

2007 Wasco County Comprehensive Plan



Final DRAFT



In the 2006 Oregon Population Report it is estimated that 5,906 children live in Wasco County, nearly a quarter of the population.

Population Research Center, Portland State University



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The Wasco County Commission on Children and Families began implementation of the Senate Bill 555 County Comprehensive Planning process by first gauging the public perception of highest concerns related to the well being of children and their families. This was done through a public survey titled *Five Minutes for Families* adapted from the tool developed in Union County (see Appendix B). The survey was distributed through web-based technology using Survey Monkey. Additionally, staff spent time at several community festivals or events gathering surveys in paper version. The survey was distributed in both English and Spanish languages and special effort was made to gather input from residents of South Wasco County communities.

The second phase of the planning process included the analysis of data relating to Wasco County's performance in the Oregon Benchmark areas concerning children and families. Commission staff researched data and presented this information to Wasco County Commission members. Members used the information to determine which areas require special focus and additional action planning. The Commission chose the following four specific areas for improvement:

- Child Abuse and/or Neglect
- Readiness to Learn
- Homeless and Runaway Youth
- Youth Substance Use

Child Abuse and/or Neglect

Findings from the Commission on Children and Families data analysis of Child Abuse and/or Neglect in Wasco County show that more children in this County are abused and/or neglected than in many other parts of the state and more locally, the region. The rate of child abuse/neglect in Wasco County has fluctuated from an all time low of 14.4 children per thousand to 22 children per thousand from 2002 through 2006. The most current rate of child abuse/neglect in Wasco County is 20.7 children for every thousand in 2006. From 2004-2006 an average of 53 new petitions for dependency were filed in Wasco County each year and a total of 76 petitions for termination of parental rights were filed from 2004-2006.

In August 2007, after several months of planning and collaboration of the Oregon Dept. of Human Services, CASA, Healthy Start, the Commission on Children and Families and Wasco Co. Youth Services; Wasco County held a CHILD NEGLECT SUMMIT and awareness event in The Dalles. This Summit was funded through a special grant from the Children's Justice Act Task Force. This Summit served as an action planning session, as groups were formed to develop and implement various child abuse/neglect prevention strategies. The Summit also confirmed that the community was already supporting a number of existing prevention strategies including: Healthy Start locally known as Families First, a Parent Education Initiative, and an initiative to improve quality of child care programs.

The Wasco County Commission on Children and Families has taken a lead in the Parent Education Initiative. In light of the statistics and also the confirmation of the strategy through the Summit, the Commission has dedicated itself to the continuation of this important initiative. Over the next six years, the Commission will work to ensure that quality evidence based programs are available and easily accessible to parents in Wasco County. The initiative is funded through grants from the Oregon Community Foundation and the Ford Family ESPPII grant program. Through the Ford Family ESPPII program, the Commission is working with Oregon State University to track results of this initiative. The Commission has also made a commitment to maintain a full time employee who works specifically on issues related to early childhood and this initiative.

Parents who participate in the proven programs offered through this initiative gain a better understanding of their child's developmental levels and new skills to assist them in dealing with the day to day demands of parenting, reduce family stress levels and enhance parent/child interactions.

While the Parent Education Initiative will be the main strategy reported through the SB555 Comprehensive

Planning Process, the Commission will remain involved in many other current community strategies to fight child abuse and neglect. Some of those current strategies are listed below:

JUVENILE COURT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT: This is a collaboration of all partners involved in Juvenile Dependency Court (Oregon DHS Child Welfare, 7th Judicial Court, Judge John Kelly, Attorneys, District Attorney, Wasco Co. Youth Services Dept., Citizen Review Board, and CASA). The Wasco Co. Commission on Children and Families acts as an independent facilitator for this process. This group meets monthly to assess and improve court processes with the end goal of improving permanency outcomes for children who are in out of home placements.

FAMILY DEPENDENCY COURT: In 2007, Wasco County created a new Family Dependency Court with funding from a BYRNE Grant through the Mid Columbia Center for Living. All partners of the Juvenile Dependency Court have been involved in the creation of this Court. The Court serves 12-13 mothers who are addicted to methamphetamine. The majority of these mothers have either an open child dependency case or a criminal case. The object of this Court Program is to work with mothers to help them complete treatment and enable them to parent their children.

HEALTHY START and the HOME VISITATION REFERRAL NETWORK: Families First is Wasco County's Healthy Start program provider through The Next Door, Inc. This program has been credentialed by Healthy Families America and is proven to reduce Child Abuse and Neglect. A goal in Wasco County is to expand this program to meet the need, there is currently a waiting list for families with identified risk factors in the target population who want services. Through collaboration, Wasco County does a great job of handling referrals to home visiting programs. This is done through the Home Visitation Referral Network and administered through the Wasco/Sherman Public Health Dept. The Columbia River Women's Clinic donates staff time to implement the New Baby Questionnaire at the first pre-natal appointment for every patient residing in Wasco and Sherman Counties.

Readiness to Learn

The Oregon Progress Board reports that Wasco County ranks dead last among Oregon Counties for helping children be Ready To Learn upon entering Kindergarten. Again, the data in this area has fluctuated severely since the year 2000 when the rate was 57%, in 2002 the rate rose to 72.6% of children who met the indicators for readiness to learn. When reported again in 2004, the numbers were back to 58.9% and then jumped back up to 75.4% in 2006. This has created a current 3-year average of 69% of kindergarten students who were prepared to learn upon entering school in Wasco County.

Late in 2006, the Wasco County Commission on Children and Families asked the Early Childhood Committee to begin exploring this issue. The committee met several times during 2007 to explore the issue. They found that while the measurement tool, *Kindergarten Readiness Survey*, is not without flaws, it is a reliable indicator of a child's skill levels. Additionally, the committee found that the majority of kindergarten teachers are completing the survey tool approximately 4-6 weeks after the start of school; therefore the tool is being implemented fairly consistently across the county. The committee did identify a need for enhanced communication regarding the skills that children need to acquire prior to kindergarten in order to be successful in the school setting. The current Early Childhood System of services in the county does not facilitate communication among child care providers, pre-school teachers, parents, and kindergarten or first grade teachers. Some strengths of the current Early Childhood System of services include strong Home Visiting services and good communication among those providers, Head Start, Early Head Start and Migrant Head Start services are well coordinated, and the medical community generally makes appropriate referrals to the Early Head Start program. Additionally, the South Wasco County School District #1 makes special efforts to interact with children and families long before children reach school age. This includes outreach through book distribution and their support of the Great Start Pre-School.

The Early Childhood Committee recommended that the Commission on Children and Families continue their support of the Parent Education Initiative and Home Visitation programs in the County. Additionally, the Committee developed a plan to increase community awareness of the kindergarten readiness through one-time workshops targeting parents of young children. At these workshops, parents will learn about basic early childhood development and the skills children need to be prepared for school.

Homeless and Runaway Youth

In February of 2007, the Wasco County Commission on Children and Families hosted a community forum on Homeless and Runaway Youth in our community. The forum had standing room only attendance and participants were truly impacted by the presentations of Vicky Briotti and Pam Dodds from Union County. School personnel who attended the forum returned to their schools and identified 120 youth who fit the statewide definition of being a homeless or runaway youth. After the forum, a committee was formed with the support of the Wasco Co. Commission on Children and Families, the Community Action Program and Six Rivers Mediation to further explore this issue. In August of 2007, an Action Plan to address this issue was presented to the Wasco County Commission on Children and Families at their regular meeting.

The action plan outlines a distribution plan for a youth friendly service guide that was created by the committee with oversight from youth in the community. The action plan also outlined the need for a youth outreach worker to identify and work with youth who meet the statewide definition to enable them to meet their basic needs of food, shelter and clothing; meet educational goals, and assist them in developing individual safety plans. The action plan has a fully developed program outline complete with job descriptions. The County has a long-term goal of developing a shelter facility for youth. Currently, the County is working with Commission member, Susan Brewer, who is donating her time as a professional grant writer to develop financial resources to support this plan.

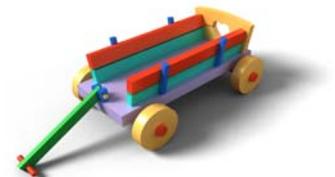
Youth Substance Use

In 2000, Wasco County formed the Wasco County Prevention Coalition with the support of the Wasco County Commission on Children and Families. The Commission on Children and Families has been a recipient of the Federal Drug Free Communities grant since 2001. During 2006, the Coalition engaged in an action planning process that resulted in a new identity for the group now known as *YOUTH THINK*. The Coalition has identified the following strategies to reduce the age of onset for use of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use and the rate of use for the past 30 days as measured by the Oregon Healthy Teen Survey.

- **Challenge Day** is a 501(c)(3) non-profit that provides powerful one-day programs as a service to middle, junior, and high schools, and other organizations and companies. This 6 1/2-hour Challenge Day program is designed for 100 students. The program is created to build connection and empathy, and to fulfill a vision that every child lives in a world where they feel safe, loved, and celebrated. Challenge Day is more than a one-day program. It is the spark that ignites a movement of compassion and positive change, known as *The Be the Change* movement. In 2007, this program was implemented over the course of a full week at two High School campuses in The Dalles and a youth group formed to continue the *Be the Change* movement.
- **STORM** is an after school program for middle school age students in The Dalles. The program operates in collaboration with North Wasco County School District #21, Mid Columbia Center for Living and YOUTH THINK.
- **Youth Action Council (YAC)** is a Positive Youth Development initiative supported by the Wasco County Commission on Children and Families and funded through the state AD#70 grant. This effort is county-wide and works with youth to develop leadership skills and promote positive youth development.

School Teach-Ins are a relatively new partnership between YOUTH THINK and local school districts. The Coalition provides presentations to students during school time with information about the risks of using alcohol, tobacco and other drugs and/or engaging in other risky behaviors.

The Wasco County Comprehensive Plan does not address every single issue that people who reside in the County are facing, however it is an attempt to assess current conditions and develop strategies to remedy them.



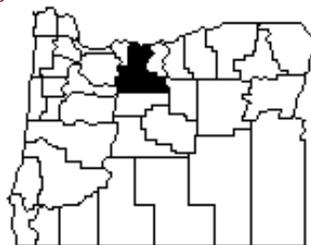
COUNTY OVERVIEW



Wasco County was originally established in 1854 with 250,000 square miles, the largest county ever established in the United States.

Wasco County, Oregon

Wasco County derives its name from the Wasco tribe of Indians. These early Indians were attracted by the abundance of the Columbia River fishing grounds. Meriwether Lewis and William Clark became the first white men to enter the region in 1805. In the 1840's the Oregon Trail was created by a large migration of people headed west. The County of Wasco was organized by the territorial legislature in 1854. This 250,000 square mile county was the largest ever established in



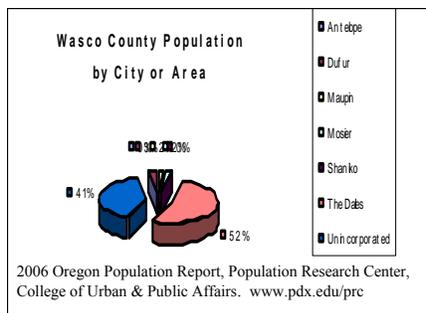
remained relatively steady with the majority of residents falling in the middle aged category. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that the largest percentage of residents in Wasco Co. are between the ages of 25-44. There are approximately 5,906 children under the age of 18 years residing in the county. About 11,939 residents are male and 12,131 residents are female.

the United States. It included all the land between the Cascade and Rocky Mountains, south of the Columbia River and north of the California-Nevada borders. Today, Wasco County is one of 36 counties in Oregon. It is located at the Eastern edge of the scenic Columbia River Gorge with a land mass containing 2,381 square miles with an approximate population of 10 people per square mile.

POPULATION

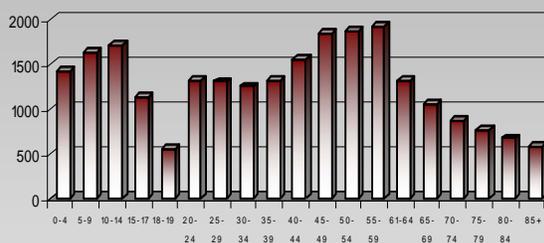
The 2006 population estimate for Wasco County, Oregon is 24,070 people according to the 2006 Oregon Population Report. The majority of the population reside in the city of The Dalles (12,625 people) with the second largest sector residing in unincorporated areas of the county.

The median age of Wasco County residents is



41.3 compared to 37 statewide in Oregon. Since 1980, the median age of residents in Wasco County has

Wasco County Population by AGE

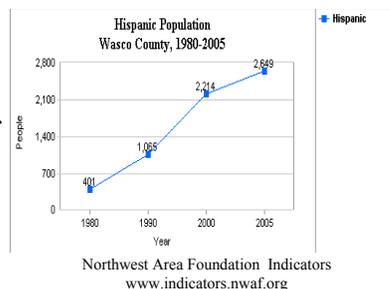


2006 Oregon Population Report

People in Wasco County who identified themselves as being a race other than white made up 13.4% of the population in 2000, the same rate as Oregon.

The non-white population in Wasco County has grown from 1,577 in 2002 to 1,713 in 2005. In 2005, residents of Hispanic origin made up 11.2% of the population in Wasco County compared to 9.2% statewide.

In 2000, those under age 18 made up 44% of the total Hispanic population in Wasco County compared to



23% of the total non-Hispanic population. And, those aged 18-64 made up 54% of the total Hispanic population compared to 58% of the total non-Hispanic population.

Population figures reported elsewhere in this document may differ slightly, as they are based on the US Census Bureau's data report.

ECONOMIC INDICATORS



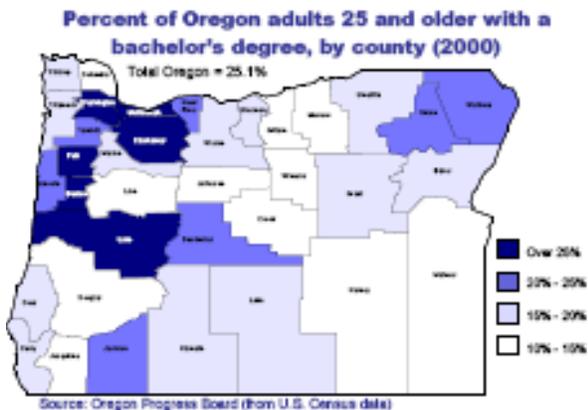
WORKFORCE EDUCATION LEVELS

In Oregon, we understand that Education levels are linked to the well-being and health of communities. In fact, Oregon has developed a statewide business plan that specifically outlines goals to increase the percentage of Oregonians with post secondary credentials, bachelor's degree, and/or higher levels of education. As a result of achieving higher levels of education among Oregonians, the state expects to achieve economic vitality, an increase in per capita income growth, and an increase in active participation in civic life.

Wasco County benefits from programs offered locally at the Columbia Gorge Community College.

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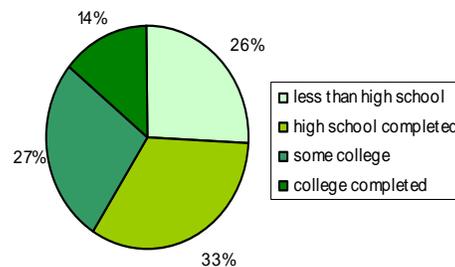
Education attainment is measured by the U.S. Census Bureau who reports that in 2000, 17.9% of the population age 25 years and older in Wasco County had no high school diploma. This compares to 14.9% statewide. Additionally, only 15.7% of Wasco County residents aged 25 years and older had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 25.1% statewide. This means that nearly 85% of residents in Wasco County have not achieved bachelor's level education.



A recent editorial in the Register Guard cited a 2004 study by the College Board that directly links prosperity and educational attainment. This article quoted the report that people who earn a 2-year college degree earn 22% more than high school graduates, and their unemployment rate is 27% lower.

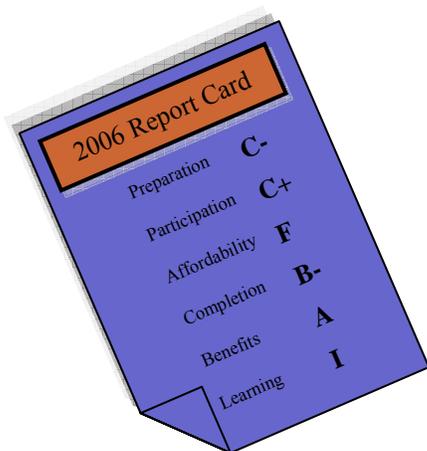
The 2006 County Data Book distributed by *Children First for Oregon* reports education levels of mothers in Wasco County who gave birth to children in 2005. We know this is a significant indicator of early childhood development and subsequent school success. A recent study conducted by Marie-Anne Suizzo and Laura M. Stapleton, titled *Home-Based Parental Involvement in Young Children's Education: Examining the Effects of Maternal Education across U.S. Ethnic Groups* found that a mother's education level has a higher impact on children's developmental capacity than the family's income level or other factors.

Mother's Education
Educational Attainment of women who gave birth in 2005



Children First for Oregon, Status of Oregon's Children 2006
www.cffo.org/children/first/publications/C6/

While Oregon recognizes the importance of providing a First-Rate Public Education to all Oregonians, the current Public Education System in Oregon has been measured and found lacking, especially in regard to higher education. A report titled *Measuring Up 2006, The State Report Card on Higher Education* gives Oregon the following grades:



Ted Kulongoski is focusing. Governor Kulongoski's Education Enterprise is a plan to bring together key players in Oregon forming The Unified Education Enterprise with the ultimate goal of improving Oregon's Education System.

Unfortunately for many Wasco County residents who live at or below poverty level, higher education remains out of reach. The *Measuring Up 2006* report takes a close look at a family's ability to pay for college.

According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the per capita personal income of Wasco County residents in 2005 was \$26,537; proving that for the majority of citizens in Wasco County, attending college full time may be unrealistic.

This report states that: "Oregon's underperformance in educating its young population could limit the states access to a competitive workforce and weaken its economy over time. The state continues to fall behind in enrolling students in college by age 19 — and this rate has dropped by double digits since the early 1990's. The proportion of students graduating from high school within four years has declined, and proportionately fewer of those who do graduate enroll in college directly after high school. Internationally, Oregon not only ranks very low in the proportion of certificates and degrees produced, but is comparable to such low-performing nations as Hungary and the Slovak Republic. Since the early 1990's, colleges and universities in Oregon have become less affordable for students and their families. If these trends are not addressed, they could undermine the state's ability to compete successfully in the global economy."

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While this paints a bleak picture for Oregon's Future, this is one area in which the current Governor,

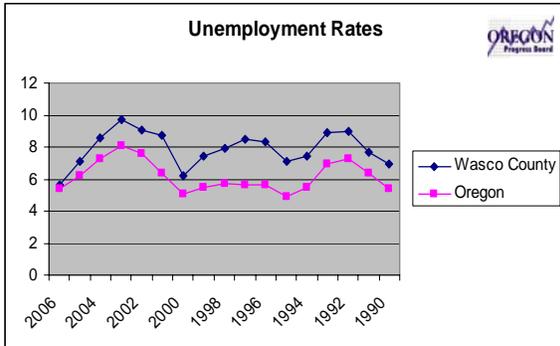
A CLOSER LOOK AT FAMILY ABILITY TO PAY	Average Family Income	Community colleges		Public 4-Year colleges/ universities		Private 4-year colleges/ universities	
		*Net College Cost	% of income needed to pay net college cost	*Net college cost	% of income needed to pay net college cost	*Net college cost	% of income needed to pay net college cost
Income groups used to calculate 2006 family ability to pay							
20% of the population with the lowest income	\$11,720	\$8,361	71%	\$9,774	83%	\$22,991	196%
20% of the population with lower-middle income	\$27,000	\$8,972	33%	\$10,685	40%	\$22,799	84%
20% of the population with middle income	\$44,000	\$9,496	22%	\$11,731	27%	\$22,448	51%
20% of the population with upper-middle income	\$68,924	\$9,649	14%	\$11,950	17%	\$22,428	33%
20% of the population with the highest income	\$112,600	\$9,679	9%	\$12,019	11%	\$22,923	20%
40% of the population with the lowest income	\$19,360	\$8,667	45%	\$10,230	53%	\$22,895	118%

*Net college cost equals tuition, room, and board, minus financial aid.

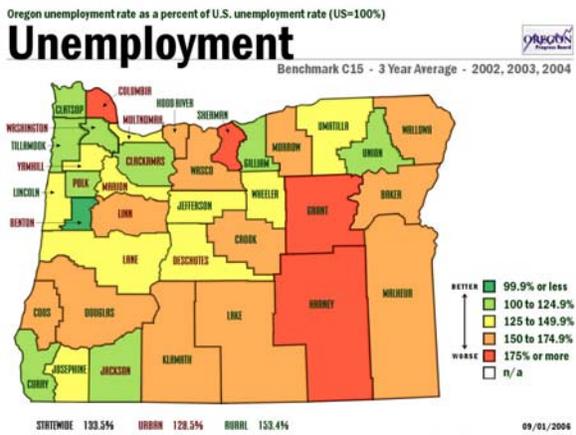


UNEMPLOYMENT

The Oregon Progress Board recently ranked Wasco County 33rd out of 36 Oregon counties economic index. This is not surprising after taking a quick look at the history of unemployment in Wasco County as employment and unemployment rates are key indicators of local economic conditions.



For the past 16 years, Wasco County has had a higher unemployment rate than the rest of the state, at times the gap between the statewide average and the Wasco County rate of unemployment showed quite a large gap.



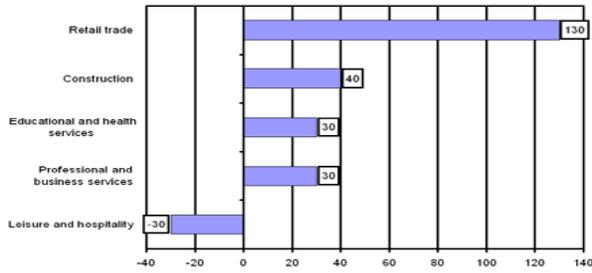
The Oregon Labor Market Information System reports that non-farm employment peaked in 2000 with 9,130 jobs. Wasco County faced a steep decline in the job market when NW Aluminum curtailed production at The Dalles plant.

According to a report titled *The Oregon State Aluminum Industry Economic Impact Study* that was prepared for the Pacific Northwest Aluminum Industry in November 2000 by Dick Conway & Associates; the Aluminum Industry played a major role in the Wasco County economy. In 1998 NW Aluminum employed 530 workers, who earned \$28.8 million in labor income. Including the indirect impact, the company supported 1,320 jobs in the county, accounting for 10.7% of total employment or one out of every 9 jobs. The aluminum plant added \$51 million to Wasco County personal income. Statewide the aluminum industry and its employees paid \$3.4 million dollars in state and local taxes. Unfortunately for Wasco County, NW Aluminum curtailed manufacturing at The Dalles plant at the same time that the state was facing a major recession. Cutbacks in nearly every major industry were severe. Wasco County had a less diverse economic structure than most counties. Cutbacks in government jobs and education were prevalent between 2002-2004. Added to that was a turbulent community shift to combine school districts eventually resulting in the combination of two of the four school districts in the county. All factors combined to create a period of severe instability for Wasco County.

Since that time, Wasco County has steadily worked to recover and has consistently posted positive growth in the job market during 2004, 2005 and 2006.

Retail trade has been the strongest performer in the area of job growth in Wasco County. Benefiting from the opening of Home Depot in 2004 and Walgreens in 2005, retail trade has gained 130 jobs to total 1,500. Construction also made significant gains in 2005 with retail, commercial, and industrial developments all together adding 40 jobs to the region. Educational and health services along with professional and business services also experienced increases while leisure and hospitality was the only major industry to post a loss of more than 20 jobs.

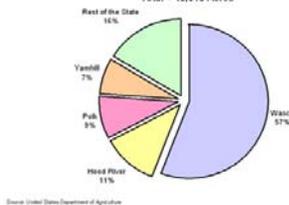
Wasco County 2005 Nonfarm Industry Job Growth



Oregon Employment Department, OLMIS

In regard to farm employment, Wasco County's employment levels are the most seasonal in the state, largely due to the predominance of the cherry industry in the region. Employment levels in Wasco County skyrocket during cherry season and then plummet as harvest ends in August.

Oregon Sweet Cherry Acreage, 2002

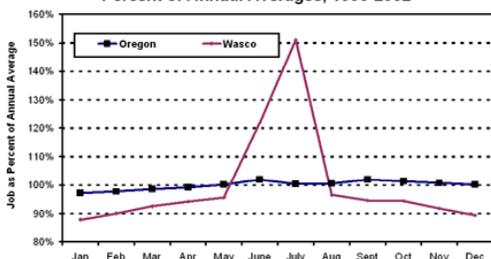


Source: United States Department of Agriculture

Wasco County has 100 sweet cherry farms with 8,390 acres of orchards; this easily ranks the county first in the state by

acreage. Because of the fragile nature of the cherry, processing plants must be in close proximity to the orchards. The effect this has on employment is easy to spot.

Wasco County Monthly Employment Percent of Annual Averages, 1995-2002

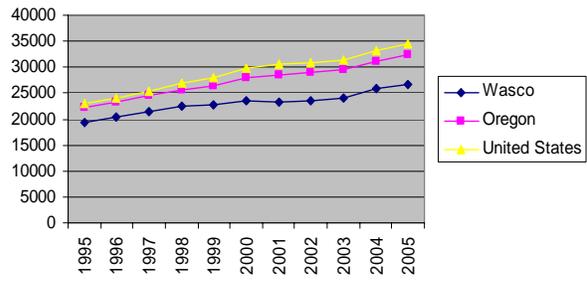


Manufacturing employment in Wasco County also experiences a sharp spike during the months of June through August coinciding with the cherry harvest. We also see increased demand for childcare services; the

Oregon Child Development Coalition alone hires approximately 120 employees for the harvest season according to Director, Jennifer Ericksen de Heredia.

While Wasco County has made significant gains since the downturn in 2002, a gap remains in the per capita income levels when compared with the state and the nation. In fact, the recent decade has widened the gap according to Worksource Oregon, Department of Human Services. This is not surprising with the significant losses of manufacturing jobs and the gains in retail trade.

Per Capita Income



Source: Oregon Employment Department

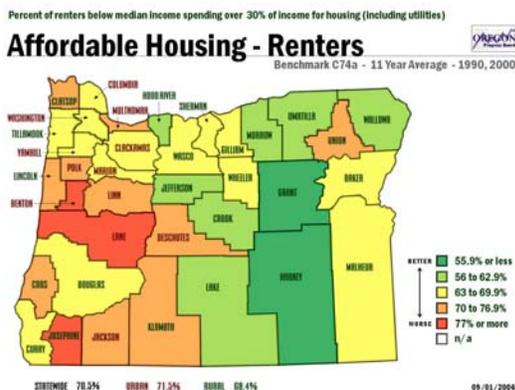
According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, on a per capita basis, Wasco County's personal income was \$26,537 in 2005. This is 82% of the state average of \$32,289, ranking Wasco County 25th out of 36 counties. The average wage per job in Wasco County for 2005 is reported at \$29,894 compared to \$35,846 in the state. The county also has a very high rate of self-employment at 23.6 percent compared to 15.6% in Oregon and 9.2% nation-wide. Of the self-employed persons in the Columbia Gorge region, 40% report that they are underemployed with specialized training or experience that qualifies them for a better job.



Wasco County's employment levels are the most seasonal in the state.

HOUSING

The U.S. Census Bureau reports that there are 10,705 housing units as of counts in 2005. In 2000, the home ownership rate was 68.4% compared to 64.3% statewide. The median value of owner-occupied housing units in 2000 was \$105,500 compared to \$152,100 statewide. In 2000, there were 2,783 renter-occupied units reported. Wasco County typically has a higher rate of renter households that are cost-burdened than the rest of the state. The Oregon Progress Board reports that in 2000, nearly 72% of renters were spending more than 30% of their income on housing. This is a relatively high rate when compared with other rural counties in Oregon whose rates average 68.4%. Home owners in Wasco County fair a little bit better, 39% of homeowners in Wasco County report spending more than 30% of their income on housing compared to 39.1% statewide and 37.4% among rural counties in Oregon.



In April of 2007, a Mid Columbia Workforce Housing Summit was held to explore and discuss solutions for providing adequate housing options for people in the workforce who are unable to afford adequate housing in the region. This summit brought many partners together to work on solutions. It also brought Housing to the forefront as a concern for the region. Since 2005, the entire region has experienced a period of growth. While many new housing units have been added, the num-

ber of low-income or workforce housing units have remained at a minimum.

POVERTY

In a 2006 Report on Poverty, the Mid Columbia Community Action Council prioritized the needs of the low-income population in Wasco County as follows:



Children 5 years old and younger experienced the highest rate of poverty in Wasco County at 20.7%

- Affordable Housing**—affordable housing in some cases is not affordable enough when the price of housing is skyrocketing and wages are not able to keep up with inflation. Affordable rental housing is now at an all-time low.
- Family Wage Jobs**—jobs that include health benefits for the entire family. Many low-income households in the county do not have any health or dental insurance and often go without any care.
- Energy Assistance**—helping to offset the rising cost of energy on low-income household budgets. Prices are rising faster than anticipated, and it is difficult for people to keep up. A severe winter could impoverish many county households.
- Food Security**—is becoming a bigger problem for low-income households in the county. Rising food prices coupled with the rising cost of gasoline makes it especially difficult for families to make ends meet.
- Transportation**—higher gasoline prices are making it harder to locate and obtain employment. Higher transportation costs also impact senior meal programs. Finding and keeping drivers has become more of a challenge.

The highest poverty rates are experienced by families with children where single mothers are the head of household (42.7% in 1999). Rates are even higher for this population when children are younger (less than 5 years) at 46.9 percent.

In a recent survey by the Wasco County Commission on Children and Families, 65.3% of respondents reported being Very Concerned about local families and children living in or at poverty level.

Nationwide, one indicator of childhood poverty is the rate of children who are eligible for the Free & Reduced Price Lunch Program. In 2004, 2,023 Wasco County Children who were attending public schools qualified for the Free & Reduced Price Lunch Program. This is approximately 1/3 of the total population of kids ages 0-17 in living in the County. In 2003, the rate of Wasco County youth eligible for this program was approximately 10% higher than the statewide average (Wasco County 55.5%, average of all Oregon Counties 45.6%).

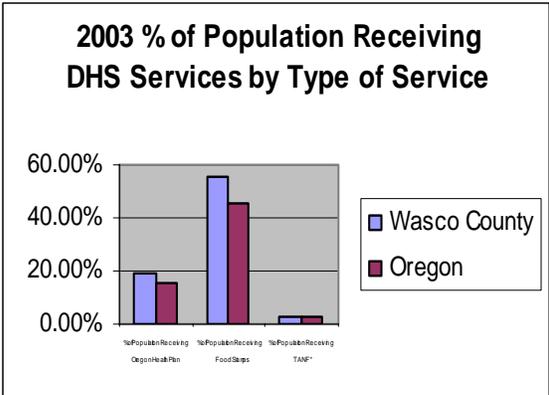
Another indicator of Poverty and family stress is the percentage of the population who are accessing services through the Oregon Department of Human Services. According to the *Oregon Housing and Community Services Report on Poverty 2004*, 29.5% of the population in Wasco County accessed DHS services in 2003 compared to 23% of the statewide population. The following table adapted from this report shows a breakdown of the services accessed:

Poverty perpetuates a number of other family stressors including hunger. The OSU Extension Service developed a report titled *Wasco County Poverty & Food Assistance* published

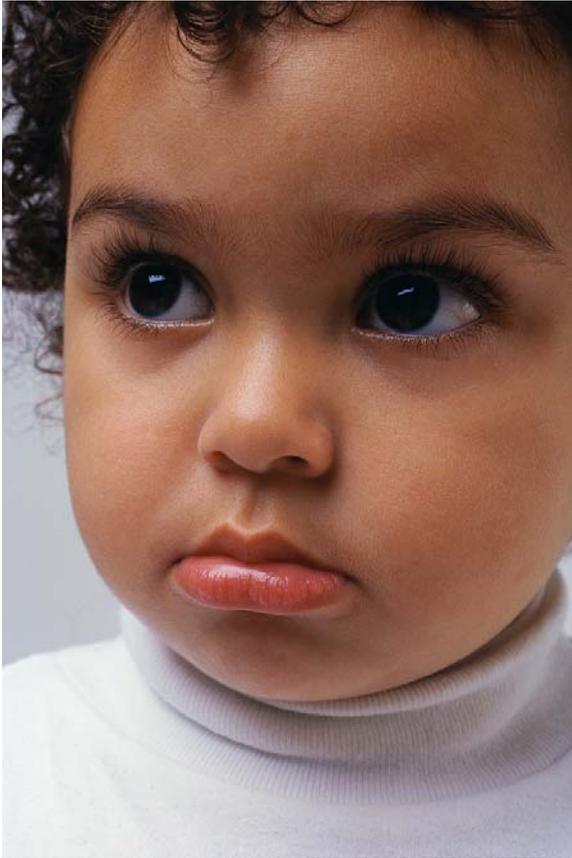
2003	% of Population Receiving Oregon Health Plan	% of Population Receiving Food Stamps	% of Population Receiving TANF*
Wasco County	18.9%	55.5%	2.3%
Oregon	15.4%	45.6%	2.3%

*TANF= Temporary Assistance to Needy Families

November 2003 examining economic well-being, nutrition and food assistance in the county. This report states that in Oregon, 185% of the poverty level is the income guideline used for federal food programs such as food stamps, child nutrition, and WIC (Women, Infants, Children). The report also demonstrates that the more rural regions of Wasco County have increased levels of poverty, however, within the more populated areas to the North of the County, there are some very concentrated areas of intense poverty. (see page 9)



Poverty also affects racial/ethnic groups disproportionately. While white residents comprised the majority of people in poverty at 74.9%, the actual rate among residents identifying themselves as White was 11.2 percent. Pacific Islanders had a reported rate of poverty at 33.3 percent and poverty among American Indian and Hispanic populations exceeded 21 percent.



Families with one adult who earns Wasco County's median income or average wage cannot afford the basic family budget.

2007 FEDERAL POVERTY GUIDELINES			
Family Size	Gross Yearly Income	Gross Monthly Income	Approx. Hourly Income
1	\$10,210	\$851	\$4.91
2	\$13,690	\$1,141	\$6.58
3	\$17,170	\$1,431	\$8.25
4	\$20,650	\$1,721	\$9.93
5	\$24,130	\$2,011	\$11.60
6	\$27,610	\$2,301	\$13.27

NUMBER OF PERSONS IN POVERTY				
	1990	2000	% Change	2000 RATE
WASCO	2,851	3,023	+6.0%	12.9
OREGON	344,867	388,740	+12.7%	11.6

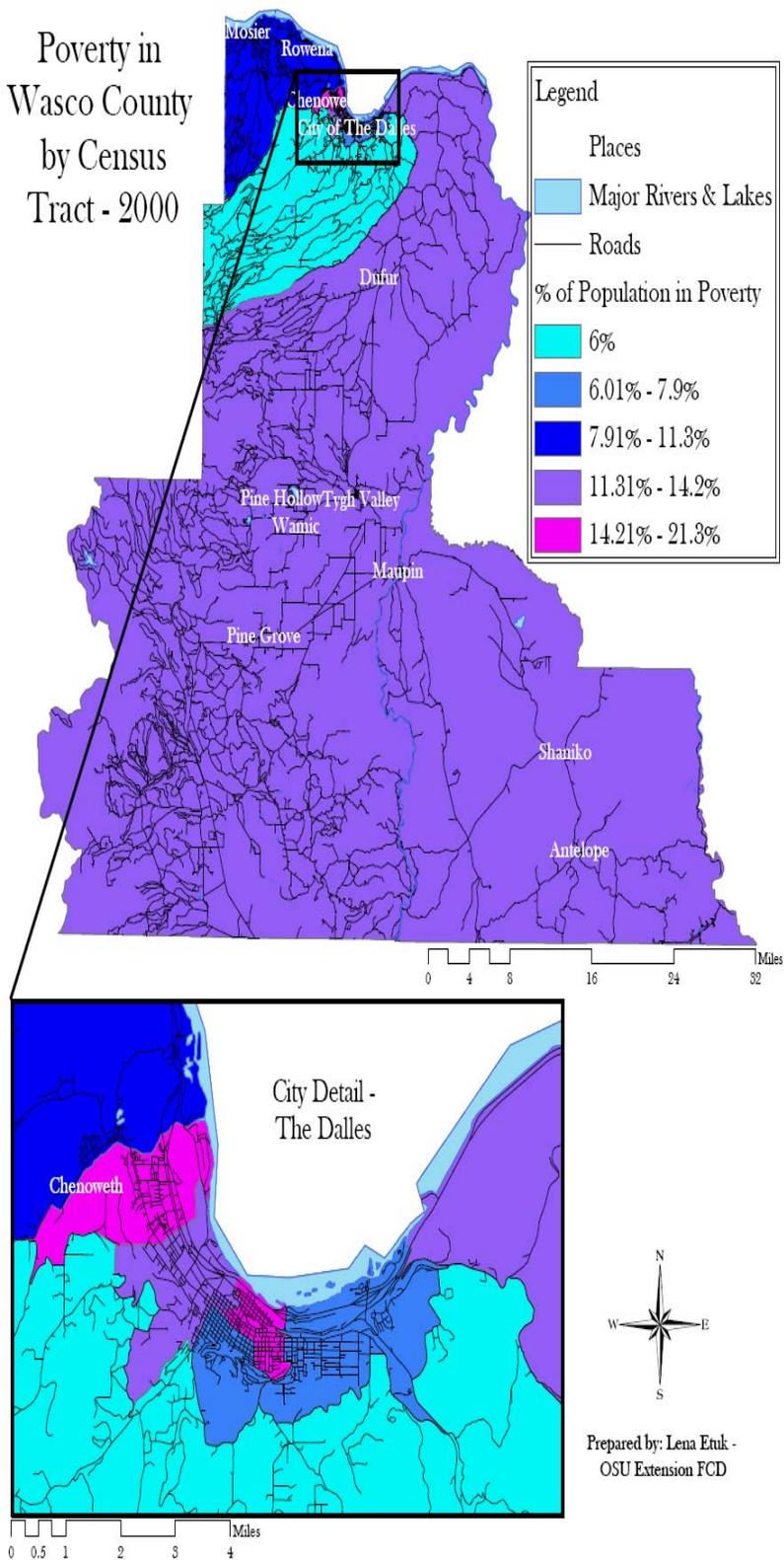
2000 FAMILIES AND CHILDREN IN POVERTY				
	Families with Children in Poverty	Children under age 18 in Poverty	Children under age 6 in Poverty	Percent of Children in Poverty
WASCO	496	1,057	393	17.8%
OREGON	54,931	121,460	44,662	14.7%

INCOME DISTRIBUTION 2000		
	WASCO	OREGON
Total Households	9,390	1,335,109
>\$15,000.00	19.6%	15.1%
\$15,000 to \$24,999	14.4%	13.4%
\$25,000 to \$34,999	14.5%	13.9%
\$35,000 to \$49,999	18.7%	17.7%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	19.4%	20.2%
\$75,000 and above	13.4%	19.7%

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME		
	1990	2000
WASCO	\$24,908	\$35,959
OREGON	\$27,250	\$40,916

The following map was produced by a demographer from the Oregon State University Extension service on November 19, 2007 for the purposes of describing the highest concentration of poverty levels in Wasco County. This map demonstrates the wide-spread poverty throughout Wasco County and also demonstrates the concentration of people within the city limits of The Dalles who are experiencing the harshest conditions of poverty.

Poverty in Wasco County by Census Tract - 2000



Community Planning Processes

Wasco County has formed an Economic Development Commission. The Commission staff and members are dedicated to furthering the economic well-being of the entire county. A primary task of this commission is to bring all county needs into a consolidated document on an annual basis. This document will be titled the "Needs and Issues Inventory," and will form the basis for economic action activity in the county. Another important function of this group will be to keep commission members and local government officials informed of all activities taking place in the county and to be a resource for those activities. The Wasco County Economic Commission proposes to conduct a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis in 2009. The last analysis was conducted in 1999 and is currently outdated. Additionally, members of the commission are currently participants in the Ford Institute for Community Leadership program. This is a 4-year leadership development program that works to strengthen resources within rural communities throughout Oregon. (*Wasco County 2007 Economic Development Action Plan*)

Community Resources for People in Poverty



The Mission statement of the Mid Columbia Community Action Council is: *"To alleviate the causes and conditions of poverty in Wasco, Hood River and Sherman Counties."*

They provide:

- Energy Assistance
- USDA Daycare Food Program
- Regional Coordinating Agency for Oregon Food Bank
- Housing Assistance
- Home Weatherization Program
- Utilities Assistance
- Lifespan Respite Care Program
- Tax Counseling Services
- Leo R. Moore Jr. Program (assistance to stranded travelers)
- Mailboxes and/or Voice Mail boxes for homeless people or victims of Domestic Violence.



HOPE or Housing for People was established in 1989. This organization provides affordable housing options in the Columbia River Gorge and also offers emergency shelter for homeless persons in the Gorge through its voucher program.



The Oregon Department of Human Services provides the TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) program. This program gives cash assistance to families who are in situational poverty. Additionally, this agency provides Food Stamps, the JOBS Training Program, the ERDC (Employment Related DayCare) program, and the Oregon Health Plan for families



The Salvation Army is a local thrift store and is also a local site for Community Meals. The Salvation Army also provides shower and bathroom facilities for homeless individuals.



St. Vincent De Paul has a thrift store in The Dalles, they also contribute to the community by organizing the collection and distribution of food baskets, holiday baskets and clothing boxes and coat drives.

FELLOWSHIP OF CHURCHES is a local organization that brings local area churches together. This group performs various good deeds in the community and also serves as a small source of funding for local projects that benefit the poor or needy in the community.

FOOD PROGRAMS: *Bread & Blessings, Rainbow Valley Gleaners, Meals on Wheels, Mid Columbia Senior Center (Senior Meals), Seventh Day Adventists Community Centers, WIC (Women, Infants & Children), Windy River Gleaners.*



The Mid Columbia Housing Authority provides Section 8 and HUD Housing Programs. They also offer technical assistance and information about local housing opportunities for families. Locally, this agency is working toward housing solutions for working families.



EDUCATION OVERVIEW

Wasco County is home to three separate school districts including North Wasco County School District #21, Dufur School District #29, and South Wasco County School District #1. In addition, there are opportunities to attend private schools in The Dalles area. These include Sonrise Academy offering K-12 education, Covenant Christian Academy offering grades K-8, and St. Mary's Academy offering grades K-8. Additionally, the Columbia Gorge Community College partners with local schools to offer some college prep courses as well as some electives. In the 2003-2004 School year, 3,458 students were enrolled in the public education school system.

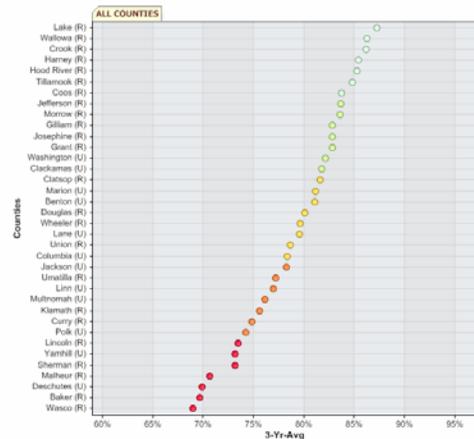
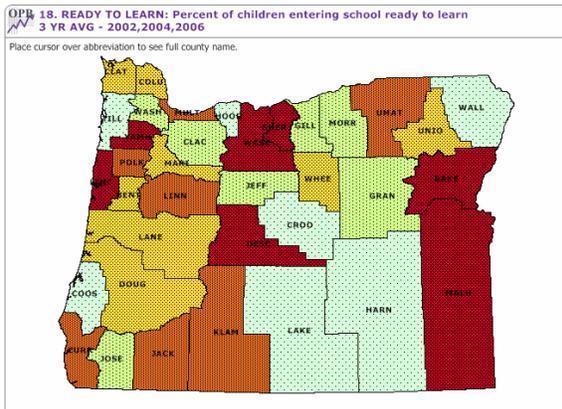
Readiness to Learn



Oregon measures the number of Kindergarten students who are prepared to learn upon entry into the school system. This is measured using a tool called the *Kindergarten Readiness Assessment*. Children are evaluated in the following areas: Physical Well Being, Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing, Approach to Learning, Cognitive Development, Fine Motor Skills, and Social/Emotional Development. Kindergarten teachers conduct this assessment within the first quarter of the school year. Results are collated by the Oregon Department of Education and published every other year by the Oregon Progress Board. The state has set a benchmark target of 85% of children in Oregon who will be *Ready To Learn* upon entering Kindergarten. In Wasco County, the percent of children who are *Ready to Learn* tends to rise and fall at extreme levels.

In 1997, only 42.2% of students were determined *Ready to Learn*. By 2000, that number rose to 57%, still a far cry from the state benchmark of 85%. In 2002, Wasco County jumped to 72.6% of children meeting *Readiness to Learn* indicators, however when measured again in 2004 the County fell back to 58.9%, ranking next to last among all counties in Oregon, finally, in 2006 Wasco County jumped back up to 75.4% of children who entered Kindergarten being prepared to learn. This created a three-year average of 69% of children being ready to learn or

In a 2007 survey conducted by the Wasco County Commission on Children and Families, 56% of respondents were Very Concerned about children being prepared to learn upon entering kindergarten/school.



31% (1/3) of children not prepared for school; currently ranking Wasco County very last (36th out of 36) counties for the benchmark of Readiness to Learn in Oregon.

Community Planning Processes

Late in 2006, the Wasco County Commission on Children and Families examined the County's progress in Oregon State Benchmark areas. At this time, they asked the Wasco County Early Childhood Committee to explore the Readiness to Learn outcome. The Committee met several times throughout 2007 to discuss the outcome. They reviewed the *Kindergarten Survey Tool*, including the data resulting from the use of the tool, and engaged in dialogue with an in-home childcare provider, a Head Start Administrator and a Kindergarten teacher to further explore the issues surrounding Early Childhood Development and what it truly means for a child to be "Ready To Learn" upon entering kindergarten. In addition, the group reviewed information provided by local Kindergarten Teacher, Melanie Reaves, regarding skills required to be successful in school and also a statewide initiative to improve readiness to learn.

The committee identified the need for enhanced communication regarding the skills that children need to acquire prior to kindergarten in order to be successful in the school setting. Currently, the local system of early education does not facilitate communication among childcare providers, pre-school teachers, parents and kindergarten or first grade teachers. Parents do not generally have contact with kindergarten teachers or other school staff regarding their child's developmental skills until after their child is enrolled in class. Pre School programs are not necessarily coordinated with Kindergarten classroom curriculum.

Additionally, in the Spring of 2007, the Wasco County Commission on Children & Families implemented a community survey titled *Five*

Minutes for Families; results from this survey indicate community perception regarding services related to children and families. In this survey, 56% of respondents were **VERY CONCERNED** about children in the County being prepared to learn upon entering kindergarten. Additionally, 75% of respondents were **VERY CONCERNED** about children & adults being able to read & write.

Action Plan

After reviewing all of the information; the Early Childhood Committee developed a plan to begin addressing communication within the system of early education in Wasco County. The Committee proposed a plan to implement one-time workshops targeting parents of pre-school age children and child care professionals. Through these events, participants will learn about basic early childhood developmental skills and gain techniques to increase skill levels among pre-school age children.

Gaps

In Wasco County gaps in services related to Readiness to Learn outcomes have been identified primarily by the Wasco County Early Childhood Committee. Those gaps that specifically relate to Early Childhood Development are listed below:

- Availability of affordable quality childcare programs.
- Lack of a public childcare center.
- Availability of Pre-School education for families who are living just above the federal poverty guidelines.
- Lack of adequate training, education and coordination regarding the effects of maternal and care giver depression on early childhood development.
- Lack of coordination and communication amongst professionals in the early childhood service system.
- Lack of adequate and affordable public transportation continues to be an issue for

service delivery in Wasco County.

Barriers

The Wasco County Early Childhood Committee has identified some barriers to improving outcomes in Readiness to Learn, these include but are not limited to the following:

- Head Start is limited to serving only those families who are living at or below the federal poverty guidelines which are very low. This excludes many of Wasco County's working poor.
- School Districts do not have adequate staff capacity to perform early outreach services to families with pre-school age children.
- The majority of health, mental health and special education services are located in the city of The Dalles creating a travel barrier for many families living in more rural regions of the county.

Early Childhood

The Wasco County Early Childhood Committee has been committed to improving outcomes of Early Childhood Development for children in Wasco County. Below is a brief summary of some recent efforts in this area.

Action Plans

- Parent Education Initiative. In 2002, the Wasco County Early Childhood Committee created a task force to develop strategies to work toward the development of positive parenting skills. Over time, Wasco County has made some progress in this area. With funding from the Oregon Community Foundation and the Ford Family Foundation, and the Wasco County Commission on Children and Families, parenting classes are being offered for families with children ages 0-8.
- Child care. The Early Childhood Committee works to improve the availability of affordable quality childcare in Wasco County on a regular basis. Young children in Wasco County spend a considerable amount of time in child care situations; improving child care quality will improve early childhood developmental outcomes, thereby increasing readiness to learn

skills.

- Children's Fair. Each year, the Wasco County Early Childhood Committee works to coordinate a Children's Fair that usually takes place in connection to the *Week of the Young Child* in April. This fair includes activities, games and public service information for young children and their families.

Gaps

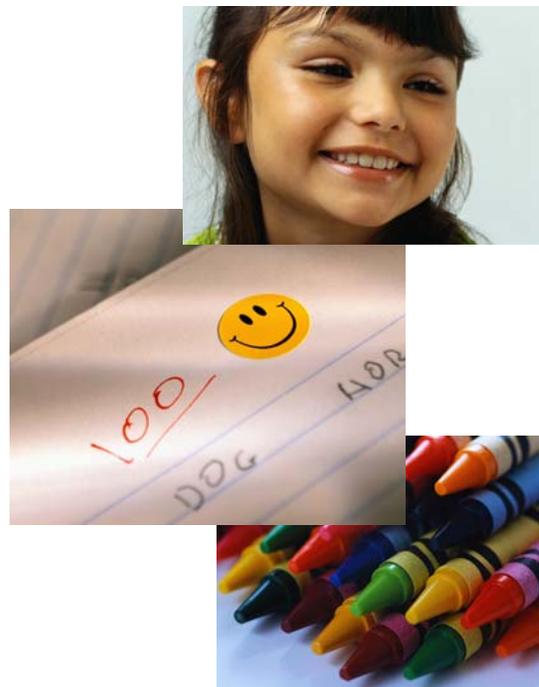
The Wasco County Early Childhood Committee has identified the following gaps in services:

- Child Care. In Wasco County there are currently no child care centers that are available to the general public.

Barriers

The following barriers have been identified in Early Childhood:

- Affordability and access to quality child care.
- Community norms regarding accessing parenting classes or other related services continue to be more negative than positive.
- Accessing long-term funding for sustainability of programs is an on-going issue.



Community Resources for Early Childhood Education



The Mid Columbia Children's Council provides Head Start, Early Head Start, and Oregon Pre-K programs in Wasco County. Children enrolled in these programs build Social, Emotional, Cognitive, Physical and Language skills. They also have access to health screenings, mental health evaluations, and nutrition programs. In this program, parents and families are active participants in their children's skill development. Parents receive regular home visits and also have opportunities to participate in programming.



The Oregon Child Development Coalition provides Migrant Seasonal Head Start, Oregon Pre-Kindergarten, HIPPIY Home Visitors, PODER Family Literacy, Migrant Education, a Meals Program, and Wrap Around Child Care programs. These programs are inclusive of the family and are designed to be culturally appropriate.



The Region 9 Education Service District offers Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education in Wasco County. Services include: Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Family Consultation, Vision & Hearing Services, Toddler Group, Pre-School or Pre-School Consultation, and Autism Services.

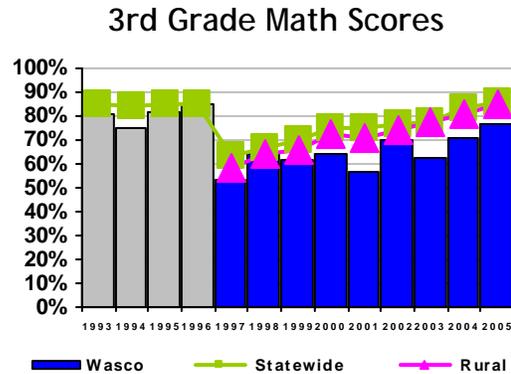
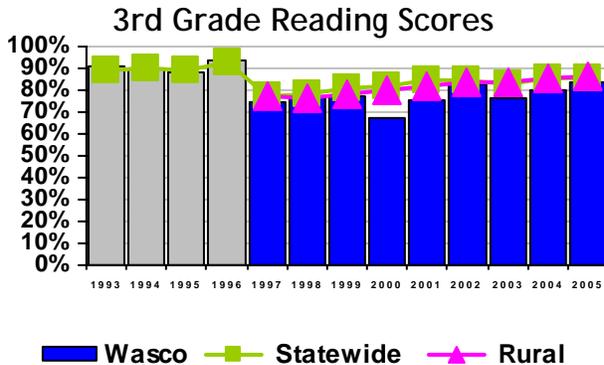


The Wasco Co. Commission on Children and Families coordinates the Parent Education Initiative in Wasco County; offering evidence based parenting classes designed to improve outcomes for children, especially early childhood development skills.

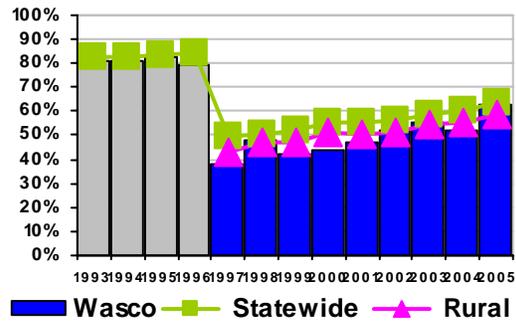
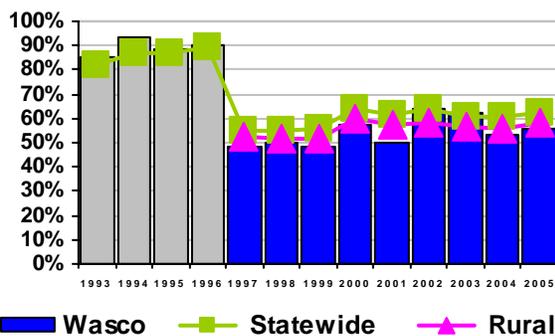


Student Achievement

Oregon measures reading and math scores for 3rd and 8th grade students as benchmarks for the public education system. The state has set targets for the percentage of students who should pass assessments. The 3rd Grade Reading Benchmark target is 90% and the 3rd grade Math Benchmark target is 81%. For 8th graders the Reading Benchmark target is 71% and the Math Benchmark target is 69%.

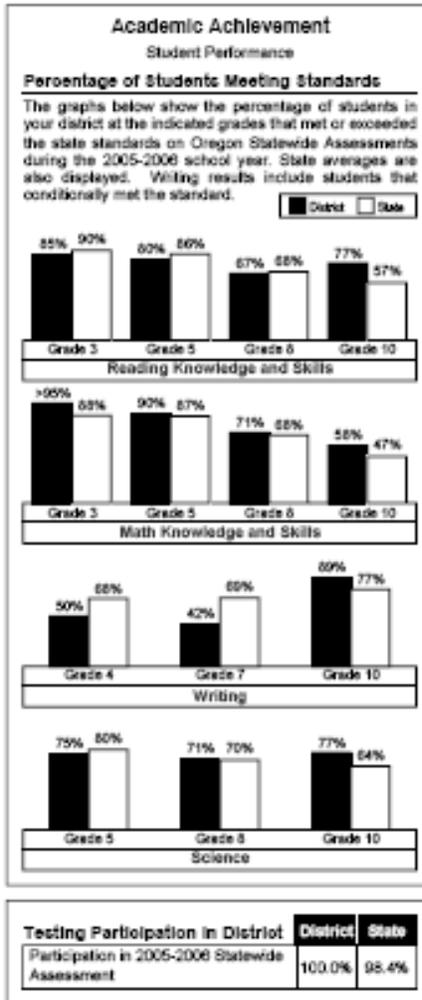
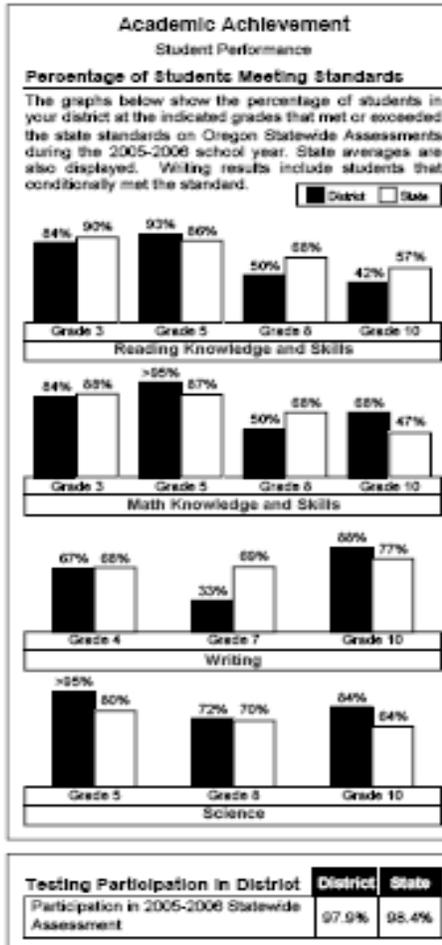


Wasco County students score slightly below the statewide and rural averages for 3rd grade reading while math scores show a more significant gap. In 2005, the Oregon Progress Board reported that 83.2% of Wasco County Students met reading achievement levels compared to 84.3% for the state. However, only 76.9% of Wasco County Students met achievement levels in math compared to 82.5% of students statewide.



In 2005, the Oregon Progress Board reported that 55.8% of 8th grade students in Wasco County met reading assessment achievement compared to a 62.1% statewide average. And, in math, 63% of Wasco County students met achievement levels compared to only 60.9% of the statewide average.

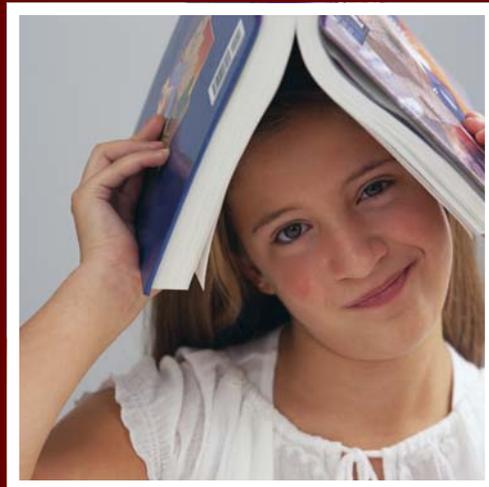
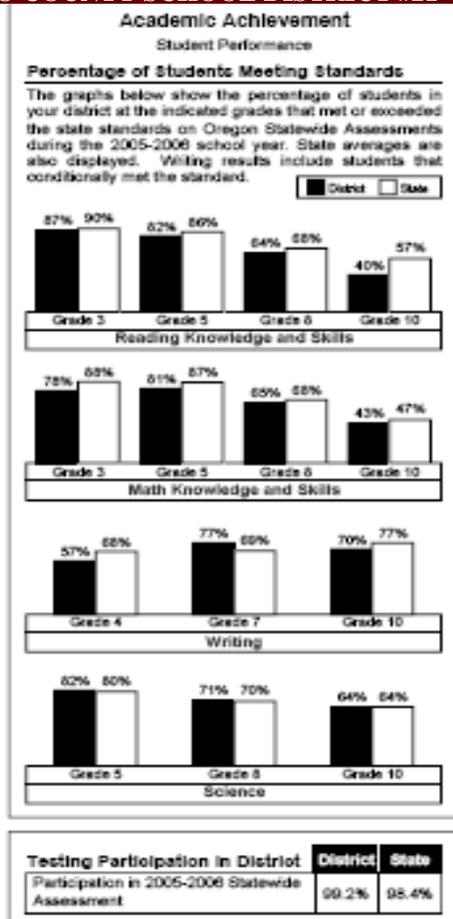
During the 2005-2006 school year students in Dufur School District #29 scored very high in science. The 5th grade class scored very high in all subjects. Middle school students have some room for improvement in the areas of reading and writing. The District reported a 92.3% attendance rate compared to 93% statewide. And nearly 92% of the teaching staff are rated as highly qualified. In addition the Dufur School Dist. MET all AYP designations.



During the 2005-2006 school year, students at South Wasco County School District #1 scored very high in Reading, Math, and Science with some improvement to be made amongst younger students in the area of Writing. The District reported an attendance rate of 92.8% compared to 93% statewide. The district qualifies as a High Poverty district and nearly 99% of the teaching staff are rated as highly qualified.

NORTH WASCO COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT #21

During the 2005-2006 school year students in the North Wasco County School District matched up very well with statewide averages in the area of Science and compared fairly well in the areas of reading, math and writing. Of all subjects, math has the most room for improvement. The district reported a rate of 92% for school attendance. 95% of schools in the district are high poverty schools



HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT

Overall, data shows that more Wasco County Youth stay in school than other youth throughout the state. The Oregon Progress Board reports a High School Dropout rate of 2.4% in 2004. The state-wide target for High School Dropout rates is 5.4%. The following tables show the number of graduates, dropouts and the graduation rate for each school district in the County.

DUFUR SCHOOL DISTRICT #29			
School Year	# of Graduates	# of High School Dropouts	Graduation Rate
05/06	19	3	86.4%
04/05	16	1	94.1%
03/04	25	2	92.6%
NORTH WASCO COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT #29			
School Year	# of Graduates	# of High School Dropouts	Graduation Rate
05/06	220	20	91%
04/05	183	14	92.9%
SOUTH WASCO COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT #29			
School Year	# of Graduates	# of High School Dropouts	Graduation Rate
05/06	21	1	95.5%
04/05	15	1	93.8%
03/04	12	2	85.7%



*We are upward bound,
the world's bright future,
The generation that will not betray
Its noblest dreams,
the things that we've been taught here,
The ways of peace and brotherhood and love.*

*So as we make this final farewell gesture
And take our leave on graduation day,
Let us thank the teachers
that we've found here,
Who must each day be
what they hope to prove.*

*What a gift you've given us—yourselves!
The best in you,
that you might be a sign
To us of what the best in us can be:
Loving, smart, hardworking, fair, and kind.*

*Your temperament's
the well-wrought text that tells
Us more than any lesson you assign.
We become the people that we see
And treasure long the good we leave behind.*

SCHOOL VIOLENCE

In general, Wasco County schools are very safe. Most students report that they feel safe at school. The following data has been extracted from the 2005-2006 Oregon Healthy Teens Survey Summary.



2005/2006 Survey Results	8th Grade	11th Grade
During the past 30 days, have you ever been harassed at school (or on the way to school)?	YES 46.3%	YES 29.1%
	NO 53.7%	NO 70.9%

2005/2006 Survey Results	8th Grade	11th Grade
During the past 30 days, on how many days did you carry a gun on school property?	0 days 98.8%	0 days 99.1%
	6+ days .1.2%	6+ days .9%

2005/2006 Survey Results	8th Grade	11th Grade
During the past 12 months, how many times were in a physical fight on school property?	0 82%	0 96.3%
	1 10.1%	1 3%
	2 or 3 5.5%	2 or 3 .4%
	4 or 5 1%	10 or 11 .4%
	6 or 7 .2%	
	8 or 9 .2%	
	10 or 11 .7%	
12 or more .2%		

2005/2006 Survey Results	8th Grade	11th Grade
During the past 12 months, how many times has someone taken money or things directly from you by using force, a weapon, or threats in school or on school property?	0 95.2%	0 98.1%
	1 2.9%	1 .8%
	2 or 3 1.2%	4 or 5 .8%
	4 or 5 .5%	12+ .4%
	12 or more .2%	

2005/2006 Survey Results	8th Grade	11th Grade
During the past 30 days, how many times did you not go to school because you felt you would be unsafe at school or on your way to school?	0 days 90%	0 days 3.4%
	1 day 4.3%	1 day 3.9%
	2 or 3 days 2.9%	2 or 3 1.1%
	4 or 5 days .9%	4 or 5 .8%
	6+ days 1.9%	6+ days .8%

2005/2006 Survey Results	8th Grade	11th Grade
During the past 30 days, on how many days did you carry a weapon other than a gun on school property?	0 days 97.7%	0 days 95.8%
	1 day 4.3%	1 day 1.1%
	2 or 3 days .5%	2 or 3 1.1%
	4 or 5 days .7%	6+ days 1.9%
	6+ days 2.8%	

2005/2006 Survey Results	8th Grade	11th Grade
During the past 12 months, has someone threatened you with a weapon such as a gun, knife or club on school property?	0 91.3%	0 97.7%
	1 5.4%	1 1.5%
	2 or 3 1.6%	2 or 3 .4%
	4 or 5 .5%	8 or 9 .4%
	6 or 7 .2%	
	8 or 9 .4%	
	10 or 11 .2%	
	12 or more .2%	

2005/2006 Survey Results	8th Grade	11th Grade
During the past 12 months, how many times has someone deliberately damaged your property (such as clothing, books, or other property) in school or on school property?	0 78.5%	0 86.8%
	1 9.7%	1 7.5%
	2 or 3 6.7%	2 or 3 5.3%
	4 or 5 2.3%	8 or 9 .4%
	6 or 7 .2%	
	8 or 9 .2%	
	10 or 11 .5%	
	12 or more 1.7%	



Community Planning Processes

In the past six years to current, there have been many community efforts to improve educational and school success outcomes for children and youth in Wasco County. There are various groups and organizations who are working on issues related to school success. The following information is not necessarily inclusive of every effort, rather it is a brief summary of some prominent community processes that have been collaborative in nature.

South Wasco County



In South Wasco County, a group formed in 2005 to begin analyzing risk and protective factors for children, youth and families in the communities in the more southern regions of Wasco County; specifically those that fall within the boundaries of the South Wasco

County School District #1. School District staff were highly involved on the committee; the committee was convened by the Wasco Co. Commission on Children and Families; other members included parents, a County Commissioner, and concerned citizens. The group identified issues throughout the age continuum including: Readiness to Learn, access to public services, drug and alcohol use among youth, and youth engaging in risky behaviors; especially sexually risky behaviors.

Action Plan

This group developed a multi-faceted action plan to address these issues.

- The School District partnered with the Wasco County Prevention Coalition (now operating as YOUTH THINK) to bring the presenter, Brad Henning, to the community. Brad Henning worked with youth and parents to reduce risky behaviors including sexually risky behaviors among youth.
- A member of the South Wasco Co. School District staff was trained in the promising practice *Girls Circle* and the District obtained a full set of the curriculum. The District has plans to implement this curriculum and is hopeful that the *Girls Circle* company will successfully develop the *Boys Council* curriculum so that the District can implement this type of program-

ming for all students.

- The group worked with a local coordinator through a small grant from the Wasco County Commission on Children & Families to implement a community wide event in May 2007. This event was called the *Family Expo & Community Sale*. The event was in collaboration with the annual community sale and patriotic pet parade. The Family Expo portion of the event that was funded by the Commission included positive youth activities and an information fair about public services. Both public and private service providers manned information booths and distributed information about accessing services.
- The South Wasco Co. School District also received grant funds from the Wasco Co. Commission on Children and Families to implement two programs targeting school readiness and academic achievement. The first is a school readiness program; the school district is developing a program that will distribute new books to all children residing in the district from the time they are born and continuing until they enter kindergarten. Books are distributed on a regular schedule promoting the connection between reading and early childhood development. The second program offered by the School District with grant funds addresses academic achievement of school age children in math. The district offers *Family Math Nights* at least three times each year. These events bring parents and children together to engage in fun activities that promote the enhancement of math skills. Parents also receive tips about helping their school age children with homework. These events have proven to be very successful with an average attendance of 40 participants.

Gaps

South Wasco County has identified the following gaps in services.

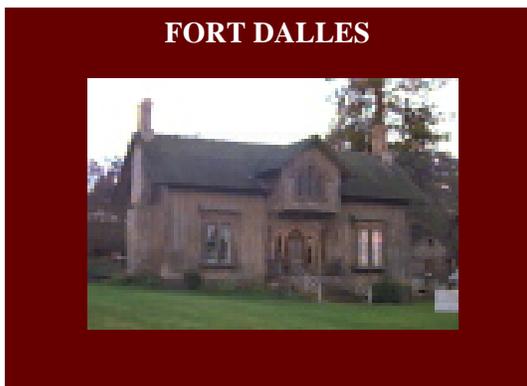
- Adequate childcare services. Childcare in South Wasco County is offered sporadically. There is no formal child care center or program offered. Most child care is obtained through family and friends; however, a few family child care providers do operate businesses in the region.

- Pre School services. Head Start does operate in the Southern regions of the County; however families that do not qualify for Head Start services struggle to find adequate pre school opportunities and/or other opportunities for adequate socialization of their young children. The School District has funded a program called *Great Start* to meet this need; however funding is not secure and the program struggles with sustainability.
- Positive youth activities outside of school district sports. This gap was identified at a Youth Summit in 2006/2007. At that time, a group of youth applied for a mini-grant through the Wasco Co. Youth Action Council to create a Snow Boarding Club as an alternative activity for youth. This was successful, however it was of limited term duration. This is an on-going gap.

Barriers

Barriers have been primarily identified by the community action group that formed in 2005.

- Transportation. Wasco County is approximately 100 miles North to South. From Maupin to The Dalles, it is approximately 45 miles of steep terrain. There is no public transportation for residents of rural Wasco County into the city of The Dalles where virtually all public services are centered and offered. Additionally, within the District boundaries of South Wasco County, transportation barriers exist. Many residents live in isolated rural locations and struggle with dependable transportation. Many youth do not have transportation to attend or participate in activities outside of school district transportation.



Elementary School Age Children

Multiple community groups are currently working to improve outcomes of school success for elementary school age children. The following information is a brief summary of some of those efforts.

Action Plans

- CHILD. A new non-profit organization was formed in October 2006 to address literacy among young children. Originally, this group was responsible for starting the SMART (Start Making A Reader Today) program in The Dalles. The organization has expanded and is currently offering the SMART program in all three elementary schools in North Wasco Co. School Dist. #21 and is also operating the Reach Out & Read program at Columbia Hills Family Medicine, the largest medical clinic in The Dalles.
- OSU Extension. The 4-H division of the OSU Extension office in Wasco County has been very active in providing positive activities for youth in Wasco County. They offer the traditional 4-H program and also strive to partner with other organizations to provide after school activities for children. During the 2005-2007 biennium, OSU Extension provided an after school program at Colonel Wright Elementary School that combined learning, gardening and homework help in an after school program.
- North Wasco County School District held a community process during the 2005-2007 biennium to make some decisions regarding curriculum use throughout the district. This was a facilitated process that was inclusive of many partners including youth, parents, staff from all sectors of the district, and community partners. The process took place over multiple meetings and took many months to accomplish.
- Boys & Girls Club of America. During the 2005-2007 biennium, a grass roots organization was formed in an effort to establish a Boys & Girls Club in The Dalles. This group has established a 501c3 non-profit status and is making progress toward their goals.
- St. Mary's Academy. In 2006-2007. St. Mary's Academy received a mini-grant from



the Wasco County Youth Action Council as a result of their participation in the Youth Summit. Through this grant, they established a program at their school that promotes volunteerism and healthy environments. The entire school participated in this project that centers around recycling and composting.

Gaps

The following gaps have been identified by various groups, community surveys and the Early Childhood Committee:

- After School Programming. Currently there is a crisis in after school programming in Wasco County. There is only one after school program that is currently operating as of November 1, 2007. That program is operating at The Dalles Middle School. Colonel Wright Elementary School is working to reinstate the after school program that had been operational at their school last year. Many families are at a loss as to know what to do to keep their children safe during the after school hours when parents are still at work.

Barriers

- Transportation. One barrier to providing after school programming or other programs for the Elementary School population continues to be transportation. This issue is intensified for the more rural regions of Wasco County.



Middle School thru High School Youth

Many organizations and community partners are working on behalf of youth and in collaboration with youth to improve outcomes related to school success and the reduction of risky behaviors. The following are brief summaries of some of these efforts:

Action Plans/Resources



The Parent Project. In 2002, staff at The Dalles Middle School identified a need to reach out to parents of middle school age youth. Staff took the initiative to find suitable programming and a small grant from the local Commission on Children & Families to purchase curriculum and training. Since that time, staff have been offering this program consistently with terrific outcomes for families and youth.



Girls Circle. In 2004, a group of middle school age female youth were presenting an elevated level of high risk factors. Multiple community partners collaborated to implement the promising practice, *Girls Circle*, since that time, these groups have been offered consistently. The groups help girls to address issues related to school, social and family. Currently, the community is working to find ways to expand this service to non-traditional populations and also to implement the new *Boys Council* curriculum that has been developed by the same company.



System of Care. The Mid Columbia Center for Living received a six year federal grant to implement the System of Care philosophy of service implementation in the Columbia Gorge region. The basis of this system is service delivery that is in partnership with families or is family driven and is inclusive of all public service delivery partners. The grant is currently in its fourth year.



Student Assistance Program. This program is currently funded by the Wasco Co. Commission on Children & Families through the Juvenile Crime Prevention grant stream. The program provides crisis intervention for youth and families. The program strives to keep youth safe and in school.



Challenge Day. The North Wasco County School District and the Wasco County Prevention Coalition or YOUTH THINK have partnered together to reduce school violence, bullying and other risky behaviors among youth. This program first took place at the Districts' 9th grade campus during the 2006-2007 school year and has continued in the current school year, expanding to the High School and Middle School campuses. In addition to the one-time event, the schools create youth groups with the theme, "Be the Change."



YOUTH THINK. The Wasco County Prevention Coalition has been working toward a community wide multi-media campaign to increase awareness of

youth issues, primarily issues related to the use of illegal substances among youth. This campaign has recently been launched in the community.

YOUTH THINK also partners with school districts, Neighborhood Watch, Youth Action Council, and multiple other community groups to promote positive outcomes for youth in Wasco County.



Youth Action Council

The Wasco County Youth Action Council (YAC) promotes positive youth development and leadership skills among youth throughout Wasco County. Youth who participate in this group create action plans each year to address current issues among their peers. This is a County-wide program sponsored by the Wasco County Commission on Children & Families and funded through State A&D #70 grant funds.

Youth Center. A grass roots effort has been started in The Dalles to develop a Youth Center facility to promote positive activities for youth. There is a group that meets regularly toward this goal.

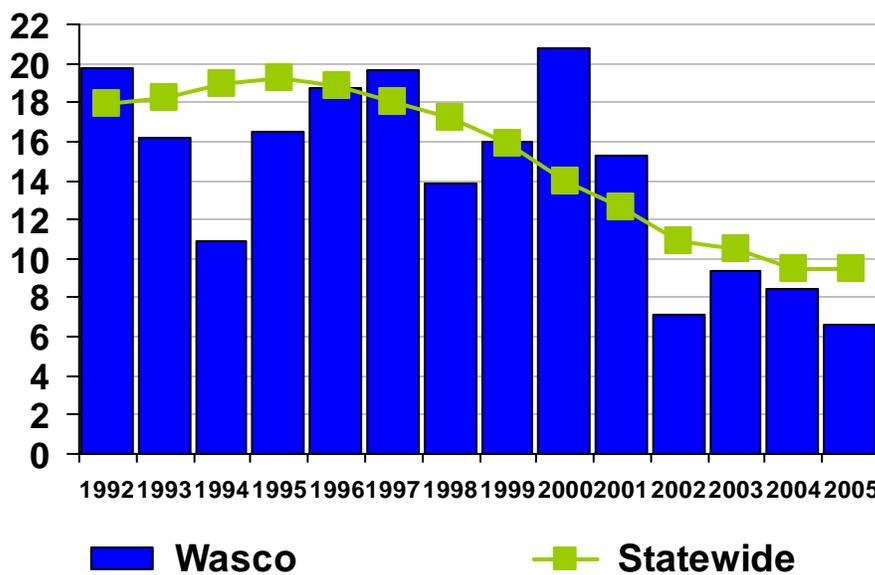


STEP. Mid Columbia Center for Living has received federal grant funding to implement the STEP (Strengthening Treatment Effectiveness through Partnerships). This program provides prevention/intervention services to youth at risk of or currently abusing substances.

OTHER YOUTH INDICATORS

TEEN PREGNANCY

Teen Pregnancy is measured by the sum of resident live births and induced abortions among females ages 15-17 divided by the estimated population of females ages 15-17. The rate does not include spontaneous abortions and fetal deaths. The pregnancy rate includes live births to Oregon residents and abortions for Oregon residents regardless of where the abortion was performed. Out-of-state abortions for Oregon residents may be under-reported because some states where Oregon residents go to have abortions do not report the patient's state of residence.



This table from the Oregon Progress Board shows that teen pregnancy rates can vary greatly from year to year in Wasco County. However, overall teen pregnancy rates are in a downward trend statewide and Wasco County has had relatively low rates of teen pregnancy for the past few years.

In the 2005-2006 Oregon Healthy Teen Survey; 76, 8th graders and 83, 11th graders reported that they have had sexual intercourse.



Pregnant and parenting teens in Wasco County can find assistance through Families First Home Visiting Services, Wasco/Sherman Public Health Department Home Visiting and Nutrition Services including WIC, Dept. of Human Services Housing, Cash Assistance, Food Stamps, Employment Related Day Care, and Oregon Health Plan, local parenting classes. In some schools in Wasco County, babies can attend classes with their teenage mothers.

In addition, many Wasco County Schools offer the "Baby Think it Over" curriculum where students get the opportunity to care for a baby simulation doll and learn about some of the realities of parenting.

RUNAWAY and/or HOMELESS YOUTH

An Oregon Statewide committee has developed the following definition of Runaway and Homeless youth:

“Runaway and Homeless Youth are non-system youth (youth not being served by or ineligible for publicly funded human services) or youth, ages 11-24, who have fallen out of state systems of care, including juvenile justice, child welfare, education, mental health and substance abuse. They lack a stable residence and/or live away from parents or guardian.”



Homeless youth also include those youth whose families themselves are homeless. Families are homeless if they do not have an address of their own, they may be living with relatives or in a vehicle, in a shelter or on the street.

WASCO COUNTY YOUTH SERVICES		
Runaway Youth: Youth who spent a minimum of one night outside of their residence and were reported to law enforcement by their parent or guardian		
Description	2005	2006
Total Un-Duplicated # of Youth	24	20
Female	17	14
Male	7	6
Under 12 years old	2	4
13-15 years old	11	2
16 years old and older	10	14
Hispanic	4	3
Native American	1	0
White/Caucasian	19	17

WASCO COUNTY YOUTH SERVICES		
Curfew: Youth who were contacted by law enforcement out after mid-night without approval or knowledge — at risk for run away		
Description	2005	2006
Total Un-Duplicated # of Youth	30	38
Female	16	10
Male	14	28
Under 12 years old	2	4
13-15 years old	17	20
16 years old and older	11	14

WASCO COUNTY YOUTH SERVICES		
Risk Factor: Youth who have documented histories of poor family relations and/or abuse/neglect and/or substance use — at risk for run away		
Description	2005	2006
Total Un-Duplicated # of Youth	43	33
Female	40	20
Male	13	13
Under 12 years old	1	12
13-15 years old	31	11
16 years old and older	11	10

During the 2006-2007 School Year; The Dalles Wahtonka High School documented:

120 HOMELESS STUDENTS

These youth are between the ages of 14-17 and meet the definition of homeless/runaway youth according to the state legislatures definition.

It is unknown how many homeless youth there are in Wasco County. From the documented number of youth who meet the statewide definition and are/were attending high school in The Dalles in 2006/2007, we can only assume that the number is great.

In 2005, the Oregon Homeless and Runaway Work Group estimated that 24,000 youth aged 11 to 21 had run away, been abandoned, or were homeless in Oregon during FY 2002-2003.

According to National Demographics sited in the *NRCFCPP Information Packet: Runaway & Homeless Youth*;

- In the course of a year, an estimated 500,000 to 1.5 million young people in the nation run away from or are forced out of their homes, and an estimated 200,000 are homeless and living on the streets.
- 75% of runaways are female
- the ages of runaways range from younger than 11 to over 18, with more than half being age 15 or 16.
- Approximately 66% of youth who are runaways seek assistance from youth shelters because of problems with parental relationships.
- Child abuse studies of homeless youth indicate rates of sexual abuse ranging from 17% to 53% and physical abuse ranging from 40% to 60%.

Community Process

On February 7, 2007, the Wasco County Commission on Children and Families hosted a community forum regarding Homeless and Runaway Youth in Wasco County. As a result of the forum, a 40-member advisory committee was formed and an action plan was developed. This action plan was presented to the Wasco County Commission on Children and Families in August 2007 by Robin Cope.



Action Plan

The Commission on Children and Families Staff together with the staff of the Wasco County

Youth Services Department and Susan Brewer Vision and Consulting services have been working to identify and secure funding to implement the plan. Together they have submitted a Federal Grant Application that was unsuccessful and are currently working to complete an application to access state funding through the Oregon Commission on Children and Families. If successful, this grant would fund 1.5 FTE to perform outreach services to homeless and runaway youth in addition to building up community resources to meeting the needs of these youth.

The Wasco Co. Commission on Children and Families has committed funding through the Federal Youth Investment grant to begin implementation of the Action Plan. Over the next few months, the advisory committee will be reconvened to discuss implementation of the plan.

Additionally, beginning in 2004, the Wasco County Commission on Children and Families convened a regional workgroup to discuss needs in the area of Shelter Care for youth. This group discovered that the current services available were inadequate to meet the needs of youth in the region. As a result of this process, the Commission established a Request for Proposal process requesting that local agencies develop solutions to the issue. Only one proposal was received; it was from the Wasco County Youth Services Department who developed the Family Resource Home Program. This program includes three (3) local families who volunteered to commit to intensive training and be available on a rotating basis as crisis shelter for youth in Wasco County. This program is currently operational and is being supported without further grant funds from the Commission. Also, the program is in the process of being replicated in Sherman County and other rural counties.

Gaps

One primary gap in services has been identified for this population:

- Shelter. Currently Wasco County does not have a 24-hour facility that is open to homeless and/or runaway youth.

Barriers

Multiple barriers have been identified regarding

services to this population.

- Transportation. There is no public transportation system that covers the entire Wasco County region and transportation within the city of The Dalles is limited.
- Identification of Homeless Youth. The population of homeless and/or runaway youth are hidden in our communities. These youth often have spent their lifetime learning to be inconspicuous to avoid abuse or insult. Also, by definition, these youth are not accessing public services and will require extensive outreach services.
- Funding. Accessing long-term sustainable sources of funding for shelter care is difficult at best. Wasco County is currently exploring capacity and resources to operate a full time shelter program.
- Proximity to Portland. Wasco County is located approximately 80 miles from the states biggest city, this proximity allows youth the opportunity to run further from home and may increases risk factors among the population.

In a recent community survey implemented by the Wasco County Commission on Children and Families; 93% of respondents were **CONCERNED** about problems facing homeless youth, adults or families.

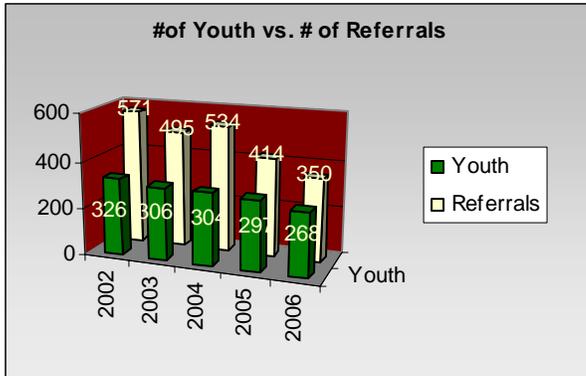




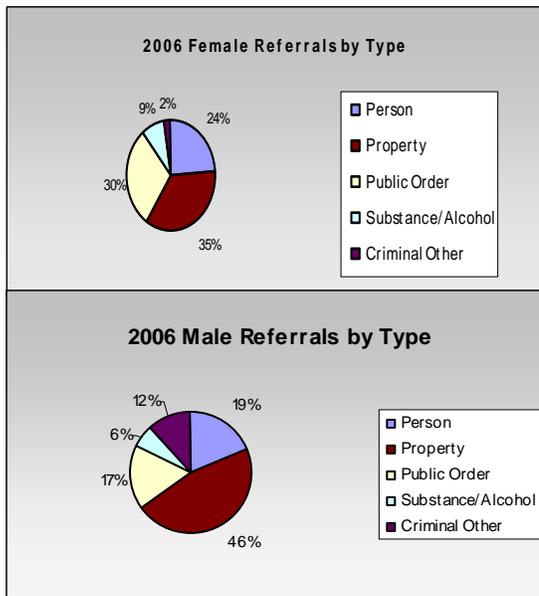
JUVENILE CRIME

In a recent survey by the Wasco Co. Commission on Children and Families, nearly 65% of community respondents were VERY CONCERNED about Juvenile Crime in our community.

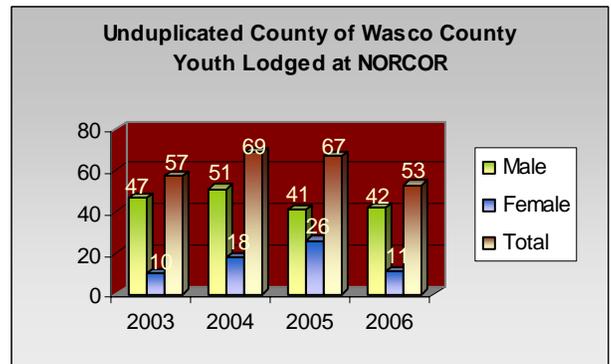
In 2006, 268 youth had 350 referrals to the Wasco County Youth Services Dept. for juvenile offenses. There has been a downward trend in both the number of youths committing offenses and the number of referrals made to the Department of Youth Services in the past decade.



For both male and female juvenile offenders, property crimes are the most prevalent, however, there is a wide variance in the percentages of crime types among the genders. The percentage of various types of crime vary by year, but not significantly.

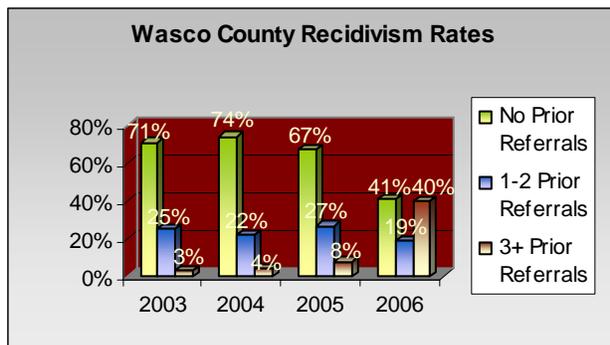


In 2006, a total of 53 Wasco County youth were held in the NORCOR Juvenile Detention Facility. The total time youth spent in custody was 1117 hours. Male youth spent more hours in custody at NORCOR, 753 hours vs. their female counterparts who spent a total of 364 hours in detention. Additionally notable, 11 female youth were lodged at NORCOR a total of 27 times and 42 males were lodged a total of 59 times.



A total of 88 youth were ordered to complete community service. The Wasco County Youth Services Department has implemented a Work Service Program. Youth who are ordered to complete Community Work Service spend time working on various projects that benefit the whole community. These jobs range from community clean-up to moving furniture or assisting with community events. Most youth complete their required amount of hours within 3 months.

Another measure of Juvenile Crime is the rate of recidivism. Recidivism is defined as: repeated or habitual relapse, as into crime. It is especially important with youth to reduce the amount of recidivism, changing negative behavior patterns before they are fully established as youth grow into young adults.



Community Planning Processes

Wasco County is currently a partner in the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative. This is a public/private partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation to examine policies and practices related to Juvenile Detention. Through this initiative, Wasco County has worked together with other rural counties to develop and pilot an intake assessment that assists in determining appropriate youth placements. Additionally, Wasco County has initiated training and assessment of practices currently taking place at the NORCOR Juvenile Facility.

Action Plan

As an outcome of the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative, Wasco County Youth Services has dedicated staff time to three unique projects in an effort to reach healthier outcomes for youth and their families.

J-WRAP. J-WRAP stands for Juvenile Wrap-around. This is a collaborative effort between the Wasco County Youth Services Department and Mid Columbia Center for Living. Youth in the J-WRAP program benefit from a team approach. Youth and their families come together with a Juvenile Counselor, a youth advocate and a family advocate. Other partners may be involved at the request of any team member. Together, this team identifies strengths of the youth and their family. Then the team works to develop a plan that will

meet the needs of the individual youth and their family. The plans usually include rewards and/or consequences to be delivered based on youth behavior.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROJECT.

The Community Education Project is collaborative project with partners from Mid Columbia Center for Living, and North Wasco County School Dist. #21. This program is designed to serve middle school students who pose emotional and/or behavioral challenges and are unable to be maintained in a conventional classroom. Each youth who enters the classroom has undergone assessments by all three collaborative partners and has assisted in the design of an Individual Behavior Plan.

The classroom is staffed by a mental health therapist and a family care coordinator from Mid Columbia Center for Living, a Juvenile Counselor from Wasco Co. Youth Services, and teachers from The Dalles Middle School. Each staff member provides a specific service with the eventual goal of returning the student to mainstream education classes.

FAMILY RESOURCE HOMES. Wasco County has taken the initiative to design a program to meet the needs of youth who run away from home or are at risk of running away. The county has trained three residential homes (families) up to the certification levels of the Oregon Youth Authority. These homes rotate on an on-call basis and provide emergency shelter for youth. Teens who access the shelter receive health and mental health assessments and develop a plan for returning home or other appropriate care arrangements.

GAPS

- There are no homeless shelter programs in the County for adults or youth.
- There is no outreach program in the County to meet the needs of youth who are homeless or have run away from home.

Barriers

- The Dalles acts as a hub and often is the place where youth from more rural communities in both Oregon & Washington often run to, however funding is allocated by County and Wasco often must serve these youth with limited resources



YOUTH SUBSTANCE USE

In a recent survey by the Wasco County Commission on Children & Families, **78%** of community respondents were **VERY CONCERNED** about youth substance abuse.

The Oregon Department of Human Services recently convened a state Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup who developed three reports covering the impact of substance abuse in the state. In addition, the DHS Office of Mental Health has published a Prevention Booklet with a summary of the 2005 Oregon Healthy Teen Results. Some of that data for Wasco County is outlined below:

ALCOHOL

The *National Institute on Drug Use* has declared addiction to be a developmental disease of childhood and adolescence. Research by the *National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism* indicates that those who begin using alcohol before the age of 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who begin drinking at age 21. Delaying the onset of youth alcohol, tobacco and other drug (ATOD) use, and reducing the rates of youth ATOD use, are two critical goals for policy-makers and stakeholders interested in reducing overall rates of substance abuse and the social and financial burdens caused by it.

The Oregon Healthy Teen Survey asks 8th & 11th grade students:

“How old were you when you had more than a sip or two of beer, wine, or hard liquor for the first time?”

2005 Wasco County AGE of First Use 8th and 11th Grade Students					
	No Use	8 to 10 years	11 to 13 years	14 to 17 years	Total # of Responses
2005	43%	18%	18%	22%	493

“How much to do you think people risk harming themselves if they take one or two drinks of alcoholic beverages nearly every day?”

2005 Wasco County Perception of Harm 8th and 11th Grade Students					
	No Risk	Slight Risk	Moderate Risk	Great Risk	Total Responses
2005	14%	20%	26%	40%	469

“How wrong do you think it is for someone your age to drink beer, wine, or hard liquor regularly?”

2005 Wasco County Perception of Right or Wrong 8th and 11th Grade Students					
	Very Wrong	Wrong	A little Bit Wrong	Not Wrong at all	Total Responses
2005	49%	22%	19%	10%	476

“On how many occasions have you had beer, wine or hard liquor to drink during the past 30 days?”

2005 Wasco County AGE of First Use 8th and 11th Grade Students						
	No Use	1 to 2 Times	3 to 5 Times	6 to 9 Times	10 or More	Total # of Responses
2005	68%	18%	7%	2%	5%	491

TOBACCO

Smoking kills an estimated 430,000 Americans each year. In addition, research shows that teens who smoke are three times more likely than nonsmokers to use alcohol, eight times more likely to use marijuana, and 22 times more likely to use cocaine. Smoking is also associated with a host of other risky behaviors, such as fighting and engaging in unprotected sex. Very few people initiate smoking or become habitual smokers after their teen years. In the United States, nearly nine out of 10 current adult smokers report starting

smoking before the age of 19. In 2005, 87% of 8th and 11th grade Oregon youth had **not** used tobacco in the past 30 days.

In Wasco County, a total of 10% of 11th grade students and 14% of 8th grade students reported smoking cigarettes during the past month. Statewide, more high school students than middle school students report smoking. This is the opposite of Wasco County youth. Additionally, the rate of youth who report smoking is much higher in Wasco County than the rest of the state. Statewide the rates of youth who report smoking during the past month have been in a downward trend for the past 10 years.

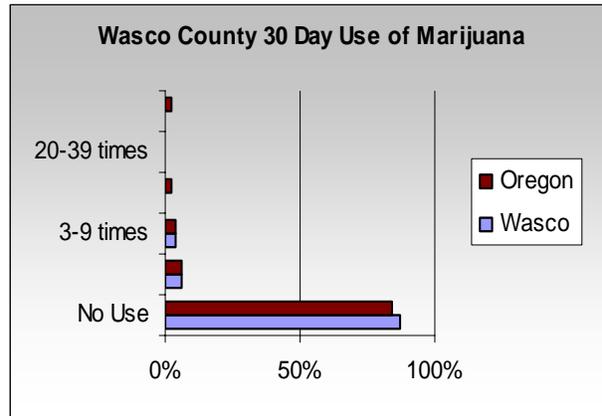
Of the 11th grade students who report that they smoke, 62% say that they began smoking when they were 13 years old or younger.

Research has shown that brain development in humans isn't complete until their early twenties. During that time of development, use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs can have a profound effect, particularly on those areas of the brain that govern inhibition and impulse control and which are the last to develop. At this time, there is *no known safe amount* of alcohol, tobacco, or any other drug of abuse for a youth whose brain is still developing.
Oregon DHS, Prevention Booklet 2006

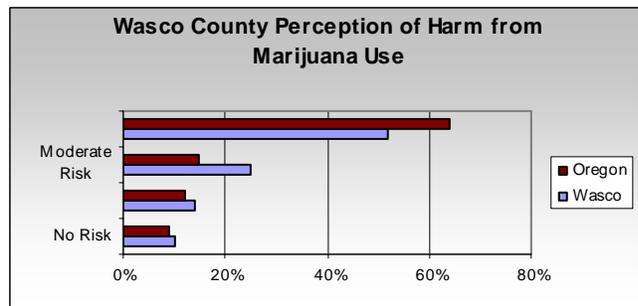
MARIJUANA

The Oregon Healthy Teen Survey asks questions about Marijuana use among 8th and 11th grade students.

“During the past 30 days, how many times did you use marijuana?”



“How much do you think people risk harming themselves if they smoke marijuana regularly?”

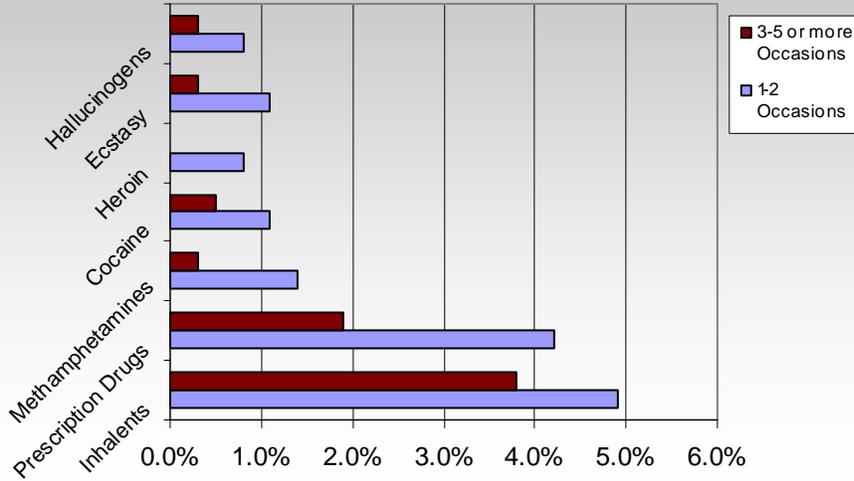


In 2005-2006 students in Wasco County reported marijuana use at a slightly lower rate than other Oregon youth and they also perceive a higher level of risk associated with the use of marijuana use.

OTHER DRUG USE

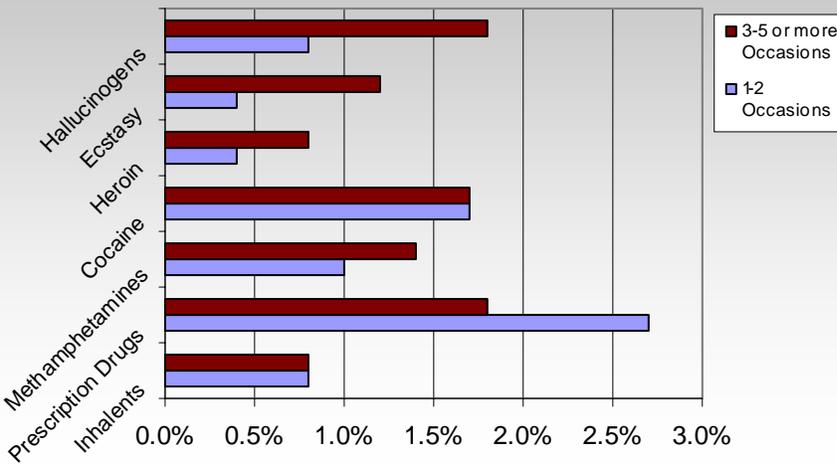
The Oregon Healthy Teen Survey also asks specific questions regarding the use of specific illicit drugs other than marijuana. The following graphs demonstrate the prevalence of use of the specific illicit drugs that students reported using during the 2005-2006 school years.

**2005-2006-OHT
Prevalence of 8th Grade Use of
Illegal Substances last 30 day use**



Oregon youth, 12 to 17, have use rates consistent with those of the nation. In 2005, 12.2 percent of Oregon youth used an illicit drug in the past 30 days, including marijuana. Rates of illegal drug use among youth are decreasing both in the nation and in the state of Oregon.

**2005-2006 OHT
Prevalence of 11th Grade Use of
Illegal Substances last 30 day use**



COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR YOUTH

In Wasco County there are many assets for youth and families. First, Wasco County is rich with opportunities for healthy recreational activities. Families and youth can enjoy camping, hunting, fishing, multiple water sports, snow sports, hiking, world class biking routes, youth and adult sports, and many other activities. Additionally, children, youth and families have access to a number of programs and services to assist them in reaching their full potential.

Children have many opportunities to get an early start on education through various pre-school opportunities both public and private. Pre-school is easier to access for families living in the Northern part of the County, specifically in The Dalles. For families who live in smaller communities South of The Dalles or families who live in isolated non-incorporated areas, transportation is a barrier to accessing services for their children.



Mid Columbia Children's Council, inc. provides Head Start, Early Head Start, Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program and Oregon Pre-K for children throughout the region. In Wasco Co. these programs are available in The Dalles, Dufur and Tygh Valley. In the 2007 Legislative Session, Head Start slots were increased by 35 in Wasco County.



The Oregon Child Development Coalition provides Migrant Head Start, Seasonal Head Start, Oregon Head Start, Migrant Education, and Early Literacy Program for families in Wasco County, especially the Migrant and Farm Worker population.



The START MAKING A READER TODAY (SMART) program is currently operating in every grade school in the North Wasco County School District. This

program recruits community volunteers to read with children in grades K-3 for 1 hour each week. Children and Adults benefit from a mentoring relationship. Children are selected to participate in the program by their teacher. This program expects to serve 120 children in 2007/2008 school year.



The OSU Extension office in

Wasco County provides 4H and Jr. Master Gardening Programs. From 2003-2007 OSU Extension partnered with Wasco Co. School Dist. to provide after school programming at Colonel Wright Elementary School. In addition, many children throughout the county benefit from programs and projects. OSU Extension plays a major role in the county fair each year.



Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Columbia Gorge recruits adult mentors who are matched up with children who have similar interests. Mentors spend a minimum of 4 hours per month with their "Little" Brother or Sister.



The Wasco County Prevention Coalition, **YOUTH THINK**, has provided after school programming at The Dalles Middle School for the past three years and has provided youth with positive activities for the past six years. In addition, the coalition partners with school districts throughout the county to provide education about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and other drug use. The Tobacco Education and Prevention Coalition partners provide reward and reminder activities throughout the county and work to decrease smoking in areas that are frequented by youth.



Since 2003, Girls in Wasco County have benefited from participating in *Girls Circle* groups. Originally, Mid Columbia Center for Living,

Wasco Co. Youth Services, JoElla Anglin, LCSW, and Wasco Co. Commission on Children & Families collaborated to purchase curriculum, train staff and offer the program. Many school districts have since trained staff and begun offering services in-house. The Commission on Children & Families continues to grant funds to implement at least four groups throughout the county. Additionally, similar curricula is being developed to serve boys and Wasco County is making plans to offer groups for both genders.

JoElla Anglin, LCSW offers the **STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM** through a grant from the Wasco County Commission on Children and Families. This program provides assessment, intervention, crisis counseling, and referral services for youth and their families.

 **YOUTH ACTION COUNCIL** The Wasco County Youth Action Council promotes Positive Youth Development and offers youth opportunities to increase Leadership Skills.

 Mid Columbia Center for Living (MCCFL) offers Mental Health and Addictions Services. Through federal and state funding, Mid Columbia Center for Living has offered the STEP (Strengthening Treatment Effectiveness through Partnerships) program. The STEP program offered alcohol and drug prevention and intervention services for youth throughout Wasco County. Additionally, MCCFL was the recipient of a federal grant to develop a System of Care for mental health services. Many youth and families have benefited from the family centered treatment and wraparound services offered.



 Mid Columbia Council of Governments (MCCOG) offers Oregon Youth Conservation Corps providing employment opportunities for youth as well as development of work skills. In addition, MCCOG offers alternative learning centers for participants of all ages, and is the only agency currently offering public transportation in Wasco County.



In a 2006 Survey conducted by the Gilmore Research Group on behalf of the Wasco Sherman Public Health Department, 83% of respondents reported that they have **NEVER** been told their children had serious health problems.

HEALTH INDICATORS



Prenatal Care

Women who begin prenatal care early in their pregnancy can have babies with better health outcomes. In Wasco County, the three-year (2001-2003) average early prenatal care rate was 85.7% per 1,000 live births.

The statewide average was 81.4% and the statewide target is 85% for this benchmark outcome.

Prematurity and Low Birth Weight

The leading cause of infant death are prematurity and low birth weight. During 2005, 290 babies were born in Wasco County. Of those, 10 babies had a reportedly low birth weight, 34.5% compared to 61.2% statewide.

Newborns have a low birth weight when they weigh less than 5.5 pounds. Many very small babies are premature, but not all.

Births to Young Mothers

Babies born to women under the age of 20 are at greater risk for complications and ongoing health problems. In 2005, 32 babies were born to Wasco County mothers who were younger than 20 years old. Comparatively, Hood River County also had 290 births in 2005 and 23 of those babies were born to mothers aged 15-19, a difference of 11 children.

Births to Unwed Mothers

In 2005, 102 babies (or 35.2%) were born to mothers who were not married. Single parent households was one of the top risk factors for Child Abuse and/or Neglect in Wasco County in 2003. Often families with just one parent struggle to meet the needs of children financially and emotionally.

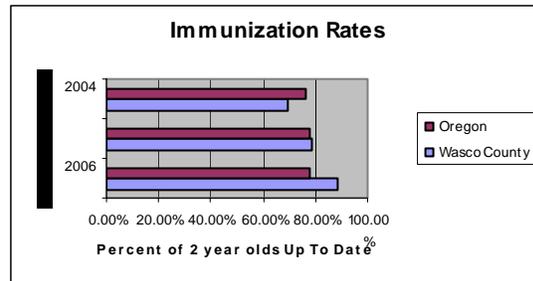
Substance Use during Pregnancy

In Wasco County, 15.2% of women who

gave birth in 2005 reported that they smoked or used tobacco products while pregnant, compared to 12.4% statewide. Additionally, .7% of mothers who gave birth in 2005 in Wasco County reported that they used alcohol and .7% reported the use of illegal drugs during their pregnancies. This compares with 1.4% and 2.1% respectively statewide. Substance use during pregnancy is measured by self-report of the mother.

Immunizations

The state of Oregon tracks immunization rates using the *Oregon ALERT Immunization Registry*. In Wasco County the rate of immunizations seems to be in an upward trend. It has been proven that immunization against infectious disease saves lives, especially the lives of children.



Infant Mortality

In 2005, one infant died in Wasco County. In 2004, four infants died in Wasco County. In 2003, there were 2 infant deaths in Wasco County. The numbers and factors vary widely in Wasco County, largely due to the relatively small population figures. The Oregon Progress Board reports a three year (2001-2003) average rate of 3.7 infant deaths compared to a rate of 5.6 statewide.



COMMUNITY HEALTH RESOURCES



The Wasco/Sherman Public Health Department provides many services to ensure that pregnant and/or nursing mothers and infants are healthy and thriving. Some of the programs include Maternity Case Management, WIC (Women, Infants, & Children), Babies First, Bilingual/Bicultural Health Worker and Cacoon. The Health Department also provides immunizations and family planning services.



Mid Columbia Medical Center has an established birthing center and provides a lactation consultant and highly qualified nursing staff. In addition, MCMC provides every family with a post-partum clinic that involves extensive referral services. MCMC also provides free childbirth classes.



Columbia River Women's Clinic is the only obstetrical clinic in Wasco County. The clinic staff are collaborative partners in the Home Visitation Referral Network and offer pre-screening for every family in Wasco and Sherman Counties.



Mid Columbia Center for Living offers treatment for addictions and mental health on a sliding fee scale.



Behavioral Health

In Wasco County, the Mid Columbia Center for Living (MCCFL) is the primary provider for mental health and addictions treatment services as designated by the Oregon Department of Human Services Addictions and Mental Health Division. Mid Columbia Center for Living provides services in Wasco, Hood River, Sherman and Gilliam Counties.

The following information was provided at a Community Forum held by Mid Columbia Center for Living on November 19, 2007.



The following table outlines estimated behavioral health service needs and MCCFL services provided relative to population in the Mid Columbia Region.

MENTAL HEALTH		4-County Region	WASCO	Hood River	Gilliam	Sherman
ENTIRE AGENCY	Estimated-ALL	4,187	2,090	1,768	165	164
	Est. %	8.5%	8.7%	8.3%	8.8%	8.8%
	MCCFL Served-ALL	1,305	688	426	82	47
	MCCCFL % of Pop	2.7%	2.9%	2.0%	4.4%	2.5%
	Population	49,155	24,070	21,335	1,885	1,865
	Difference	5.9%	5.8%	6.3%	4.4%	6.3%

ADDICTIONS		4-County Region	WASCO	Hood River	Gilliam	Sherman
ENTIRE AGENCY	Estimated-ALL	4,938	2,484	2,056	199	199
	Est. %	10%	10.3%	9.6%	10.6%	10.7%
	MCCFL Served-ALL	615	261	274	19	9
	MCCCFL % of Pop	1.3%	1.1%	1.3%	1%	.5%
	Population	49,155	24,070	21,335	1,885	1,865
	Difference	8.8%	9.2%	8.4%	9.5%	10.2%

Tables at the left demonstrate a need for increased behavioral health services in Wasco County. Especially in the area of Addictions Treatment Services where only 1.1% of the need is being met.

Mid Columbia Center for Living. Elke Geiger. (November, 2007) Behavioral Health in the Mid Columbia Region: Estimated Needs and MCCFL Services Provided.



Mid Columbia Center for Living reports that the most common diagnoses for mental health clients included depressive disorder and anxiety, followed by drug- and alcohol- related disorders.

Most referrals for mental health services come from: SELF (18%), Private Health Care Professional/Primary Care Physician (16%), Family/Friend (13%), Services to Children and Families/Other support program for child (10%).

Additionally, Mid Columbia Center for Living reports the following number of addictions by substance:

ADDICTION	WASCO	% of Total Addictions
Alcohol	141	37%
Cannabis	106	28%
Amphetamine	70	18%
Nicotine	14	4%
Gambling	21	5%
Opioid	11	3%
Cocaine	8	2%
Polysubstance	9	2%
Other Substance	1	<1%
TOTAL	381	100%

Mid Columbia Center for Living. (November 2007). Addictions among MCCFL AOD Clients in FY 2006-2007.

Client Diagnoses	WASCO		
	0-17	18+	ALL
Depressive Disorder	62	230	292
Anxiety, Somatic, Factitious D/O	68	166	234
Drug Related Disorders	49	173	222
Alcohol Related Disorder	42	154	196
Adjustment Disorders	84	66	150
Bipolar	21	105	126
ADHA & Disruptive Behavioral D/O	94	26	120
Schizophrenia	1	92	93
Personality Disorders	0	77	77
Impulse Control	4	30	34
Mental Retardation Disorder	0	27	27
Other Psychosis	3	21	24
Pervasive Developmental Disorder	18	5	23
Infant/Child/Adolescent Disorder	18	0	18
Learning Related Disorders	9	4	13
Mental D/O Due to General Medical Condition	11	2	13
Delirium, Dementia	0	5	5
Eating Disorders	0	4	4
Sexual Gender Identity	0	2	2
TOTAL	484	1189	1673

Mid Columbia Center for Living. Elke Geiger. (November 2007). Mid Columbia Center for Living Client Demographic Data for Wasco County FY 2006-2007.

Mid Columbia Center for Living reaches out to meet the needs of children and youth in Wasco County by offering two specialized programs. **COLUMBIA RIVER WRAPAROUND:** is based on the System of Care model and has been funded through a six year federal grant. The program strategies include: Social Marketing, Training, Education, Collaboration, Evaluation, System Building and Coordinated Services to infants and children ages 0-7 with severe emotional disorders and youth ages 8-21 who qualify for high level of need (CASSII) and at risk for restrictive home or school placement. **STEP: Strengthening Treatment Effectiveness through Partnerships** is a grant funded program that offers alcohol/drug prevention and intervention services to youth 13-18 years old.

CHILD CARE INDICATORS



"I've been doing family child care in my home for 15 years. I know I am doing a good thing even though it's not financially rewarding."

—A family child care provider in Wasco County

In 2004, there were 4,135 children ages 0-12 living in Wasco County.

- 1,431 children age 0-4 years
- 1,644 children age 5-9
- 1,060 children age 10-12

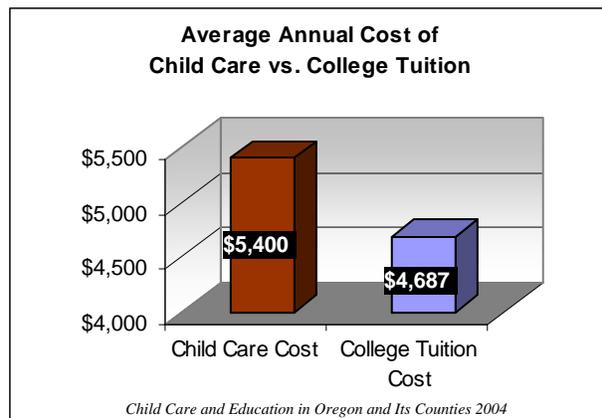
The use of childcare depends on the age of children, marital status, and employment status of parents. (*Child Care and Education in Oregon and Its Counties 2004.*)

- 77% of families with children under 13 are headed by two parents where one or both are employed
- 63% of families with children under 13 have a single employed or two employed parents
- 37% of families with children under 13 have at least one parent who is not in the paid workforce
- 34% of families with children under 13 use paid care
- Families use an average of 23.8 hours of paid care per week

In 2004 there were 726 child care slots in education centers and 341 child care slots in

family child care. The target for Oregon is to have 25 child care slots for every 100 children ages 12 and younger, Wasco County had 26 slots in 2004. (*Child Care and Education in Oregon and Its Counties 2004.*)

A major barrier to accessing quality child care is the cost to families who are already struggling to meet basic needs. The Oregon Department of Human Services provides Child Care Subsidies to working families whose income is below 185% of the Federal



Poverty line. This program is called Employment Related Daycare (ERDC). In order to benefit from this program, a family must qualify and prove that they are either work or enrolled in the DHS JOBS Program. Then, they must find a childcare provider who is either listed with DHS or is willing to complete the DHS "listing process." Once the child care provider becomes listed, they may submit billing forms to DHS monthly requesting payment for care given to children in the family. Each family has one co-payment that is determined by family size and income. The family pays the co-pay directly to the child care provider. The Oregon Department of Human Services has set rates that they are willing to pay for child care. If the cost of child care exceeds the rate that the state pays through ERDC, then the family must pay the balance of the child care costs plus their co-pay. (*Oregon DHS: Child Care Subsidy Information*)

In Wasco County, 99 children ages 3-4 years were enrolled in a Head Start program (80% of eligible) in 2004. Additionally, 145 children ages 0-12 years received state assistance with part or all of their childcare costs. (*Child Care and Education in Oregon and Its Counties: 2004*)

Community Planning Process

The Early Childhood Committee works to improve the availability of affordable quality childcare in Wasco County on a regular basis. Beginning in 2003 through 2007 the committee collaborated with the Wasco Co. Commission on Children and Families and Child Care Partners Resource & Referral to offer mini-grants for child care providers to increase the quality of child care environments through training, evaluation, and environmental improvement projects. Additionally, the committee has worked tirelessly to communicate with child care providers regarding their concerns and needs. In 2007, the committee supported a proposal by Child Care Partners Resource & Referral to implement a Childcare Appreciation Event in response to communication from providers about the lack of respect and/or acknowledgment of their profession. Additionally, the committee supported the implementation of a community forum regarding childcare needs in Wasco County. Through this forum the following concerns related to childcare were identified:

Concerns of Parents:

- Choices for child care are limited to family child care, employer based centers w/ limited community access, centers w/ part-time programs and eligibility requirements based on income.
- Not enough child care options for working families.
- Some childcare environments seem unhealthy and may be unsafe.
- Child Care is especially hard to find to meet the following needs: drop-in care, night/weekend care, sick care, care for children with special needs or disabilities.
- There is a need for child care worker training to care for children with special needs and/or disabilities.

Concerns outlined by Child Care Providers:

- Increased support for child care as a profession
- Increased appreciation and/or respect for the service to the economic vitality of the community.
- There is a lack of understanding about the impact that child care providers have on early childhood development.
- Child Care is not always accepted as a valid option or choice for a career path.
- Employers under-value the need for quality child care and the impact that a lack of childcare has on the workforce.

Possible Solutions

- Create a community task force with a focus of developing viable options for a Community Child Care Center w/ drop-in and flexible hours.
- Engage employers and/or business owners to become advocates of child care.
- Work at state and local level to create more incentives for providers to increase the quality of care.

Gaps

The Early Childhood Committee has recently identified an urgent need for Child Care or Programming during the After School hours.

Barriers

A long-term barrier to child care availability has been the state rates for the ERDC program. have been far below the market rates for child care. The 2007 Legislature did increase rates for the ERDC program. This is a huge improvement for the statewide system.

Another barrier to improvements in child care are statewide incentives for Providers to access continued training or make environmental improvements that would enhance the experiences of children in care.



SAFETY INDICATORS



The WORLDJUST IS

*A neglected child does not know she is neglected
Her parents are who they are
She is who she is
The World JUST IS*

*An abused child does not know she is abused
Her parents are who they are
She is who she is
The World JUST IS*

*But then a
cherished child knows she is loved
She knows who her parents are
She knows who she is.*

The World IS JUST

—Author Unknown



Child Abuse and Neglect

The early years of the 2000 decade have been riddled with news stories of children who have been harmed at the hands of adults in Oregon. There have been cases of abductions, abuse, and foster care nightmares.

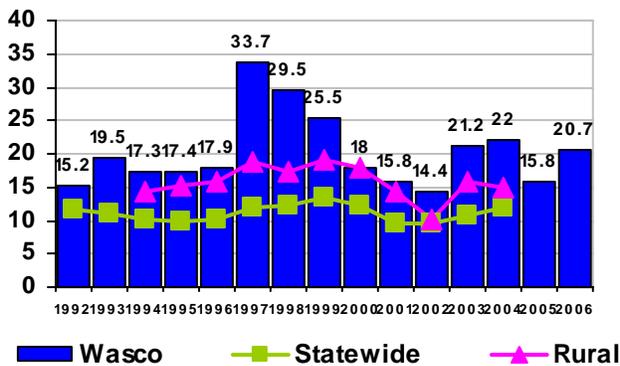
In Oregon, the Department of Human Services, Children, Adults and Families Division (DHS-CAF) is responsible for ensuring the safety and well-being of all the state's children in the child welfare system. This department responds to reports of child abuse or neglect, provides child protective services, oversees out-of-home placement of children, and promotes adoption of children who are not able to return home to their parents.

In 2006, DHS-CAF invited experts from the National Resource Center for Child Protective Services (NRCCPS) to identify opportunities to improve the safety of children in Oregon's child welfare system. Currently, DHS-CAF is implementing a series of initiatives designed to improve the child welfare system and better serve children and their families. These initiatives include:

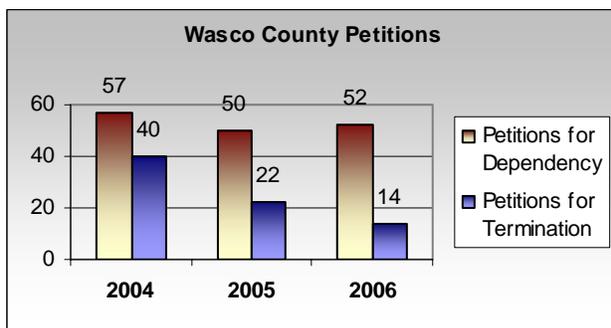
- Improving access to addiction and treatment services for families in the child welfare system
- Improving services provided to families in the TANF program
- Improving the safety of children in the child welfare system
- Strengthening connections for children in foster care
- Improving child protective services staff's ability to focus on the safety and permanency of children in child welfare
- Strengthening commitment to continuous system improvement

(The Status of Children in Oregon's Child Protection System 2006)

The Oregon Progress Board currently ranks Wasco County 28th out of 36 counties for having one of the highest rates of Child Abuse and/or Neglect. In the current decade, the rate of child abuse/neglect in Wasco County has moved up and down the scale dramatically. In 2002, the rate dipped to the lowest figure the county had experienced in 10+ years at 14.4 children per 1000 children under age 18. However, the very next year, the rate was right back up at 21.2 children abused/neglected per 1000 children. The rate decreased again in 2005, to 15.8 but was back up again in 2006 to a rate of 20.7.



In a 2006 report to the Wasco County Court, the department of Youth Services documented the number of petitions filed for dependency and termination. Petitions for dependency include allegations of abuse, neglect, and/or threat of harm against children and request that the victim(s) become dependents of the state of Oregon. Petitions for termination outline substantiated cause for the termination of parental rights.

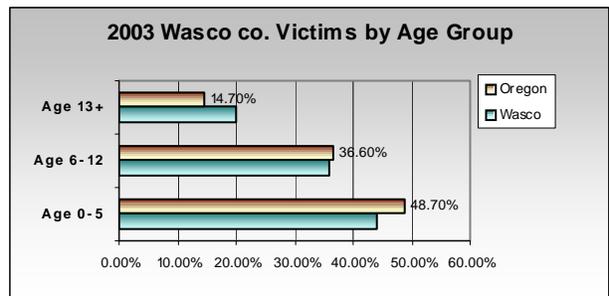


2004
TOP 5 Stress Indicators in
WASCO COUNTY

1. Suspected Drug/Alcohol Abuse
2. Parental Involvement w/ Law Enf.
3. Single Parent Household
4. Head of Family Unemployed
5. Physical Abuse of Spouse/fighting

Dept. of Human Services, SDA #9

Generally, the total number of victims declines as children get older. In 2006, statewide 49.4% of victims were younger than 6 years old. Additionally, 52.5% of victims statewide were female. The increasing number of young victims, as well as the intensity of family problems, results in more difficult cases that take longer to resolve. (*The Status of Children in Oregon's Child Protection System 2006*)

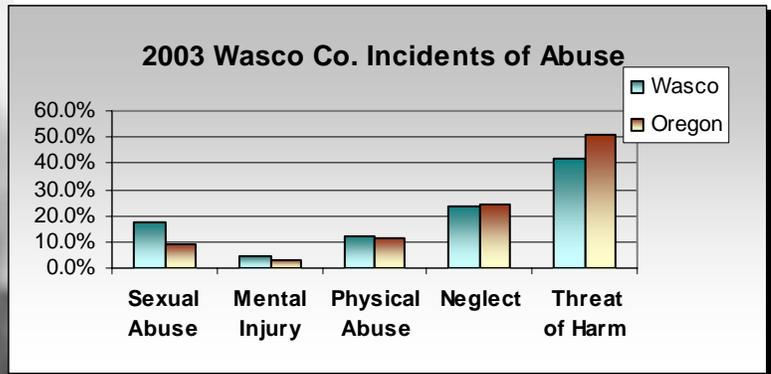


INFANTS make up the largest single age group of child abuse And/or neglect **VICTIMS**

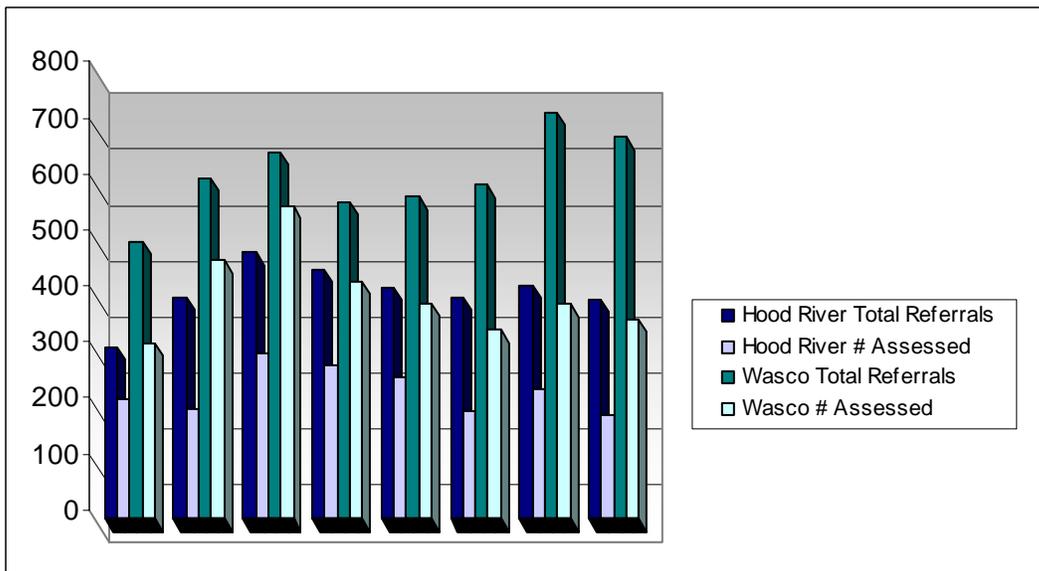


Each type of maltreatment experienced by a victim in a founded referral counts as an incident of child abuse/neglect. The number of incidents is larger than the number of victims because victims may have suffered more than one type of maltreatment and/or may have been involved in more than one founded referral.

In 2003, the Department of Human Services, SDA #9 reported the following percentages regarding incidents of child abuse/neglect:



In a comparison report dated March 2004, prepared for Bill Sheirbon, Child Welfare Program Manager of SDA#9, the number of protective service referrals for Hood River County and Wasco County were reported as follows:



As you can see in the table above, Wasco County has significantly higher concerns regarding child abuse/neglect than Hood River County; a neighboring County to the West comparable in population size and rural area.

Community Planning Processes

The Juvenile Court Improvement Project (JCIP) is a collaboration amongst all partners of the Court (7th Judicial District, Wasco Co. Youth Services, DHS, Wasco Co. Commission on Children & Families, Attorneys, Wasco Co. Dist. Attorney, CASA, and the Citizen Review Board.) The goal of the project is to improve processes to achieve better outcomes for children in dependency court. This group has worked for approximately two years to implement changes in local court processes that have resulted in improved services to children in the community who have been abused and/or neglected. A current copy of this plan is on file with the 7th Judicial District Court and it can also be accessed through the Wasco Co. Commission on Children and Families.

The 7th Judicial Circuit Court also engaged in a planning process to submit a grant application for the implementation of a new program in Wasco and Hood River County to serve mothers who have an identified addiction to methamphetamine. While many partners participated in the planning process, Mid Columbia Center for Living was the lead agency who submitted the grant application to the BYRNE Foundation. This application was funded and has resulted in a new *Family Dependency Court* in Wasco County. This Court is modeled after the local Drug Court program and has the capacity to serve approximately 12-13 families in Wasco County. This program works with mothers to prevent further abuse and/or neglect of their children, to reunite mothers and their children when possible, and to ensure that mothers develop the capacity to remain free of substance abuse and also to develop the capacity to adequately care for and provide for their children's needs both physical and emotional.

In August 2007, the Wasco County Commission on Children and Families collaborated

with several community partners (Region 9 DHS, Columbia Gorge CASA, Wasco Co. Youth Services Dept.) to host a community forum focusing on Child Neglect in our communities. This forum resulted in a number of small community projects aimed at reducing the risk factors for child neglect. Below is a list of some of those on-going efforts:

- Increase the capacity of the Healthy Start program that is currently offering Home Visiting services to first time parents.
- Develop a community task force to increase options for quality childcare in Wasco County.
- Develop a "Check-List" describing the process for expunging criminal records of adult parents.
- Create a community mentorship program bringing seasoned parents together with new parents in an effort to provide support.
- Provide supports for parents including groups, evidence based parenting programs, etc.
- Develop a media campaign with positive parenting messages.
- Develop a resource guide that is available and easily accessible to parents and community members at large.

Gaps

- Residential treatment facilities for parents addicted to drugs and/or alcohol.
- Community Child Care Centers with the capacity to accept drop-ins
- Adequate child care for evenings, weekends or special needs care
- Family Wage Jobs

Barriers

- State funding for Healthy Start programs does not allow for intensive services to all of the families exhibiting high levels of risk factors in the County. The local Healthy Start program has to turn away families who want the service and are at elevated risk for abusing their children.
- State requirements for starting a new Child Care Center in rural Oregon are cost prohibitive.

CHILD SAFETY RESOURCES



The Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program trains community volunteers to advocate for children who have open dependency cases. These volunteers investigate the case and advocate for the child's best interests in court.



Intensive assessment, treatment and foster home placement is provided to juvenile sex offenders in the area through the Therapeutic Foster Care program.



Families First of Wasco and Sherman Counties is a program of The Next Door, inc. offering Healthy Start services. These include prenatal welcome baby visits and intensive home visiting services for first born children ages 0-3.



The Wasco Sherman Public Health Department offers Home Visiting Services to new mothers and/or children who have special medical needs. In addition, the Public Health Department administers the Home Visitation Referral Network, a collaboration of all agencies within the county that offer home visiting services and Columbia River Women's Clinic. The Home Visitation Referral Network was established in an effort to reduce duplication of services and ensure that more families receive home visiting services.



The Oregon Department of Human Services provides limited funding for the Family Support and Connections program offered through Families First of The Next Door. This program offers a limited number of home visits and referral services to families with identified risk factors. The program pri-

marily serves families who access the TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) program at DHS.



Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Columbia River Gorge supports mentoring relationships between adults and children. This program currently supports more than 30 mentoring relationships in Wasco County.



Appendix A

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Appendix B

Five Minutes For Families

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey. Your responses will help to determine critical focus areas for the development or support of services for children and families in our county over the next two years.

Completed surveys due no later than June 30, 2007.

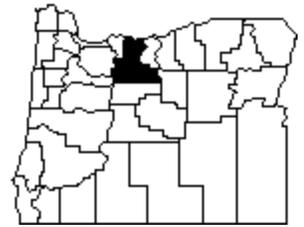
To take this survey online: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=613073659173>

I live in:	Dufur	Maupin	Mosier	Shaniko	The Dalles	Tygh Valley	Rural Wasco County	
I AM CONCERNED ABOUT...						Not Concerned	Somewhat Concerned	Very Concerned
Access to quality childcare that is affordable (ages infant to 12 years)								
Children being prepared for kindergarten and school.								
Children and/or Adults being able to read and write.								
Child abuse and/or neglect in our community.								
Availability of After School Programs and/or Childcare								
Job opportunities that support myself and/or family.								
Availability of affordable housing.								
Problems facing homeless youth, adults, and/or families.								
Local families and children living in or at poverty level.								
Access to transportation for myself and/or family.								
The availability of positive activities for youth.								
Juvenile crime in our community.								
Youth Substance Abuse (alcohol/tobacco/other drugs)								
Knowing who to contact for information about services or programs								
Community access to mental health services.								
Adult Substance Abuse (alcohol/tobacco/other drugs)								
Domestic violence in our community.								
Do you have concerns for or about kids and families that were not included in this survey? If so, please explain.								
If you could ask your community leaders to address one issue for children and families, what would it be?								
What can we <u>DO</u> to make life better for kids and/or families in our community?								
<i>Optional:</i> I am (circle one): Male Female My age is _____								
Return completed surveys to: Commission on Children & Families, 610 Court Street, The Dalles, OR 97058.								

Appendix C

Wasco County Commission on Children and Families

“Building Healthy Communities for Children and Families Together.”



The COMMISSION ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
Mobilizes an entire community to action, creating successful futures for
kids and volunteers alike



The Dalles SMART Program works with students in grades K-3; pairing them one on one with adult volunteers from the community to read together for one hour per week.

The Goal of this program is to increase student success in school. This is measured through a Mid-Year Milestone Assessment completed by the students' teacher and 3rd Grade Reading/Math Assessments.

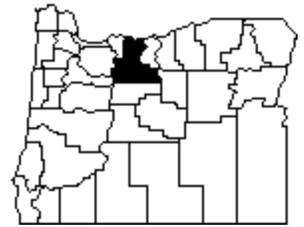
This program began in November 2003, as a vision by a part-time *Volunteer Coordinator* who was working at the poorest school in the district, Chenoweth Elementary School. This *Volunteer Coordinator*, Melanie Reaves wanted to bring adult volunteers from the community into the school, and she thought that SMART (Start Making A Reader Today) might be the answer. She held an initial planning meeting and invited the Commission on Children and Families Administrator to attend. The Commission Administrator began meeting with Melanie and other school personnel, providing technical assistance and mentoring Melanie to build community support and mobilize citizens to act. The program was implemented in the last quarter of that school year and has continued to grow each year since that time. What began with one part-time Coordinator, the COMMISSION and a handful of volunteers has grown to a program that serves 120 children in 3 Elementary Schools with a Non-Profit Board made up of 9 active board members and a full time staff with over 100 active community volunteers.

In the 2005-2007 Biennium, the Commission on Children and Families supported the SMART program with seed money (\$25,000 GREAT START) to hire staff and work toward raising community generated support. This Biennium, The Dalles SMART Program has generated nearly \$15,000.00 in community support through local fund raisers and community presentations.

This program has had significant impacts on children and families in our community. Of children served last year nearly 30% had parents who were incarcerated. Of these children **98%** showed an improvement in reading milestones and **100%** showed an improvement in relationship skills. Overall, children were more enthusiastic about school and many showed improvements in their general behavior at school. One teacher commented that a student in her class would ask her every day if it was his day to go read and even opted to miss a class party rather than miss his SMART Reading Day.

Wasco County Commission on Children and Families

“Building Healthy Communities for Children and Families Together.”



The COMMISSION ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
*Generates the energy to develop a new service delivery model to meet the
crisis shelter needs of youth in rural communities.*



Upon learning of gaps in the crisis shelter service system for youth, the Administrator of the Wasco Co. Commission on Children and Families convened a regional meeting of all partners who typically place youth in crisis shelter beds. This included the Juvenile Directors of Hood River, Wasco, Sherman, Gilliam and Wheeler Counties; Department of Human Services SDA #9 Child Welfare, Mid Columbia Center for Living, and a representative of The Next Door, Inc. Initial meetings began in October 2005.

Through this process, the group identified the needs of youth in the region and assessed the current system of services. They then began to design the ultimate service package that would truly meet the needs of area youth. They then assessed current capacity and resources. It was then that they began

to look at other service models and get creative in addressing this issue. In 2006, the Wasco County Commission on Children and Families issued a Request for Proposals to provide Crisis Shelter services with a comprehensive assessment component. The Wasco County Youth Services Department responded with a proposal for the ***Family Resource Home Program***.

The *Family Resource Home Program* demonstrates a new model of services. This program recruits and trains local families to provide crisis shelter services. The families are provided with intensive training to meet the level of OYA certification. Once the initial training is completed, the family then joins a rotation where they are on-call for a period of 4 weeks on a rotating basis. Youth who have run away from home or are in need of crisis shelter for another reason can then be placed in the home for a period not to exceed 14 days. Upon entry into the program, each youth receives a gender specific overnight bag and a comprehensive health, mental health, drug and alcohol assessment to take place within 48 hours. Youth are then referred for appropriate services. Many times, these services include mediation with their families. The services always include the development of an individualized safety plan that includes an element of shelter.

As of December 31, 2007; this program is currently operational in Wasco County. Originally, the program anticipated serving 8-12 youth annually. In six months prior to this report, the program had successfully served 10 youth; 90% of those youth did not run away from home again.

This program model is currently being replicated in Gilliam and Wheeler Counties and will soon be replicated in Morrow County.

The following is a story of one youth from Wasco County. . .



A fight with my mom starts the battle. I want her to leave the guy she is making us live with because he is mean to her. She has no job, she has no other home, and she doesn't put me above her "boyfriend". I look up to my older brother who is 16 and living on his own. He doesn't have a home, but friends make sure he has food and a place to sleep. He has been in trouble with the law, but he seems happier than I am.

The only choice I have is to leave. I hope my friends' parents are as understanding, but I am worried I am only 13. It is warm at night, so I can sleep outside if I need too, which is better than the chaos of my home.

I stay at the same place my brother is living for a couple of days, but they want me to move on. My mom signed me as a runaway and the police find me at my friends. I don't want to go home, my mom now has cuts and bruises on her arms that she says occurred when she "accidentally" stuck her arm through a window. I love my mom and want to live with her, but I can't live back in the same home.

Mom agrees to let me stay in a Family Resource Home for a couple of days. She is promising to move into an apartment with an

Aunt, I will have my own bedroom. My brother's juvenile court counselor takes me to the Family Resource Home.

I am scared to go somewhere that I have never been, meet people I do not know, and sleep in someone else's home. Bob (juvenile court counselor) gives me a backpack that I get to keep. It is better that I have my "own" things. The family introduces themselves to me and then lets me settle in. Dinner is OK, and they seem really nice.

The next day their extended family comes over and I get included just like I belong. They ask me questions, joke around and have fun. I meet with a counselor and my Mom and we plan on me returning to her home within a couple of days. I get to tell her I am really hurt and mad about the man we live with.

In four days I return to live with my mom. Things are not perfect, and I will struggle in the future, but I know I will have another adult who knows and cares about the decisions I make.

WASCO COUNTY, OREGON



CONTACT INFORMATION:

Wasco County Commission on Children and Families
Trudy Townsend, Administrator
610 Court Street, The Dalles, OR 97058
Phone 541-506-2670 or Fax 541-506-2671
trudyt@co.wasco.or.us
<http://www.co.wasco.or.us/WCCCF/WCCCF.html>