

2006 County Biennial Updates Coordinated, Comprehensive Plans For Children and Families

Executive Summary



A full Update Summary is available from OCCF

Throughout this report, there is mention of “large counties”, “medium counties” and “small counties.” This refers to population size. Large counties are: Multnomah, Washington, Clackamas, Lane and Marion. Medium counties are: Jackson, Deschutes, Linn, Douglas, Yamhill, Benton, Josephine, Umatilla, Klamath, Polk, Coos, Lincoln, Columbia, Clatsop and Malheur. Small counties are: Tillamook, Union, Wasco, Curry, Hood River, Crook, Jefferson, Baker, Morrow, Grant, Harney, Lake, Wallowa, Gilliam, Sherman and Wheeler.

Oregon County Biennial Updates-- Coordinated, Comprehensive Plans For Children and Families

Introduction

Local coordinated, comprehensive plans provide a means for communities to coordinate the many programs, strategies and services for children ages 0 through 18 and their families and to focus local efforts to improve results. Each of the 36 counties in Oregon completed a six-year coordinated comprehensive plan for children and families in January 2002. Local commissions on children and families have the responsibility for leading, coordinating and facilitating the development of the plan. The plan represents the vision, priorities and strategies of the community. As Lane County described it in its 2006 update,

We have encouraged use of our comprehensive plan as the umbrella or “mother” plan from which more targeted, specific or focused workplans can stem. For example, the Commission’s as well as other community partners’ plans such as the Domestic Violence Council, Early Childhood Planning Team, Human Services Commission, Mental Health Advisory Committee, Alcohol and Drug Issues Forum, the Public Health Division, etc. all refer to, and in some cases stem from, our community “master plan”.

Comprehensive planning, or strategic planning as it is frequently termed in the private sector, is not a static, one-time event. Instead, good strategic plans are updated frequently according to new information received. The biennial updates provide the opportunity for refining and adjusting the 6-year plan. The state Partners for Children and Families provided counties with a list of questions to be completed in their biennial updates. These questions asked for results of reviews of the latest available data for 19 high level outcomes to determine where progress is occurring and what areas need increased attention, to identify where critical gaps in services exist and to provide feedback to state agencies about barriers to implementation of the plans.

The formal community process was followed by a biennial update that was completed in June 2004 and the most recent one, completed February 1, 2006. The biennial updates are required in Oregon Administrative Rules and provide communities with the opportunity to:

- Reassess the plan to test its relevancy to current community conditions and expectations;
- Revise the plan to incorporate significant changes in funding levels;
- Refine priorities, strategies, and outcomes based on updated information;
- Expand, strengthen or acknowledge effective partnerships through discussion of priorities and strategies in the plan; and
- Communicate successes and challenges with state partners.

This report compiles the information contained in the 2006 updates.

Wide Participation in Development of Updates

The six year plans required extensive involvement from the members of the community, non-profits, businesses and government agencies. Counties received input from representatives of a variety of professional and personal perspectives. The extent of participation in the biennial updates was at the discretion of each county. Counties were asked to indicate by category the participants who provided input into this update. Input was received from an average of 30.5 different perspectives in each county. (Actual numbers of participants were not tracked.) Table 1 shows the categories of participants. Representatives of the juvenile justice system, child protective services, substance abuse prevention, early childhood services and public health participated in at least 31 counties, out of 35 counties reporting. The participation in each category for 2006 is very similar to 2004 levels¹.

The processes used to complete the update varied considerably among the counties. Wasco County, for example, held one large community forum, conducted individual interviews with key partners and collected input from community groups at their regular meetings. Josephine County made presentations to community groups and then distributed a survey to community partners and youth-serving groups. The compiled survey results included the category of participant (the Table 1 list) and their zip code to ensure geographical representation. Multnomah County, the largest in population, developed its update through the coordinated efforts of staff from the County's Departments of Health, County Human Services, Community Justice, School and Community Partnerships and the Commission on Children, Families and Community.

What is important in these results is that information contained in the updates does reflect wide input, not just that of a small planning group and not just that of the local commission on children and families.

¹ One category, Safety Net, is now known as Family Support and Connections.

Table 1.
2006 Biennial Update Process Partners
34 counties reporting

Much of the value of planning lies in the relationships that are established and the insights that are shared among the planning participants as a result of focused discussions on shared issues.

Number of Counties:

Juvenile Department	34	Groups of diverse populations	16
DHS - Child abuse & neglect	34	Disability services	16
Prevention coordinators	33	Business	16
Early childhood team representatives	33	Parole/probation	16
Head Start/Oregon Prekindergarten	32	Alternative schools	15
Public health department	31	Workforce Providers	14
Child care resource and referral	31	Public Housing Authorities	14
Service providers – Juvenile Justice	30	Other Health Care Providers	13
Local mental health authority	30	Chamber of Commerce	13
County human services agency	30	Community Partnership Teams	13
Domestic violence organizations	29	Service Clubs	12
DHS - Food,cash,housing	29	Neighborhood coalitions	12
School district	29	Community Colleges	12
Safety net	28	Other affordable housing providers	11
Law enforcement	28	School Board	10
Early Intervention/Early Child. Spec. Educ.	28	Tribal governments	8
DHS Service providers	27	Other	7
General Population	26	HMOs	7
A&D Service providers	25	Parent teacher associations	3
After-school programs	25		
Educational Service District	24		
Faith Community	23		
Clients/consumers	23		
Specific schools	22		
Mental health organizations	22		
Community Action Agency	22		
Youth	21		
Other county government entity	21		
Advocacy groups	20		
Child care providers	18		
People with Special Needs	16		
Hospitals	16		

The Statewide Context for the Updates

Economy

At this biennial update, the State is recovering from the worst economic slump in almost 30 years. State revenues declined from \$12 billion to \$9 billion in 2003². Oregon's unemployment rate was over 8.5% – the highest state in the country. Now Oregon's unemployment rate is down to 5.7% and the job growth rate is the 5th fastest in the nation. The substantial negative effects of job loss and poverty on families are well-documented. In the county updates, it is apparent that the economy and lack of jobs drive many of the social issues addressed in the plan. In fact, as described in more detail later in this report, in a ranking of critical gaps across the state, living wage jobs ranks #4, above many important human services.

The Oregon Business Plan³ outlines some of the economic characteristics of counties and helps provide a context for understanding the unique issues and concerns that they face that are not apparent in a statewide aggregation of data:

Oregon is now a set of regional economies, not a single statewide economy. Four factors characterize a regional view of Oregon:

- *Different parts of Oregon have distinctive economies reflecting the locational preferences of various industry clusters.*
- *Declining pay is the chief economic problem of rural regions. All of the regions outside the Willamette Valley have lower average wage levels today, adjusted for inflation, than in 1976. Northwest Oregon wages are up 20 percent.*
- *Regional pay differentials closely correlate with variations in educational attainment—rural areas have far fewer highly educated workers as a fraction of their population than does the Portland metropolitan area.*
- *No region has failed to create jobs. Every region has more jobs than in 1976; growth rates in lagging regions (Eastern Oregon, Coos-Curry-Douglas) have been a third to 40 percent of the state average. Southern and Central Oregon are growing faster than the rest of the state.*

All programs and services for children and families are feeling the effects of three rounds of budget reductions at the state level, and the potential for new budget cuts to social services by the federal government. The 2005 legislative session reduced the budget for the Department of Human Services in field staffing for self-sufficiency and child welfare programs, the JOBS employment and training program, cost-of-living adjustments for clients and providers, and abstinence education and the Community

² State of the State Address, Governor Ted Kulongoski, February 24, 2006

³ Oregon Business Plan, accessed March 2, 2006 at www.oregonbusinessplan.org/plan_economy.html

Safety Net programs. The projected need for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Employment Related Day Care, and some child welfare program services was not fully funded.

Local Commissions on Children and Families received cuts in funding for local staffing and services and supports, including a 20% reduction in Healthy Start. The impacts that the reduction in local staffing has on the ability to carry out the work envisioned in the comprehensive plans are mentioned frequently in the updates.

Polk County summarized the impacts of budget reductions in the area of child maltreatment:

There are several reasons for the increase that Polk County, as well as the state in general, is seeing an increase in child maltreatment rates. The struggling economy for the past four years has created more families living in poverty without health coverage and many basic needs. Additionally, services directly targeting this outcome have had unstable funding. Healthy Start funding decreased from 65% to 47% in 2004. Funding for Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) decreased by nearly 18% in the last two years. Both of these programs specifically serve children at risk of abuse. Non-profit partners who serve this population have also struggled during the economic downturn. Department of Human Services Child Welfare staff are stretched thin and are struggling to keep up with the number of children in need of Foster Homes due to removal from their homes from the increasing methamphetamine use.

Programs and Initiatives

New legislation (HB 2202) was adopted by the 2004 legislature that brings a coordinated focus to the growing population of *homeless and runaway youth*. The legislation assigns the Oregon Commission on Children & Families as the lead agency in coordinating statewide planning for delivery of services to homeless youth and their families. The work will result in recommendations to the legislature for: policies that integrate a system of services for homeless youth in the state's continuum of care; funding mechanisms that will support a continuum of services; policies that address parental responsibility; and long term goals to address the underlying causes of homelessness. Informing these recommendations will be information gathered through local comprehensive planning processes and demonstration sites that will examine barriers to the local implementation of care and services to runaway and homeless youth that result from existing state level policies. The work of HB 2202 will also encompass the identification of means of service delivery for the homeless and runaway population that are culturally competent, gender specific and evidence based.

With an ongoing commitment to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Children's Initiative, the Department of Human Services, Children, Adults, and Families, in consultation with the Oregon Commission on Children and Families, has developed a

program aimed at preventing child abuse and neglect in TANF households. The *Family Support & Connections Program* replaces the former Community Safety Net Program and focuses on the TANF Population. The ultimate goal is to serve TANF children safely within their families and thus reduce the percentage of TANF children who require foster care services. The individual goals of the program are to improve: caregiver-child relationships; parental coping skills; social supports and community connections; economic stability.

The *Oregon Early Childhood Foundations* are a new resource providing “guidelines” for all adults working with children ages three to five. Expansion to ages zero to three will be occurring in the future. The Foundations are designed to assist Parents, Families, Child-Care Providers, Pre-school and Pre-kindergarten Programs promote learning and healthy development of Oregon’s young children.

The *Children’s Mental Health Systems Change Initiative* was developed in response to a budget note passed in the 2003 Legislature. The goal of the Initiative is to substantially increase the availability and quality (breadth, depth and intensity) of individualized, intensive home and community-based services so that children are served in the most natural environment possible and so that the use of institutional care is minimized. The initiative puts children at the center of the system. Families are encouraged to be part of the case planning and are majority participants on the advisory body that oversees the change initiative.

Based on legislation adopted during the 2001 legislative session, state agencies continue to work together to develop and support a statewide system of *community learning centers*. Through interagency partnerships a state level coordinator is devoted full time to facilitate the creation and enhancement of new and existing community schools. A community school is both a place and a set of partnerships between a school and other community resources keeping open before, during and after school, 7 days a week and during the summer. It integrates academics, services, supports, and opportunities to improve student learning, strengthen families, and promote healthier communities.

Summary of Findings

County responses listed below are examples, and do not represent a complete listing of responses to findings.

1. Data and community strategies:

- a. Alcohol use by 8th grade students has been increasing since 2003. Counties are:*
 - Sponsoring professional speakers for parents and youth,*
 - Increasing alcohol-free out-of-school activities,*
 - Working with law enforcement on underage drinking prevention,*
 - Establishing coalitions to address the issue,*
 - Increasing community awareness through media campaigns.*

- b. Illicit drug use by 8th grade students is at its lowest rate since 2000, but still 16% of the student report using these drugs. Counties are:*
 - Establishing and maintaining drug courts, despite budget reductions,*
 - Securing grant funds through coalition efforts,*
 - Creating peer mentoring and youth recognition programs,*
 - Focusing on changing community norms.*

- c. Child abuse and neglect rates are increasing statewide, after several years of decline. Counties are:*
 - Sponsoring parenting classes,*
 - Sponsoring training of professionals (physicians, teachers, childcare providers, etc.),*
 - Conducting community awareness campaigns,*
 - Securing new grant funding for programs such as supervised visitation.*

- d. Domestic violence has a negative impact on children and is frequently a side effect of meth consumption. To address domestic violence, counties are:*
 - Collaborating with schools and law enforcement and other agencies*
 - Coordinating services into one location*
 - Creating training and written materials for professionals*

- e. Teen Pregnancy has been significantly declining for the past decade. Counties are:*
 - Sponsoring a variety of programs, from S.T.A.R.S. to Baby Think it Over*
 - Working with specific populations of youth*

- f. *Juvenile arrests for person and property crimes increased in 2003 after a decade of decline. Counties are:*
- *Incorporating reducing risks and increasing protective factors into programs,*
 - *Addressing truancy,*
 - *Providing mentoring programs,*
 - *Providing wrap-around services to more comprehensively meet needs,*
 - *Taking a case-management approach.*
- g. *The Ready to Learn benchmark has improved significantly. Eighty percent of children enter school ready to learn, as compared to 58% in 1997. Counties are:*
- *Coordinating with partners to schedule an array of parenting education information,*
 - *Expanding hours for childcare,*
 - *Developing a community framework for educational success,*
 - *Conducting home visiting programs.*
- h. *Poverty statewide has remained fairly level since 2002, but there is considerable variation in the rate among counties. Counties are addressing poverty in a variety of ways, including:*
- *Creating coalitions to address the issue from a variety of perspectives,*
 - *Focusing interagency efforts on poverty reduction,*
 - *Sponsoring a summit.*
- i. *Methamphetamine use is a significant concern in counties. Counties are:*
- *Establishing interagency, multi-disciplinary task forces, including action plans that identify who will do what,*
 - *Sponsoring community forums and summits,*
 - *Developing meth prevention plans,*
 - *Proving education for parents and services for children,*
 - *Implementing a matrix model of methamphetamine treatment,*
 - *Increasing the availability of foster care.*
2. *Early childhood teams are making improvements in local systems. Twelve counties have expanded existing services and some new services have been created. Counties have developed collaborative grant applications. Training opportunities have been expanded and linkages with schools have been created or strengthened in many counties.*

3. *Improvements have been made in services for diverse populations, including increases in bi-lingual staff, Spanish-language training and multi-lingual program explanatory material. Committees and coalitions have been established. These groups are working together to identify outreach needs, program policies and other ways to improve services. Fairs and other outreach efforts are provided to increase awareness of existing services. Funders are requiring that contractors meet certain requirements for serving diverse populations.*
4. *Coordination of services continues to improve. Many success stories demonstrate that coalitions established in recent years are seeing a payoff in achieving outcomes that individually would not have been possible.*
5. *Runaway and homeless youth resources and services are severely lacking throughout the state. The greatest concerns reported consistently among the counties are:*
 - a. *The need for shelter, meaning a safe place for youth to stay, and*
 - b. *A comprehensive array of services.*
6. *Recommendations regarding policies and services for runaway and homeless youth fall into the following categories:*
 - a. *Need for a uniform definition of homeless and runaway youth,*
 - b. *Improved system for collection of data,*
 - c. *Establishment of a statewide system of services,*
 - d. *Clarification and strengthening of laws,*
 - e. *Improving access to health and mental health services,*
 - f. *Improved agency coordination.*
7. *The top five gaps that have been identified by counties are the same five as reported in the 2004 updates:*
 - a. *Children's mental health,*
 - b. *Family support for high-risk families,*
 - c. *Youth alcohol and drug treatment,*
 - d. *Living wage jobs,*
 - e. *Access to health and dental services.*
8. *Unlike in the 2004 Updates, county priorities did not change significantly since the last biennial update. Strategies were refined, completed strategies were dropped, but overall there are not major changes to report.*

Although counties have demonstrated significant success in achieving outcomes, a common theme in every update was the concern about how budget reductions are impacting prevention programs and staff workload issues.

Feedback from the Counties

Information is included in the biennial updates on the specific barriers that counties are encountering in implementing their coordinated, comprehensive plans, and their suggestions for how state government can assist with reducing or eliminating those barriers. A total of 97 barriers were identified and are grouped into very general categories in Appendix 2. It is notable that barriers related to state agency coordination was the largest group (14.) This is significant because coordination is not directly a function of funding. The concern about implementation of best practices is also evident in that nine counties listed it as a barrier, ranging from the largest county in population to the smallest county. Other categories were agency-specific (22 combined), funding (12), laws (11), program-specific (10), data (6), flexibility (6), partnerships (3), staffing (2).