what we know about how children develop. Despite compelling research from leading national economists documenting the significant return on investment that flows from high quality early childhood programming, New Hampshire has made little progress in building the kind of system that will ensure that all of the state’s children and their families are healthy, learning, and thriving.

Raising New Hampshire highlights some of the challenges and strengths of New Hampshire’s current systems of care and support that affect a child’s earliest years; and examines proven approaches to health, education, and family support that will help future generations realize their full potential. We hope that the film brings you more fully into the unfolding statewide discussion about the importance of a child’s earliest years, and equips you with new tools to take action.

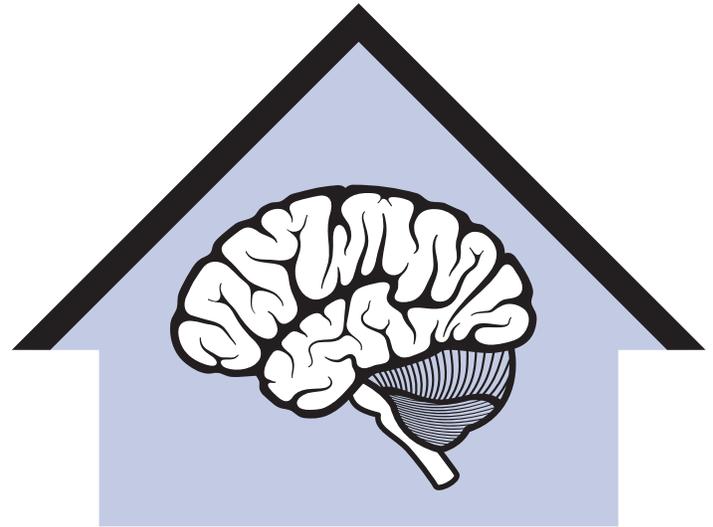


Did You Know?

The Science of Early Childhood Development

Brains are built from the bottom up, with simple circuits and skills providing the foundation for more advanced circuits and skills that develop later. In the first few years of life, 700 to 1,000 new neural connections form every second. The connections that form early provide either a strong or weak foundation for the connections that form later. Just as a weak foundation compromises the quality and strength of a house, adverse experiences — or toxic stress — early in life can impair brain architecture, with negative effects lasting into adulthood.

Creating conditions that promote healthy brain architecture and reduce toxic stress during the early years is likely to be more effective and less costly than trying to fix problems later in life.² Public policies that support the development of a comprehensive early childhood system would ensure that every child is able to reach his/her full potential.



Like a house, the brain is built from the bottom up.

New Hampshire's Comprehensive Plan for Early Childhood

A plan that embraces the interrelationships between basic needs

Economic and parenting supports to ensure children have nurturing and stable relationships with caring adults.

Family Support

Early Learning

Early care and education opportunities in nurturing environments where children can learn what they need to succeed in school and life.

Health (Physical, Mental, and Nutritional)

Comprehensive health services that meet vision, hearing, nutrition, behavioral, and medical needs.

Source: "Providing the Leadership to Promote a Comprehensive, Coordinated, and Sustainable Early Childhood System, Spark NH, 2012.

The needs of young children are highly interrelated and yet services, programs, and systems that seek to address these needs are largely fragmented, uncoordinated, and under-funded. With a vision that all children in New Hampshire and their families are healthy, learning and thriving, the Governor's Early Childhood Council, Spark NH, released a *Comprehensive Plan for Early Childhood* in 2013.

The plan brings together all statewide efforts related to the critical period of child development across health, early learning and family support. While progress has been made, NH's early childhood system remains fragile and fails too many children.

The *Comprehensive Plan for Early Childhood* can be accessed at: www.sparknh.com

Investment in Early Learning

Children who have high quality early learning experiences do better in school, are less likely to need special education services, are less likely to repeat a grade, and are more likely to graduate from high school.³ High quality early learning helps develop social-emotional skills and self-regulation, as well as the ability to focus and stay on task.⁴

Unfortunately, quality early learning opportunities are out of reach for many working parents. New Hampshire is one of the least affordable states in the country for center-based care, and ranks 27th in the nation for childcare quality.⁵

High staff turnover makes it difficult for children to form the stable, consistent relationships they need for healthy development.⁶ Low wages are a contributing factor to high staff turnover.⁷ The average income for a childcare provider is \$21,140.⁸

Public preschool is not available for most New Hampshire families, and we are one of 11 states that

do not invest state funds in public preschool.⁹ Also, most families in the state do not have access to full-day public kindergarten.¹⁰

Return on Investment

*\$1.00 invested
in early learning
= \$8.60 in
future savings*



Research suggests that every dollar invested in expanding early learning yields \$8.60 in savings for our communities.¹¹ About half of the return on investment originates from increased earnings for children when they grow up.

Social and Emotional Development

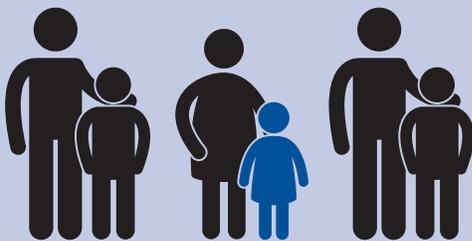
Research has shown that supporting healthy emotional development is as crucial as teaching a child to speak

or take his/her first steps. Healthy emotional relationships with primary caregivers are the foundation for a young child's growth and development.

Substance abuse, trauma, and mental health problems can interfere with a parent's ability to provide the stable, nurturing, and responsive interactions necessary for the child's healthy development.¹²

We must ensure that when problems arise, children receive early assessment, diagnosis, and treatment. Early intervention is key to preventing larger problems down the road. Unfortunately, pregnant and post-partum women in New Hampshire are not routinely screened for maternal depression, anxiety disorder, substance abuse, and family violence.

Sixty-nine percent of New Hampshire's children between 10 months and 5 years do not receive screening for developmental or behavioral concerns.¹³



*An estimated 10 percent of
New Hampshire children are in
need of behavioral health services
but only 1 in 3 receives the
treatment they need.*

Source: National Survey of Children's Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011–12.

Family Support

Research has documented the impact of a parent's education, economic stability, and overall health on a child's trajectory. All families need the skills, basic resources, and supports to promote their children's development and learning.

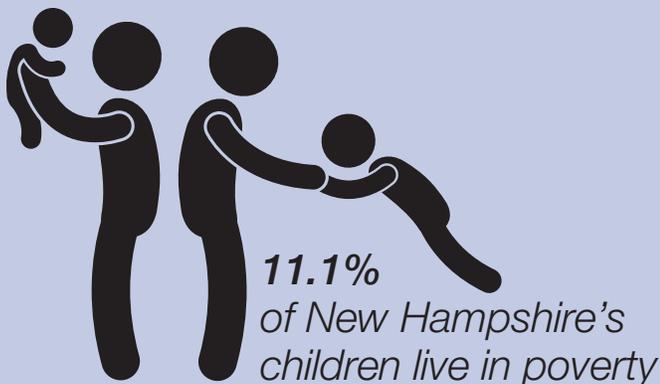
Children who are born into poverty are less likely to graduate from high school and more likely to be employed in low-income jobs — or unemployed — when they grow up and have their own families.^{14 15}

One of the best ways to ensure the well being of young children is to invest in their parent's economic well being. Parents who are able to complete their education and access job training are much more likely to secure employment and earn enough to provide for their children.¹⁶

An increase in a low-income family's annual earnings by as little as \$3,000 — \$4,000 will improve a child's school performance and earning levels when they become adults.¹⁷

In addition to a focus on improved family economic well being, voluntary home visiting programs have proven to be very effective. Home visiting programs strengthen family relationships, and reduce child maltreatment, low academic achievement, and poverty.¹⁸ Studies have also demonstrated reduced health care costs and need for remedial education, as well as increased family self-sufficiency.¹⁹

Unfortunately, due to extremely limited state investment, the vast majority of New Hampshire families do not have access to home visiting or family support programs.



2 out of 7 households
are headed by single parents



Source: NH Kids Count 2015 Data Book, 2015.

Planning a Successful Screening

A screening of *Raising New Hampshire* — or the national documentary series, *The Raising of America* — can be as simple as gathering up friends, family, and/or colleagues, watching it together, and discussing the concepts, ideas, and implications of local changes that could be made. The public awareness tools available at *The Raising of America* website are also ideal for a

broad range of community-based groups, businesses, and organizations involved in education, health, community service, and economic development.

For a more detailed outline for planning your screening event, visit: www.raisingofamerica.org/plan-screening

Planning Checklist

- What are your goals?** What would you like the audience to discuss? What specific actions would you like the audience to take?
- What kind of event?** Is this a large or small event, a conference, a workshop?
- Find local co-sponsors.** Are there other organizations in your community who are working on these issues? Are there key professions/agencies that would be important partners? Are there business owners, members of the clergy, law enforcement, or other community leaders who would like to co-host?
- Identify speakers/experts to help lead the discussion.** Find a diverse group of local experts who can speak to existing child health and well-being inequities at the local level. Think about how to build support for specific reforms and promising initiatives.
- Determine location.** Local community centers, churches, and schools often have free or low-cost space available.
- Promotion.** Visit www.raisingofamerica.org/plan-screening for poster templates, project description, postcards, and other helpful materials for screenings of the national documentary. Visit <http://www.endowmentforhealth.org/our-priorities/ensuring-the-healthy-development-of-young-children/raising-nh> for poster templates, and other materials for screenings of *Raising New Hampshire*. Also use your own email lists, social media, community message boards, etc. to get the word out effectively (at no cost).

Facilitating a Successful Discussion

Introduce yourself. Share your name, hometown, and a few of the “hats” you wear in the community. Briefly share what interested you about the issues raised and why you think it’s important. As facilitator, it is your job to initiate discussion, keep it moving, and guide it so all those who wish to speak or ask questions have a chance to do so.

Ask general questions. Start the discussion by asking people to share their strongest impressions from the film. What stood out for you? Write these impressions down on a large easel tablet or white board (or project them on a screen for a large group).

Identify shared and unique perspectives. Help participants to identify where their reactions are common and where they are unique. For example, “we all noticed the information about brain development.” “One of us noticed the effects of nutrition.”

Guide discussion toward action.

- **What concrete steps can you and your family take to improve the lives of the young children in your life?**

Prompt:

What kinds of early childhood activities help build a strong brain? (Read to your child, promote dialogue, ensure high quality childcare, etc.)

- **What steps can your local community take to improve the lives of young children?**

Prompt:

Identify New Hampshire examples of community investment and its dividends, and encourage participation — like the Seacoast Early Learning Alliance that saves local child care programs money.
<http://www.uwgs.org/sela/>

Identify a local child care program that has a reputation for quality. What aspects of the program make it the best in the area?

- **At the municipal and state level, what concrete steps would you prioritize for policymakers to improve the lives of young children?**

Prompt:

For example, more young children should have access to full day kindergarten. What can we do to encourage our school district to provide it?

- **What are some of the barriers or challenges to fulfilling the steps we have identified?**

Prompt:

For example, lack of state support for these programs was mentioned as a key barrier in the film. What policies and priorities need to change?

Identify a specific challenge or barrier in the local community — like capacity, transportation, or business-based child care — and discuss potential local solutions that would address them.



Now What?

Taking action in New Hampshire

Hosting a viewing of *Raising New Hampshire* or *The Raising of America* is a great way to engage your community and begin a conversation about change.

The level of involvement that individuals may take will vary. Below are some suggestions for actions:

I Can Spread the Word

- Keynote a regional breakfast
- Write an article or op-ed for my local newspaper
- Arrange a local screening
- Host a “lunch and learn” at my workplace

I Can Connect

- Learn more about resources in my community to support early childhood development:
 - **New Hampshire Children’s Trust**
<http://www.nhchildrenstrust.org/programs>
 - **Child Care Aware**
<http://nh.childcareaware.org/>
 - **NH Association for Infant Mental Health**
<http://www.nhaimh.org/>
 - **Watch Me Grow**
<http://watchmegrownh.org/about.php>
 - **Seacoast Early Learning Alliance**
<http://www.uwgs.org/sela/>
- Get news from our Governor-appointed early childhood advisory council, Spark NH
<http://sparknh.com/newsletters>
- Visit or join the board of an early childhood program in my community

I Can Take a Stand

- Call my elected officials and ask what they are doing to support young children
- Vote — Find and support candidates and policies that share your values.
- Take “Our Pledge to New Hampshire’s Children”
<http://sparknh.org/pledge>
- Partner with advocacy organizations to strengthen early childhood system:
 - **Every Child Matters**
<http://www.everychildmatters.org/>
 - **NH Kids Count** <http://nhkidscount.org/>
- Encourage your local chamber of commerce to adopt an early childhood policy position
- Promote early childhood policies in the *Blueprint for Action for New Hampshire’s Young Children*
<http://sparknh.com/>

To arrange a local screening of *Raising New Hampshire: The Early Years* or *The Raising of America*, go to <http://sparknh.com/Raising-of-America-Viewings>

Endnotes

- 1 American Community Survey 2013
- 2 The Science of Early Childhood Development. (2007) National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. <http://www.developingchild.net>
- 3 “A Matter of Equity: Preschool in America.” US Department of Education. April 2015.
- 4 Parker-Pope, T. (2012, August 23). Simon says don’t use flashcards. The New York Times. (via Strategies for Children. The Path to a Comprehensive Workforce Begins with High-Quality Early Education). Retrieved from http://strategiesforchildren.org/eea/6research_summaries/13_HQEE_PathToCompetitiveWorkforce.pdf
- 5 Child Care Aware of America. (2012) Parents and the High Cost of Child Care: 2012 Report. Available at http://www.naccrra.org/sites/default/files/default_site_pages/2012/cost_report_2012_final_081012_0.pdf
- 6 The Science of Early Childhood Development. (2007) National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. <http://www.developingchild.net>
- 7 Smith, K., & Baughman, R. (2007). Low Wages Prevalent in Direct Care and Child Care Workforce. Retrieved October 12, 2013, from http://www.carseyinstitute.unh.edu/publications/PB_caregivers.pdf
- 8 U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2013). May 2012 State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates New Hampshire. Available at http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nh.htm#25-0000
- 9 More information on this from New American Foundation, <http://febp.newamerica.net/background-analysis/pre-k-funding>
- 10 Full-day kindergarten attendance estimated calculated using the NH Department of Education reports: Kindergarten Enrollments in Public Schools as of October 1, 2012 and Districts with Full Day Kindergarten, 2011–2012 to estimate full day kindergarten enrollment as compared to total kindergarten enrollment.
- 11 “A Matter of Equity: Preschool in America.” US Department of Education. April 2015.
- 12 Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University (2009). Maternal Depression Can Undermine the Development of Young Children: Working Paper No. 8. <http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu>
- 13 ZERO TO THREE National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families. Early Experiences Matter: A Guide to Improved Policies for Infants and Toddlers. (2009).
- 14 Duncan, G.L. & Brooks-Gunn, J. (eds). *Consequences of growing up poor*. Russell Sage Foundation, 1995.
- 15 Ending Child Poverty Now. Children’s Defense Fund 2015 <http://www.childrensdefense.org/library/PovertyReport/EndingChildPovertyNow.html?referrer=https://www.google.com> p. 11
- 16 For more information on the impact of education on employment rates and earnings see: US Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences National Center for Education Statistics http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cba.asp
- 17 G.L. Duncan and K. Magnuson, “The Long Reach of Childhood Poverty,” *Pathways*, Winter (2011): 22-27.
- 18 Solving Social Ills Through Early Childhood Home Visiting. The Pew Charitable Trusts, January 2013.
- 19 Pew Charitable Trusts (2014). <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-andanalysis/fact-sheets/2014/02/03/home-visiting-family-support-programs>