

Circle of Connection

Learning

At Spaulding Academy & Family Services, we know that meaningful change happens through connection and relationships. Whether supporting a child through a difficult transition, helping a family strengthen connections, or preparing a youth for their next stage of life, lasting success is built through compassion, collaboration, and community.

That belief is reflected in two initiatives that strive to strengthen services across New Hampshire: Strength to Succeed and Better Together. Both programs share a common goal: bringing families, professionals, organizations, and communities together to create stronger opportunities for children, youth, and their families.

One of the most impactful aspects of Strength to Succeed and Better Together is the opportunity for Parent Partners to engage directly with professionals. On July 23rd, 2026, Spaulding Permanency Specialists, members of Health Services, and the Community Based Program, sat together in a circle with three Parent Partners. Through sharing their lived experiences, Parent Partners empowered, connected, and inspired Spaulding staff in meaningful ways.

The circle may have ended, but the connections formed, insights shared, and collective commitment to supporting children, youth, and families will continue to influence our work long after the conversation is over. Interested in learning more? Consider joining the Permanency Specialists as they attend the next Better Together Roundtable Discussion virtually on December 10th, 2026, from 9:00am to 12:00pm

For more information visit: https://unh.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eSgxRMJLdbZ5Zz0

Bonnie Huestis, MSW
Clinical Coordinator

Colors of Fall

Student Art

This month in the art room we have been exploring the beautiful themes of fall! We have been working on our cutting skills as well as working with different textured paper. These are some of the beautiful sunflowers our students created this month!

Robyn Allen
Art & Music Teacher



Building a Balanced Breakfast

Nutrition

Students who eat breakfast have higher school attendance, higher ability to concentrate, and solve problems and have more muscle coordination. Here is what is important to incorporate into a balanced breakfast and some ideas to offer when time is limited.

- **WHOLE GRAINS**—whole grains provide fiber, helping the body feel full longer and helping the digestive tract to work properly. Whole grains also provide B vitamins and minerals.
 - Choose 2 servings for younger students / Choose up to 3 servings for older students
 - 1 serving = 1 slice of bread, 1 pancake or waffle, ½ bagel, 1 oz cereal, 1 muffin, 1 tortilla wrap
- **DAIRY**—dairy is needed to build strong bones but also provides protein. Lactose-free milks are available but be sure plant-based milks are fortified with calcium and vitamin D.
 - Choose 1 serving
 - 1 serving = 1 cup of milk or 1 cup of yogurt
- **FRUITS**—fruits provide us with potassium, vitamin C, folate and dietary fiber. Whole fruit provides more nutrition than juice.
 - Choose 1 serving
 - 1 serving = 1 cup of raw or cooked fruit, ¼ cup dried fruit, ½ cup juice
- **PROTEIN**—protein helps us feel full longer and is fuel for our muscles. These foods also give us iron, B vitamins, zinc and magnesium.
 - Choose 1 serving
 - 1 serving = 1 egg, 1 ounce of meat, 1 tablespoon of peanut butter, ½ ounce of nuts or seeds

Some Quick Breakfast Ideas

- Peanut butter on whole wheat toast with milk and an orange
- Whole grain cereal topped with nuts, berries and low-fat milk
- Smoothie including milk, frozen banana, nut butter and spinach
- Yogurt parfait made with whole-grain granola, yogurt and berries
- Hot whole grain cereal with dried fruit, nuts, spices like cinnamon or nutmeg and milk
- Whole grain waffles topped with nut butter, banana and milk to drink
- Hard boiled eggs with whole grain English muffin, low fat milk and applesauce



Lesley Robie, RDN, CNSC
Registered Dietitian

Culinary Showcase

The Dining Services team recently traveled to Seabrook, New Hampshire, to participate in a culinary showcase hosted by US Foods, one of Spaulding's largest suppliers. Held at the US Foods facility, the event was a day filled with learning new cooking techniques, exploring food ideas, and taking part in some friendly cooking competitions.

The team came away with new skills and plenty of inspiration for future events and menu items at Spaulding. Most importantly, it was a great opportunity for team building and connecting outside of the kitchen. We're grateful to everyone at Spaulding who supported the team and helped make this experience possible!

Nicole Desharnais, MA
Board Liaison & Communication Specialist



Happenings

Clinical

Trick-or-Treating

Halloween can be an exciting time for children, but trick-or-treating can also bring a lot of sensory experiences all at once. For children on the autism spectrum, bright decorations, loud noises, crowds, unfamiliar costumes, doorbells, and changes in routine may feel overwhelming. Before heading out, consider talking with your child about what to expect and creating a plan that matches their sensory needs. Let your child choose whether they want to wear a costume and remember that a costume does not have to look traditional to be fun! Comfortable clothing, a familiar jacket, headphones, sunglasses, or other sensory supports can help your child feel more comfortable. You may also want to practice trick-or-treating at home or visit a few familiar houses before going out into a larger crowd.

Most importantly, give your child permission to experience Halloween in their own way. Take breaks when needed, watch for signs of sensory overload, and avoid making the number of houses visited or the amount of candy collected be the goal of the evening. If your child becomes overwhelmed, it is okay to pause, return home, or try again another day. Consider visiting during a quieter time, choosing a less crowded neighborhood, or creating an alternative Halloween activity at home. Your child might enjoy handing out candy, decorating the house, having a Halloween movie night, or participating in a sensory-friendly celebration just as much as traditional trick-or-treating. When we as caregivers focus on comfort, connection, flexibility, and fun, we can help make Halloween a positive and memorable experience for every child.

Liz Lowrey, M.S. CMHC
Behavioral Health Clinician



Full Circle Communication

Spaulding behaviorists don't just work with students—we work with families too! Parent training is a great opportunity for caregivers to learn more about the strategies their child is using and how those same supports can be carried over at home. Training can focus on communication, coping skills, transitions, routines, daily living skills, or behaviors that may be challenging at home.

Parent training doesn't have to feel like a "training" at all! It can be a conversation, practicing strategies together, creating helpful visuals, or problem-solving something that has been tricky at home. Families know their child best, and our goal is to work together to find strategies that are realistic, helpful, and work for the whole family.

Nicole Hilliker,
Behavior Specialist

Behavioral



Transitions

When a child visits home from residential treatment, weekends can feel exciting, but they can also be overwhelming for both children and caregivers. After spending time in a structured treatment environment, children may benefit from having some familiar routines at home while also having opportunities to relax and reconnect with family. Try creating a weekend plan that includes a healthy balance of structured time and leisure time, rather than filling every moment with activities. Let your child know the plan ahead of time, include them in choosing some activities, and build-in opportunities for breaks or quiet time. The goal is not to follow the schedule perfectly, but to provide enough structure that everyone knows what to expect.

For example, a Saturday might look like:

- 8:00 AM - Wake up and breakfast
- 9:00 AM - Leisure/free time
- 10:30 AM - Family activity
- 12:00 PM - Family lunch
- 1:00 - Quiet or independent time
- 2:30 PM - Chore or household responsibility
- 3:00 PM - Preferred leisure activity
- 5:30 PM - Family dinner
- 6:30 PM - Family game/movie time
- 8:30 PM - Wind-down routine.

Sundays can follow a similar rhythm while allowing time to prepare for returning to residential treatment.

For example:

- 8:00 AM - Breakfast
- 9:00 AM - Leisure time
- 10:30 AM - Family activity or community outing
- 12:30 PM - Family meal
- 1:30 PM - Rest/quiet time
- 3:00 PM - Chore and preparing belongings
- 4:00 PM - One-on-one caregiver/child connection time
- 5:30 PM - Family dinner
- 6:30 PM - Preferred activity
- 7:30 PM - Prepare for the week and bedtime routine.



Remember that a successful home visit does not have to be packed with outings, special events, or family activities. Simple moments such as eating a meal together, watching a favorite show, completing a chore as a team, or having a quiet conversation can be meaningful opportunities for connection. Predictability provides security, leisure provides regulation, and family time provides connection. If the weekend does not go exactly as planned, that is okay; flexibility and repair are also important parts of building healthy family routines.

Liz Lowrey, M.S. CMHC
Behavioral Health Clinician

A Week in the Life of CBP

Residential

What does a week in Spaulding's Community-Based Program (CBP) look like? Well... it involves a lot of miles, a lot of moving pieces, and even more meaningful connections. Our ISO In-Home CBP team includes 11 dedicated professionals: 4 clinicians, 5 case managers, and 2 family aides, who bring services directly to children and families in their homes and communities. Together, our team drives an average of approximately 4,500 miles every single week.

That's about 900 miles each workday and approximately 234,000 miles over the course of a year. To put that into perspective, CBP travels far enough to circle the Earth more than nine times each year AND almost enough miles to reach the moon! But those miles represent much more than time spent behind the wheel. They represent knocking on a family's front door and meeting them where they are. They represent a clinician helping a youth understand a difficult emotion, a case manager connecting a family with an important resource, or a family aide helping a parent practice new skills during time with their child. During any given week, our team may provide individual and family sessions, caregiver education and support, supported parenting time, case management, treatment planning, school and provider collaboration, community connections, crisis support, and coordination with DCYF/DJJS and other members of a family's team.

And then there is everything happening between visits: phone calls, emails, documentation, scheduling, consultations, problem-solving, advocacy, and the occasional parking-lot office session before heading to the next family! Community-based work means there isn't always a predictable roadmap. Schedules change. Needs arise. Plans shift. Our team continually adapts while keeping children and families at the center of the work.

So, while 4,500 miles a week is a pretty impressive fun fact, the most important part isn't how far we travel. It's what we're traveling for! Every mile represents another opportunity to build connection, strengthen parenting skills, support a young person, help stabilize a family, celebrate progress, navigate a challenge, or simply show up consistently for someone who needs us. In CBP, going the extra mile isn't just a saying... it's part of what we do every week.

Kelly Hopler, MS
ISO Clinical Coordinator

