

For Immediate Release – May 10, 2006

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Governor to Sign Legislation Supporting Children's Advocacy Centers and Victims of Child Abuse

Concord, NH – At 9:30 A.M. on Thursday, May 11, 2006 in the Governor and Council Chambers on the 2nd floor of the State House, Governor John Lynch will sign into law SB370, legislation enabling the development and continued growth of Children's Advocacy Centers and Multidisciplinary Teams throughout the state of New Hampshire as they relate to investigations into allegations of severe child abuse. Joining Governor Lynch will be one of the bill's authors Attorney General Kelly Ayotte and several members of the State Legislature including Senator David Gottesman, the bill's primary sponsor. Other legislative sponsors include Senators Joseph Foster, Lou D'Allesandro, Robert Clegg, Robert Letourneau and Martha Fuller Clark and Representatives Maureen Mooney, William Knowles and Janet Wall.

Representatives from the New Hampshire Network of Children's Advocacy Centers including directors of several Children's Advocacy Centers already operating throughout the state will be in attendance.

"This legislation is a huge boost to services for children and families across the state," said Kathryn Adler, executive director of the Child Advocacy Center of Rockingham County and the chair of the statewide Network of Children's Advocacy Centers. Adler went on to say, "Having the legislature offer their legislative "seal of approval" will equate better services for children and families and further local efforts to establish and sustain Children's Advocacy Centers throughout New Hampshire."

By utilizing a multidisciplinary joint investigative approach, Children's Advocacy Centers are community based facilities that provide hope and healing to child abuse victims and their non-offending family members. In communities with a Children's Advocacy Center, law enforcement, the Division for Children, Youth and Families, the County Attorney's Office, victim advocate services and medical and mental health professionals sign a shared services agreement in which all parties self mandate a team approach to child abuse investigations and subsequent service delivery. Based on a national model, Children's Advocacy Centers provide a safe neutral environment for the evaluation of child abuse and exploitation; coordination of services for victims and families and child abuse prevention through community education.

New Hampshire currently has four Children's Advocacy Center programs. The Child Advocacy Center of Rockingham County with offices in Portsmouth and Derry; the Hillsborough County South Child Advocacy Center in Nashua; The Greater Lakes Child Advocacy Center in Laconia and the Child Advocacy Center of Grafton and Sullivan Counties at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon. By years end, these programs will have provided services to more than to 1,500 New Hampshire children and non-offending caregivers.

A recent national cost benefit analysis of the Children's Advocacy Center model shows that on average CACs save approximately \$1,300 in services to children and families during the course of a child abuse investigation. Thus, by the end of 2006, Children's Advocacy Centers across the state will have saved close to \$200,000 in services to children and families. An additional three Children's Advocacy Centers are expected to be up and running here in New Hampshire within the year.

The United States Department of Justice endorses the Children's Advocacy Center model as a "best practice" approach for intervening in cases of severe child abuse. New Hampshire's growing Children's Advocacy Center movement will fundamentally change the state's approach to child abuse services and prevention. For more information on a Children's Advocacy Center in your community, please call 603-422-8253.

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