

Executive Summary

Planning Together for Oregon's Children and Families



Phase I

*Mapping the Strengths, Gaps
and Barriers in Local Communities*

Presented by the state and local Commissions on Children and Families, in partnership with the Department of Human Services, Department of Education, Oregon Youth Authority, and the Criminal Justice Commission.

February 2001

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Key Benchmarks

Key Benchmarks for Oregon's children and families show that the state is making real progress in several important areas. An increasing percentage of mothers receive early prenatal care, and immunization rates are up as well. Benchmarks for youth show reductions in juvenile crime, teen pregnancy, and increased levels of student achievement. Use of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco by eighth-graders is also down. In several other areas, however, lack of progress suggests the need for additional efforts or more creative solutions. Despite Oregon's economic vitality over the last decade, the poverty rate for families has not improved. Family and child poverty has increased in many Oregon rural communities. Although children's school readiness has improved slightly, about one-third of Oregon kindergartners did not meet all developmental standards for their age.

Strengths and Assets

Many of the plans submitted by local Commissions on Children and Families reflect the strong commitment of our communities to plan strategically and use available data to come up with collaborative and creative solutions for improving outcomes for children and families. Over and over again, counties attributed their success to a new and broader focus on strengthening youth, family, and community assets, rather than categorical deficits. They also stressed the importance of creating partnerships to leverage resources; deliver services more effectively; and create more streamlined points of access. The plans also reflected an increased recognition of the importance of investing in early childhood as a strategy for improving all of our outcomes for youth and families.

Most Frequent Gaps and Barriers

In spite of their strengths, local communities also highlighted many challenges and gaps for families. The chart below summarizes the most frequent of these, across all of the core outcomes. Surprisingly, problems with public transportation proved to be the most frequent gap. This gap impacted multiple outcomes, and was cited by rural, urban, and suburban counties alike. The lack of mental health services was also highlighted, for families with young children, as well as youth in middle school and high school. The need for additional after-school activities was also significant, and ran across all age groups. Because of the persistent impact of poverty on families in many rural communities, the needs for living wage jobs and affordable housing were highlighted frequently in the plans. Although they did not appear as frequently as some of the service gaps,

many counties highlighted important system-level barriers. The primary barrier is the unevenness of service access, particularly for families in rural and remote communities.

Finally, there was more of a consensus about race/cultural gaps and barriers than any other area in the Phase I plans. These gaps and barriers were reported to impact each of the areas addressed, across most of Oregon's communities. The lack of bilingual teachers, staff, and professionals was highlighted most frequently, as was the lack of interpreters and translators. Culturally competent services and culturally appropriate materials are also limited in most communities.



County Highlights

"Our direction is clear — our Lane County community, in partnership with the state, must lead and that leadership will require character and courage. It will demand that we be inventive, flexible and willing to team with multiple sectors in the state and local communities. It is one thing to feel the need for change, it is another thing to create and manage change. That is our charge and our challenge — to develop actions and strategies that will create a future where we give as much priority to promoting children's potential as we do to ameliorating problems."

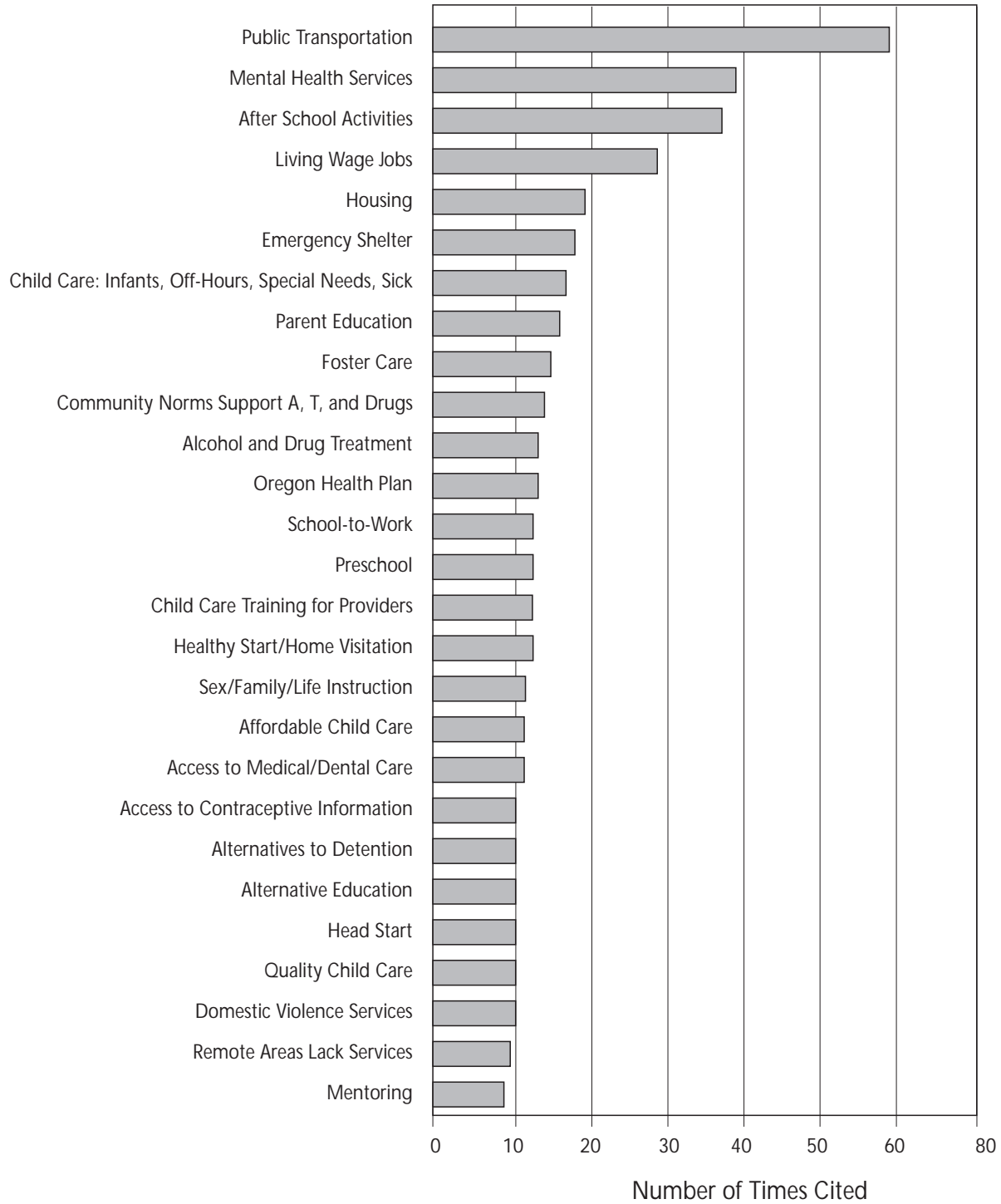
— SB 555 *Comprehensive Planning for Children and Families in Lane County, Phase I*

"The number one concern shared by the citizens of Wallowa County in a recent survey was the need to secure family wage jobs. The economy is suffering as indicated by the 35th ranking of the 36 counties in four economic indicators, namely per capita income, wage, unemployment, and net job loss. Wages in 1998 were 30 percent lower than the state average. These factors greatly affect the ability for families to be strong and nurturing."

— *Wallowa County Comprehensive Planning 2000, Phase 1: Mapping*

County Highlights, continued back page

Most Frequent Gaps and Barriers: All Outcomes



County Highlights, continued

“As the county has developed, local government has had to focus on infrastructure development, assuring roads, transportation and regulations around land use. But, with increased population, comes increased human needs that have not been accompanied by increased resources committed to social services. State and local funding have remained stagnant or declined. The result is that the county is losing ground and data validates declining trends in outcomes for children and families.”

— *Washington County Comprehensive Plan 2000*

“The county is also separated by mountain passes which create a barrier, especially in the winter, to access services available [only] in the county seat ... Transportation is noted as a barrier on almost all of the needs assessments conducted in the community.”

— *2001-03 Comprehensive Plan for Josephine County Children, Youth, and Families*

“In Hood River County more confirmed cases of child abuse and neglect are coming into care because of behavioral issues with the child. Mental health problems are getting more pronounced; sexually acting out children and more severe mental health diagnoses at earlier ages.”

— *Hood River County Comprehensive plan for Children and Families 2001*

“One of the biggest changes in the last ten years has been the transformation from competitive to collaborative relationships between teen pregnancy prevention agencies in Jackson County. The formation of the RAPP group in 1994 has been instrumental in effecting this change. RAPP has provided the structure for building trust, respect and collaborative partnerships. Leadership and responsibility is shared between key agencies (CCF, Public Health, Planned Parenthood, AFS).”

— *Comprehensive Plan 2000, Jackson County*

“Shelter care does not currently exist in Malheur County. It is our plan to work toward the development of a regionally based public/private collaboration to provide adequate shelter care resources for adolescents. Planning for a shelter care facility will be done in cooperation with other community partners.”

— *Comprehensive Plan for Children and Families 2000-2001, Malheur County*

“Youth are seen as assets and contribute positively through service projects. We have strong interagency collaboration. We lack sufficient services for at-risk girls, cultural and ethnic minorities or people with limited English proficiency.”

— *Comprehensive Planning Report, Phase One, September 15, 2000; Deschutes County*

“Juvenile crime prevention is strengthened by the willingness of community agencies and partners to collaborate, as is evidenced in high levels of collaboration in the Unified Services Team, the ‘Work Solution’ one stop shop for workforce issues, and the joint county, tribal, school district Family Advocate project.”

— *Phase One Community Mapping 2000, Harney County Comprehensive Plan for Children and Families*

“The community’s ability to collaborate and work together is one of the greatest strengths of this community...For example, a group of community members saw a lack of services for transitional youth. Together they developed a committee for youth alternatives. The focus was youth who were not involved with OYA or SCF. Today the committee is in the final stages of developing Safe Houses throughout the county for youth who have few or no places to go.”

— *Yamhill County 2000 Mapping*

“Multnomah County’s infant death rate has dropped dramatically in recent years, but figures for minority children (African-American 10.2 percent, Hispanic 7.2 percent, Asian 7.7 percent) continue to run higher than that of white children (4.5 percent).”

— *Coordinated Comprehensive Plan for the Commission on Children, Families and Community (Multnomah County)*

“The primary barrier for families is language. Families expressed willingness to learn English, but need ESL services at flexible times. There is a lack of bilingual personnel and materials in state and county offices.”

— *Union County Report to the Oregon Commission on Children and Families and our Communities*



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