



COLUMBIA COUNTY, OREGON

2008 - 2014 COMMUNITY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

County Overview

Geography:	Northwest Oregon, 687 square miles.
Average Temperature:	January 39° July 68.4°
Annual Precipitation:	44.6"
Population:	46,965 (July, 2006 Certified Estimate, Portland State University) 49,163 (2006 Estimate, US Census)
Per Capita Personal Income 2003:	\$27,745
Average Annual Wage 2006:	\$32,213 (Covered Employment)
Average Civilian Labor Force 2006:	23,778 (Age 16 and over)
1st Congressional District:	Senators Gordon Smith and Ron Wyden Representative David Wu
State Senate District #16	Senator Betsy Johnson
31st State House of Representatives:	Representative Brad Witt

Locally Determined

The, 1999, State of Oregon Legislature understood the value of local communities in determining the best ways to support and serve children and families. They asked each county in Oregon to complete a Community Comprehensive Plan for children and families. This plan provides invaluable information and advice to policy makers about how to best address local issues.

The Columbia County Plan is the result of people throughout the county giving, gathering and analyzing data and information related to our children and their families. A summary of findings follows. We invite you to visit the Columbia County Commission on Children and Families' website for more information at www.co.columbia.or.us/cccf.

Community Process

Columbia County's Commission on Children and Families began its planning process for development of the 2008-2014 Community Comprehensive Plan for Children and Families in January, 2007. The local Commission placed the highest value on requesting the involvement of all the sectors of each of our communities and unincorporated areas in Columbia County. Commission staff were directed to engage the community in a variety of ways. Information about the process and requests for

involvement were distributed countywide, via email, mail, fax, telephone, word of mouth and media releases.

As a result of this request, a self selected group of interested community members began meeting on February 28, 2007. They chose to develop a steering committee comprised of over 25 people representing multiple stakeholders including the Department of Human Services, education, adult and juvenile justice, early childhood, mental health and alcohol and drug, public health, faith community, individuals, workforce development and the recovery community. The role of the steering committee was threefold: insure the local process met local needs and state requirements; develop a time line; and direct local Commission staff throughout the process. Commission staff were given the responsibility of staffing steering committee meetings, providing regular written progress reports, implementing an on-line community survey, entering data into the Comprehensive Plan database, tracking the time line, writing drafts for review, and writing and insuring approval and submission of the executive summary.

A multi-pronged approach to gathering information and data was chosen by the steering committee. They selected areas of interest using Oregon's benchmarks and assigned themselves the responsibility of gathering information and data and sharing and analyzing it at monthly meetings. Sources and methods of gathering information included: surveys, state and local planning documents, group and advisory committee plans and information, state and local agency data, and anecdotal information. An on-line community survey was implemented to gather anonymous community input. Demographics and outreach to diverse populations were a part of each analysis.

Each monthly meeting was designed so that several issues were discussed and assessed in relationship to one another and to the health and well-being of Columbia County. After a thorough analysis, the steering committee met in November, 2007, and reaffirmed previously identified community issues, barriers, gaps, and a focus issue. In December, 2007, they reviewed database entries and the executive summary. Throughout this process the local media printed articles and aired information requesting community involvement.

In January, 2008, Columbia Community Mental Health, a private non-profit designated as the local Mental Health Authority, began completion of the state required Implementation Plan. This process offered Columbia County another opportunity to share information about children's and adult mental health and alcohol and drug services. Results of this process will be included in the Community Plan database as they become available.

Information about how to strengthen the healthy development of Columbia County residents has been gathered, analyzed and used to develop and prioritize services and supports for almost 30 years. Particular efforts have been made to include youth, senior citizens, parents, clients, agency line staff and administration. As our population has grown and diversified, participation of representatives and members of the Hispanic and American Indian populations has increased. They have given information about community strengths and needs specific to their diverse culturally specific issues.

Population

Columbia County's population has increased from 37,557 in 2000, to 46,965 in 2006 according to Portland State University. This is a 25.05% increase. The increase is mostly due to migration into the county. The largest increase from 2003 to 2006 is the population aged 55 to 74. The US Census estimates the 2006 total population as 49,163.

Population figures developed by Portland State University used to determine state funding for youth services indicate Columbia County's youth population, ages 0 to 17, has decreased. However, local schools report an increase in the number of enrolled students from 8535 in 2004, to 8703 in 2006. The numbers continued to increase in 2007 to 8749. Home schooled students increased from 347 in 2004, to 407 in 2006. The birth rate has remained fairly constant since 2000.

According to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, our juvenile population ages 0 to 17 years is 12,009. It is 91% White, 5% Hispanic, 1.8% American Indian, 1.2% Asian and 1% Black. In Columbia County, the Hispanic population has had the largest increase since 2003, from 4.51% to 5%.

To meet this increased need, supports to our Hispanic population have been enhanced with an increasing number of bi-lingual and bi-cultural staff throughout the education system and in all human service organizations. For instance, St. Helens School District, the largest of the 5 local Districts, have full time teachers specifically to support Hispanic students at all grade levels as well as education and supports specifically for Hispanic parents. The drop out rate for Hispanic students (2%) is well below that of other students (8%).

Representatives of Columbia County's Latino population identified community strengths: strong support within the Latino population, strong family relationships, availability and willingness to work, and increasing participation in broader community events. Barriers to healthy family development included deportation and one family member not working. Lack of support by the broader community was not identified as a problem. Migrant housing was completed in Scappoose in, 2007, but was accessed by only 1 family. It is unclear why this housing was not used. Further research is necessary. The majority of services and supports continue to come from Washington County.

The composition of our population continues to change slowly. Our diversity continues to be primarily defined in terms of socio-economic status. While poverty has decreased slightly, more families are working at low paying jobs. The need for family supports such as child care, food, and covered health care benefits continues to increase.

For additional information about Columbia County's population, school district statistics, and links to local resources, we invite you to visit the Commission on Children and Families website at www.co.columbia.or.us/ccccf.

Community Issues

Columbia County chose the following issues which impact the healthy development of our children, youth, families and communities. Issues were identified as a result of reviewing data and information, gathered from the community, analysis of current services, barriers to healthy individual and community development and gaps in services and supports. They are not prioritized.

Family Supports

Continual and consistent outreach and supports to all parents is vital for healthy family development. Strong, nurturing families lead to improved literacy and school success, good problem solving skills and decreased violence. Especially noted was the need for support to grandparents raising grandchildren, a trend which is increasing, and parents who are in the criminal justice and alcohol and drug systems. Supports and services to our families are most effective when delivered in non-stigmatizing sites such as community centers and schools, in each community. Research shows continuing to strengthen the following family supports is critical: parent education for all ages and

stages of development, literacy supports and education, respite, youth and adult mentors, and wraparound services designed to support specific family needs and coordinated among service providers.

Alcohol and Drug Prevention, Treatment and Supports

Adult and youth substance abuse is inextricably linked to adult and juvenile crime, school failure, poverty and poor health outcomes. Specific services for youth which need to be increased are: early identification of substance abuse, healthy activities such as before and after school programs, housing for homeless youth, alcohol and drug treatment and transitional housing. Sustaining the Day Treatment Program for youth is critical. Other local needs include: transitional housing for females with children, identification and treatment for adults, after care services for all ages, transitional housing for males, increased adult treatment, and consistent law enforcement and policies. Youth and adult drug courts are in place and effective. The faith and recovery communities actively support organizations, individuals and families.

Organizational Capacity

There is currently a lack of organizational capacity to effectively meet the human services needs present in the County. Building organizational capacity includes: strength based methods are utilized by organizations and policy makers, the use of strength based models are evaluated regularly, positive cross discipline relationships and communication are in place and sustained, and standards of practice for all organizations are in place and met. Standards of practice include: appropriate financial resources and staffing levels, professional, educated and trained staff, supports for staff, and trained, supervised and supported volunteers.

Public Safety

About half of the county's population lives in unincorporated areas. Law enforcement in the unincorporated areas of the county is severely lacking. This is the result of the failure of voters to approve funding for the Sheriff's Department. Data regarding youth substance abuse will eventually be impacted as there is a decrease in the number youth being held accountable. This will also result in a decrease in the number of youth referred to treatment and supports for alcohol and drug use. Family violence and child maltreatment have also been impacted although the data has not yet been verified.

Health care

Access to health care has been identified as a community issue since 1994. Health care needs include: school based health centers, health care and supports for adolescents such as the STARS program, dental care, prenatal care to insure healthy pregnancies, immunizations, Public Health services, hospital services, all prescription drugs particularly those related to mental health, mental health services, and safety information and resources such as child care safety seats and bike helmets. While the most current statistics from the Department of Health Services Public Health Division indicate a decrease in teen pregnancy, school nurses are reporting an increase. A significant barrier to access is the lack of a local hospital. However, in 2006, plans were implemented and are moving forward to establish a critical care facility. School based health centers provide a particularly valuable support for our working parents, most of whom work outside Columbia County.

Homeless and Runaway Youth and Homeless Adults

Statistics do not tell the true story about the numbers of homeless youth in Columbia County. Finding supports for them is difficult. There is not a local shelter and funds and safe places to house and nurture them are limited. Homeless and runaway youth are closely linked to juvenile crime, dropping out of high school, and substance abuse. Homeless families have become an increasing challenge

for the county with limited resources available to prevent and address homelessness. In December, 2007, floods displaced many families, especially in Vernonia. This was the second flood in 11 years.

Transportation

Up to 65% of our population commutes outside the county to work. We do not have a hospital nor college in Columbia County. Three of our 7 incorporated communities do not have grocery stores. Access to jobs, health care, food, and education outside the county is critical. Longview in the State of Washington, Multnomah and Washington Counties in Oregon are destination points. Safe, affordable transportation has been identified as a crucial need since 1994. In, 2007, significant progress has been made to increase public transportation within Columbia County, to Multnomah and Washington counties and to Longview, Washington. Transportation is inextricably linked to local issues such as family supports, public safety, poverty, and all areas of health care.

Safety and Freedom From Violence

Child maltreatment is a significant and prevalent problem and one which is not captured accurately by statistics. Also, domestic violence data is not uniformly collected. Decreases in law enforcement and Department of Human Services Child Welfare staff have an impact on this data. Locally kept, unofficial statistics indicate our child abuse rate is linked alcohol and drug use, family violence and criminal activity. The Juvenile Department reports there is a correlation between child abuse and neglect and juvenile crime. Gaps in services which if in place would decrease family violence include violence prevention programs for children, support groups for youth who have experienced violence and support for adults who have experienced violence.

Juvenile Crime Prevention

Our juvenile crime rate continues to decrease. This is due to careful, collaborative and effective juvenile justice planning which has proven successful in sustaining services in spite of severe budget reductions. Our system of services includes programs specifically designed to prevent entry into the juvenile justice system. Locally, juvenile crime is closely linked to child abuse and neglect, poverty, alcohol and drug use and lack of school success. It is essential to maintain and continue to enhance the current system of services which include the Teen and Family Transition Program and Juvenile Department services and skills training.

Mental Health Services

Services located in each community have increased since 2003. Services which are needed include a shelter evaluation program, local sex offender treatment, access to residential beds, and access to mental health medications. Continued enhancements to services located in all areas of the county are strongly recommended. Lack of access to medications is specifically noted as a major contributor to crime, homelessness, addiction and poor health outcomes.

Quality Child Care and Out of School Time Programs (After and Before School Programs)

Because up to 65% of our population commutes outside Columbia County to work, child care and out of school time programs and services are essential for strong child and family development. These programs prepare children for school and increase school success. Out of school time programs have been shown to increase graduation rates decrease juvenile crime both locally and nationally. Unfortunately, drastic funding reductions to local Commissions on Children and Families and increased funding restrictions have resulted in fewer school and community based programs.

School Success

School success and connectedness to school is a key factor in building protective factors in youth. Youth who are engaged in learning are less likely to use drugs or have socially disruptive behaviors,

report less anxiety and depression, have better relationships with adults, and are more likely to continue their education. The Management Training Corporation estimates 60% to 65% of their clients read at a 6th grade level or below. The Juvenile Department and Community Corrections report crime and substance abuse are closely linked with lack of school success. The Columbia County Jail and Community Corrections have requested reading and math tutors.

Food Security

Food stamp applications continue to increase in Columbia County. This is due to an active outreach program. While it is important to provide food, it is equally important to teach people about nutrition and how to safely prepare food. This is especially true for the majority of our working families who are commuting to and from work and have limited time to shop and prepare nutritious meals.

Housing

There continues to be a shortage of safe, affordable and accessible housing which is a basic need impacting all other issues. Floods and landslides in December, 2007, resulted in homelessness for families in the county. Low income families in Vernonia were severely impacted. Low income families who were renting were impacted countywide.

Economic Development

Strong economic development is dependent on a healthy, skilled workforce. The lack of literacy skills (reading, math, cognitive skills) is a barrier to employment. Columbia County continues to see slight increases in the number of people employed. Both parents in many low income families work. More families are working at low paying jobs which do not offer health insurance. Our unemployment rate had been above 10% since 2002. It remains at about 6%. The development of an educated, skilled and healthy workforce is crucial to our local economy. All other community issues are linked to a strong local economy that can provide livable wage jobs.

Focus Issue: Literacy

Analysis of community issues resulted in one focus issue which local practice and national research show will impact several of the above Community Issues. Literacy (reading, math and cognitive skills) is a key to school success. School success, in turn, results in decreased alcohol and drug abuse and crime. Ultimately, literacy is a factor in strong economic development.

For the purpose of the Community Comprehensive Plan, the following definition applies:

“Family literacy: services and supports which are interactive between parent and child and include age appropriate education, parent training, and collaboration with all local organizations. Literacy is essential for family well being and economic development.”

In Columbia County, since 1997, there has been an overall positive trend in the percent of 3rd graders who achieve established skill levels in reading. In 5th grade there is a generally positive trend but it is not consistent. By 8th grade, reading scores drop significantly. This data is collected by each local school district and released by the Oregon Department of Education. To change this trend local partners have chosen to refine their focus to improve reading literacy.

In October, 2005, a Literacy Initiative was adopted and remains active in Columbia County. Partners in the initiative include business, Community Action Team (Head Start and Healthy Start), Commission on Children and Families, Community Corrections, Department of Human Services (Child Welfare and Self Sufficiency), Foster Grandparents, individuals, Kiwanis Clubs, libraries (city, school and state),

Management Training Corporation, media, Northwest Regional Education Service District, Oregon State University Extension, Retired Senior Volunteer Program, and schools.

Each partner agreed to make literacy a primary focus within their organization and to support the countywide partnership. Activities include: gathering donated books and distributing them to schools, city and school libraries and to low income clients, reading activities in libraries and schools, tutors, parent education about the importance of reading, planning efforts to establish literacy activities in the Columbia County Jail and for Community Corrections clients, and promoting the importance of literacy via the media.

The following are examples of how the Focus Issue was addressed in 2007. St. Helens and Scappoose School Districts and the libraries serving their communities applied for and received three grants to encourage reading. Community Action Team applied for and received a grant to promote family literacy. Local school districts formed a literacy team and are training teachers to increase their skills to teach reading. The Commission on Children and Families is targeting book donations from the Kiwanis Clubs and the St. Helens Book Store activities to schools and organizations which will use the books in a way designed to improve reading ability. The Healthy Start program has trained staff to educate parents about how to teach their children to read. The Healthy Start Program Manager and local Commission Director are members of the state steering committee working with foundations and state agencies to acquire resources for literacy training for early childhood providers and children's librarians.

The end result of this work will be an increase in reading skills, school success, the ability to manage tasks of daily living and work preparedness. The success of our on-going collaboration will be measured using the Oregon Department of Education's 5th grade reading data.

COUNTY PROGRESS

The Oregon Progress Board Indexes show Columbia County making progress in three areas. Overall there are positive gains in the Economy Index, Child Well Being, and Public Safety. The Education Index shows a slight decrease. The following tables summarize Oregon Progress Board's data.

Community partners thank you for giving us this opportunity to share this information. You are invited to further explore the status of our County and to participate in the healthy development of our children, families and communities. For a copy of the executive summary we encourage you to visit the Commission on Children and Families website at www.co.columbia.or.us/cccf or call 503.397.7225.

OREGON PROGRESS BOARD, COLUMBIA COUNTY DATA SNAPSHOT, NOVEMBER, 2007

Columbia County Child Well-Being Index Rankings*

	2005	2007
◆ Prenatal Care	10	8
◆ 8 th Grade Alcohol Use	23	24
◆ Child Abuse	4	6
◆ Tobacco Use During Pregnancy	23	26
◆ Teen Pregnancy	8	4
◆ Rank out of 36 counties	7	6

*Ranked with 36 Oregon Counties. Lower rank numbers indicate higher performance.

Columbia County Rankings Education Index*

	2005	2007
◆ High School Dropout Rate	13	16
◆ 8 th Grade Reading	35	34
◆ 8 th Grade Math	33	32
◆ 3 rd Grade Reading	28	29
◆ 3 rd Grade Math	17	13
◆ Rank out of 36 counties	27	28

*Ranked with 36 Oregon Counties. Lower rank numbers indicate higher performance.

Columbia County Economy Index Rankings*

	2005	2007
■ Net Job Growth/Loss	25	24
■ Per Capita Income	6	9
■ Wages	5	5
■ Unemployment	34	23
■ Rank: out of 36 counties	20	13

*Ranked with 36 Oregon Counties. Lower rank numbers indicate higher performance.

Columbia County Rankings Public Safety Index*

	2005	2007
• Overall Crime	18	13
• Juvenile Arrests	27	17
• Rank out of 36 counties	23	14

*Ranked with 36 Oregon Counties. Lower rank numbers indicate higher performance.

APPROVAL PAGE

A signed copy of the Approval Page is on file at the Board of County Commissioners and Commission on Children and Families offices.

Columbia County Comprehensive Plan for Children and Families, January, 2008, was approved by the Board of County Commissioners on January 7, 2008.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS FOR COLUMBIA COUNTY, OREGON

By: _____
Chair

By: _____
Commissioner

By: _____
Commissioner

Columbia Comprehensive Plan for Children and Families, January, 2008, was approved by the Chair of the Local Commission on Children and Families on January 2, 2008, and is recommended for approval to the Board of County Commissioners.

Chairperson's Signature
Local Commission on Children & Families

Earl Fisher
Chairperson's Name