

Garfield, Loup and Wheeler Counties

Three Year Comprehensive Juvenile Services Plan

2006-2008

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County Federal I.D. Numbers

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Community Team Section

Team Description

Garfield, Loup, and Wheeler counties joined together to form the GLW Children's council in 1990. Meetings are held monthly with all participants with a sub-committee set up. We continue to strive to work collaboratively with surrounding counties, but due to our great distances from services this Council, representing all three counties, became a 501c3 enabling us to receive and dispense grant funds. Members of our coalition are as follows:

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Overview - The Three Counties

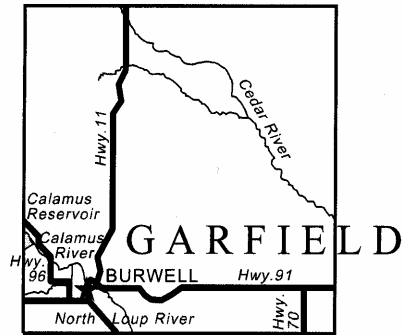
Garfield, Loup and Wheeler counties are located in North-Central Nebraska at the gateway to the Nebraska Sandhills. Each county is nominally twenty-four miles square, so together they form a rectangular strip seventy-two miles long and twenty four miles wide, comprising a land area of some 1,715 square miles and over a million acres.

This is farm and ranch country, and that fact is evident in the lifestyle and economic welfare of the people. Population centers are few and far between. Loup and Garfield Counties each have only a single incorporated town. Wheeler County has two. All three counties face declining population bases, and all are experiencing economic hard times. Loup and Wheeler Counties are among the 50 poorest counties in the United States, measured by adjusted gross income reported to the Internal Revenue Service on 2000 income tax returns, and Garfield County ranks in the bottom 12 percent among Nebraska counties.

Residents of all three counties are almost entirely (99%) white, born in the United States, and of German, English, Irish and Czech ancestry. Nearly all speak only English at home. As in other rural communities, the population appears to be aging, with median age for both sexes ranges from 40.4 years in Wheeler County to 42.9 in Loup, to 45.9 in Garfield. Median ages in towns are somewhat higher.

Each county supports a public school system consisting of a high school and one or more elementary schools. There are no established private or parochial schools, although a few children are home-schooled. None of the counties is served by any form of public transportation.

Garfield County



- **Land Area:** 570 square miles
- **Population (2000):** 2,141
- **County Seat:** Burwell
- **Towns and Population (2000):** [Burwell](#), 1,278.
- **Public School Districts:** [Burwell Elementary School](#), Burwell; [Burwell Junior-Senior High School](#), Burwell; District 70-Garfield County, Burwell; Richland Public School, Burwell;

Originally a part of Wheeler County, Garfield County was established as a separate legal entity in 1884. Named for assassinated U.S. President James A. Garfield, it is centrally located between Loup County on the west and Wheeler County on its eastern border. Located at the junction of the Calamus and North Loup Rivers, the county seat, Burwell, lies at the intersection of State Highways 11 and 91 and the recently designated Highway 96, which runs along the north shore of the Calamus Reservoir.

Population

According to census figures, the county's total population in 2000 was 1,902, a decline of 11.2 percent since 1990 and nearly 30 percent since 1960 and nearly 45 percent since 1940. The population density is now 3.3 persons per square mile. Ladies outnumber gentlemen, with 52.1 percent females vs. 47.9 percent males. Fifty-nine percent of the population, or 1,128 souls, live in Burwell, the county seat.

Industry and Employment

Cattle ranching and farming operations have long been the backbone of the local economy. The Burwell Livestock Market has been an important center

for cattle sales for decades. Census figures indicate a total of 198 non-employer business establishments and 90 private non-farm businesses employing 508 workers in the county in 1999, a slight increase of 1.2% since 1990. Local government entities employed 126 in 1999. Of 102 families with children under the age of six, 84.3 percent reported that all parents in the family were in the labor force.

Tourism

Since construction of the nearby Virginia Smith Dam and Calamus Reservoir was completed in 1985, tourism and recreation have become increasingly important to the local economy, as the area seeks to attract visitors to enjoy lake and river activities and visit historical sites such as nearby Fort Hartsuff, in adjoining Valley County. Nebraska's Big Rodeo, a four-day event held during the county fair every summer, draws visitors from many states.

Wage and Income Levels

Family income levels in Garfield County are relatively low. Census figures, which include families not required to file tax returns, put 1999 median household income for Burwell residents at \$22,569. Average adjusted gross income reported on federal tax returns filed in 2000 was \$28,110, placing Garfield County among the poorest Nebraska counties, in the 88th percentile. Wage earners in the county fared even worse, ranking in the bottom two percent with average wages and salaries of \$15,998.

Standard of Living

In 1999, 9.7 percent of the overall population and 13.0 percent of families with children under five years of age were living below the federally determined

poverty level, compared with a statewide average of 9.7 percent. A new study released in November, 2002 by the Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest introduces a Self-Sufficiency Standard which documents the cost of living which families must meet to live independently, without public or private assistance. The study concludes that “for most parents, earnings that are well above the official poverty level are nevertheless far below what they need to meet their families’ basic needs.” For Garfield County, the study estimates that a single adult needs a wage of \$5.61 per hour, or \$11,845 annually, to meet this standard of self-sufficiency. For an adult with an infant and a preschooler, the standard rises to \$9.96 per hour, or \$21,038 per year. Adding an additional school age child means the parent will need a \$14.59 hourly wage or \$30,819 each year to make ends meet. That figure is nearly twice the average wage in the Burwell area.

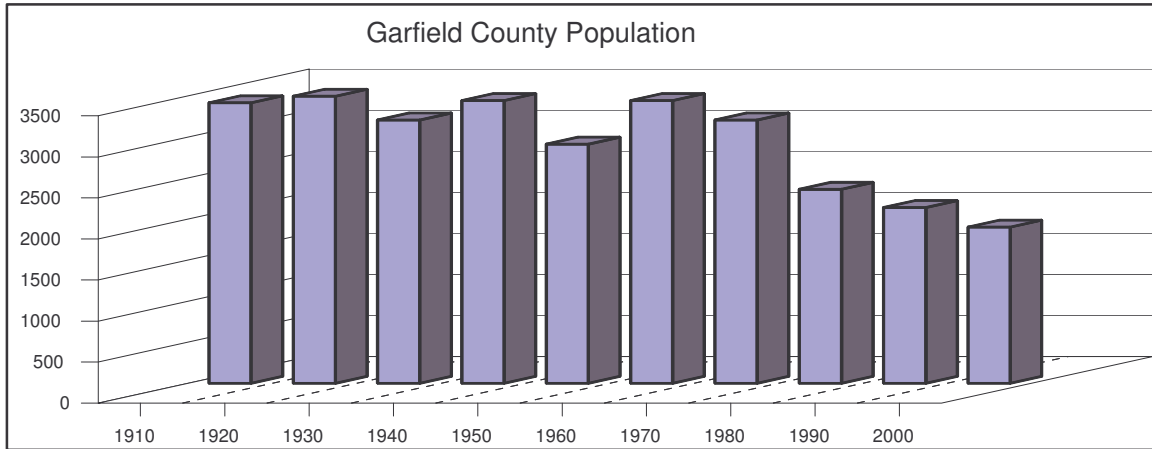
Medical Care

The local hospital, traditionally one of the area’s largest employers, ceased operations in 1989, and the facility now houses a nursing home and assisted living center. Medical needs of residents are met by a resident physician and a satellite clinic associated with the Ord Family Health Center, located 17 miles Southeast of Burwell, in Valley County.

Education and Schools

2000 census figures show that 81.1 percent of the adult (over 25) population are high school graduates, and 13.4 percent have a bachelor’s degree or higher. 23.5 percent of the population is under 18 years of age. Of 437 children over the age of three enrolled in school in 2000, 44 were attending preschool and kindergarten, 362 were enrolled in elementary or secondary

schools, and 31 were college or graduate students. The county's only Junior-Senior High School and its largest elementary school are located in Burwell.



1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
3417	3496	3207	3444	2912	3444	3207	2363	2141	1902

Source: U.S. Census Data

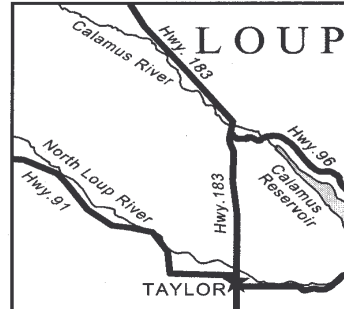
Table 39
The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Garfield County, NE, 2002

Monthly Costs	Adult +							
	Adult	infant	preschooler	infant preschooler	schoolage teenager	preschooler schoolage	2 Adults + infant preschooler	2 Adults + schoolage preschooler
Housing	326	416	416	416	416	532	416	416
Child Care	0	335	259	594	259	853	594	518
Food	178	261	270	351	442	472	504	554
Transportation	203	208	208	208	208	208	408	408
Health Care	76	176	176	184	206	198	220	225
Miscellaneous	78	140	133	175	153	226	214	212
Taxes	125	128	123	154	119	331	302	249
Earned Income								
Tax Credit (-)	0	-148	-161	-194	-254	-23	-52	-70
Child Care Tax Credit (-)	0	-36	-27	-43	-15	-80	-78	-69
Child Tax Credit (-)	0	-50	-50	-92	-64	-150	-100	-100
Self-Sufficiency Wage								
-Hourly	\$5.61	\$8.13	\$7.65	\$9.96	\$8.36	\$14.59	\$6.90	\$6.65
-Monthly	\$987	\$1,430	\$1,347	\$1,753	\$1,472	\$2,568	\$2,429	\$2,342
-Annual	\$11,845	\$17,162	\$16,159	\$21,038	\$17,659	\$30,819	\$29,151	\$28,103

Source: *The Self Sufficiency Standard for Nebraska*, November 2002

Loup County

Land Area: 570 square miles
Population (1990): 683
County Seat: Taylor
County Clerk Address: P.O. Box 187, Taylor, NE 68879, phone (308) 942-3135
Towns and Population (1990): Almeria, unincorporated; Taylor, 186.
Public School Districts: Loup County Public Schools, Taylor.



With its county seat at Taylor, located on the scenic North Loup River at the junction of State Highways 183 and 91, Loup County was formally organized in 1883, about ten years after white settlers first arrived in the area. Although settlements once existed at Kent and Almeria, Taylor is the County's only remaining village.

Population

The population of Loup County, once as high as 2,188 in 1910, dipped to 683 in 1990, and then rebounded slightly to 712 in the 2000 census, a 4.2 percent increase. With approximately 570 square miles in the county, the population density is only 1.2 persons per square mile. Men have a slight numerical advantage over women, with 52.1 percent of the population. The ladies, of course, make up the other 47.9 percent. 207 people listed the Village of Taylor as their home in the most recent census count.

Business and Employment

Loup County residents depend upon agriculture for their livelihood. Only *eight* private, non-farm businesses were left in Loup County in 1999, along with

37 non-employer establishments listed as of 1998. The county has no medical facilities. Taylor's only grocery store closed in 2001, leaving only a service station/convenience store to serve the needs of area residents. Private non-farm employment dropped a whopping 36.8 percent from 1990 to 1999, leaving only 12 people employed in private non-farm businesses in the entire county. Local government employed the equivalent of 44 full-time workers.

Wages and Income

Economic data for Loup County is not encouraging. On the basis of income and earnings, Loup residents are among the poorest in the nation. 72.7 percent of all families with children under six years of age report that all parents in the family were part of the labor force. Still, based on federal income tax returns filed in 2000, average family Adjusted Gross Income was \$18,923, placing the county in the bottom one percent in the state. Wage and salary income, averaging only \$11,753, was also in the bottom percentile. In fact, *Loup County ranked 6th from the bottom in adjusted gross income among all counties in the United States, and 4th from the bottom in wages and salaries reported to IRS in 2000.* Area news media reported that the county had the very lowest per capita income in the entire country. Low income does not mean low expenses, though. To add insult to injury for tenants, average rents and royalties ranked among the *highest* in the state, in the top three percent.

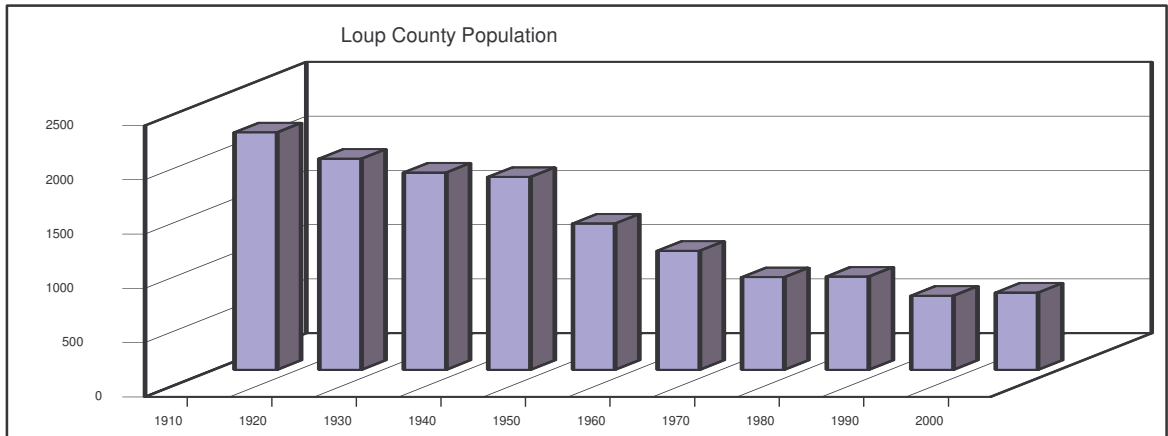
Standard of Living

In view of the previous paragraph, it may not be surprising that one in seven families (14.2%), one out of every four (25%) families with children under five years of age, and 17.7% of all residents were living below the federal poverty level in 1999. The average Loup County worker earned less than the minimum amount needed to support a single adult and barely one-third of the amount

needed for a family with two children, applying 2002 Self-Sufficiency Standards established by the Nebraska Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest.

Education and Schools

Loup County takes pride in its public school system, although of course, enrollment numbers are low due to the small population base. A total of 168 students over the age of three were enrolled in school in 2000. Of these, 24 were attending preschool and kindergarten, 89 were in elementary school, and high school enrollment was 47. Eight students were enrolled in college or graduate school. 91.8 percent of the adult (over 25) population completed high school or higher and 13.3 percent had earned at least a bachelor’s degree.



1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
2188	1946	1818	1777	1348	1097	854	859	683	712

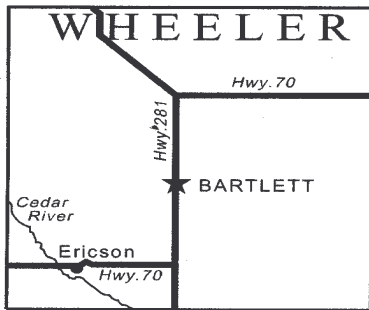
Source: U.S. Census Data

Table 60
The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Loup County, NE, 2002

Monthly Costs	Adult	Adult +						
		Adult + infant	Adult + preschooler	Adult + infant preschooler	Adult + schoolage teenager	Adult + infant preschooler schoolage	2 Adults + infant preschooler	2 Adults + preschooler schoolage
Housing	326	416	416	416	416	532	416	416
Child Care	0	335	259	594	259	853	594	518
Food	178	261	270	351	442	472	504	554
Transportation	203	208	208	208	208	208	408	408
Health Care	76	176	176	184	206	198	220	225
Miscellaneous	78	140	133	175	153	226	214	212
Taxes	125	128	123	154	119	331	302	255
Earned Income								
Tax Credit (-)	0	-148	-161	-194	-254	-23	-52	-69
Child Care								
Tax Credit (-)	0	-36	-27	-43	-15	-80	-78	-69
Child Tax Credit (-)	0	-50	-50	-92	-64	-150	-100	-100
Self-Sufficiency Wage								
-Hourly	\$5.61	\$8.13	\$7.65	\$9.96	\$8.36	\$14.59	\$6.90	\$6.67
							<i>per adult</i>	<i>per adult</i>
-Monthly	\$987	\$1,430	\$1,347	\$1,753	\$1,472	\$2,568	\$2,429	\$2,349
-Annual	\$11,845	\$17,162	\$16,159	\$21,038	\$17,659	\$30,819	\$29,151	\$28,186

Source: *The Self Sufficiency Standard for Nebraska*, November 2002

Wheeler County



Land Area: 575 square miles
Population (1990): 948
County Seat: Bartlett
County Clerk Address: P.O. Box 127, Bartlett, NE 68622, phone (308) 654-3235
Towns and Population (1990): Bartlett, 131; Cummingsville, unincorporated; Ericson, 111.
Public School Districts: Wheeler Central Schools, Bartlett.

Originally composed of government lands including the area now known as Garfield County, Wheeler County was established in 1881. The county seat of Bartlett is located in the center of the county on State Highway 281, while the Village of Ericson lies south and west near the Cedar River on Highway 70.

Population

As in Garfield and Loup Counties to the east, the second half of the 20th Century saw declining population and disappearing towns in Wheeler County. From a high level of 2531 in 1920, the population fell below 1000 in the 1980 census, and by 2000, numbers had dwindled to 886, or 1.5 persons per square mile. Just over half of all residents (51 percent) are female. Twenty-six percent live in two incorporated villages with 128 people making their homes in Bartlett, the county seat, Ericson, has 104 inhabitants.

Business and Employment

According to census information for the county, eighteen private non-farm establishments had a total of 98 paid employees in 1999, a decline of nearly one-third since 1990. All parents in the family were in the work force in 81.2 percent of families with children under the age of six, Sixty-six non-employer

establishments were recorded in 1998. Local government provided forty-six full-time equivalent jobs. The county lacks medical facilities, and does not have a resident physician.

Wages and Income

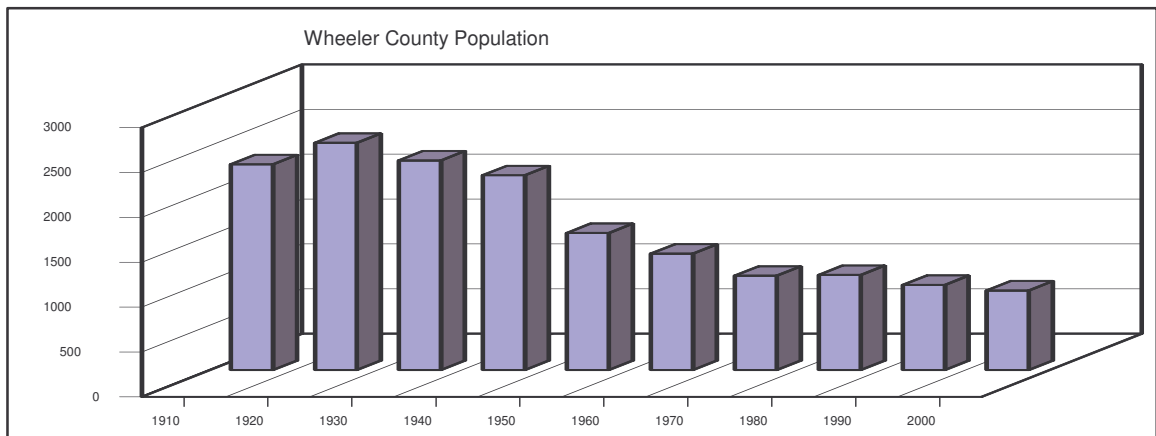
When it comes to economic difficulty, unfortunately, Wheeler County residents have much in common with their counterparts in Loup County to the west. Federal income tax returns filed in 2000 show Wheeler County families ranked in the bottom one percent of Nebraska counties with average adjusted gross income of \$22,403, and in the bottom two percent with respect to earned income, with wages and salaries averaging \$16,625. As a result, Wheeler was number 38 of the bottom 50 U.S. Counties in the year 2000. Rural families were a bit less fortunate than their village neighbors, as 1999 median household incomes were higher in town, with Bartlett averaging \$33,250 and Ericson \$25,278. Rents and royalty levels across the county, on the other hand, were in the top five percent of Nebraska counties.

Standard of Living

Although the average 1999 wage earner in Wheeler County earned a bit more than his or her counterpart in Garfield and Loup Counties, that wage income was barely adequate to sustain an adult and a preschool child according to Self-Sufficiency Standards published in November, 2002. It was just 57 percent of the amount needed to support a family of two adults with an infant and a preschooler. Census data shows that 15.4 percent of all families in the county were living below the federal poverty level in 1999. This number rises to 21 percent for families with related children under 18 years of ages. A shocking 39.1 percent of families with related preschool children (under 5 years of age) lived in poverty in 1999.

Education and Schools

14.9 percent of Wheeler County residents over 25 years of age hold bachelor's degrees or higher, while 90.8 percent completed high school or its equivalent. 236 children over the age of three are enrolled in school, with 23 in preschool and kindergarten, 196 in elementary and high schools, and 17 attending college or graduate school.



	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
	2292	2531	2335	2170	1526	1297	1051	1060	948	886

Source: U.S. Census Data

Table 92
The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Wheeler County, NE, 2002

Monthly Costs	Adult	Adult +		Adult +	Adult +	Adult +	2 Adults +	2 Adults +
		infant	preschooler	infant	schoolage	preschooler	infant	preschooler
Housing	326	416	416	416	416	533	416	416
Child Care	0	335	259	594	259	853	594	518
Food	178	261	270	351	442	472	504	554
Transportation	203	208	208	208	208	208	408	408
Health Care	75	172	172	180	202	195	216	221
Miscellaneous	78	139	133	175	153	226	214	212
Taxes	125	128	124	153	118	329	301	252
Earned Income								
Tax Credit (-)	0	-149	-162	-195	-255	-24	-53	-70
Child Care								
Tax Credit (-)	0	-35	-27	-42	-14	-80	-77	-69
Child Tax Credit (-)	0	-50	-50	-91	-63	-150	-100	-100
Self-Sufficiency Wage								
-Hourly	\$5.60	\$8.10	\$7.63	\$9.93	\$8.33	\$14.56	\$6.88	\$6.65
							<i>per adult</i>	<i>per adult</i>
-Monthly	\$985	\$1,425	\$1,342	\$1,748	\$1,466	\$2,562	\$2,423	\$2,341
-Annual	\$11,824	\$17,099	\$16,108	\$20,977	\$17,597	\$30,742	\$29,074	\$28,095

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2002 - The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Nebraska

Source: *The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Nebraska, November 2002*

Community Planning Tool

Summary/Recommendations

Juvenile Justice officials for Garfield, Loup, and Wheeler counties met on September 20, 2005 to discuss the Community Planning tool. Involved in this meeting were personnel from the county attorney (Garfield Co.) office, SICA committee members, extension, schools, health department, and law enforcement (Garfield Co.). A subsequent phone conversation was had with probation about their role in system points applicable to that agency. As a result of the conversations had with the respective agencies, the following recommendations are for consideration for the three year juvenile comprehensive plan:

- 1) This tri-county area is currently receiving funding for wraparound services which includes services for juveniles and families. This needs to continue to be a priority. However, a collaborative effort with counties outside this tri-county area has resources available (i.e. Custer Co.)
- 2) Alcohol use in these communities is considered socially acceptable by both parents and juveniles, therefore, providing no support for taking this issue seriously in the justice process. Consequences for alcohol related offenses need to reflect sanctions for both the juvenile and parents such as both attending a victim impact panel or alcohol education classes for both the juvenile and parents.
- 3) Due to limited sources of activities outside of the school system and employment opportunities, the three county area could benefit from implementing a community service program such as Youth as Resources. This can be collaboration between schools, justice, extension, and community stakeholders which would provide community service opportunities for improvement of community property, responsibility of teens in area, and accountability to the community.
- 4) Due to low economic and financial situations for residents in this area, HHS/OJS needs to become an integral part of the justice system in this area. Contact needs to be made with administrators for these respective agencies to have the workers assigned to this area to be a part of justice related coalitions.
- 5) With the geographic challenges of this three county area and the limited law enforcement, it would continue to be a recommendation for this area to develop a public hotline for reporting issues such as suspicious activity, behavior, or illegal acts especially by juveniles. Thus, giving the community an anonymous way to report activity to law enforcement to improve the communication between agencies and counties.

Identified Priority Areas

Priority Areas

A number of issues were identified as problems affecting youth in all three counties. The issues often overlap, and have been grouped into three priority groups:

A. Awareness and Access to Activities and Services

Every group highlighted the scarcity of businesses, services and activities in these three counties. Many participants mentioned the need to travel great distances at times to obtain necessary services, purchase goods and supplies, and find entertainment and recreation. Neither Loup nor Wheeler Counties has a resident doctor or attorney. None of the three counties has an emergency medical center or an acute-care hospital. At-risk juveniles dealing with lifestyle and health issues such as substance abuse, truancy, premature sexual activity and pregnancy, gender identification issues, underage tobacco use and eating disorders often must travel significant distances to neighboring counties to receive assistance.

Due to economic and geographic limitations, support services and activities for at-risk youth and their parents are often limited within the three-county area. The various agencies which do serve the area do not have a visible presence there. As a result, resources that are available sometimes go unused or underutilized because there is no person or agency to provide information or referrals when needed.

A Juvenile Services Coordinator serving all three counties could continue to serve as a clearinghouse for information on services and activities available to youth, including legal, medical and social services as well as opportunities for recreation, social interaction and community service. Ideally, the coordinator would be available to provide individual assessment and assistance, and coordinate referrals to existing agencies, service providers and mental health professionals as needed. Currently SICA (State Incentive Cooperative

Agreement) through the State of provides a Prevention Coordinator in each school in our counties to implement activities and science based curriculum. SICA also provides funds for a part time law enforcement officer to do Keg registration, compliance checks and to do presentations to the schools.

B. Supervision, Accountability and Skill Development

A second theme expressed in all three counties relates to the inability or unwillingness of some parents to supervise their children and hold them accountable for unacceptable behavior, or to provide wholesome examples and instruction in basic life skills. Minors are frequently required to assume adult responsibilities such as cooking, home maintenance and child care, for which they are ill-equipped and unprepared.

In every adult focus group, lack of parental supervision and involvement in the lives of children was identified as a significant problem. A related problem facing many parents of young children is the unavailability of affordable day care. Whether failure of supervision stems from a scarcity of day care providers, economic pressures requiring parents to work extended hours or shifts outside the home, illness or disability, substance abuse, or from irresponsible or immature behavior on the part of the parent, the result is that children are left to fend for themselves, often assuming responsibility for maintaining the household, cooking, cleaning, and caring for younger siblings or their own children. .

There is a need for continued low-cost, individualized programs and science-based proven strategies to assist parents and young people to acquire skills necessary to improve employment opportunities, avoid financial pitfalls and live healthier lives. Principal topics might include improving parenting skills, dealing with special problems facing children of divorce, budget management and check writing, and anger management. Employment-related skills such as resume writing, interviewing and personal presentation would be especially useful. Some clients need help with very basic skills such as survival cooking and personal hygiene.

C. Law Enforcement Issues

Participants in every community found some fault with existing law enforcement efforts. Not surprisingly, alcohol and drugs were a major concern. In Loup and Wheeler counties, where law enforcement has been limited to a single officer in each county, patrons expressed frustration with a perceived lack of success in solving a number of vandalism and theft incidents. In addition, there is a political strategy that these officers must be re-elected by popular vote, causing some limitations in enforcement.

Virtually every contributor acknowledged that the use/abuse of alcohol and controlled substances by minors is a serious concern in its own right, and a contributing factor in many other problem situations. Theft and vandalism by juvenile offenders was cited as a problem in two of the three counties. Teenage driving habits and offenses such as speeding and careless driving were seen as problems, along with youth-involved vehicle accidents. Patrons were concerned about perceived inadequate or ineffective law enforcement efforts and a general lack of respect for persons and property on the part of some young people.

More effective methods are needed to prevent and deal with unlawful and/or dangerous behaviors by youth, including early intervention for at-risk youth, alternatives to court-ordered criminal sanctions in cases involving minor or first-time offenses (juvenile diversion), and improved law enforcement. There is also a need for a diversion system that tracks offenders and the results of the program. Garfield and Wheeler counties have the same probation officer however Loup County has a different one. All three counties have different county attorneys so there is a need for coordination. We have talked with the Garfield Co. attorney about housing and coordinating results through his office.

Strategies

Strategies

It is evident that there is no single solution or set of solutions that will solve all of the problems identified in Garfield, Loup and Wheeler Counties. The difficulties and frustrations experienced by youth and parents in these three rural Nebraska counties are not unique - and to the extent that they stem from harsh economic reality and geographic isolation, with long distances from commercial shopping and entertainment centers, the difficulties may literally “come with the territory.”

Much can be done, though, to improve the situation and help to make rural and small-town life a bit more interesting and satisfying for our young people. First of all, we need to build upon our strengths - preserving the resources we have in the three-county area, taking full advantage of them and making them fully accessible to the broadest possible constituency. Secondly, we need to expand the range of those resources and services by drawing on our own communities and seeking out new resources as they become available from public and private sources.

Problem A. Awareness and Access to Activities and Services, and
Problem B. Supervision, Accountability and Skill Development

The Counties, in cooperation with the GLW Children’s Council Inc. employ a youth prevention coordinator in each school, a Wraparound Coordinator, a part time resource officer, and a summer youth coordinator that can be used as a resource available to parents and at-risk youth who need help, that is funded with Juvenile Services, Crime Commission, and SICA dollars. Juvenile Services provides only \$3,300 of our \$193,000 budget. However, those seeking assistance are faced with a bewildering array of services and requirements presented by social services, schools, the juvenile court system, and other providers. Many available resources, especially those outside “the system”, go

unused because people simply don't know about them. Often the most effective solutions involve a mix of formal, "system" services and less formal, individualized assistance from family members, teachers, friends and willing volunteers.

To assist juveniles and their parent in identifying and accessing needed resources, as well as helping them to become aware of youth activities and opportunities in the three-county area, we propose a centrally located *Juvenile Services Coordinator* - a person who cares about young people and whose job it is to:

1. Compile and maintain a complete roster or list of services, professionals and volunteers committed to helping at-risk youth, including government-sponsored and faith-based groups, counselors, mentors and volunteers.
2. Receive referrals of at-risk youth from all sources, and conduct or provide for individualized assessment of the needs of each participant youth.
3. Serve as a clearing-house for information on youth activities and events in the area. Assist service providers and volunteers in each town or county to coordinate opportunities for youth.
4. Arrange or provide one-day or short duration classes on a variety of subjects including budget management and responsible check writing, parenting challenges, problems experienced by children of divorce, anger management, job seeking skills, resume writing, interviewing and personal presentation, and even survival cooking for teens and young adults.
5. Coordinate efforts by local law enforcement agencies to involve youth in crime-prevention and constructive community support programs.
6. Work closely with law enforcement, probation and juvenile diversion plan administrators, where available, to coordinate effective and constructive community-service opportunities.

Full implementation of this position will do a great deal to address the problems identified in the first two priority groups identified above.

Problem C. Law Enforcement Issues

Additional efforts can be made to improve cooperation and support among agencies serving the three counties, continue or increase efforts to deal with underage alcohol and drug use, and improve relations between law enforcement officials and the general public, including juveniles.

Law enforcement agencies must work together to maximize effectiveness. Police and Sheriff's officers should meet regularly with each other to coordinate efforts and share information, ideas and resources. Agencies should strive to maintain a friendly, helpful presence in each community and school system.

Enforcement efforts and community cooperation may benefit from a telephone "hot line" service whereby members of the public can anonymously report suspicious activity or behavior and request information from law enforcement in confidence.

In the future, the counties may wish to combine their resources to create a jointly operated court diversion program for juvenile and first-time offenders in non-felony cases.

Appendix A

Community Planning Decision Point Analysis

Data Points	Total Population (*2000)	Juvenile Population (**2004)
Total Population	3,500	400
Male	1,716	193
Female	1,784	21
White	3,461	212
Black/African American	0	1
Asian	2	0
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1	0
American Indian	8	2
Hispanic	36	11
Juveniles Arrested		0
Juveniles Detained		0
Juveniles Prosecuted		13
Juveniles Placed in Diversion		0 (no formal diversion)
Number of Juveniles Adjudicated		13
Number of Juveniles placed on Probation		3
YRTC-Kearney commitments		0
YRTC-Geneva commitments		0

Sources:

*2000 U.S. Census Data

**2003 OJJDP website 2004 DMC Federal Reports (Ages 10-17)

System Decision Point: Arrest/Citation: Police/Law Enforcement

Decision: *Whether an information report should be filed, or what offense, if any, with which juvenile should be cited or arrested*

Formal Determining Factors

- Sufficient factual basis to believe offense committed
- Underlying support for a particular offense

Informal Determining Factors

- Law enforcement does a good job of citing based on facts and leaving the informal factors out of the decision making

Decision: *Whether to cite or arrest juvenile for juvenile or adult*

Formal Determining Factors

- Seriousness of offense
- Age

Informal Determining Factors

- Most misdemeanors are a cited and released
- Violent felonies will be cited as an adult
- If juvenile is probation or HHS then that respective agency will usually deal with the juvenile

Decision: *Whether to take juvenile into custody or to cite and release*
(NRS § 43-248(1), (2); § 43-250(1), (2), (3))

Formal Determining Factors

- As stated in statute

Informal Determining Factors

- Immediate risk to juvenile
- Immediate/short term risk to public
- Seriousness of perceived offense
- Extent to which parent or other responsible adult available to take responsibility for juvenile
- Since there are no in county placement options, law enforcement only option to release back to the parents or responsible adult
- HHS will place kids if put in their custody

Problem: The only options for law enforcement and probation is cite/release or secure detention which is a several hour drive there and back

Solution: Utilize local facilities such as nursing homes, hospitals, or shelter beds for short-term placement.

Comments:

One major problem for this area is getting parental cooperation. Parents in these communities provide a struggle for law enforcement and prosecution because of certain perceived status in the community. It is often difficult for law enforcement and prosecuting attorneys to do their job when parents are trying to influence the process by their status. According to statistics from the Crime Commission, the three counties had no juvenile arrests in 2004.

System Decision Point:Initial Detention: State of Nebraska Probation

Decision: *Whether juvenile should be detained or released*

Formal Determining Factors

- Risk assessment outcome
- Accessibility of placement options: parent's/guardians, emergency shelter, staff secure facility, secure detention facility

Informal Determining Factors

- Probation is able to use secure detention at Madison County or staff secure at Cedar's Richardson home in Broken Bow
- Using screening instrument for justification of placement
- Wheeler County has not called probation for several years for detention

Comments:

According to statistics from probation, Garfield, Loup and Wheeler Counties did not complete any detentions in 2004.

System Decision Point: Charge Juvenile: County Attorney

Decision: *Whether to prosecute juvenile*

Formal Determining Factors

- Likelihood of successful
- Factors under NRS § 43-276

Informal Determining Factors

- If 16 years old and younger, County Attorney is usually filing a juvenile petition
- If 17 years and older, County Attorney will file adult and juvenile will have to request the transfer
- No formal diversion program
- Only has a part-time County Attorney so all cases are decided up by one person
- Parents in this area tend to hire high paid attorneys to influence the court's decision and "bully" the system

Decision: *Whether youth should be prosecuted as juvenile or adult*

Formal Determining Factors

- Seriousness of offense

Informal Determining Factors

- No factors reported

Decision: *Offense for which juvenile should be charged*

Formal Determining Factors

- As outlined in statute

Informal Determining Factors

- No factors reported

Comments:

According to statistics from the Crime Commission, 13 juveniles were prosecuted in juvenile court in the tri-county area in 2004. None of the counties have a diversion program available.

System Decision Point: Pre-adjudication detention: Juvenile Court Judge

Decision: *Whether juvenile detained at the time of citation/arrest should continue in detention or out-of-home placement pending adjudication*

Formal Determining Factors

- Whether there is an "immediate and urgent necessity for the protection of such juvenile"
- Whether there is an "immediate and urgent necessity for the protection of . . .the person or property of
- Whether the juvenile is likely to flee the jurisdiction of the court

Informal Determining Factors

- The county uses an emergency shelters which are out of county and Madison detention center for secure detention, both which are costly for the respective counties

Comments:

Due the cost of secure detention, the county does not like to leave juveniles locked up for any longer period of time than needed. HHS takes some of the burden off of the county costs if they are placed in a shelter placement, but regardless all options are out of the tri-county area.

System Decision Point: Probable Cause Hearing: Juvenile Court Judge

Decision: *Whether State can show that probable cause exists that juvenile is within the jurisdiction of the court*

Formal Determining Factors

- As stated in statute

Informal Determining Factors

- None reported

Comments:

No comments for this section

System Decision Point:Competency Evaluation: Juvenile Court Judge

Decision: *Whether juvenile is competent to participate in the proceedings*

Formal Determining Factors

- As outlined in statute

Informal Determining Factors

- Judge will use as intended by statute, however, there is no local residential facility in the tri-county area for evaluation to occur

Decision: *Whether juvenile is "responsible" for his/her acts*

Formal Determining Factors

- "Complete evaluation of the juvenile including any authorized area of inquiry requested by the court."
- Opinion of physician, surgeon, psychiatrist, community mental health program, psychologist

Informal Determining Factors

- No factors reported

Comments:

No comments for this section.

System Decision Point:Adjudication: Juvenile Court Judge

Decision: *Whether the juvenile is, beyond a reasonable doubt, "a person described by § 43-247"*

Formal Determining Factors

- Legal sufficiency of evidence presented during adjudication hearing
- Whether juvenile admits the allegations of the petition (or, "pleads to the charges")
- Residency
- Age

Informal Determining Factors

- Most adjudications go uncontested in this area; usually get admissions by juveniles

Decision: *Whether to order probation to conduct a pre-disposition investigation (statutory authority unclear--see also: § 29-2261 (2))*

Formal Determining Factors

Informal Determining Factors

- Judge does not use PDI most of the time. Court feels that they usually have enough information to do a direct probation

Decision: *Whether to order OJS evaluation*

Formal Determining Factors

- NRS § 29-2204 (3): "Prior to making a disposition which commits the juvenile to the Office of Juvenile Services, the court shall order the juvenile to be evaluated by the office if the juvenile has not had an evaluation within the past twelve months.

Informal Determining Factors

- Judge will order OJS evaluations pre-adjudication and pre-disposition
- Judge do very few OJS evaluations because do not feel evaluations are quality

Decision: *Whether to order a PDI and an OJS Evaluation*

Formal Determining Factors

Informal Determining Factors

- County Attorney feels Judges is more likely to do an OJS evaluation than PDI because of recommendations and placement options from an evaluation
- Probation feels that more PDI's are completed with subsequent probation orders

Comments:

According to statistics from the Crime Commission, there were 13 adjudications in 2004 in the tri-county area. There are two judges that handle juvenile cases in this area. Juvenile Court is only held one time a week in these respective counties if there are any cases at all. This could be a benefit in regards to immediate consequences for juveniles because of a shorter time period to arraignment.

System Decision Point: Disposition: Juvenile Court Judge

Decision: *Whether to place juvenile on probation*

Formal Determining Factors

- As outlined in statute

Informal Determining Factors

- Most cases have dispositions of probation

Decision: *Whether to commit juvenile to the Office of Juvenile*

Formal Determining

- Whether juvenile is at least twelve years of age

Informal Determining Factors

- Judge will use for both out of home placements and YRTC commitment intentions

Decision: *Whether to place juvenile on probation and commit juvenile to HHS or OJS*

Formal Determining Factors

- As outlined in statute
- No apparent authority for delinquent in the legal custody of parents/guardian

Informal Determining Factors

- Judge does not usually do dual supervision cases. He is not opposed to this type of supervision just does not use on a regular basis

Comments:

According to statistics from probation, Judges placed 3 juveniles on probation in 2004. The Judges in this area use generic probation orders which does not provide for an individualized plan for juveniles. In addition, as soon as the conditions are complete, probation is requesting termination without further accountable supervision.

System Decision Point: Administrative Sanctions: Probation

Decision: *Whether to impose administrative sanctions on a probationer*

Formal Determining Factors

- Probation officers has reasonable cause to believe that probationer has committed or is about to commit a substance abuse violation or a non criminal violation
- Substance abuse violation refers to a positive test for drug or alcohol use, failure to report for such a test or failure to comply with substance abuse evaluations or treatment

Informal Determining Factors

- Probation is not using administrative sanctions-handle cases informally with modification of orders

Comments:

No comments for this section

System Decision Point: Motion To Revoke Probation: County Attorney

Decision: *Whether to file a motion to revoke probation*

Formal Determining Factors

- As outlined in statute

Informal Determining Factors

- Will file a motion to revoke if the juvenile receives a new charge
- Probation will request a motion to revoke be filed before there is an adjudication on the new charge

Comments:

No comments for this section.

System Decision Point: Modification/Revocation of Probation: Juvenile Court Judge

Decision: *Whether to modify or revoke probation*

Formal Determining Factors

- As outlined in statute

Informal Determining Factors

- Judge will revoke probation, but will usually extend the probationary period and conditions

Comments:

No comments for this section.

System Decision Point: Setting Aside Adjudication: Juvenile Court Judge

Decision: *Whether juvenile has satisfactorily completed his or her probation and supervision or the treatment program of his or her commitment*

Formal Determining Factors

- Juvenile's post-adjudication behavior and response to treatment and rehabilitation programs
- Whether setting aside adjudication will depreciate seriousness of juvenile's conduct or promote disrespect for the law
- Whether failure to set aside adjudication may result in disabilities disproportionate to the conduct upon which the adjudication was based

Informal Determining Factors

- Judges use determinate and indeterminate times on probation
- Judges will usually do shorter terms on alcohol related offenses and longer on criminal mischief (or other restitution related cases)
- If it is a MIP case request termination immediately upon completion class (if they get placed on probation at all-most are directs to the court or fine)

Decision: *Whether juvenile should be discharged from custody and supervision of OJS*

Formal Determining Factors

- Presumably same as those for probation

Informal Determining Factors

- Court officials do not know who the OJS worker in this area is so does not know who to even contact about these issues

Problem: HHS has a large turnover in this area

Solution: The workers that have been in placed in this area do a good job while they are there.

Problem: HHS worker is out of county

Solution: HHS and OJS need to be more active in this area for justice related issues.

Comments:

With the general lack of trust and overall not even knowing who the HHS or OJS worker is in the area at any given time, HHS/OJS needs to become a more present and active entity in this area. This is a deficiency in the utilization of services.

Summary/Recommendations:

Juvenile Justice officials for Garfield, Loup, and Wheelers counties met on September 20, 2005 to discuss the Community Planning tool. Involved in this meeting were personnel from the county attorney (Garfield Co.) office, SICA committee members, extension, schools, health department, and law enforcement (Garfield Co.). A subsequent phone conversation was had with probation about their role in system points applicable to that agency. As a result of the conversations had with the respective agencies, the following recommendations are for consideration for the next three year juvenile comprehensive plan:

- 1) This tri-county area is currently receiving funding for wraparound services which includes services for juveniles and families. This needs to continue to be a priority. However, a collaborative effort with counties outside this tri-county area that have resources available (i.e. Custer County).
- 2) Alcohol use in these communities is considered socially acceptable by both parents and juveniles, therefore, providing no support for taking this issue seriously in the justice process. Consequences for alcohol related offenses need to reflect sanctions for both the juvenile and parents such as both attending a victim impact panel or alcohol education classes for both the juvenile and parents.
- 3) Due to limited sources of activities outside of the school system and employment opportunities, the three county area could benefit from implementing a community service program such as Youth as Resources. This can be a collaboration between schools, justice, extension, and community stakeholders which would provide community service opportunities for improvement of community property, responsibility of teens in area, and accountability to the community.
- 4) Due to a low economic and financial situations for residents in this area, HHS/OJS needs to become an integral part of the justice system in this area. Contact needs to be made with administrators for these respective agencies to have the workers assigned to this area to be a part of justice related coalitions.
- 5) With the geographic challenges of this three county area and the limited law enforcement, it would continue to be recommendation for this area to develop a public hotline for reporting issues such as suspicious activity, behavior, or illegal acts especially by juveniles. Thus, giving the community an anonymous way to report activity to law enforcement to improve the communication between agencies and counties.