



Left Behind Before Kindergarten

Over half of New Hampshire's preschoolers with disabilities lack early intervention, fueling a growing educational crisis.

In New Hampshire, the promise of a bright future begins with our youngest and most vulnerable learners. However, for over **2,741 preschoolers with disabilities**, that promise of a bright tomorrow is currently out of reach. **More than 50% of these children—a staggering 1,370—are left behind each year**, unable to access the crucial early intervention services they need before kindergarten.

Across the state, **only 20% of preschool-aged children are enrolled in public programs**, leaving the vast majority without the essential services foundational for healthy development and future academic success.

Partnering with CMF Kids districts, CMF Kids Special Education Consultant Shelli Roberts of Insighted, LLC, led a study to uncover barriers and opportunities in New Hampshire's early intervention system, offering solutions to help every child thrive.

View the complete *Left Behind Before Kindergarten* report at:

cmf.org/leftbehind



75% *of Programs
Have Waitlists*

In New Hampshire, three-quarters of preschool programs operate at full capacity, and in the CMF Kids Partnership Districts, 73% of programs have waitlists. For children waiting for these critical services, each day is a missed opportunity for growth.

80% *of Preschoolers Lack
Access to Public
Programs*

Across the state, only 20% of preschool-aged children are enrolled in public preschool, with children in rural areas like Northumberland and Milan disproportionately affected by limited access.

85% *of Programs Lack
Full-Day Options*

Full-day services, essential for children who need additional support, are only available in 15% of programs statewide, with restricted options in underserved areas like Lisbon and the White Mountains Regional School District.

Strengthening the Granite State's Communities of Need

The challenges facing New Hampshire's preschool education landscape are even more pronounced in the CMF Kids Partnership Districts, where economic hardship, geographic isolation, transportation barriers, and workforce shortages create obstacles to accessing high-quality, inclusive preschool programs.

While the statewide average shows that only 5,067 of New Hampshire's three- and four-year-olds are enrolled in public preschool, the situation is even more dire in the CMF Kids Partnership Districts. The absence of district-run preschool programs in rural or underprivileged areas leaves nearly **80% of young children with disabilities unserved**, forcing their families to navigate complex external partnerships to access crucial services and support.

The early years are a critical window for development, setting the foundation for a child's cognitive, social, and emotional growth. Children with disabilities who lack access to services before kindergarten are **four times more likely to face ongoing academic and social struggles**, often needing more intensive—and costly—support in later years.

Investing in Our Youngest Learners - Before It's Too Late

New Hampshire's preschool special education system is at a tipping point, where the urgent needs of young learners far exceed available resources. The crisis in the state's preschool special education system is not just an educational challenge but a moral imperative demanding our collective action.

Across New Hampshire, only 15% of preschool programs offer full-day services—a critical need for children with disabilities who require extended learning and support and a gap that is even more pronounced in CMF Kids Partnership Districts, like Lisbon, Milan, Northumberland, and the White Mountains region.

We have the knowledge; we have the evidence. We know that early intervention transforms lives, inclusive education fosters resilience, and investing in our youngest learners yields returns far beyond the classroom. Yet knowing is not enough; we must translate this understanding into tangible, transformative change. It's time for us to act collectively.

We must act urgently to ensure our earliest learners with disabilities have the chance to reach their full potential before it's too late—because every moment we wait, opportunities for growth, learning, and a brighter future slip further out of reach.

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Partner School Districts

Berlin School District
Lisbon Regional School District
Littleton School District
Manchester School District
Milan School District
Nashua School District
Newport School District
Northumberland, Stratford
and Stark School District
White Mountain Regional School



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