

Harney County Comprehensive Plan on Children and Families Update 2010

Executive Summary

This document provides the 2010 biennial update to the 2008-2014 Harney County Comprehensive Plan on Children and Families, which is required by Oregon Administrative Rules. The biennial update reports on the progress of implementation of the original plan and captures revisions since the January 2008 submission date.

This 2010 Harney County Comprehensive Plan for Children and Families Update is the result of research, community input, collaboration, and commission review. Led by the Harney County Commission on Children and Families (HCCCF), community partners across all major agencies, organizations, private citizens, and members of the Burns Paiute Tribe were involved in discussions, interviews, and/or document review. We had broad representation across our cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic sectors by taking the interview and discussion process to community groups and individuals, as well as utilizing local commission meetings for receiving input. The result is an inclusive process resulting in recommendations for both local and state level strategies to strengthen Harney County's children and families.

Harney County has a strong relationship with the Burns Paiute Tribe, who has been a key partner, and the result of working together is collaboration and coordination. As a sovereign nation, located on the reservation in Burns, the tribe provides many services to its tribal members - such as juvenile crime prevention, law enforcement, child welfare, drug and alcohol treatment for adults and youth, and social services. Yet, the Burns Paiute Tribe and Harney County in general take a cooperative, coordinated, and complementary approach to prevention. Where the tribe can offer services for community parenting classes, such as the use of its meeting facilities, it does so. Where it makes sense for DHS and juvenile crime case work to be shared, they do so. Harney Behavioral Health cross training between tribal and county agencies has increased and memoranda of understanding (MOUs) reflect this trend. Harney Behavioral Health, the Community Action Team, and the Burns Paiute Tribe continue to work together on ways to fund staff for mental health services at the reservation.

The primary community change since 2008 Comprehensive Plan has been the increased economic stress, unemployment, and poverty factors experienced by families in Harney County, Oregon. Harney County's economic situation has worsened since 2008. As a result of the significant barriers to reducing the rising levels of unemployment, Harney County's family economic stress level is rising. State and federal legislative barriers to development of Harney County's natural resources continues to impede local economic progress.

The most immediate change is the identified increased need for food assistance, which had not been an issue in 2008. As hunger issues increase, emotional stress within families is expected to increase, with anticipated potential increases in substance abuse, domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, juvenile crime, and school drop-out rates. We are monitoring these areas. These are our challenges.

In praise of the well-balanced and excellent planning and service delivery of a range of supports and program in Harney County, the child abuse and neglect rate and the juvenile crime rate have begun to decline since 2007, although this trend will be very challenging to sustain during the economic stress of the recession and growing federal debt.

Three significant gaps in services identified in the 2008 Comprehensive Plan have been filled. First, Harney County was awarded a five year federal Drug Free Community Support Program grant in October 2008. Additionally, Harney County established a Drug Treatment Court Program for adults with serious substance abuse problems, and Harney Behavioral Health is now establishing a satellite office to serve clients at the High Desert Medical Clinic. These were goals set during the 2008 comprehensive planning process.

During our comprehensive plan update process, we determined that our focus area – reducing underage substance abuse – will remain as the focus area.

Additionally, encouraging signs that our community strategies across other areas are working encourages us to continue efforts in all areas of major concern for our children, youth, families and communities. These areas continue to include: few living wage jobs, high unemployment rate, high rate of child abuse and neglect, increasing juvenile crime offenses, teen pregnancy, high school graduation rate, and the availability and quality of child care options.

Underlying all the issues, Harney County's #1 priority for children and families remains increasing positive parenting. When parents are supervising their children and supported where they need help, all child wellness indicators improve.

As the Harney County Commission on Children and Families makes program and funding decisions to support Harney County's focus issue, as well as the other areas of concern, the following goals continue to guide our work:

- Increase parenting skills.
- Increase the quantity and quality of childcare options for families in Harney County.
- Continue to support, expand and improve the operations of the Kids Club of Harney County.
- Reduce juvenile crime through prevention efforts and provide treatment to youth already in the system.
- Provide intervention to middle and high school students identified as “acting out” by school counselors, juvenile department and other local sources.
- Increase access to a variety of after school activities.
- Increase funding opportunities to support implementation of HCCCCF priorities.

Harney County residents will continue to excel at working together in spite of steep challenges. We move forward with confidence that our planning efforts and the work of mobilized, caring citizens will improve the lives of Harney County's children and families.

Harney County Comprehensive Plan on Children and Families Update 2010

The Harney County Commission on Children and Families is the lead agency for submission of the Harney County Comprehensive Plan on Children and Families. While this planning effort falls under the leadership and staff responsibility of the commission, the plan itself is a community plan. Through the comprehensive planning process, separate local agency plans, data research, and community input are brought together to identify the issues, gaps, barriers, and strategies needed across providers and partners in order to improve services to strengthen the lives of children and families in Harney County, Oregon.

The purpose of this planning document is to update the six-year comprehensive plan submitted in 2008 for the 2008-2014 period. This update will not revisit the more in-depth analysis provided in the January 2008 Harney County Comprehensive Plan on Children and Families; rather, the plan will focus on assessing any *major* changes in the community since 2008. After providing a brief overview of Harney County, the plan will describe what has changed since 2008, provide a summary of the local agency plans and efforts, show how the various local plans are linked, describe the community focus issue, identify any emerging issues, and summarize the update.

Brief Overview of Harney County, Oregon

Introduction: Harney County, in southeastern Oregon's high desert country, is Oregon's largest county, the eighth largest county in the United States, and is larger than eight of the 50 states. The county contains 10,228 square miles, and its population in 2000 was 7,609. According to the Population Research Center at Portland State University, the November 2007 preliminary annual population estimate for Harney County was 7,680.¹ Any population change in Harney County since 2008 has been minimal. The population density is, therefore, less than one person per square mile, making the county one of the most sparsely populated in the nation. This serves as the basis for federal classification as a "rural frontier" community. These demographics require that services be centralized, but at the same time, there is a need for outreach and flexible systems that cater to the unique local circumstances.

Population Center: The population center of Harney County is the Burns-Hines area. The cities of Burns and Hines are adjacent to each other along Highway 20 and together account for approximately sixty percent of the county population. The preponderance of social services, programs and government functions take place there. School District 3 includes the following schools in Burns and Hines: Slater Elementary School, Hines Middle School, and Burns High School. Harney Educational Service District Region XVII is also in Burns and administers the Early Childhood Center and seven rural school districts.

¹ Population Research Center, Portland State University. "Preliminary 2007 Annual Population Estimates", Released November 2007.

Rural Areas: Beyond the population center of Burns and Hines, small rural communities are scattered across the vast expanse that is Harney County. Rural schools teach grades Kindergarten through 8th grade in eight independent school districts, seven of which are essentially modern, one-room school houses. These rural schools are located in Riley, Double O, Fields, Diamond, French Glen, Pine Creek, and Drewsey. Graduates from these schools move on to attend Crane Union High School, which is one of the few public boarding high schools in the United States. Crane Elementary School serves grades Kindergarten through 8th graders in a conventional elementary school set-up, and graduates also attend Crane Union High School.

Economic Health: The Oregon Economic and Community Development Department classifies Harney County as “distressed” based on its high unemployment rates, average pay per worker, static or declining population, and the percent of families living in poverty.² The numbers and percentages pertaining to these factors have worsened since 2008, creating heavy stress on families. The lack of economic opportunity and undiversified economy continues to place undue burdens on families’ mental and physical health. Further indicative of this economic plight, Harney County has significantly higher than average struggling populations and at-risk children.

Unemployment: Recent trends in Southeast Oregon have been very negative since 2008. Harney County’s unemployment rate has increased significantly since then, when all manufacturing industry in Harney County (Monaco Coach, Louisiana Pacific, etc) shut down. According to Oregon Employment Department data, December 2009 data shows that Harney County had the highest seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in the State of Oregon, at 15.5%. Private, small businesses are struggling to stay open, leaving government and ranching /agriculture as the largest employers in the county.

Poverty: Harney County’s poverty level has remained high. The December 2008 data indicates that 15.9% of the county was below poverty levels, with nearly one-third of all school age children living below the poverty line (defined as income of \$22,050 a year for a family of four).

Child Abuse and Neglect: Harney County’s geographic isolation, high unemployment, and high poverty rate contribute to a socio-economic environment that increases risk factors to families. This has been the case for many years. Because of a range of targeted services, however, Harney County statistics for child abuse and neglect rates have moved in the right direction the past two years. The rates of confirmed victims of child abuse and neglect per 1,000 children has moved downward as follows: 2007 – 23.6; 2008 – 22.2; and 2009 – 20. Foster care rates per 1,000 children in Harney County have also dropped: 2007 – 21.9; 2008 – 16.8; and 2009 – 16.0.³

Juvenile Crime: Harney County had 18.9 juvenile arrests per 1000 in 2008, compared to 15.0 per 1000 for all of Oregon; however, the arrest rate as well as recidivism has dropped

² The statistics used in this section, unless otherwise noted, are from the Oregon Economic and Community Development website, <http://www.econ.state.or.us>. From the website, you can access “Community Profiles,” and “Harney County Economic Indicators.”

³ Oregon Dept of Human Services: Children, Adults and Families Division. 2009 Child Welfare Data Book

slightly since then. Our strong juvenile crime prevention program is keeping this statistic in check for now, although increasing rates of unemployment and poverty increase the risk factors for local youth.

Underage Substance Abuse: Harney County's rates of 8th and 11th grade use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs are surveyed annually, but are most useful for trend data. Since 2008, there has been no significant change in the rates of use by youth; changes in the data will be reviewed at the three and five year points to assess progress.

Participation

This 2010 Harney County Comprehensive Plan for Children and Families Update is the result of research, community input, collaboration, and commission review. Led by the Harney County Commission on Children and Families (HCCCF), community partners across all major agencies, organizations, private citizens, families, youth, and members of the Burns Paiute Tribe were involved in discussions, interviews, and/or document review. We had broad representation across our cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic sectors by taking the interview and discussion process to community groups and individuals, as well as utilizing local commission meetings for receiving input. Various groups and meetings, such as HCCCF, the Community Action Team, Harney Partners for Kids and Families, and the Harney County Court, provide structure for implementing and monitoring the Comprehensive Plan. Coordination and participation among consumers, families, partners, and providers is excellent in Harney County. Topics and issues from the Comprehensive Plan are consistently addressed and on the agendas of community meetings throughout the year. The result is an inclusive process resulting in recommendations for both local and state level strategies to strengthen Harney County's children and families.

What's Changed Since 2008

The primary community change since the 2008 Comprehensive Plan has been the increased economic stress, unemployment, and poverty factors experienced by families in Harney County. Harney County's economic situation has worsened since 2008. The last major private manufacturers shut their doors in 2008 and 2009, leaving the ranching/agriculture and government as the major employers in the county. State and federal regulations limiting and/or prohibiting natural resource development and the resultant employment opportunities that are the natural fit for such a vast, frontier rural, and geographically isolated county, are largely responsible for the situation. This is not new, but continues to be the most significant barrier to the well being of children and families in Harney County. Aggressive, well-financed litigation by environmental groups from outside the county continue to prevent progress. As a result of the significant barriers to reducing the rising levels of unemployment, Harney County's family economic stress level is rising.

The most immediate change is the identified increased need for food assistance, which had not been an issue at the time of the 2008 submission of the comprehensive plan. As hunger issues increase, emotional stress within families is expected to increase, with anticipated potential increases in substance abuse, domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, juvenile crime, and school drop-out rates. We are monitoring these areas. These are our challenges.

In praise of the well-balanced and excellent planning and service delivery of a range of supports and program in Harney County, the child abuse and neglect rate and the juvenile crime rate have begun to decline since 2007, although this trend will be very challenging to sustain during the economic stress of the recession and growing federal debt.

Additionally, three significant gaps in services identified in the 2008 Comprehensive Plan have been filled. First, Harney County was awarded a five-year federal Drug Free Community Support Program grant in October 2008. Additionally, Harney County established a Drug Treatment Court Program for adults with serious substance abuse problems, and Harney Behavioral Health is now establishing a satellite office to serve clients at the High Desert Medical Clinic. These were goals set during the 2008 comprehensive planning process.

Coordinated Planning and Efforts

Harney County is fortunate in its community resilience, and truly outstanding in its ability to bring community partners together to address issues in a comprehensive way. Planning for children and families in Harney County has been well coordinated over the years, with full participation and collaboration among all partners. Therefore, there are few changes to our comprehensive plan at this time, in spite of the deteriorating economic situation.

The update process was inclusive and included a review of major issues across community partners, agencies, and community plans: early childhood teams, juvenile crime prevention partnerships, local alcohol and drug prevention and treatment planning committees, local public safety coordinating council, mental health advisory board, public health, and safe communities coalition.

Summaries of Local Agency Plans and Issue Areas

In 2008, Harney County identified the following top areas of greatest concern for our children, youth, families and communities: few living wage jobs, high unemployment rate, high rate of underage substance abuse, high rate of child abuse and neglect, increasing juvenile crime offenses, possible rise in teen pregnancy, possible reduction in high school graduation rate, and the availability and quality of child care options. All these areas are long term issues and are being addressed effectively, within the resources available. A summary of the plans and issue area work is described below.

County Economic Development: The Harney County Court has been and continues to be active in developing relationships, assets, tax breaks, and other incentives to attract and retain employers. Harney County is represented in regional groups and boards to develop economic and natural resource partnerships for mutual benefit and economic development. Additionally, the Harney County Economic Development Coordinator is retained at county expense and works this issue. **Barrier:** State and federal regulations limiting and/or prohibiting natural resource development and the resultant employment opportunities that are the natural fit for such a vast, frontier rural, and geographically isolated county are largely responsible for the situation. This is not new, but continues to be the most significant barrier to the well being of children and families in Harney County. Aggressive, well-financed litigation by environmental groups from outside the county continue to prevent progress.

Strategy: Continue to engage in the challenging process of community mobilization (building advocacy) at the state level to allow responsible natural resource-related economic development opportunities for Harney County.

Early Childhood: Harney County's early childhood team, through the Early Childhood Center and the Local Interagency Coordinating Council, identified the following issues of concern through their 2009 community survey: few living wage jobs, high unemployment rate, high rates of underage alcohol, tobacco and drug use, high rates of child abuse, high school graduation rate, teen pregnancy rate, increasing juvenile crime rate, and limited availability and quality of child care options. The Early Childhood Center addresses school readiness and child abuse and neglect through its Head Start, Great Start, Healthy Start, and parent education programs. Gap: Funding cuts to the Healthy Start program limit our ability to address child abuse and neglect. Strategy: Develop community-based partnerships with local partners and funders to seek additional resources for home visitation and parent education programs.

Juvenile Crime Prevention (JCP): The Harney County JCP Plan describes how the best investment for the JCP grant in Harney County is to continue to use the funding to pay staff involved with the JCP School Liaison Program. This program directly applies evidence-based prevention to the target population -- referred, unadjudicated youth who are at-risk of entering the Juvenile Court System as adjudicated youth offenders in the near future. It is a direct and effective use of JCP funds. Therefore, the Harney County JCP Plan for 2009-2011 is to continue the JCP School Liaison Program, seek local solutions for service delivery improvements, and if necessary, seek state level support to reduce a potential barrier seen in the current public school truancy statute, which we recommend be researched, clarified, and if needed, revised to allow for earlier truancy intervention in the future. Gaps: Counseling and tutoring space for the conduct of the JCP School Liaison work is a service gap. There is a capacity gap of needing more staff time to deliver JCP services amidst other staff duties. Solutions: Local community mobilization solutions to engage partners to find office space and volunteers to help with this program. Barrier: The Oregon State statute on public school attendance/truancy may be a barrier to earlier truancy intervention at the local level. Solution: Policy development work, with local research work first, and then possibly State-level participation and assistance in determining if changes to the state statute would be beneficial and feasible.

Public Health: The Harney County Health Department Annual Plan addresses the increasingly older population in Harney County through "Living Well with Chronic Conditions" outreach, youth education on health care issues through the rural schools, a strong vaccination and immunization program, a dental health program for children, infant wellness programs, tobacco prevention and education programs, disaster preparedness planning, an environmental health program, and attention to communicable diseases for identification and prevention. The programs are on track and, in the area of tobacco prevention and education, the Health Department collaborates with many community partners involved with our Drug Free Community work.

Behavioral Health (Mental Health and Addiction Services): Harney Behavioral Health's plan describes recovery-focused services, integration of mental health and addiction services, increased emphasis on services to children, family care coordination services, and solutions

to serving the Burns Paiute Tribe. The increased emphasis on children and family services is a direct result of community collaboration and communication. **Gap:** The need for more clinicians to be available at the tribal facilities, specifically for tribal members. **Strategy:** Seek funding and/or partnerships to hire a clinician solely for tribal use (culturally competent solution).

High School Graduation Rate: The JCP School Liaison Program, Burns Alternative High School, and the OYCC Community Stewardship Corps Program address school success and increase high school graduation rates in Harney County. These programs are working well.

Teen Pregnancy: The number of Harney County teen pregnancies in 2009 was up from recent years, but whether that indicates a trend and a need to focus resources is still not known. This issue will be tracked over the next two years.

Linking Issues to Advisory Groups:

	Few living wage jobs	High unemployment rate	High rate of alcohol / drug use	High rate of tobacco use	High rate of child abuse / neglect	Rate of high school graduation is too low	Teen pregnancy is on the rise	Increase in juvenile crime offenses	Availability and quality of child care options are limited
Early Childhood Team	X	X	X	X	X		X		X
Juvenile Crime Prevention Partnerships	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	
Local Alcohol /Drug Prevention Planning Committee	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Local Alcohol and Drug Treatment Planning Committee	X	X	X	X	X				X
Local Public Safety Coordinating Council			X	X				X	
Mental Health Advisory Board	X	X	X	X				X	
Public Health Partners			X	X	X		X		
Safe Communities Coalition			X	X					

Harney County Focus Issue: No Change

The chart shown above indicates which issues of concern are identified in various community partner plans. In 2008, with the exception of reducing underage substance abuse, all areas of concern were being addressed by one or more community partners and/or programs.

The decision to identify *reducing underage substance abuse* as Harney County’s focus issue was made on solid reasoning and will continue to be our Community Focus Issue. Since 2008, Harney County was awarded a nationally competitive Drug Free Community Support Program grant, which is a five-year grant implemented through a local coalition, Harney Partner for Kids and Families. This work is about community change, and we are in the early stages of a long term effort which is reflected in our selection of coalition building as

our intermediate outcome. The coalition numbers and capacity must be developed first; we anticipate the potential for adding additional intermediate outcomes as the coalition grows. Additionally, we believe the long-term results will include at least two of the following for the target population of 6th, 8th, and 11th grade students: decreasing the number of students reporting early use, decreasing use in the last 30 days, increasing the perception of parental disapproval, and/or increasing the perception of harm as measured by Oregon and local teen survey tools. Monetary support from the State would be helpful for use in funding staff positions to address substance abuse issues for youth and families. There are no revisions in strategies and/or measurement at this time.

Emerging Issue: Food and Hunger

Harney County's need for food assistance services rose by more than 60% between 2007 and 2009, with approximately 751 households presently receiving food stamp benefits in Harney County. Between 2007 and January 2009, the monthly reported households using the Harney County Food Bank jumped from 62 to 101 per month. The amount of food distributed to the Harney County Food Pantry by the Oregon Food Bank/Southeast Oregon Regional Food Bank increased from 31,571 lbs to 48,866 lbs.⁴

The need is great in Harney County; yet there have been disruptions in service during the time of most need. In 2009, the Oregon Food Bank discontinued direct deliveries to Burns. Since then, the regional food bank - Southeast Oregon Regional Food Bank in Ontario, Oregon (Malheur County) – is the sole source for Harney County food bank supplies. Unfortunately, food delivery service from Ontario to Burns for the July 2009 through the present (March 2010) has been sporadic, inconsistent, and insufficient - leaving Harney County families in need. Community work is being done now to work with the Southeast Oregon Regional Food Bank to break down communication and service barriers. Gaps: Food Bank deliveries no longer come monthly; the less frequent deliveries are insufficient for the hunger situation in Harney County. Barriers: The Oregon Food Bank and Southeast Oregon Regional Food Bank operating procedures presently make no allowance for innovative delivery and distribution services that deviate from their standard operating procedures.

Possible Solutions: For the emerging increase in food needs in Harney County, we will engage in community mobilization work to develop additional community-based partnerships (such as truck drivers who regularly drive to Ontario or Portland from Burns); policy development work with the Oregon Food Bank and Southeast Oregon Regional Food Bank to develop acceptable, innovative adjustments to their delivery policies; and service delivery improvements to alter delivery schedules and transportation providers, as needed, to accomplish the mission of feeding our community.

Summary of Investments in Harney County's Children and Families

Harney County invests its funding in programs and services that address early childhood development and school readiness (Great Start preschool, Healthy Start home visitation

⁴ Source: Harney County Food Bank Monthly Agency Report, Oregon Food Bank Inventory Tracking Software (CERES/Primarius) as prepared by Peter Lawson, Southeast Regional Food Bank Branch Coordinator

services); child abuse and neglect prevention (Healthy Start, CASA, and Kids Club funding); juvenile crime prevention (JCP School Liaison Program); academic/school graduation rates (OYCC Community Stewardship Corps). The focus issue identified for Harney County – youth substance abuse prevention – is being addressed through the federal Drug Free Communities Support Program grant which involves a five-year effort, coalition work, and community collaboration.

Summary

Harney County has experienced significant economic hardship, high unemployment, and increasing poverty since 2008. During our comprehensive plan update process, we determined that our focus area – reducing underage substance abuse – will remain as the focus area. Additionally, positive signs that our community strategies across other areas are working encourage us to continue efforts in all areas of major concern for our children, youth, families and communities. These areas continue to include: few living wage jobs, high unemployment rate, high rate of child abuse and neglect, increasing juvenile crime offenses, teen pregnancy, high school graduation rate, and the availability and quality of child care options.

Underlying all the issues, Harney County’s #1 priority for children and families remains increasing positive parenting. When parents are supervising their children and supported where they need help, all child wellness indicators improve.

As the Harney County Commission on Children and Families makes program and funding decisions to support Harney County’s focus issue, as well as the other areas of concern, the following goals continue to guide our work:

- Increase parenting skills.
- Increase the quantity and quality of childcare options for families in Harney County.
- Continue support to expand and improve the operations of the Kids Club of Harney County.
- Reduce juvenile crime through prevention efforts and provide treatment to youth already in the system.
- Provide intervention to middle and high school students identified as “acting out” by school counselors, juvenile department and other local sources.
- Increase access to a variety of after-school activities.
- Increase funding opportunities to support implementation of HCCCF priorities.

Harney County residents will continue to excel at working together in spite of steep challenges. We move forward with confidence that our planning efforts and the work of mobilized, caring citizens will improve the lives of Harney County’s children and families.