



Investing in the Early Years: New Hampshire Early Childhood Cost-Benefit Analysis

In recent years, a confluence of research has called attention to the importance of investments in early childhood, from home visiting programs that start during the prenatal period to high-quality preschool one or two years before kindergarten entry. A first line of research is from leading developmental theories in disparate disciplines, including psychology, neuroscience, and economics, that have highlighted the importance of the early years in promoting children's cognitive, social, emotional, behavioral, and physical development with consequences for lifelong health and well-being. A second strand of research provides extensive empirical evidence from rigorous evaluations regarding the effectiveness of early interventions, both smaller-scale model programs, as well as large scale programs implemented at the national, state, and local levels. A third component is the mounting evidence base regarding the economic returns from investments in high quality early childhood programs, with benefits that accrue to program participants as well as society as a whole.

Motivated by this same evidence base, stakeholders in the public and private sectors in New Hampshire have been focused on advancing early investments in the state, especially for the state's most vulnerable children. In order to support stakeholders in New Hampshire with their efforts to expand these investments, the Endowment for Health has contracted with the RAND Corporation to conduct a state-level economic analysis of the costs and benefits of evidence-based early childhood programs targeted to at-risk children.

In particular, the study team, in collaboration with the funders and other stakeholders, will first identify three evidence-based early childhood interventions that will be the focus of the cost-benefit analysis (CBA). The RAND team will draw on evaluation research for the selected interventions to identify the expected outcomes the intervention will affect and the expected magnitudes of the effects. Other components of the CBA will be tailored to capture the composition of the at-risk population in New Hampshire, to account for the existing level of services, and to employ estimates specific to New Hampshire of the expected cost of program implementation and the expected value of the resulting outcomes.

The project is being led by Dr. Lynn A. Karoly of the RAND Corporation. Through independent research and analysis, the non-profit non-partisan RAND Corporation, headquartered in Santa Monica, California, develops solutions to public policy challenges to help make communities throughout the world safer and more secure, healthier, and more prosperous.

The project was launched in August 2016 and will be completed in July 2017. Findings from the study will be disseminated in early 2017 through a publicly-available report, accompanied by a presentation for the state legislature and other stakeholders of interest.

This project is funded by the Endowment for Health, the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, the Neil and Louise Tillotson Fund, the New Hampshire Department of Education, and the HNH Foundation. For more information on the study, contact Dr. Lynn A. Karoly, RAND Project Leader, at karoly@rand.org or Kim Firth, Program Director, Endowment for Health, at kfirth@endowmentforhealth.org.