

# **ORLEANS COUNTY: PRELIMINARY DIRECTIONS FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING AND YOUTH ASSET DEVELOPMENT**

## **INVENTORY OF SERVICES, COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS, ISSUES AND DATA**

Prepared for:

**Genesee/Orleans Integrated County Planning for Children,  
Youth and Families**

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October, 1999

## Summary

In 1998, the Genesee/Orleans Youth Bureau, in cooperation with the Orleans County and Genesee County Departments of Social Services, received an Integrated County Planning Grant from New York State's Office of Children and Family Services. The primary purpose of this multi-year grant is to help organizations and communities in Orleans and Genesee Counties develop integrated planning processes leading to more comprehensive and effective services for children and youth, adults, and families.

This first phase of the project included (a) an inventory of services to children and youth, adults, and families in the two counties; (b) analysis of data concerning these services and their impacts; and (c) a determination of perceptions about community resources from youth and from adults who provide or utilize various services. Youth perceptions include selected summaries of a recently-completed 7<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> grade survey in neighboring Genesee County. The steering committee for this project agreed to include selected summary information from that survey in the belief that findings from an immediately-adjacent county would be illustrative in shedding light on how youth in Orleans County may think about the same subjects.

This Orleans County report should be used as a point of departure, a beginning, to help develop a comprehensive vision (1) of the strengths, resources and services the Orleans County community currently has in place--and (2) of where the community needs to provide additional resources to strengthen its assets for developing strong, resilient, self-sufficient youth, adults, and families. This summary organizes the primary findings of the full report in terms of how the Orleans County community is doing, and how it is perceived by samples of its youth and adults as doing, around six major themes or focus areas: Economic Security, Physical and Emotional Health, Education, Citizenship, Family, and Community. The summary, along with a number of "community discussion points" included in Chapter II of the report, is designed to serve as a starting point to stimulate extensive discussions concerning where the community--as a whole, as well as through its various organizations, jurisdictions, and individual citizens--needs to go from here to strengthen its assets around each of these six core areas.

## Economic Security

Orleans County's per capita income in 1997 was only about \$17,800, almost \$10,500 below the upstate average income level. The county's unemployment rate in recent years has typically averaged a percentage point or more higher than the comparable upstate rate. Many families lack

sufficient economic opportunities due to the county's primarily agricultural economic base. There are many minimum and other low-wage service jobs, which are typically inadequate by themselves to support a family. The county's continued dependence upon agriculture and seasonal employment was perceived by many as keeping overall wages low, discouraging employers seeking skilled labor from moving into the county, and discouraging the community's youth from seeking careers locally.

Residents can expand their employment opportunities in the Buffalo and Rochester areas, but this is only realistic for those with access to private transportation. Although many do commute, transportation is perceived to be a significant barrier to job opportunities. The county has no public transportation system. Given the county's economic base of low-wage service jobs, there is often little perceived incentive to accept a job which, after work-related expenses for transportation, child care, etc., may leave little for other essentials. However, it should be noted that DSS child care subsidies could reportedly be provided to 20 percent more families than are currently using available funds.

The county has an array of agencies offering a variety of emergency financial assistance, food, and shelter to those in need. However, there is a perceived need for more affordable housing for low-income residents, and the county is viewed by many as having an aging housing stock that is expensive to heat and maintain.

Less than half of the county's high school graduates receive Regents diplomas, and in recent years about a third of the graduates have indicated no plans to go on to advanced education. Thus it appears that substantial numbers are staying in the county and either commuting, or finding job opportunities within the county, with presumably relatively meager economic prospects likely for many. Some of those interviewed perceive that more youth would be motivated if there were more co-op and job/career shadowing opportunities for local students.

## **Physical and Emotional Health**

Many health-related early intervention programs exist within the county, and the number and proportion of low birthweight births have been declining, to levels below (better than) the upstate rate and virtually identical to national goals. Yet the proportion of births to women who received early prenatal care is consistently considerably lower than the national goal. The infant mortality rate remains consistently a bit higher than both the upstate rate and the national goal. The county's adolescent pregnancy rates have remained relatively stable in recent years, but remain higher than the upstate rates. Outside New York City, the county's teen pregnancy rate for females ages 15-17 ranks seventh highest in the state, although the rate is virtually identical to the national goal.

In adjacent Genesee County, about one of every six 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders said they had attempted suicide at some point. In Orleans County, mental health referrals were up substantially between 1993 and 1997, and formal admissions more than doubled. The prevailing perception is that the County mental health clinic may be understaffed to meet the growing demand. The proportions of students in the adjacent county who reported using alcohol, smoking cigarettes, and using marijuana all are substantially higher than the national goals. Adults perceive that large numbers of Orleans County youth have experimented with alcohol and marijuana, and some fear



that they are ripe for being exploited by drug dealers from Buffalo and Rochester. Many of those interviewed suggested that teens need more help in developing decision-making and refusal skills in general, and especially regarding the use of drugs and alcohol.

## Education

Statewide standardized test scores for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders are relatively high in the county (especially in math), though typically below upstate levels by a percentage point or so. Dropout rates in county schools are generally lower than upstate rates. Proportions of graduates receiving Regents diplomas are typically slightly below the upstate average, but have been increasing to just under half of all graduates. The roughly two-thirds of high school graduates each year who intend to enter college is typically considerably lower than the upstate annual rates. Students have expressed a desire to be more substantively involved in making decisions that affect them directly.

Several programs such as Even Start and LIFE are working collaboratively to develop literacy and other related educational and parenting skills with a variety of eligible children and families. These may become models for school/community organization collaboration, although they are currently only operating in a limited number of schools. The County DSS has been a partner with local school districts, assigning on-site preventive workers to each district in order not only to facilitate needed counseling with particular students, but also wherever possible to involve parents in the process of addressing any identified issues.

Most school districts attempt to provide a nurturing environment not only for youth, but also for the entire community through use of their facilities as widely-available community centers. Several districts, as well as programs such as Literacy Volunteers, attempt to focus on continuing, lifelong education.

## Citizenship

Note that virtually all the measures of progress in this area have no specific Orleans County data available. There is little adult data, and most youth data are only available on a surrogate basis from the Genesee County student surveys, which we have used selectively in the belief that the findings from a somewhat similar county would at least suggest how youth in Orleans County may think about the same subjects, until such time as similar surveys may be conducted in Orleans.

Many agencies in Orleans County work with youth to provide a variety of social and recreational activities and to help instill concepts of good citizenship, caring and values. Despite their valuable and recognized contributions, many youth are not reached by such formal programs, and many adults interviewed during this project reported concerns about the values held by youth. Only about 55 percent of the Genesee County youth reported that they accept and assume personal responsibility for their actions. However, although only 40 percent of the students said they place a high value on helping others, more than 80 percent reported helping friends or neighbors at least an hour a week. More than 60 percent of those in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades said they act on their convictions and stand up for what they believe.

More than half of Genesee County's middle school students and about two-thirds of 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders said they are active in various sports, clubs or organizations. More than half said they spend at least an hour a week in religious activities, and about 45 percent reported community service involvement for at least an hour a week.

Orleans County adolescent arrest rates for violent and property crimes have both declined in recent years, and typically were below comparable upstate rates. One-fifth of Genesee County's 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders reported that they had been in trouble with the police within the past year.

## **Family**

Many of those interviewed expressed concerns about declining family values and the lack of strong parenting skills among many parents. On the other hand, many of those interviewed cited among the community's strengths a strong sense of family and strong parental involvement. Both views probably contain elements of truth. In the Genesee County survey, although most students reported high levels of family support, half of middle school students and only a quarter of older students reported positive levels of ongoing communications within their families.

The number of new Orleans County admissions to foster care settings has remained relatively stable in recent years, at rates just above comparable counties. But the total numbers of children in care at a given time have been steadily decreasing to levels below comparable counties, thus suggesting that children are staying in foster homes for shorter periods of time.

After some increases in the number of child abuse and neglect cases in recent years, the number dropped back to previous levels in 1998. Rates of indicated cases in the county have typically been slightly lower than the upstate rate. Although we have only anecdotal data, several of those we talked to suggested that there is considerable youth violence against parents within the county. Several expressed the need for expanded domestic violence programs, including more focus on the perpetrator.

Although a number of programs address a variety of parenting issues, they tend to focus on those in their immediate geographic areas. There is a perceived need for more parenting programs and classes on various topics, parent support groups, and parent aides to provide direct hands-on parent training in the home setting. There is a perceived need for better linkages and followup with parents once referrals are made to agencies, in order to assure that needed services are received.

## **Community**

Despite the insufficient number of well-paying, consistent employment opportunities in the county, the county's population continues to grow: for those willing and able to commute, the county's location makes it possible for residents to work in the Rochester or Buffalo areas, while finding low-cost housing and other lifestyle amenities throughout the county, though at the potential price of less family time. Among the positive amenities for many are a small-town way of life, friendliness and feeling of security. County crime rates are consistently significantly lower than comparable upstate rates.

A large number and variety of services and activities exist for youth, adults and families. However, given difficulties in accessing many services due to distances and transportation concerns, many activities and services have relatively limited target audiences. There is a perceived need to reach more youth through various social and recreational programs, especially those not involved in traditional school extracurricular activities. Those surveyed and interviewed for this project consistently noted the need for more structured, non-sports activities, including safe places for youth to congregate, socialize, do homework, play games and music, access computers, and receive counseling and support as needed. Often youth seem unaware of the opportunities that do exist.

Fewer than a third of all surveyed youth in Genesee County reported having a positive adult role model in their lives, and only about 20 percent said adults in the community value youth. The number of youth on the waiting list for the Just Friends mentoring program exceeds the number matched with a mentor. Many of those interviewed said the community must find more ways to involve youth in leadership roles and in providing various types of community service.

Many issues appear exacerbated by the east-west split of the county, and the resulting lack of countywide focus on many issues. The existence of two separate United Way organizations further adds to the difficulty of pooling resources to address countywide issues. Many emphasized the need for more effective community leadership focused on developing and strengthening assets for children and youth, adults and families in the community--at the individual level, within the faith and business communities, in service provider agencies and school districts, among young people, and in the public sector, from elected and departmental officials.

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## Acknowledgments

CGR would like to express its thanks to the large number of people in Orleans County who made this report possible. County department heads, heads of community based organizations, school district superintendents, and representatives of law enforcement agencies made themselves readily available, often on relatively short notice, for lengthy interviews and follow-up telephone calls. Many staff members of the above organizations also participated in the interview process and often were responsible for putting together the data that CGR requested. They did so with patience and humor, despite repeated telephone calls for further data or clarification. Those who participated in focus groups gave freely of their time and ideas to promote the well-being of the community. In particular, we acknowledge the project's Core Committee, listed on page 2 of the report. That committee gave birth to this overall project, and its members have provided crucial leadership and guidance throughout all phases of the project undertaken to date. Of particular importance to this report was the Genesee/Orleans Youth Bureau staff, who gave freely of their time and attention to clarify issues, answer the telephone, take and relay messages, and answer myriad questions about service providers.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

### **A. Background and Context**

In 1998, the Genesee/Orleans Youth Bureau, in cooperation with the Genesee County and Orleans County Departments of Social Services, received an Integrated County Planning Grant from New York State's Office of Children and Family Services. The primary purpose of this grant is to help organizations and communities in Genesee and Orleans Counties develop integrated planning processes leading to more comprehensive and effective services for children and youth, adults and families. The project has three components: (1) developing a process for integrated planning and service delivery among each county's various departments, beginning with the Department of Social Services and the Youth Bureau; (2) assessing service needs and developing more comprehensive services for children, adults and families in each county; and (3) promoting broad community involvement in strengthening youth development and Community Asset Building. The Center for Governmental Research (CGR) was hired to serve as the planning consultant for the integrated planning grant. As a part of the integrated planning process, CGR conducted an inventory for each county of existing programs and services, and of data and perceptions concerning how well the respective communities are responding to a variety of goals for improving outcomes for children, adults, and families. This report presents the inventory for Orleans County. A companion inventory has also been prepared for Genesee County.

### **B. Purpose and Objectives of Project**

The primary purpose of this project is to help develop a comprehensive vision of the strengths, resources and services the Orleans County community already has in place--and what it needs to develop--so that all its children will grow up with sufficient resources, and its adult resources and families will be strengthened. Asset Development is one of the key concepts included in this project. Asset Development is a strengths-based, positive approach to developing healthy children and youth. This approach identifies the assets children and youth need to live healthy lives, be successful in school, be prepared for future challenges, and resist risk behaviors such as drug use and premature sexual activity. In developing this inventory of services and perceptions of community resources, CGR used the same positive, strengths-based approach to identify the resources and assets not only for youth, but throughout the human services sector of the Orleans County community. The assessment process focuses not only on children, youth and

families, but also on issues related to services for adults in the community, including seniors, and on services to a variety of vulnerable, “at risk” populations.

CGR is often brought into a community to identify weaknesses and service gaps and suggest recommendations for remedying what it finds. In this project, CGR was asked to focus more on how such limitations can be turned into strengths, and to develop a document to help identify issues that can help the community focus on how it can strengthen its existing assets and create new ones that do not now exist. CGR used the interviews and focus groups included in the study process as a way to not only gather information and assess perceptions about services, but also to introduce to the key stakeholders in the community the concept of Asset Development.

The second key concept of the Integrated County Planning initiative is the introduction of New York State Touchstones goals, objectives and outcomes. The Touchstones goals and objectives were established by the 13 member agencies of the NYS Council on Children and Families. Those agencies include: Office of Children and Family Services, Department of Health, State Education Department, Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, Office of Mental Health, Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, Division of Criminal Justice Services, Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, Office of Advocate for Persons with Disabilities, Division of Probation and Correctional Alternatives, State Office for the Aging, Commission on Quality of Care for the Mentally Disabled, and Department of Labor. The Touchstones goals, objectives and outcomes will assist the State and its localities in charting progress made toward reaching program goals and strengthening community assets. The utilization of these common goals and outcomes will enable each county to review its human services base to determine where services are in place to address various goals, where services need to be strengthened, and the extent to which data exist to measure progress against the goals. CGR uses this report to introduce the use of Touchstones to Orleans County residents and decision-makers as a tool to assess and monitor the resources currently available, and to identify those areas that need strengthening, to meet the needs of children, adults and families in the county.

## **C. Oversight and Scope of ICP Project**

A Core Committee was formed by the two counties to guide and oversee the five-year planning initiative, and to work with CGR on its role in the study. The core group is composed of Deborah Kerr-Rosenbeck, the Director of the Genesee/Orleans Youth Bureau, Carol Blake,

the Orleans County Commissioner of Social Services; and Eileen Kirkpatrick, the Director of Services of the Genesee County Department of Social Services. The Core Committee developed a list of County departments and non-profit agencies that are known to provide services to youth, adults and families in the two counties. Interviews were conducted in each county with selected representatives of these agencies, and separate focus groups were conducted with other key groups of service recipients, providers, youth, and other community residents. A separate inventory report was prepared for each county.

## **D. Methodology: Study Approach and Process**

This first phase of the integrated planning project involved the development of an inventory of services to children and youth, adults, and families in Genesee and Orleans Counties; compilation and analysis of data concerning these services and their impacts; and a determination of perceptions from youth and representatives of various service providers and community organizations concerning resources available to residents of each county.

Within Orleans County, administrators and staff members in County government departments and non-profit agencies providing services to children, adults, and families were interviewed to obtain information on the services provided, data regarding service recipients, and input on the perceived strengths and weaknesses in the community. Participants were also asked to identify the problems children and families are facing or would be likely to face in the future. In addition to the interviews, focus groups were held with Department of Social Services staff members, Genesee-Orleans Youth Board members, Chamber of Commerce representatives, users of services of DSS, and a religious community youth planning group (including subsets of both youth and adults). Each of these groups was asked to identify strengths and limitations of services and programs in the county, and to identify ways in which they and the community could help change limitations into strengths. CGR also analyzed various statistical indicators of the health and well-being of the community (collected from various local and state agencies).

*All of this information was compiled and summarized in this document, which is designed as a reference, a tool, to help Orleans County, its residents and its many organizations to focus their planning processes and resources on filling service gaps, enhancing community assets, and expanding and reallocating resources where needed to strengthen youth, adults and families in the community.*

More specifically, in order to position Orleans County to develop practical recommendations to help strengthen the resources available to children, adults and families throughout the county, CGR completed the following tasks:

- ❖ Interviews with representatives of County departments, other public agencies and non-profit service organizations providing a variety of health and human services and programs. We conducted private interviews with all such organizations identified by the project's Core Committee. These interviews covered topics such as the services offered by the organization being interviewed; interactions with other providers; perceptions of strengths and weaknesses related to issues affecting children, adults and families in the community; and key issues to be aware of in the areas of services to children, adults and families. Participants were asked to describe any service gaps they see in the community, or any areas where services are available but inaccessible for a variety of reasons. We asked for input on perceptions of the problems facing youth, adults and families today, what is being done to address those problems, and what should be done in the future.
- ❖ Interviews with school district superintendents and principals. We conducted interviews with the superintendent, various school principals and occasionally other school officials in four of the five Orleans County school districts. We asked these school officials to identify the services and programs offered within schools, to assess the strengths and weaknesses of services to children and families in their geographic area and the county as a whole, and to identify both assets available to children and families in their respective areas as well as their view of the primary problems facing children and families now and over the next few years.
- ❖ Focus Groups. Focus groups were conducted with several important stakeholder groups in the community. These groups included about 40 DSS employees from both counties (broken down into several focus groups, each of which included staff from both counties), a group of about 10 parents and 15 youth from a religious community youth planning group, about 10 Genesee-Orleans Youth Board members, 12 users of DSS services, and five Chamber of Commerce businesspersons. This format allowed us to elicit information from many individuals simultaneously, and encouraged both individual brainstorming as well as group discussion of ideas and determination of priority areas. The focus groups were well-received by the participants, and provided a voice for many individuals who might otherwise not have had input into this process. We attempted to create ample opportunities for a variety of ideas and perceptions to surface. These focus groups

provided opportunities to obtain information from a number of people knowledgeable about community resources. The groups, while not necessarily representative of all citizens of the county, provided valuable insights about community resources. Many of the issues which surfaced in these focus groups were reasonably consistent, both across groups and with perceptions obtained from other people interviewed during the project. During the next year of the Integrated County Planning Project, we will continue to conduct focus groups, with particular emphasis on including a broader cross-section of youth, including those not necessarily heavily involved in school activities and youth considered “at risk” and either receiving or considered to be in need of receiving various types of intervention services.

- ❖ **Survey of Students.** In many communities, assessments of resources available to youth and families are based primarily on the views of adults. This was not the case in neighboring Genesee County. An extensive survey of more than 2,700 7<sup>th</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> grade students was conducted in that county. Nearly all students in those grades completed surveys, thus assuring that views on personal and community resources and a variety of other issues were obtained from a large and representative sample of youth throughout the county. Although such a survey has not yet been conducted in Orleans County, some of the Genesee County results are presented in this report because they may be illustrative of the responses of youth in other rural counties such as Orleans.
- ❖ **Review of Available Data and Written Materials.** Any appropriate written materials pertaining to the various agencies and organizations being studied were also reviewed. Where available, these materials were used to provide an accurate and comprehensive review of the services provided.
- ❖ **Analysis of State and Local Data Measures/Indicators.** CGR also reviewed and analyzed a variety of indicators obtained from the State of New York, including the New York State Touchstones 1998 Data Book, Office of Children and Family Services MAPS trend data for social services, and PRISMS (Prevention Risk Indicators/Services Monitoring System) data collected by the NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS). Also reviewed were data provided by County departments and local not-for-profit agencies.

- ❖ **Review of Touchstones Goals and Objectives.** CGR reviewed the New York State Touchstones goals and objectives and used the Touchstones format to organize the services provided in Orleans County and to analyze data provided on service usage and outcomes.

## **E. Value of Staff/Agency/Organization Comments**

Most interviews were conducted in a one-to-one, in-person format. A few agencies asked several staff members to participate in the interviews. In general, respondents were very cooperative, open, candid, and thoughtful in their comments. Many had positive comments about the Integrated County Planning grant and applauded efforts to create change in the community. Most were appreciative of the opportunity to share their ideas, thoughts, and expertise on the issue of youth, adult and family services.

Focus group participants were similarly pleased to be asked to participate in this process. While there was some skepticism over whether the information gathered during the interview and focus group processes would actually be used to effect change in the community, in general there were positive observations and suggestions for needed changes from those who participated in the focus groups.

In order to encourage candid responses, we guaranteed all interview and focus group participants that their comments would be treated with strict confidence and that no statements made in the report would be in any way attributable to any single source. No individual or agency is ever quoted directly in the report, and no single person's comments had undue influence on our ultimate findings or conclusions. Thus, the comments that follow are based on CGR's overall compilation of available services and our summary of the perceptions of, and issues raised by, those we interviewed. What follows represents a composite of what we heard, what we observed, insights from all sources, and our own independent professional judgment.

## **F. County Demographics**

In order to put in context the information presented in the following chapters, Orleans County's population is briefly described in this section.

The County had a 1995 estimated population of 45,144, according to the Census Bureau. Its overall population has been growing in recent years, having increased by about 6,600 (17.3 percent) since 1980 and by about 3,300 (7.9 percent) since 1990.

The County's population in 1990 was 91.5 percent white: just over 38,000 of its 41,846 residents at that time were white. Another 2,754 (6.6 percent) were black, 194 (0.5 percent) were Native American, and 1,029 (2.5 percent) identified themselves as being of Hispanic origin.

The per capita income of Orleans County in 1997 was \$17,822, compared with an upstate New York average of \$28,258. The County's unemployment rate in recent years has tended to average around 6 percent, typically about 1 percent higher than the overall rate for upstate counties. Its rate of children on public assistance has consistently been well below comparable statewide and upstate rates.

## **G. Value of this Inventory**

*This inventory or report should be used by the Orleans County community as a point of departure, a beginning, to help focus attention on the resources it currently offers to children, adults and families--and on where the community needs to provide additional resources to strengthen its assets for developing strong, resilient, self-sufficient youth and families. As people read the report, it should be thought of not as a definitive evaluation of services and not by itself as a basis for decision-making, but rather as one piece of valuable integrated information, to be combined with other community information and perspectives and experiences to enhance broad discussion within all aspects of the community concerning the issues raised by the report.*

A variety of information is presented in this report. Some of it is factual, and some involves perceptions, which may or may not always be 100 percent accurate. But regardless of their accuracy, people make many decisions based on their perceptions, so that perceptions can often have the power or effect of reality. The report, then, represents a point-in-time "snapshot" of assets available to youth, adults and families in Orleans County, as reflected by the data and perceptions available to CGR as of mid-1999.

The report is intended to begin a dialogue among all segments of the Orleans County community. It is less important whether people agree with every statement in the document than that they begin to discuss the issues raised in this report and to debate what these issues mean for the county's residents and for the ability of the county's various organizations and communities



to strengthen the assets available to youth and families. If people disagree with some of the perceptions noted in the report, they should begin to discuss what needs to be done to correct the perceptions. Similarly, if the report suggests areas where the community needs to develop more resources or assets to strengthen youth and families, *individuals and groups throughout the county will ideally use this information to initiate processes to address the questions raised, act on the findings, and initiate steps to create community solutions and expand the resources available to youth, adults and families.*

## **H. Outline of Remainder of Report**

The remainder of this report is organized into the following chapters:

- Chapter II summarizes for each of eight Touchstone goals the report's findings and organizes what is known about existing services, perceptions about resources, relevant data and questions for community consideration related to each goal. *If the reader is not able to read the entire report thoroughly, we recommend that he or she at least give careful consideration to Chapter II.*
- Chapter III summarizes community perceptions of community strengths, resources and limitations related to services, programs and assets affecting youth, adults and families in the county.
- Chapter IV summarizes findings from the survey of Genesee County's 7<sup>th</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> graders.
- Chapter V outlines, in more detail than Chapter II, what services are available in the county to address each Touchstones goal and specific objective, and what available data indicate concerning how the county is doing against the Touchstones goals and objectives.
- Chapter VI describes in some detail the specific services and programs available in the county for children, adults, and families.

Throughout the report, where the word "county" is capitalized, it typically refers to a government entity; where it is not capitalized, it refers to the geographic area.

## II. COMMUNITY GOALS, CURRENT STATUS, AND ISSUES FOR COMMUNITY CONSIDERATION

This chapter provides an overview summary of what follows in more detail in the report's remaining chapters. It focuses on eight community-wide goals, or Touchstones, that have the potential to guide the Orleans County community in a process designed to strengthen assets or resources needed to develop strong, self-sufficient children, adults and families throughout the county. The eight goals, and the six major "life areas" they represent, are as follows:

### **Economic Security**

- Goal 1: All individuals will reside in households with sufficient economic resources to meet their basic needs.
- Goal 2: All individuals will be prepared for their eventual economic self-sufficiency.

### **Physical and Emotional Health**

- Goal 3: All individuals will have optimal physical and emotional health.

### **Education**

- Goal 4: All individuals will leave school prepared to live, learn and work in a community as contributing members of society.

### **Citizenship**

- Goal 5: All individuals will demonstrate good citizenship as law-abiding, contributing members of their families, schools and communities.

### **Family**

- Goal 6: All individuals will reside in safe, stable and nurturing environments.

### **Community**

- Goal 7: New York State communities, and specifically Orleans County, will provide children, adults and families with healthy, safe and thriving environments.
- Goal 8: New York State communities, and specifically Orleans County, will provide individuals with opportunities to help them meet their needs for physical, social, moral and emotional growth.

For each goal, we indicate the more detailed objectives under each, as well as a summary of what we know about how the community is doing in each area. The description includes a summary of services and programs currently in place to address each goal, available data about how the community as a whole is doing in meeting the goal, and relevant selected summary results from the recently-completed survey of youth in neighboring Genesee County. It should be noted that even though there is no way of knowing exactly how Orleans County youth would respond if they were surveyed, CGR and the ICP Core Committee have agreed to include selected summary information from that survey in the belief that the findings from an immediately adjacent county would at least be illustrative in shedding light on how youth in Orleans County may think about the same subjects.

In addition, we summarize community perceptions and opinions about community strengths, resources and limitations that shed light on each goal. Based on the overall summary of the community's current knowledge and perceptions, we conclude the discussion of each goal by raising a series of "community discussion points"--a series of issues and questions to help guide the community, its individuals and its various component groups and organizations as they determine what responses are needed to address the various goals and objectives.

To some extent the eight goals overlap. In particular, some of the same issues related to the community's economic well-being cut across goals 1, 2, and 7, and similar issues of community values and good citizenship have implications for both goals 5 and 8. Rather than repeat data, perceptions and issues under more than one goal, we have attempted to simply cross-reference statements made under a previous goal.

For more detail on the summarized materials in this chapter, including more detailed breakdowns of information for the various objectives under each goal, and more descriptions of the services available in the community, see the remaining chapters of this report.

The key to the review of this chapter is that it be used as a foundation for action. It is not designed to contain answers, and is not meant to represent a definitive statement or all-inclusive list of issues pertaining to any of the goals. But it is meant to provide a compilation of information that can serve as a point of departure for extensive community discussions of the eight goals and where the community needs to go from here in developing assets to address each of them.

## **Goal 1: All individuals will reside in households with sufficient economic resources to meet their basic needs.**

### **Observations**

This goal contains two more detailed objectives:

- All individuals will reside in households with sufficient economic resources to provide food, clothing, shelter and other necessities.
- Children and youth will receive adequate financial support from absent parents.

### **Relevant Data and Perceptions**

- The per capita income for Orleans County in 1997 was only about \$17,800, almost \$10,500 under the upstate average income level.
- The children's poverty level in 1990 (17.5 percent) was higher than the overall rate for upstate counties. Between 1993 and 1997, the numbers and proportions of children through the age of 17 who received public assistance declined substantially, and children receiving food stamps also declined at a slower rate. However, the numbers of people using Ministry of Concern emergency services increased through the mid-1990s, and many of those interviewed suspect that there may be considerable "hidden poverty" behind these numbers, although that cannot be confirmed.
- There is some evidence that there may have been a substantial increase in recent years in the proportion of low-income families with insufficient income to afford two nutritious meals a day. More comprehensive information is needed to confirm this possibility.
- Many families lack sufficient economic opportunities due to the county's primarily agricultural economic base. There are many minimum and other low-wage service jobs; however, few of those by themselves will actually support a family at an adequate level, as suggested by the county's low per capita income level. The county's continued dependence upon agriculture and seasonal employment was perceived by many as having the effect of keeping overall wages low and discouraging employers seeking skilled labor from moving into the county. Without substantial changes in the local economy, there will continue to be far more low-wage service jobs than skilled high-wage jobs.
- Transportation is perceived to be a significant barrier to job opportunities for many, particularly in the more outlying areas of the county. There is no public transportation

system within the county, and only a limited van/bus service (CATS) which serves primarily seniors and people with disabilities. Thus access to jobs and services can be a major barrier for many in outlying areas.

- Given the county's economic base of low-wage service jobs, there is often little perceived incentive to accept a job which, after work-related expenses for transportation, child care, etc., may leave little for other essentials. Therefore, there is a perception that many are taking their chances at losing their welfare benefits rather than accepting mandated work participation jobs.
- However, it should be noted that, even though working parents can be negatively impacted by limited child care options in the county, including limited after-school programming, sufficient resources exist that additional child care subsidies could reportedly be provided through DSS for 20 percent more families than are currently using the available funds.
- There appears to be considerable misunderstanding by staff in several community agencies as to various requirements of welfare reform, as well as of various support and transition resources available to those moving from welfare to work. Opportunities for people to make smooth transitions from the welfare rolls may be missed as a result.
- The county has an array of agencies which offer a variety of emergency financial assistance, food and shelter to those in need, including some that provide extensive services to the area's migrant and ex-migrant population.
- There is a perceived need for more affordable housing for low-income residents of the county. The county is viewed as having an aging housing stock that is expensive to heat and maintain, which is exacerbated by many owners having low-wage jobs or being seniors on fixed incomes. There are programs of the Ministry of Concern, Rural Opportunities, and others designed to help renters maintain stable housing and avoid eviction.
- Language barriers reportedly create problems in some agencies which offer emergency and other services within the county.
- The measures used to track progress against this goal are currently incomplete and need to be strengthened.

## **Community Discussion Points**

- What can Orleans County realistically do to modify its economy and increase its supply of well-paying jobs?

- Are there ways to use the untapped child care subsidies to provide sufficient incentives to enable additional people to move from welfare to work or to do what is necessary to accept better, higher-paying jobs?
- What else can be done to create more opportunities for those on welfare to make a smooth transition to the world of work? Are expanded support services needed in the community?
- How can training be provided to entry level employees that will allow them to sustain permanent employment and advance to higher-paying jobs?
- What can be done to overcome at least some of the negative impact of the transportation system on access to jobs and needed services? Do opportunities exist to develop joint approaches with Genesee or other adjacent counties?
- Does the fact that welfare rolls and the number of children on welfare are sharply lower than a few years ago mean that the economic situation in the county has improved, and that most of those no longer on welfare have found employment, or are some of these people becoming added burdens to family and friends, and to other parts of the service system? Is there a way to track the impact of the reduction of the rolls and what it has meant to individuals and families?
- Better ways are needed to track how well the community is doing in meeting this goal of sufficient economic resources and meeting basic needs, including not only the impact on individuals, but also on agencies providing basic emergency and support services. Also, agency staff themselves may need more training in welfare reform provisions in order to help facilitate smooth transitions to work, and stability once there.
- What can be done to increase the number of bilingual staff within community agencies that have significant interaction with the migrant, ex-migrant, and other dual-language residents of the county?
- Other questions?

## **Goal 2: All individuals will be prepared for their eventual economic self-sufficiency.**

### **Objectives**

This goal contains two objectives:

- All individuals will have skills, attitudes, and competencies to enter college, the work force, or other meaningful activities.
- All individuals who can work will have opportunities for employment.

### **Relevant Data and Perceptions**

As noted above, this goal overlaps to some extent with Goal 1. So as not to repeat issues, we invite the reader to also review the Goal 1 issues to determine their relevance to Goal 2.

- Orleans County's unemployment rate in recent years has averaged about 6 percent or more per year, typically a percentage point or more higher than the comparable upstate rate.
- The economic opportunities provided elsewhere in the state and country are perceived as being likely to continue to draw the talented, bright youth away from this community, unless it is possible to change the types of opportunities available. Many of those interviewed talked about the need to find ways to convince the best and brightest to remain and revitalize the community.
- For those willing and able to commute, the county's location makes it possible for many residents to expand their employment opportunities by seeking employment in the Buffalo and Rochester areas, but this only is realistic for those who have, or have access to, private transportation.
- Less than half of the county's high school graduates receive Regents diplomas, and consistently in recent years, about a third of the graduates have indicated no plans to go on to some level of advanced education. Thus it appears that substantial numbers are staying in the county and either commuting, or finding job opportunities within the county, with presumably relatively meager economic prospects likely for many.
- Test results indicate that county students generally do well on standard tests, at least at the elementary school level. And there is evidence that many are highly motivated to do well in junior/middle and high schools as well. However, to the extent that the Genesee

County survey can shed light on Orleans students, although almost three-quarters of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students reported being motivated to do well in school, only about 60 percent of 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders reported being so motivated.

- There is a perception among some of those interviewed during this project that more youth would be motivated if there were more co-op and job/career shadowing opportunities for local students. After a decline, there appear to have been recent steady increases in the number of summer youth employment program participants. In fact, the County Job Development Agency reportedly now turns away higher numbers of applicants for its summer career exploration program than it can accept.
- Given the local economy and transportation issues and concerns with making the transition from welfare to the world of work, there is a perception among many that there are a significant number of people in the county who want to work but are not able to find economically viable employment.
- Some perceive that there needs to be expansion of subsidized day care and after-school programs in order to create more work incentives for some parents. Unused DSS funds noted above may offer at least a partial means of doing so, though this may also imply that a significant educational and motivational effort is needed to convince people of the value the subsidy can have by helping create long-term job opportunities for individuals.
- In addition to the County Job Development efforts, VESID, ARC, Literacy Volunteers, Even Start and others are perceived as doing important work in the county helping to make those with handicaps, those with little work experience and displaced workers more viable in the work place.

## Community Discussion Points

In addition to related issues raised in the Goal 1 discussion:

- What can be done to increase the level of achievement motivation among area students? What can be done to create a sense of future opportunity in the local economy for them?
- What happens, and what should happen, to local graduates who do not go on to college?
- Would the ability to significantly expand such programs as the summer career exploration program help motivate more youth?
- Is there a need for expanded computer/technology training opportunities in the county for displaced workers and others entering the work force from the welfare rolls? Are other types of expanded training opportunities needed to build on existing efforts to train displaced workers and those making the transition from welfare to work?



- Are expanded child care, transportation, health care benefits and/or other types of support services needed to ease the transition into work and to stabilize employment for those coming off the welfare rolls, and for displaced workers needing interim training, or are current efforts by the Job Development Agency and others sufficient?
- What can and should be done to make sure that unused DSS child care subsidies are used as incentives to improve the job opportunities of area residents?
- Other questions?

## **Goal 3: All individuals will have optimal physical and emotional health.**

### **Objectives**

This goal contains nine objectives:

- Children will be born healthy.
- All individuals will be free from preventable disease and injury.
- All individuals will have nutritious diets.
- All individuals will be physically fit.
- All individuals will be emotionally healthy.
- All individuals will be free from health risk behaviors (e.g., smoking, drinking, substance abuse, unsafe sexual activity).
- All individuals will have access to timely and appropriate preventive and primary health care.
- All individuals with special health care needs will experience an optimal quality of life. (Individuals with special health care needs are those children, youth, or adults who have or are suspected of having a serious or chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional condition and who also require health and related services of a type or amount beyond that required by individuals generally).
- All individuals with service needs due to mental illness, developmental disabilities and/or substance abuse problems will have access to timely and appropriate services.

### **Relevant Data and Perceptions**

- The number and proportion of low birthweight births declined through the mid-1990s, to a level below (better than) the upstate rate and virtually identical to the Healthy People 2000 national goal.<sup>1</sup> The proportion of births to women who received early prenatal care is consistently just under 75 percent and is consistently slightly lower than the upstate rate, and considerably lower than the national goal of 90 percent. The infant mortality rate remains consistently a bit higher than both the upstate rate and the Healthy People 2000

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<sup>1</sup>For some of the measures under this goal, reference is made to how Orleans County compares to Healthy People 2000 national goals. Healthy People 2000 is a set of objectives, or measurable targets, designed as part of a strategy to improve the health of all Americans.

national goal. Overall, the county's healthy birth track record is satisfactory but could be improved.

- The county's adolescent pregnancy rates have remained relatively stable in recent years, but they remain higher than the upstate rates. Outside New York City, the county's teen pregnancy rate (for those 15 through 19) was most recently ninth highest in the state. For only those ages 15-17, the county ranks seventh highest, although the pregnancy rate of just under 50 per 1,000 females ages 15-17 is virtually identical to the Healthy People 2000 national goal.
- Relatively little is known about adult nutrition and physical fitness habits in the county, but if the Genesee County student survey is reasonably suggestive of Orleans students, about 55 percent of 7<sup>th</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> graders are paying attention to healthy nutrition and exercise patterns.
- In the adjacent county, about one of every six 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students reported having attempted suicide at some point in their life. In Orleans County, mental health referrals were up substantially between 1993 and 1997, and formal admissions more than doubled during that period. The prevailing perception is that there are often relatively long waiting lists for accessing services at the County mental health clinic, and that the clinic may be understaffed to meet the growing demand, although emergencies can always be accommodated.
- The proportions of students in the adjacent county who reported using alcohol at least once in the past month, reported smoking in the past month, and reported using marijuana in the past year, all are higher by substantial margins than the Healthy People 2000 national goals. Interviews independently suggested that there is a widespread perception that large numbers of Orleans County youth have experimented with alcohol and marijuana, and some fear that they are ripe for being exploited by drug dealers from the Buffalo and Rochester areas.
- Many of those interviewed suggested that teens need more help in developing decision-making and refusal skills in general, and especially regarding the use of drugs and alcohol. The local school survey provides support for that assessment.
- At this point there is not a central data base in the county with adequate means of tracking progress on the last three objectives under this goal. Some partial data suggest that about 30 percent of low-income households contain at least one uninsured person, but this needs to be confirmed with better data. Residents eligible for coverage under the NYS Child Health Plus insurance program may not always be able to access medical services from a convenient provider, since providers of that insurance do not have contracts with all conveniently-located physicians. Thus, from a practical perspective, some people who

are technically covered by insurance may not have convenient access to primary health care.

- A wide range of health-related early intervention programs exist within the county.
- The potential value of having expanded mental health staff offering services to young people in the county and specifically to a greater extent in conjunction with the schools is under consideration.
- There appear to be gaps in dental services for those on Medicaid. No private dentists in the county accept Medicaid as payment, though a clinic is considering offering dental services. A number of people expressed concern about the need for clarification and better education about such things as Medicaid eligibility in general, Medicaid managed care programs, and transitional benefits available through Medicaid as a person makes the transition from welfare to work.

## **Community Discussion Points**

- Are early intervention programs reaching all families with high-risk infants? What outcomes are being achieved with the families served?
- Are there initiatives County government or others should take to further improve the county's record in achieving healthy births?
- What additional efforts can be undertaken to reduce the adolescent pregnancy rates in the county? Would expanding various activities and healthy outlets to involve more county youth help reduce the rates?
- What should be done to improve community preventive education on the benefits of healthier lifestyles and to help improve individual decision-making and resistance skills?
- What if anything should the community do to attempt to reduce the level of youth smoking, drug and alcohol use, and bring them more in line with national goals?
- What should be the community's response to the reported rate in nearby Genesee County of youth attempting suicide?
- Should the community support expanded mental health preventive services to youth in schools? Should it support more preventive, comprehensive services for family units, to supplement services for children alone?
- Are there opportunities to expand access to dental services for those on Medicaid, to clarify various issues related to Medicaid coverage under various circumstances, and to work out a resolution that doesn't limit coverage for eligible county youth under the Child Health Plus program?
- Other questions?

## **Goal 4: All individuals will leave school prepared to live, learn and work in a community as contributing members of society.**

### **Objectives**

This goal contains four objectives:

- Children will come to school ready to learn.
- Students will meet or exceed high standards for academic performance and demonstrate knowledge and skills required for lifelong learning and self-sufficiency in a dynamic world.
- Students will be educated in a safe, supportive, drug free and nurturing environment.
- Students will stay in school until successful completion.

### **Relevant Data and Perceptions**

- There is currently little comprehensive data available to the community on the extent to which students enter school ready to learn. For example, pre-kindergarten screening data on various measures would be helpful.
- As noted earlier, passing scores on statewide standardized tests for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders are typically relatively high in Orleans County (especially in math), and have remained relatively stable through 1997, though typically below the upstate performance levels by a percentage point or so. However, only 55 percent of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders and 40 percent of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders surveyed in Genesee County reported having parents and teachers setting high expectations and encouraging them to do well. Almost three quarters of the younger students and 60 percent of the older students reported being self-motivated to do well in school.
- Dropout rates in Orleans County schools, typically around 2 percent, are generally lower than upstate rates. Proportions of graduates receiving Regents diplomas are typically slightly below the upstate average, but have been increasing through 1996/97 to just under half of all graduates. The roughly two-thirds of high school graduates each year who intend to enter college is typically considerably lower than the upstate annual rates of about 80 percent.
- Several programs such as Even Start and LIFE are working collaboratively to develop literacy and other related educational and parenting skills with a variety of eligible

children and families. These may become models for collaboration between schools and community organizations, although they are currently only operating in a limited number of schools.

- The County DSS has been a partner with each school district in the county in providing and specifically assigning on-site preventive workers to each district in order not only to facilitate needed counseling with particular students, but also wherever possible to involve the parent in the process of addressing any identified issues.
- Most school districts attempt to provide a nurturing environment not only for young students, but also for the entire community through use of the facilities as widely-available community centers. Several districts attempt to focus on continuing education as part of an emphasis on lifelong learning opportunities.
- Students have expressed a desire for more school districts to find more ways to have students be more substantively involved in processes of making decisions that affect them directly.

## **Community Discussion Points**

- Should communities and school districts place even more emphasis on offering adult/ continuing learning opportunities for the larger community in the future? Should there be more family learning opportunities provided?
- Are there ways to get parents more involved in schools and working with their children on their academic efforts?
- Are there ways to increase the level of academic motivation of students, and to help them feel a sense of high expectations and of encouragement from both parents and teachers?
- How does the community help schools create a safe, accepting and nurturing environment for all students?
- Should LIFE, Even Start and related family literacy program models be considered for expansion into other districts?
- Is there value to expanding career development efforts in schools?
- Are there productive ways at the school district level and/or in individual schools in which students can be more directly involved in making decisions on issues that directly affect them?
- Is there consistent data across school districts that can be used to monitor readiness to learn when students enter school?
- Other questions?

## **Goal 5: All individuals will demonstrate good citizenship as law-abiding, contributing members of their families, schools and communities.**

### **Objectives**

This goal contains eight objectives:

- All individuals will assume personal responsibility for their behavior.
- All individuals will demonstrate ethical behavior and civic values.
- All individuals will understand and respect people who are different from themselves.
- All individuals will participate in family and community activities.
- All individuals will have positive peer interactions.
- All individuals will make constructive use of leisure time.
- Youth will delay becoming parents until adulthood.
- All individuals will refrain from violence and other illegal behaviors.

### **Relevant Data and Perceptions**

NOTE that except for the last two of the eight objectives under this goal, virtually all the measures of progress against these objectives have no specific Orleans County data available. There is little adult data at this point for any of them, and youth data are only available on a surrogate basis from the Genesee County student surveys. Thus we have borrowed liberally below from the Genesee student surveys in the belief by CGR and the ICP Project's Core Committee that the findings from an immediately adjacent, somewhat similar county would at least be illustrative in shedding light on how youth in Orleans County may think about the same subjects. In so doing, we assume that such data at least provide a point of reference, rather than having no Orleans student perspective, up to such time as similar surveys may be conducted in Orleans.

Note also that Goals 5 and 8, and to some extent 6, have much in common, and should be reviewed together. We have attempted not to repeat the same data or issues in the separate goal sections, although some of the issues are clearly related.

- Many agencies in Orleans work with youth to provide a variety of social and recreational activities and to help instill concepts of good citizenship, caring, and values. These

include a wide range of agencies, including schools, the religious community, Cooperative Extension, Y programs, Youth Bureau and its various programs, municipalities, Alternative Choices for Teens, Just Friends, police and youth diversion activities, and Family Court and Probation for those who need more structure and sanctions in their lives.

- Despite the valuable efforts of these and many other agencies in the county, many youth are not reached, and many of the adults interviewed during this project reported concerns about the values held by youth.
- Students themselves echoed similar concerns. About 55 percent of all students in neighboring Genesee County said they accept and assume personal responsibility for their actions. The skills to resist peer pressure appear to erode over time: Almost half of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders reported the ability to resist negative peer pressure, but that declined to only a third of those in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades.
- More than two-thirds of the younger students reported that their best friends model responsible behavior; among 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders, slightly less than half reported positive peer influence.
- Although only 40 percent of all students reported that they placed a high value on helping others, more than 80 percent also reported that they help friends or neighbors at least an hour a week. More than 40 percent placed a high value on promoting equality and social justice. Just over half of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders and more than 60 percent of those in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades say they act on their convictions and stand up for what they believe.
- Half of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders surveyed indicated that they place a high value on getting to know people of other racial/ethnic groups.
- More than 55 percent of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders and about two-thirds of 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders said they are active in various sports, clubs or organizations in school or the larger community. More than half of all students said they spend at least an hour a week in religious activities. About 45 percent reported community service involvement for at least an hour a week.
- About 15 percent of all students reported being actively involved in lessons or practice in music, theater or other artistic/creative endeavors. About one-fifth said they read simply for pleasure at least three hours a week.
- Orleans County adolescent arrest rates for violent and property crimes had both declined through 1996, and the annual county rates were typically below the upstate New York rates. On the other hand, the number and rate of cases opened for PINS services increased rapidly between 1993 and 1996, but may have declined since then, although the data bases may be slightly different and need further analysis to confirm the more recent



data. A fifth of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders in Genesee County reported having been in trouble with the police in the previous year. Most school districts reported that significant numbers of students in a year are involved in disciplinary actions and/or need help for a variety of behavioral problems, often involving larger family issues.

- Emphasis was placed in interviews and focus groups on the need to provide increased opportunities for preventive services and more fun, social/recreational programming, rather than having to focus so many resources on remedial programs and intervention after problems have surfaced.
- Suggestions were made that the religious community should become more active in developing a variety of outreach programs for youth in various sectors of the county.

### **Community Discussion Points**

- How does the community more effectively respond to and counter the concerns of youth apathy and declining ability as youth get older to resist peer pressure?
- At the same time, how does the community build on the willingness of youth to act on their convictions, help others and promote social justice?
- How does the community more effectively reach those youth not currently involved in traditional sports and extracurricular programs?
- What if anything should the religious community do to reach more youth throughout the county?
- How applicable are Genesee County youth survey findings to Orleans County youth?
- Should officials in Orleans County make arrangements to conduct their own youth survey?
- Other questions?
- See other related issues and questions in the remaining goal areas below.

## **Goal 6: All individuals will reside in safe, stable and nurturing environments.**

### **Objectives**

This goal contains seven objectives:

- Parents/caregivers will provide children with a stable family relationship.
- Parents/caregivers will possess and practice adequate child rearing skills.
- All individuals will be literate.
- Parents/caregivers will be positively involved in their children's learning.
- All individuals will have the knowledge and ability to access support services for their children, themselves, or other members of their family.
- All individuals will reside in households free from physical and emotional abuse, neglect and domestic violence.
- All individuals will reside in households free from alcohol and other substance abuse.

### **Relevant Data and Perceptions**

- The number of new Orleans County admissions to foster care settings has remained relatively stable in recent years, at rates just above comparable counties. But the total numbers of children in care at a given time has been steadily decreasing to levels below comparable counties, thus suggesting that children are staying in foster homes for shorter periods of time.
- Many of those interviewed for this project expressed concerns about the lack of strong parenting skills among many parents in the county and a decline in family values.
- On the other hand, many of those interviewed cited as one of the community's strengths a strong sense of family and strong parental involvement. Both views probably contain elements of truth. In the Genesee County survey, similar conflicting views arose: More than two-thirds of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students and 60 percent of the older students reported high levels of family support. However, half of the younger students and only a quarter of the older ones reported positive levels of ongoing communications within their families.
- As noted earlier, less than half of all 7<sup>th</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> graders in Genesee County reported that parents and teachers set high expectations and encouragement to do well in school,

and less than a third of all students indicated that their parents were actively involved in their schooling.

- The amount of time available for parental involvement in schools and adult time spent with children may be reduced as a result of the substantial numbers of people commuting to jobs outside the county.
- After some increases in the number of indicated child abuse and neglect cases in recent years, the number dropped back to previous levels in 1998. Rates of indicated cases in the county have typically been slightly lower than the upstate rate. The numbers of preventive case openings and active preventive cases have not changed substantially in recent years, remaining slightly higher than the rates for comparable counties.
- Although we have no data to confirm the assertions, several of those we talked to noted that there is a considerable amount of youth violence against parents within the county. Some of those making these claims add that it is very difficult to get anyone to take such charges seriously or have them seriously investigated.
- Several expressed the need for expanded domestic violence programs, including more focus on the perpetrator.
- A number of programs are addressing a variety of parenting issues. A new Family Resource Center is opening in Albion this fall, but unfortunately it begins as a similar program is apparently ending in Medina. Other programs such as LIFE and Even Start are addressing parenting needs in various specific locations. They tend to serve primarily parents and families in their immediate geographic areas.
- Many noted an apparent need for more parenting programs, parent (and/or young mother) support groups, and parenting classes on various topics. Ideally they should be offered at convenient locations throughout the county. Support was expressed for the notion of expanding the number of parent aides in the county to provide direct, hands-on, in-home training on various practical aspects of parenting.
- Several agencies and school districts spoke of the need for better linkages and followup with parents once referrals are made to an agency for certain services, or once a problem with the parent's child is identified. Too often, referrals "fall through the cracks" with no parental or agency follow-through, to the perceived detriment of both the child and the overall family.
- The Office for the Aging offers support groups for caregivers of senior citizens.
- There are currently no good measures available to monitor community progress against the objectives involving community literacy, parental child rearing skills and the ability to access support services for children.

## Community Discussion Points

- What can or should the community do to help improve communications between adults and youth within families, especially those involving older youth? Is there a need for specific training and parent support groups for parents of adolescents, to supplement considerable supports available for mothers of young children from birth?
- Are there ways to get more parents actively involved in schools and in being more actively involved in their child's academic progress? How can schools help to make parents feel more comfortable in a more active role?
- How can service provider agencies and school districts develop means of minimizing cases "falling through the cracks" following referrals? Once a problem is identified and referred to an agency, are there ways to assure that the needed services are provided and that the parents as well as youth are brought into the process where appropriate?
- How do we minimize wasteful duplication of efforts? Can a comprehensive case management/tracking system be developed?
- To what extent should parenting classes and parent support groups be strengthened and expanded, and with what focus and target audiences? How do we get people to attend historically under-attended parenting programs and services? Should additional resources be put into increasing the number of parent aides, with what likely benefits?
- Can domestic violence and child abuse (and perhaps parent abuse) be more effectively addressed within the county?
- How does the community assure that it is providing sufficient services to meet the needs of families and children at risk of, or already involved in, foster home placements, and that it can respond as effectively as possible to address the needs of families in crisis?
- What assets need to be strengthened in the community to address the needs of children in foster care and their families, and of those in families at risk of having a child placed in a foster home? What assets can be put in place to prevent or reduce the numbers of families reaching that point in the first place?
- Other questions?

## **Goal 7: New York State communities, and specifically Orleans County, will provide children, adults and families with healthy, safe and thriving environments.**

### **Objectives**

This goal contains five objectives:

- Communities will be economically sound.
- The environment will be free of pollutants.
- Neighborhoods will be crime free.
- Adequate housing will be available.
- Adequate transportation will be available.

### **Relevant Data and Perceptions**

This goal and the issues related to it overlap to some extent with the issues raised in conjunction with goals 1 and 2. Thus we invite the reader to also review those issues in considering how the Orleans County community is doing in addressing Goal 7.

- Data indicating low per capita income and relatively high unemployment rates in Orleans County, coupled with the county's primarily low-wage agricultural and service-oriented economic base, paint a picture that cannot be described objectively as an economically sound community. Overall, there remains a lack of sufficient well-paying, consistent employment opportunities for many individuals in the county. Nonetheless, the county's population continues to grow, apparently as a result of people willing to commute while still being able to enjoy a rural lifestyle. For those willing to commute, and who have adequate transportation and the required skills, the county's location makes it possible for residents to expand their opportunities by seeking employment in the Rochester or Buffalo areas, while finding low-cost housing and other lifestyle amenities throughout the county's various communities, though at a potential price of less time available for family and community involvement.
- Among the positive amenities for many is the small-town way of life, with a friendliness and feeling of security not always experienced elsewhere. As one tangible example of the sense of security, the crime rates for the county are consistently significantly lower than the comparable upstate rates.

- There are currently no good measures of the community's ability to meet the environmental objective, and there are insufficient community-wide measures available at this time on the adequacy of the community's housing and transportation services.
- However, it is clear from many interviews that the lack of adequate transportation permeates much of the life of the community. There is a lack of dependable transportation for youth, adults, the disabled, those with low incomes, the elderly and those in outlying areas. It is a pervasive problem that leads to difficulty in obtaining and maintaining employment for some, problems for some in accessing a variety of services and activities, and difficulty getting children to and from school and other activities for others. Without access to a car, people lose control over their ability to work in certain places, access certain services, simply go out for social occasions, and the like. Lack of adequate transportation options and the distances between places often affects how families spend much of their time. In some cases, students are unable to take part in jobs, after-school activities, community activities, etc. because they are unable to negotiate transportation arrangements. In other cases, the arrangements get made, but at the price of a parent or someone else spending in some cases substantial amounts of personal time playing "chauffeur."
- Although the county's housing may be relatively inexpensive to purchase, some of the older housing stock is also expensive to maintain and heat, which becomes a particular problem for those with low-paying jobs and/or those on fixed incomes. Although private developers have developed several senior housing projects, there is the sense that there is no one agency focusing on what the county should be doing in terms of an overall housing strategy.
- Although there is no good documentation of the issue, there may be a hidden "homeless" population living in the county, "doubled up" with relatives or friends. Some of those interviewed spoke of the need for a homeless shelter, but it may be less the need for a formal shelter than options for providing short-term housing for a few who may need it on an emergency basis. Similarly, there may need to be a respite home capability for youth who run away or need a short break from their families, but there appears to be no quantification of the extent of the need.
- These and other issues are exacerbated by the east-west split of the county, and the difficulties caused by split media coverage, the respective pulls to Buffalo and Rochester, and the resulting lack of a sense of a countywide focus on many issues. The fact that there are also two separate United Way organizations further adds to the difficulty of doing comprehensive planning or pooling financial resources to take on projects of

countywide scope. On a more positive recent note, two separate Chambers of Commerce have recently merged to create one countywide Chamber.

## Community Discussion Points

- What initiatives should organizations in the county be taking to address housing concerns? Should the County consider creating a mechanism to address housing issues and begin to develop housing policies or at least recommendations for action?
- What would need to happen for the two United Ways to merge and pool their financial resources and thereby create a force for countywide planning, funding and action on issues of communitywide concern? What would be the potential advantages and disadvantages of such an approach?
- Are there any opportunities to expand transportation options within the county? Are there any opportunities to develop joint strategies with Genesee or other adjoining counties?
- Are there realistic initiatives Orleans County can take to expand its supply of well-paying jobs?
- How can the quality of the environment be effectively monitored? Should the County consider developing an “Environmental Report Card,” as others have done?
- Other questions?

**Goal 8: New York State communities, and specifically Orleans County, will provide all individuals with opportunities to help them meet their needs for physical, social, moral and emotional growth.**

**Objectives**

This goal contains three objectives:

- Communities will make available and accessible formal and informal services (e.g., child care, parent training, recreation, youth services, libraries, museums, parks).
- Adults in the community will provide youth with good role models and opportunities for positive adult interactions.
- Communities will provide opportunities for all individuals to make positive contributions to community life and to practice skill development.

**Relevant Data and Perceptions**

See also earlier discussions related to Goals 5 and 6.

- A large number and variety of different types of agencies, programs, services and activities exist for youth, adults and families in Orleans County. Aside from programs offered in Albion, many of the programs are available primarily through the various school districts and towns/villages throughout the county. Given the difficulties in accessing many services in the county due to distances and transportation concerns, many activities and services thus have relatively limited target audiences, no matter how good they may be.
- While the numbers of people in Orleans County who were served by the prevention and administration programs funded by the Youth Bureau remained fairly constant in recent years, the numbers served by intervention programs dropped dramatically. Beyond those data, better information is needed from a number of agencies regarding access by the entire community to various resources.
- There is a perceived need to reach more youth through a variety of social and recreational programming, including reaching those youth who are not involved in traditional school sports and other extracurricular activities.



- While there are clearly a number of recreational resources available to youth and families, there was nonetheless a common complaint that there is not enough for kids or in many cases adults to do throughout the county.
- Youth in the community are perceived as needing more structured activities. Students indicated that their main concern was the lack of spaces just for teens. Many reported that they would like to have a safe place without excessive monitoring where they could do homework, socialize, play games, play music, perhaps access computers, and purchase snacks. A youth-oriented drop-in center where youth could feel safe, obtain counseling, and have access to other services and fun activities might be ideal.
- Several youth and adults alike noted a need to involve youth in more community service projects. More inter-generational program planning, such as adolescents visiting nursing homes, is also perceived by many as valuable. Several suggested that if youth have better options to choose from, they will make better choices.
- On the other hand, many youth seem unaware of many of the services and activities that do exist, and opportunities that may exist in one community are often not promoted or made known to youth in other neighboring communities, thus raising issues of the need for more effective communication of what exists.
- There is a substantial waiting list for the Just Friends mentoring program. There are more children on the waiting list than matched with a mentor. Adults and youth interviewed as part of this project, as well as the Genesee County youth survey findings, consistently suggest the need for more such role model/mentoring efforts and one-on-one adult involvement with youth.
- Moreover, only a little over a fourth of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders and 17 percent of the older students in the adjacent county believe that adults in the community value youth. Only a third of the younger students and a fourth of the older students reported having a positive adult role model (parent or other adult) in their lives. Although many of those we interviewed cited as a strength in the community a spirit of volunteerism and a desire to help among county residents, the ability for individuals to volunteer to provide services (e.g., mentoring or tutoring support) is often limited by job pressures, hours when services are available, time spent commuting or transporting family, the location of services, etc.
- Less than 45 percent of the students in Genesee County reported that they experience caring neighbors, and about 45 percent said they receive support from as many as three or more nonparent adults.
- Only one-fourth of the younger students and 17 percent of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders in the neighboring county said that young people are given useful roles to play in the community. Several youth and adults who were interviewed spoke of the value of

creating more opportunities for youth to be involved in leadership and decision-making roles and in providing community service in various ways.

- Several noted that one of the most important times to provide a variety of services and activities for youth is during the after-school hours, and suggested that expansion of various opportunities during that time (as is beginning to happen in some locations) would benefit many youth and families.
- In order to assure that needed services are accessed, short of through court mandates, several recommended that case management or similar functions or responsibilities be created within agencies to provide needed followup with individuals and families to assure that needed services actually are received by those who could benefit from them.
- A recurring theme in the interviews and focus groups was the need for more effective community leadership focused on asset development for children and youth, adults and families in the community. In order for the Orleans County community to be successful in developing and expanding assets, many suggested that increased leadership will be needed at a number of different levels--at the personal level; within the religious/faith and business communities; in the provider agencies and school districts; among young people; and in the public sector, from elected and departmental officials. Such leadership will be necessary to assure that resource allocation decisions will be made wisely and consistent with the development and expansion of assets throughout the sectors of the community.

## Community Discussion Points

- Is there a need for teen centers in Orleans County? To what extent is it feasible to offer more services, and particularly community drop-in or activity centers, in scattered locations? Can school facilities play a role here, or must there be a clear separation from schools to be successful?
- What can be done to more effectively publicize activities and functions to youth and families? If events exist in one community that others would be interested in, are there ways of publicizing them and perhaps also pooling transportation to enable more to attend?
- Are there ways of creating more opportunities for expanded youth involvement in various community service opportunities?
- How can youth leadership and decision-making roles be expanded in the community? How can the community show that youth and the contributions they can make are valued?

- Is it feasible to expand after-school programming and evening hours of selected services and programs in the county? Would such expansion serve enough additional individuals and families to justify the efforts?
- What would be needed to recruit more adults to work one-on-one with youth, through such things as providing expanded mentoring and role model types of programs such as the Ministry of Concern's Just Friends program?
- For those not able or willing to become involved in formal programs, how can individuals be encouraged and motivated to find ways of showing youth they care about them, in meaningful but informal ways?
- What will the community and its various agencies, formal and informal organizations and clubs, service groups, and religious communities do in responding to the issues raised in this report?
- Other questions?

### III. COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF STRENGTHS, RESOURCES, AND LIMITATIONS

During the interviews and focus group discussions, participants were asked to identify strengths in the community. Several terms were used to identify strengths, including resources and assets. The strengths and resources identified through these sources were used in CGR's analysis of the community in relation to New York State Touchstones goals and objectives for children, adults, and families. It is important to recognize that these represent strengths as *perceived* by those we interviewed. Other strengths may exist in the community that were not identified by study participants and therefore are not identified in this report. Often a strength exists that cannot be clearly seen or identified by community members because there is a common misperception that it does not exist, or the strength may exist in tandem with a limitation that is easier to identify. A particular strength may not be identified because it is seen every day and has become a community norm, and therefore may be taken for granted and overlooked when someone asks about "strengths." Thus this list of perceived strengths may not be complete, but represents the composite expressed views of more than 100 different individuals who were included in the Orleans County interviews and focus groups.

Participants were also asked to identify things that appeared to them as weaknesses or limitations in services for children, adults and families. That question was followed with a request to identify perceived service gaps. "Service gaps" are defined as services that are not presently being offered within the county, existing services that need to be expanded, or new services that are needed in the county. All participants were then asked to identify the problems they thought children and families in Orleans County would face in the future. "The future" was defined as the next five year period. It is important to remember that these are "perceived" weaknesses, limitations, and service gaps, and may be in some cases inaccurate or "misperceptions."

Upon analysis of the answers to all of these questions, in some cases items mentioned as strengths were also identified as weaknesses or limitations. They may have been identified in that way by the same individual, or by different individuals. This does not mean that the identified strength necessarily cancels out the identified weakness; perhaps both are true in certain situations. Weaknesses or limitations were also defined as service gaps, often being so intertwined that they could not be separated. Further, most of the problems identified by the last question relate to or are intertwined with the weaknesses and service gaps identified in the earlier

questions. Therefore, in this chapter the identified strengths, resources, and limitations are woven together under the overall community issues to which they apply.

It is also important to remember that an identified weakness, service gap or problem may be “perceived” because of an individual’s own experience or viewpoint. Although in a few cases the weakness, service gap or problem may not in fact exist, at least at the level identified, the *perception* that it does can be just as limiting or harmful to the community in determining decisions or actions. It should also be noted that in order for an item to be discussed below, it must have surfaced in more than one interview or focus group discussion. Therefore, accurate or not, the perceptions referenced below have at least some visibility and credibility within the community. Thus the issues that follow, regardless of how accurate the perceptions may or may not be, have significant implications for how the community proceeds to address these issues in the future. To the extent that any of the perceptions are not 100 percent accurate, those affected should seek ways to educate the community concerning the reality. To the extent that the perceptions are accurate but “unpleasant,” affected individuals or organizations may wish to begin to seek solutions to the perceived problems.

## **Size and Rural Nature**

The rural nature of the community was identified as a primary strength in virtually every interview and focus group. The rural community is perceived as maintaining strong family values with strong parental involvement. Many existing community organizations for families and youth are viewed as strong, including sports teams, churches, Boy and Girl Scouts, and 4H. School systems generally are perceived as strong and as being in touch with the youth, and teachers and administrators are seen as caring about youth. Most commonly stated was, “this community looks after its own.” The sense of community, of looking out for each other, and of maintaining family ties is primary to maintaining the rural quality of life.

The relatively small population increases the ability to communicate amongst one another, leading to an awareness of the problems faced by the community and its members. Service providers and clients often know one another, leading service providers to be more aware of the results of their services and to see their clients as people rather than numbers. “After all, everybody sees everybody in the grocery store.” Services are local in nature, rather than large impersonal agencies, and their staffs are local people, giving the agencies and their staffs a vested interest in seeing community problems solved. Across the service organizations, staff members often move from one agency to another as they seek new challenges. Yet despite this movement,

service providers note the stability of their staffs, identifying staff members as dedicated, committed, resourceful and creative. Staff members are perceived as having a personal investment in the community--people who work here, live here. Informal networking is said to happen often because staff members of various organizations are friends and neighbors and talk on a daily basis.

The relatively small population is also seen as a strength at a leadership level. Service providers regularly serve as Board members of other service agencies. If one agency identifies a new problem, other agencies often become aware of it very quickly through those interlocking connections. Community problems do not remain hidden, or known by only a small number of people. This has also led to increased coordination and collaboration between agencies, and an increase in joint case management. As a part of this increased collaboration and joint case management, more and more agencies are beginning to bring families into the service planning process. Because service providers tend to know what the other service providers are offering, and because there are fewer options, making referrals may be easier than in a larger community with more choices. Networking is both important and simple and staff routinely do it, whether formally or informally.

On the other hand, the “everybody knows everybody else” that can be so helpful in addressing problems and making connections with services can also be seen in another light, “everybody knows everybody else’s business.” Both sides of this issue were noted by almost everyone we spoke with, often accompanied by laughter. Most concede that it is difficult to have a problem and keep it private in a small, rural area. No one blamed this on staff members sharing confidential information. In a rural area with the service providers most often located in one centralized area (as in Albion), it is easy to be seen coming and going from an agency’s office, and such information is perceived as often spreading quickly. There is little or no anonymity in a rural area with a small population. Problems within a family are unlikely to be a secret from the surrounding community.

Although the movement of staff between agencies was seen as a strength, because staff members know other agencies well, it can be a limitation as well. When staff members must move from agency to agency in order to move ahead in their careers, or if they leave an agency because of inadequate salaries or benefits, such movement leads to problems of turnover and lack of continuity within any given service provider. This may mean that an agency must be constantly training new staff members and helping clients adjust to personnel changes. If the only staff member responsible for a particular program (not unusual in a small agency) leaves,

services offered by that program may be disrupted for a period of time. Clients who are dealing with upheaval in their own lives need continuity of services to help provide some measure of stability.

While some cited the high level of involvement of some members of the community in providing services and support for activities, in a rural area it is also easy to remain outside of activities and services. There is a significant population that lives outside the concentration of services in Albion or the smaller villages. For those individuals, taking advantage of services or activities may be difficult due to transportation problems, smaller numbers of services in general, lack of awareness about what is available, or lack of family members, friends or neighbors who invite and encourage community participation. Since many of the activities offered in a rural area depend upon willing and able volunteers, this rural population may be an untapped resource.

Also, there are fewer resources to draw from with such a relatively small population. Therefore, agencies are perceived by many as having lower per capita budgets than their counterparts in larger communities. Although participants cited the regular use of creativity and stretching of resources to cope with this, they also noted that such creativity and stretching can only go so far, and often leads to employee burnout. Although many cited a spirit of volunteerism and a desire to help among county residents, the ability for individuals to volunteer to provide services (e.g., mentoring or tutoring support) is often limited by job pressures, hours when services are available, the location of services, etc. Services are also limited in scope because of the rural nature of the county, with specialty services that serve only small numbers of clients available only in Buffalo or Rochester, or maybe (although unlikely) in Batavia. Few services are located outside of Albion because providers don't have a large enough budget, staff or clientele to offer branch offices. Although referrals may be easier for providers when there is a limited number of agencies, for the consumer this means limited choice. If consumers are not pleased with the services provided or do not wish to use a particular provider, there is typically nowhere else convenient to go for those same services locally.

The size and rural nature also impacts life in the community in other ways. There were factors cited that on the surface appear to bring "extra" problems into the community. The county has two state prisons and sometimes inmates stay in the area upon their release and bring family members to join them. These former inmates often reportedly have relatively low education levels and few job skills. The county is also primarily agricultural, and migrant workers are perceived by many as bringing another set of problems, mostly arising from educational level, problems understanding the English language, and poverty. Migrants are often

seen as a transient population with limited investment in the long range well-being of the community. Yet former migrants also choose to settle in the area, leading to an increasing need for bilingual service providers. Agencies are aware of the need to increase the numbers of bilingual staff members to provide services for an increasingly diverse population as migrant workers choose to settle in the community.

## Geography

For those with access to private transportation, the proximity to two major urban areas, Rochester and Buffalo, provides families a wide variety of cultural, entertainment and educational events appealing to all ages and tastes, while still enabling them to reside in a rural area. This geographic location also allows access to a variety of specialized services (medical, mental health, etc.) not usually available in a rural area. It also offers a wide variety of employment opportunities for those willing and able to commute to urban areas to work.

Yet this issue, being located halfway between two large urban areas, also has a flip side. Orleans County has no large urban center and is situated almost halfway between the urban centers of Buffalo and Rochester. This has led to a split down the center of the county, into East and West orientations, towards Rochester or Buffalo. This split is fueled partly by the lack of some recreational activities, such as movie theaters, in the county. Those on the west side tend to gravitate toward Buffalo for recreation, while those on the east side gravitate toward Rochester.

The New York State Child Health Plus insurance program is another illustration of the east/west split. There are two providers of Child Health Plus insurance in Orleans County, the Buffalo Blue Cross/Blue Shield organization and Fidelis. If a child is insured through the Buffalo Blues or Fidelis, medical care for that child must be obtained through physicians who have contracts with either of those organizations. Oak Orchard Health Center, with its locations in Brockport and Albion, does not have a contract with either insurer. For many low income parents, insuring their children means a change to new and possibly less convenient physicians. This is especially a problem for parents residing on the east side of the county, who are more likely to get their medical care through Oak Orchard.

This split into east and west also occasionally limits the community's ability to pull together on issues facing the entire county. Broadcast media coverage tends to be split between the Buffalo and Rochester markets, further limiting the likelihood on many issues of obtaining



countywide coverage. Some also gravitate toward either the Buffalo or Rochester newspapers. However, two local newspapers with fairly large circulations, The Medina Journal (published Monday through Friday) and the Batavia Daily News-Orleans Edition (published Monday through Saturday), each provide some countywide perspective on selected issues. There are two United Way organizations in the county, thereby limiting countywide efforts that need broad funding support. The Eastern Orleans organization is affiliated with the United Way of Greater Rochester, Inc. The Western Orleans United Way is a totally separate organization. Similarly, the county previously had two Chambers of Commerce, one in Albion and one in Medina. However, those organizations have recently merged to create one countywide Chamber of Commerce.

## **Transportation**

As expected in a rural county, virtually every interview included the topic of transportation. This issue grows out of both the rural nature of the county and its geographic location. There is no public transportation system within the county. The Orleans Community Action Committee provides a van/bus service within the county; however, it has limited hours and a limited scope of operation. Concerns were also raised regarding the confidentiality of this service, as drivers are not obliged to keep information about clients' destinations confidential. Medina has a taxi service, but many noted unspecified safety concerns about that service, as well as its cost. Also, there is no public transportation into or out of the county. None of the major interstate carriers (i.e., Trailways, Greyhound, etc.) services Orleans County. For many wishing to see medical specialists in Rochester or Buffalo, this creates a hardship. Most noted that families do usually manage to get where they need to go, but also noted such stories as seeing mothers walking from the center of Albion out to the DSS offices with small children (not warmly dressed) in below freezing conditions, on a narrow road with no sidewalks. Others noted that while the CATS system is available for medical and nutritional appointments for the elderly, it will not provide rides to the hairdresser, family visits or social events due to its funding restrictions, even though such social visits are seen as essential quality of life issues for the aging population. The lack of public transportation also keeps those without reliable transportation from accessing employment possibilities in nearby urban areas.

## **Economics**

There is also a lack of sufficient economic opportunities for many families due to the county's primarily agricultural economic base. Added to that are the concerns about geographic

location and transportation as noted above. There are many minimum and other low-wage service jobs; however, few of those by themselves will actually support a family at an adequate level, as suggested by the county's low per capita income level. Many of the available jobs in the county pay between \$5.75 and \$7.00 an hour, whereas many noted that the county needs more jobs paying \$8.00 an hour and up to provide adequate family support. One example given was that of a single mother with two children making \$6.00/hour at a service job, which adds up to \$12,480 per year. Such parents must often work two or more jobs at the expense of time and energy spent on the family. The county's continued dependence upon agriculture and seasonal employment was perceived by many as keeping wages low and discouraging employers seeking skilled labor from moving into the county. The lack of economic potential is believed likely to remain as a problem. As things stand, there will continue to be far more low-wage service jobs than skilled high-wage jobs. Families are likely to remain pressured to hold two or more jobs just to survive. The economic opportunities provided elsewhere in the state and country are perceived as being likely to continue to draw the talented, bright youth away from these communities. Many participants talked about the need to find ways to convince the best and brightest to remain and revitalize the community. As youth leave the community and their baby boom generation parents move into retirement age, the tax base may decline further in the future. Many suggested that there is likely to be an increasing need for geriatric services without a young tax base to support those services.

## **Housing**

There is a perception that housing needs of the community are being responded to in part, albeit slowly, through increasing amounts of Section 8 housing. This was noted as being particularly important in a county with an aging housing stock that is expensive to heat and maintain, especially since this aging housing is often occupied by those with low-wage jobs or senior citizens on fixed incomes. Several developers, working with the Farmer's Home Administration and Section 8, have built senior housing complexes in Holley, Albion, Lyndonville, and Medina.

Because much of the county's housing stock is old, many worried about resulting health and safety issues for residents. The elderly, in particular, will continue to have problems maintaining older structures and heating poorly insulated dwellings. Participants noted that many of the large, old farmhouses in the county are currently being lived in by one or two senior citizens on fixed incomes. The housing issues also intertwine with the economic issues noted above. Service jobs that pay at or close to minimum wage do not provide for adequate funds to

improve inadequate housing. As the housing stock continues to age, the amount of substandard housing grows. It was noted that the Orleans County Housing Council was defunded some time ago, the Rural Preservation Corporation is inactive, and there is no agency that is focusing on providing affordable Senior housing. Although private developers, through the Farmer's Home Administration and Section 8 have built several senior housing projects, there is a fear that without a concerted effort there will be a shortage of senior housing as the population ages.

## **Schools**

The county's school districts were noted as strengths for their work in providing a variety of programming and activities for students with a variety of needs, sometimes without ideal levels of support from parents and various community organizations. It was noted that in most rural areas, the schools provide one of the few gathering places for children, youth and families. The school buildings are often seen as the community center, the primary place in many small villages for community members to gather for meetings, various recreational and educational activities, and social events. Many of those interviewed thought that the schools do their best, with available funds, to provide safe and fun activities outside of traditional school hours. All of the school districts in the county have some collaboration between in-house student support staff and community agency service providers.

## **Services**

Often noted was the "can do" attitude exhibited by staff members at many of the agencies in the county. Staff members are perceived as often being highly creative when it comes to stretching small budgets and providing unusual services to meet unusual needs. Staff members will look throughout the community for a way to address a client need, sometimes calling friends and family to locate a used item or a necessary service. Staff members are perceived as making do with what they have or doing without so that budgets can stretch to meet community needs. It was noted that such stretching can often lead to burnout, yet there is a surprising longevity among service provider staff. These people are said to be dedicated and committed to their community.

A few agencies were mentioned several times as doing a particularly good job of addressing problems in the community. The Probation Department was cited as often being the lead agency in new and innovative projects, and its JD/PINS Diversion Program received mention for its ability to bring agencies together to collaborate for the good of the whole family.

The Department of Social Services received positive mention for its links with the schools for early intervention services. The Department of Mental Health received several mentions for being progressive in terms of looking ahead to what would be needed and how to provide for that need. Others noted that Mental Health always fits someone in when immediate help is needed, even if understaffed. Also receiving mention was local community participation in addressing emergency needs, through volunteering and donations, particularly participation through the local churches, the Ministry of Concern, and Orleans Community Action. These organizations provide emergency food, clothing and housing not available through other agencies and depend upon the local community for donations of money and/or food, clothing, and furniture. The Genesee/Orleans Youth Bureau received mention for its good perspective on the community and its needs. The LIFE program, with its focus on helping young people be successful in school, and the Even Start Program with its focus on family literacy were mentioned as leading literacy efforts, although participants also noted that both served only small segments of the community because of the requirements of their funders. Others cited the connection between the Women/Infants/Children (WIC) program and Oak Orchard Health Center as ensuring that pregnant teens get necessary medical care.

Several other organizations received mention for their work in the community. Regional Action Phone (RAP) is perceived as providing quick and correct referrals to agencies. The ARC provides continuous services from early childhood through senior citizens to those with developmental disabilities. The Human Services Council works hard to ensure communication between agencies and up-to-date knowledge of what services are available to community members. Family Court Judge James Punch was mentioned for his ability to look at the needs of the whole family in determining solutions. The religious community was cited by several people for the efforts of several churches to offer a variety of services to youth.

Many noted new programs that need to be developed in the county, or programs that need to be expanded. Some of the programs have a limited service area, due to the requirements of the sponsoring agency or the funder. For example, Even Start Family Literacy serves only the Albion School District. There are many families that other agencies would like to refer to Even Start, but they are unable to do so because of this restriction. There are a limited number of Spanish-speaking agency staff members scattered throughout the county, and although agencies are aware of and working to change this, there appears to be a shortage of bilingual job candidates. At this time there is also an increasing number of people speaking different Spanish dialects arriving in the county as a part of the migrant population. The bilingual interpreter problem is complicated by increasing numbers of Russian or Eastern European refugees seeking

to settle in the county. There is no extensive English as a Second Language program available in the county.

Many identified the lack of a homeless shelter as a limitation. Although most agreed that there is no real “homeless” population in the county, there were specific circumstances mentioned where some type of shelter may be needed. One area is covered in more detail in the section on youth--no respite home or shelter for youth who run away, are forced out of their home, or need a short break from their families. Others mentioned a perceived difficulty in locating emergency shelter for someone who becomes homeless through fire or other housing emergency, leading people to rely on friends and family members who might be unprepared or unable to take in extra people. None, however, could give specific numbers or an estimate of the scope of need. Others perceived that there would probably be an increased need in the future once welfare time limits take effect and people begin losing benefits.

## **Service Coordination and Accountability**

Virtually all participants noted that there are concerns about how well community agencies collaborate in the provision of services to youth, adults and families. There is a continuum of collaboration in the county between human services agencies and between agencies and schools, with some collaborations operating much more effectively than others. Some of these collaborations include:

- **Domestic Violence Task Force:** This two-year-old task force created a countywide protocol for dealing with domestic violence issues across agencies. Members include representatives of law enforcement, human service agencies, the District Attorney, and the court. Monthly meetings include case conferencing on particularly difficult cases.
- **Sex Abuse Task Force:** This group has a similar membership and purpose to the Domestic Violence Task Force.
- **Youth Diversion Committee:** This committee develops coordinated plans based on the best interests of the child and family for youth referred for PINS and JD diversion services. Membership includes Probation, DSS, Mental Health, Youth Bureau, and invited agencies (depending upon cases to be presented).
- **DSS Case Management Pilot:** This group’s purpose is to case conference Public Assistance clients who also use multiple service agencies; the focus is to develop a single case plan for the client. This collaborative effort is just getting underway.

- **ACT (Alternative Choices for Teens):** This agency is run by a consortium of agencies (Community Action, Cooperative Extension, DSS, Youth Bureau and others).

Although the first two collaboratives, the Domestic Violence Task Force and the Sex Abuse Task Force, appear to do a good job of sharing information about each participating agency and have developed a protocol to be followed by all agencies, it appears that they only occasionally become involved in direct coordination of individual cases. The Youth Diversion Committee is more routinely involved in direct coordination of individual cases, and the DSS Case Management Pilot is also developing a similar approach to the direct coordination of cases. ACT is a collaboration to provide services to teens that are not otherwise provided by existing agencies. There is a perception that the community needs more agency collaboration to develop creative new programs that will fill in the service gaps between existing agencies.

There is general agreement that both agencies and schools have the best interests of students at heart and are working to provide necessary services, but there is also agreement that there is much room for improvement. Participants did note that the Orleans County Human Services Council works to foster collaborative efforts between agencies and between agencies and schools. The Council hosts a School/Agency Roundtable every other year. The Roundtable is implemented and coordinated by the Genesee-Orleans Youth Bureau and is meant to educate school personnel (teachers, counselors, administrators) about the services available in the community. Many noted that the schools were the one place where children and youth are available for educational programming about the issues of drugs and sexuality and for provision of services, making collaboration between agencies and schools an important part of future human services planning.

Frequently cited as a problem was the apparent lack of cooperation between various agencies. For example, staff members in some agencies may not notify other agencies of case conferences or other important client-centered happenings early enough for staff from other agencies to arrange to be there to take part. This means that little information about a family gets shared with the other agencies also involved with the same family. This is of particular concern, as it leaves the perception that some agencies are unwilling to share information which could be helpful to the client.

School officials frequently cite the need for support in following up with parents on issues that affect the entire family. Efforts by schools to address such family issues often are ineffective because of the lack of adequate resources within the schools to provide needed follow-up, and

because of the lack of trust in some cases with parents who may be suspicious of the schools or may have been in conflict with the schools in the past over issues affecting their children. Most school officials in the county indicated the desire to work more effectively with community-based agencies which may have the ability to provide needed follow-through with parents and to establish levels of trust and understanding with them that may not always be possible for schools to do. Several school district officials expressed the desire to have more of the type of outreach services made available by the Department of Social Services in each district, in order to provide additional counseling and support for parents and families whose problems, left unaddressed, have negative impacts on the ability of their children to function effectively in class.

Even with such desire for more coordinated services between schools and community agencies, it is clear that more effective communications and sharing of information would be needed for the students and parents to benefit. Too often in the past, there is the perception that agencies and schools have not worked together as effectively as they should because of an unwillingness or inability on the part of one party to share needed information about a student or family that the other party needs to provide consistent, complementary supportive services or activities. The ability to establish levels of trust between top-level agency staff and school officials and between line staff case workers and counselors is perceived as being key to effective relationships that benefit the students and families. This is likely to involve the need for clear agreements around release of certain types of information and breaking down confidentiality barriers in order to assure that each party has the information needed to best meet the student/parent needs. Related to this is the perceived need to build in improved accountability and reporting relationships so that decisions made, for example, by Family Court, Probation or DSS are communicated to those who need to know in the schools, and vice versa, in order that appropriate consistent actions and follow-through can be provided and appropriate monitoring can be in place to assure that the expected actions are taken, or alternative options explored if the first approaches don't work.

An additional concern was expressed by several people that some agency staff display inappropriate attitudes and behavior toward clients, including being impatient and occasionally rude, giving the appearance of doing as little as possible to help the client. Several voiced their concern that such attitude problems are caused by burnout due to high caseloads, but the behavior is nonetheless unacceptable and needs to be carefully monitored by agency officials.

## **Medical Care**

Some limitations are related to medical care. Dental services are not readily available for Medicaid recipients. Oak Orchard Clinic in Brockport takes Medicaid payment for dental services, but is located outside the county. The Oak Orchard location in Albion does not offer dental services at this time, although it plans to do so in the future. None of the private dentists in the county will accept Medicaid as payment for services.

## **Mental Health**

Mental health services, although generally considered very good for a county of this size, have some limitations. There is no residential psychiatric facility in the county. Although facilities outside the county, such as in Rochester, can be accessed, this creates a hardship for families wishing to be involved in treatment planning and/or family treatment sessions, or who just wish to visit on a regular basis. Therapeutic foster care for mentally ill children is also available only outside of the county, again creating hardships for the family wishing to visit or to be involved in the treatment process. Especially for children, there are few choices if the therapist/client “fit” does not work. There is also a perception of not enough access to psychiatrists for consultations, whether because of a lack of psychiatrist time or need for more psychiatrists in the county. The prevailing perception is that there are often relatively long waiting lists for accessing services at the County mental health clinic, although emergencies can always be accommodated, and that the County’s clinic typically has to operate with insufficient resources to meet the need for its services.

## **Alcohol and Substance Abuse**

Respondents suggested that alcohol and drug abuse will remain problems and probably increase as dealers who are being hassled more in Rochester and Buffalo look to other places to continue their businesses. There is little competition and the potential for considerable money to be made in Orleans County. There is already a perception that large numbers of youth in Orleans County have experimented with alcohol and marijuana and are ready to move on to harder drugs if they become more readily available.

Continuing problems with alcohol and drug abuse are directly related to other ongoing problems: domestic violence, sexual abuse, date rape, incest, and teen pregnancy, each of which may increase with increased drug use. Although interview or focus group participants did not



have numbers to back their claims, they see these problems as interwoven, citing their experience that clients presenting with any of the above problems often cite the use of drugs and alcohol--by either the victim or the perpetrator--as a contributing factor. Participants expect to see these problems continue indefinitely, but also see them as symptoms of larger problems--inadequate parental responsibility and a lack of family values. These problems are seen as often having a generational basis: children live what they learn at home. Youth see parents using drugs and alcohol inappropriately, witness parent/parent violence, and experience parent/child violence and/or parent/child sexual abuse. In families that have spent generations in poverty, children learn firsthand a lack of empowerment and lack of self-motivation. Participants noted that although families in poverty seem to exhibit these problems most clearly or most often, the same perceived lack of parental responsibility can be seen in working class families where two or more jobs sap family energy and motivation. Middle class families may also exhibit similar lack of parental responsibility when they excuse their children's irresponsible behaviors as "just sowing a few wild oats," and expect the schools and others to teach what the parents are unwilling or unable to teach.

## **Parenting**

Several of the limitations the community identified apply to parenting. Parenting classes or programs appear to be few and far between. Although some agencies occasionally sponsor a class or a talk on a subject related to parenting skills, there appears to be no organized effort to keep such classes going on a regular basis. The only parent resource center in the county, The Family Center, located in Medina, will be closing at the end of its budget year unless it obtains other funding. But it is being replaced by a new Family Resource Center, sponsored by the Even Start Project, that will open in Albion this Fall (to be located in the Swan Library). This may, of course, be less accessible to people who used the Medina Center. With the limited availability of primary prevention services in the county, there is a perceived need for more intensive parenting programs for problem families, as well as for the development of programs where parents mentor and support other parents. The need for expanded parent aide services was mentioned by several; such services offer practical, hands-on, on-site advice and modeling in how to carry out certain functions in the home, and are viewed by some as offering valuable support to parents who want to be better homemakers and be better parents to their children, but don't know how to do so.

There appears to be no emergency funding that covers high cost specialty baby formulas, often needed given the health problems of babies born to teen mothers. With a high teen

pregnancy rate, the county has a number of pregnant or parenting teens each year who feel unable to return to their schools (through embarrassment about their situation or uncertainty about being accepted in the school setting) and therefore are unable to complete a traditional high school program. Since these teens often have no ready access to transportation, the current GED programs are not always accessible.

Parents and children are also impacted by the limited child care options in the county. There is limited after school programming for elementary and middle school age children and a widespread perception that many of these children are home unsupervised from 2:30–6:00 p.m. According to most participants, these are the primary hours for criminal activity, drug and alcohol use, and early sexuality. Many children and youth are said to be using their own homes as afterschool hangouts for groups of children without parental supervision.

## Youth

Aside from school activities, the lack of safe and healthy structured activities and challenges for teens were noted in virtually all interviews as a major county limitation. Some noted that the lack of structure leads many youth to feel displaced and disconnected from their community. Several noted the perception that drug dealers from Buffalo and Rochester are recognizing a relatively untapped market of young people looking to make easy money and with time on their hands to fill with unhealthy activities. Still others noted that many youth have few positive role models and therefore follow examples of drug and alcohol abuse, early parenting and domestic violence. Virtually all interviews mentioned the high teen pregnancy rate (in 1996, Orleans County ranked number nine in the state) as one of the major problems to be addressed, yet without addressing the lack of healthy activities for teens, many felt this was unlikely to change.

Other than schools, there is perceived to be no community center to sponsor activities involving youth and/or families, especially on evenings and weekends when there is little else to do. Some noted that the few activities that are of interest to teens are often held concurrently because the promoters of these activities do not compare schedules with one another. Many youth seem unaware of many of the services and activities that do exist, raising issues of the need for more effective communication of what exists, and opportunities that may exist in one community are often not promoted or made known to youth in other neighboring communities. Several spoke of the need for more opportunities for youth to be involved in community service projects, and for opportunities to be provided to reach youth who are not involved in traditional

programs and extracurricular activities in schools. The need for more extensive mentoring/role model/Big Brother/Big Sister programs was also cited by several of those interviewed.

A number of other limitations were mentioned that apply particularly to adolescents. There are no in-county residential alcohol and drug abuse programs for adolescents. Referrals can be made to out-of-county residential facilities, but the wait can be two to three months for placement. Since families are seen as an integral part of adolescent drug abuse treatment, placement out of the county can create hardships for the family or prevent family involvement. There are also no residential alternatives for youth having difficulty at home. There is no in-county respite home or shelter for adolescents who run away. There is no in-county detention center, creating potential problems for families wishing to visit the youth, as well as for small law enforcement agencies who must commit officers to transport youth to locations some distance away from the county. As a response to this, the county is contracting with Wyndham Lawn in Lockport to provide two non-secure beds for Orleans County youth.

## **Welfare Reform**

Most of those interviewed indicated that they have been looking closely at Welfare Reform and its impact on children and families in the community. One thing participants identified was the perceived resistance of many among the rural public assistance population to welfare-to-work mandates. Given the county's economic base of low-wage service jobs, it is clear that after the expenses (e.g., transportation, child care) of working at minimum wage jobs, there is often little left for other expenses such as food and housing. Therefore, there is a perception that many are taking their chances at losing their welfare payments rather than accepting mandated work participation jobs. Also of concern is the fact that in about two years the first welfare recipients will reach their lifetime limits for benefits. Many of those interviewed see this as leading in the future to more homelessness, more people with no medical insurance, more people needing emergency food, and more children going without food, shelter and needed medical care because of the economy and what parents do or do not do with regard to welfare mandates and work opportunities.

Welfare reform is perceived by others as creating an increase in the need for other services. There is a perception among some service providers that a number of those now relying upon public assistance as their primary resource base and support system will not have the capacity to move into the workforce and become self-sufficient. As these people lose their support system, the amount of stress they face will grow. For those with limited education,

limited emotional supports or capacity, and limited other supports, this stress may create problems that will need to be dealt with by the criminal justice, mental health, or substance abuse systems.

A wider limitation in this area seems to be that many service providers do not clearly understand how welfare reform is being implemented. There is an incorrect perception among some that the loss of cash benefits will automatically mean a corresponding loss of food stamps, medical insurance, and housing. There is a perception that service providers will be increasingly called upon to fill those needs as the time limits become closer. Service providers may also not be aware of the benefits offered to low income working families (such as the child care subsidy and transitional Medicaid) through the Department of Social Services. Better education of staff in the service system's many provider agencies may be needed in order to assure that a client's welfare reform-related needs, obligations and opportunities--and the consequences of any decisions made--will be understood by those agencies working with the client, so that any provider can offer appropriate advice.

## **Community Leadership**

A recurring theme in the interviews and focus groups was the need for more effective community leadership around the development and expansion of assets and resources for children and youth, adults and families in the community. In order for the Orleans County community to be successful in developing and expanding assets for children, youth and families, increased leadership will be needed at a number of different levels. At the personal level, individuals will need to consider what contributions they can make to improve the development of assets in any areas over which they have any control. Representatives of the religious/faith and business communities will need to exercise leadership in determining what roles they can play in expanding resources in the county. Leadership will be called for in the provider agencies and school districts in addressing the types of issues raised above in order to improve services. Leadership must also be present among young people, as they make decisions about the roles they can play both in the development of assets and in making constructive use of new or expanded resources made available by the community in future years. And leadership will be required in the public sector, from elected and departmental officials at the County, municipality and school district levels, to assure that resource allocation decisions will be made wisely and consistent with the development and expansion of assets throughout the sectors of the community.

## IV. YOUTH ASSETS: STUDENT SURVEY FINDINGS

### Introduction

One of the key concepts in the Integrated County Planning grant is community implementation of the Assets Approach to Youth Development. Research has found that children and youth with certain supports (called developmental assets) in place are less likely to engage in risky behaviors and dangerous activities and are more likely to succeed in school and in life. The Search Institute of Minneapolis, through its research with youth throughout the United States, has developed a list of 40 developmental assets. The assets are divided into two categories, external and internal. *External* assets are those supports provided by families, schools, neighborhoods, peers, communities, and religious institutions. The external assets provide support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time. *Internal* assets are those values, personal expectations, and feelings of purpose that develop within individual youth. Internal Assets are displayed through a commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity. A list of the 40 assets is attached as Appendix I.

Anyone can participate in building assets for youth--individuals, families, schools, neighborhood groups, municipalities, government and non-profit agencies, businesses, service clubs, and religious communities. Most assets can be built at little or no cost, by focusing time and attention on what children and youth say about their needs.

### Asset Surveys

In the Spring of 1999, extensive surveys of more than 2,700 7<sup>th</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> grade students were conducted in neighboring Genesee County. The "Search Institute Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors" survey was administered to youth in grades 9 and 10 (and, in one school district, 11<sup>th</sup> graders as well). That survey measures both assets and a wide variety of risk behaviors, ranging from experimenting with alcohol and drugs to using violence to solve problems. In addition, the "America's Promise/Search Institute Survey of Student Resources and Assets" was administered to 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders in the county. That survey measures assets and a few early risk behaviors, such as early alcohol and tobacco experimentation and school truancy. The responses of 1,337 9<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> graders and 1,396 7<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> graders were analyzed to provide data about youth in Genesee County. We are sharing some of

those results here since these findings may be illustrative of what assets youth in other rural counties in western New York (such as Orleans County) may possess.

## Observations

The reports generated by Search Institute upon completion of the surveys contain detailed information describing what Genesee County youth reported about themselves and their community. The following are highlights of the reports, with headings that correspond to the asset categories used by Search. Contact the Genesee-Orleans Youth Bureau for more information about the surveys.

### *External Assets*

- ❖ *Support:* While about half of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders reported having positive family communication (the young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents), that dropped to about one-quarter of 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders.
- ❖ *Empowerment:* Fewer than half of the students at all grade levels reported being involved in service to others one or more hours per week.
- ❖ *Boundaries and Expectations:* About one-third of the middle/junior high school students reported having adult role models. This number dropped at the high school level, where only one-quarter of the students reported having adult role models.
- ❖ *Constructive Use of Time:* Participation in youth programs such as sports, clubs or organizations at school and in the community was reported by over half of younger students, increasing to two-thirds of older students.

### *Internal Assets*

- ❖ *Commitment to Learning:* Three-quarters of middle/junior high school students reported being motivated to achieve in school. This number drops to just over 60 percent for high school students.

- ❖ *Positive Values:* Restraint, believing it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs, is an important value for over half of the younger students, but was reported as a value by only about one-quarter of the older students. Roughly 60 percent of all students reported that honesty and integrity were important values.
- ❖ *Social Competencies:* Having resistance skills (being able to resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations) was reported by just under half of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders, dropping off to one-third of 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders.
- ❖ *Positive Identity:* Just under half of the students surveyed reported having high self esteem.

## Other Comments and Information

Research has shown that the higher the number of assets a youth possesses, the less likely he or she is to engage in risk-taking behaviors. Youth reporting 31-40 assets indicate very little risk-taking behavior while youth with 0-10 assets declare a wide variety of risk-taking behaviors. Overall, 70 percent of Genesee County students surveyed have between 11 and 30 assets, less than 10 percent reported having 31-40 assets, and about 20 percent reported having 10 or fewer assets. The following table shows the percentage of Genesee County students that experience each level of assets and a comparison to Search Institute's overall proportions. Overall Search Institute statistics are based upon the results of surveys administered to almost 100,000 youth in grades 6-12 in 213 towns and cities throughout the United States.

Number of Assets	Search Institute Total	Genesee County 7 <sup>th</sup> and 8 <sup>th</sup> Grades	Genesee County 9 <sup>th</sup> , 10 <sup>th</sup> and 11 <sup>th</sup> Grades
0-10	20%	18%	23%
11-20	42%	37%	45%
21-30	30%	33%	26%
31-40	8%	12%	5%

## Thriving Indicators

Thriving indicators are those attitudes and behaviors that show how successful a student is at dealing with the normal concerns of daily life. Thriving indicators include succeeding in school, maintaining good health, helping others, overcoming adversity, exhibiting leadership, valuing diversity, delaying gratification, and resisting danger. Some of the thriving indicators reported include:

- ❖ *Succeeding in School:* Getting mostly A's on report cards was reported by about one-third of younger students and about one-quarter of older students.
- ❖ *Maintaining good health:* Paying attention to healthy nutrition and exercise was reported by just over half of all students.
- ❖ *Delaying Gratification:* Just under 40 percent of high school students reported being able to delay gratification (saving money for something special rather than spending it right away).
- ❖ *Valuing Diversity:* Just over half said they place a high importance on getting to know people of other racial/ethnic groups.
- ❖ *Resisting Danger:* Less than one-sixth of high school students reported that they avoid doing things that are dangerous.

## Risk-Taking Behaviors

The Genesee County surveys also reviewed the risk-taking behaviors engaged in by youth. Risk-taking behaviors include smoking, use of alcohol, marijuana or other drugs, sexual intercourse, anti-social behavior (shoplifting, vandalism, or police involvement), violence (including weapon use), school truancy, gambling, eating disorders, depression, and attempted suicide. Some of the risk-taking behaviors surveyed include:

- ❖ *Alcohol Use:* About one-third of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders and almost half of the 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders reported having used alcohol once or more in the last 30 days.



- ❖ *Tobacco Use:* Almost one-quarter of younger students and just over one-third of older students reported having smoked cigarettes once or more in the last 30 days.
- ❖ *Marijuana Use:* About one-sixth of younger students and one-third of older students reported using marijuana once or more in the last 12 months.
- ❖ *Sexual Intercourse:* Questions regarding sexual intercourse were only asked of older students. About one-third of those students reported having had sexual intercourse.
- ❖ *Violence:* Over one-third of high school students have hit someone once or more in the last 12 months.
- ❖ *Anti-Social Behavior:* More than a quarter of the students said they had shop-lifted, and one-fifth said they had been in trouble with the police within the past year.
- ❖ *Attempted Suicide:* About one-sixth of 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> graders said they have attempted suicide.

## Relationship of Assets to Risk-Taking Behaviors

The survey results also illustrate the correlation between the number of assets reported and risk-taking behaviors. The more assets students revealed, the less likely they were to declare risk-taking behaviors. The following tables depict this relationship for Genesee County youth. Overall results compiled by Search Institute exhibit the same correlation.

	Number of Assets Reported 7 <sup>th</sup> and 8 <sup>th</sup> grade: Genesee County			
Risk-Taking Behavior	0-10	11-20	21-30	31-40
Alcohol (use in last 30 days)	63%	38%	15%	4%
Tobacco (use in last 30 days)	55%	24%	9%	2%
Marijuana (use in last 12 months)	44%	17%	3%	0%

	Number of Assets Reported 9 <sup>th</sup> , 10 <sup>th</sup> and 11 <sup>th</sup> grade: Genesee County			
Risk-Taking Behavior	0-10	11-20	21-30	31-40
Alcohol (use in last 30 days)	67%	53%	31%	17%
Tobacco (use in last 30 days)	58%	39%	16%	6%
Marijuana (use in last 12 months)	57%	38%	13%	3%

## Conclusion

The preceding observations are but a small portion of the detailed information on assets and risk-taking behaviors gleaned from Genesee County youth through these surveys. These data raise several important questions for the Orleans County community. To what extent do the Genesee County data reflect the profiles that would exist if Orleans County students were to complete the same surveys? How will the Orleans County community respond to what youth in the adjacent county said through these surveys? How can the community help build the assets that will reduce the risk-taking behaviors? One of the advantages of the asset approach is that it can be incorporated into existing programming and services and can help identify the need for creating new services. As noted earlier, any individual or group can participate, often at little or no cost, in building assets for youth and their families, once they focus on what children and youth say about their needs. Contact the Genesee-Orleans Youth Bureau for more information about the survey results or to obtain additional materials related to how various sectors of the community can participate in helping develop community assets.

## **V. TOUCHSTONES: COMMUNITY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

One of the key concepts of the Integrated County Planning initiative is the introduction of New York State Touchstones goals, objectives, and outcomes. Eight broad goals are stated under six “Life Areas”: Economic Security, Physical and Emotional Health, Education, Citizenship, Family, and Community. The eight goals and numerous objectives will assist the State and its localities in charting progress made toward strengthening community assets. The utilization of Touchstones will enable each county to determine the existence of services and programs addressing each goal and objective, and to determine the extent to which data exist to measure community progress in meeting the specific goals and objectives. It should be noted that although the focus of the state Touchstones goals and objectives is related specifically to improving outcomes for children and families, the Genesee/Orleans Integrated County Planning grant has broadened the focus in each county to be more inclusive, incorporating goals and objectives for adults, including seniors, as well as children and families.

It appears clear at this point that many of the goals and objectives will ultimately need to be more carefully defined, and that better measures will need to be developed to effectively assess progress against desired community outcomes. Nonetheless, even in its imperfect early stages, the Touchstones concept should prove quite useful to Orleans County in its efforts to determine desired outcomes for its children, adults and families, and to help shape the development and strengthening of a variety of community assets to help assure that the desired goals and outcomes are ultimately attained.

In the first section of this chapter, individual services and programs in Orleans County are categorized against the Touchstones goals and objectives. In the subsequent section, the data measures used to track progress against each goal and objective are profiled.

### **A. Services and Programs by Goals and Objectives**

This section classifies the human services agencies, programs and services operating in the county in terms of the Touchstones goals and objectives that they appear to address. For each goal and objective, we have indicated the name of any program or service that attempts to have an impact on it, based on CGR’s understanding of the primary focus of each program, as further reviewed by the Core Committee and Orleans County human service agency department heads. For a more detailed description of many of the programs/services listed below, see subsequent

Chapter VI. As best we can determine, the programs and services attempting to impact on each objective include but are not necessarily limited to the following:

## **Economic Security**

**GOAL 1: All individuals will reside in households with sufficient economic resources to meet their basic needs.**

Objective 1: All individuals will reside in households with sufficient economic resources to provide food, clothing, shelter and other necessities.

- Orleans County Department of Social Services
- Genesee/Orleans Ministry of Concern
- Educational Opportunities Commission (EOC)
- Women, Infants, Children (WIC) Program
- Orleans County Job Development Agency
- Orleans Community Action Committee
- Department of Labor
- Office for the Aging–All Programs
- VESID
- The ARC of Orleans County
- Orleans County Cooperative Extension
- Catholic Charities
- Literacy Volunteers of America–Orleans County

Objective 2: Children and youth will receive adequate financial support from absent parents.

- Orleans County Department of Social Services
- Family Court

**GOAL 2: All individuals will be prepared for their eventual economic self-sufficiency.**

Objective 1: All individuals will have skills, attitudes, and competencies to enter college, the work force, or other meaningful activities.

- Genesee/Orleans Youth Bureau
- Alternative Choices for Teens
- Project Even Start
- The ARC of Orleans County

- YMCA
- LIFE
- Orleans County Job Development Agency
- Orleans County School Districts
- Educational Opportunities Commission
- VESID
- Head Start
- Orleans County Chamber of Commerce
- Genesee Community College
- BOCES
- Job Corps.
- Orleans County Business/Education Council
- Orleans County Cooperative Extension
- Department of Social Services
- Office for the Aging
- Legal Aid Society–Youth Advocate Program
- Literacy Volunteers of America–Orleans County

Objective 2: All individuals who can work will have opportunities for employment.

- County of Orleans Job Development Agency
- Department of Labor
- The ARC of Orleans County

## **Physical and Emotional Health**

**GOAL 3: All individuals will have optimal physical and emotional health.**

Objective 1: Children will be born healthy.

- DSS TASA Program
- Orleans County Health Department (Maternal and Child Health Home Visits)
- The medical community
- Planned Parenthood

Objective 2: All individuals will be free from preventable disease and injury.

- Orleans County Health Department  
Immunization Program

Maternal and Child Health Home Visits

- Head Start
- Planned Parenthood
- The medical community
- Women, Infants, Children (WIC) Program

Objective 3: All individuals will have nutritious diets.

- Women, Infants, Children (WIC) Program
- Orleans County Health Department
  - Health Educator
  - Maternal and Child Health Home Visits
- Orleans County DSS (Food Stamps)
- Orleans Community Action Committee (Head Start, Food Pantry)
- Head Start
- Orleans County Cooperative Extension
- Orleans County Ministry of Concern
- Office for the Aging

Objective 4: All individuals will be physically fit.

- Orleans County Health Department (Health Educator)
- Genesee/Orleans Youth Bureau (Recreation Programs)
- Lake Plains YMCA (Recreation Programs)
- Orleans County School Districts
- Orleans County Cooperative Extension
- The medical community
- Office for the Aging

Objective 5: All individuals will be emotionally healthy.

- Orleans County Department of Mental Health
- Genesee/Orleans Youth Bureau (CONTACT, Youth at Risk)
- Alternative Choices for Teens
- Genesee-Orleans Ministry of Concern (Just Friends)
- GCASA (All Programs)
- Regional Action Phone (RAP)
- Catholic Charities (School Intervention Program)
- Head Start

- Orleans County Health Department (Maternal and Child Health Home Visits)
- Orleans County Cooperative Extension
- The medical community
- Planned Parenthood
- Orleans County Department of Social Services

Objective 6: All individuals will be free from health risk behaviors (e.g., smoking, drinking, substance abuse, unsafe sexual activity).

- Orleans County Department of Mental Health
- Genesee/Orleans Youth Bureau (CONTACT, Youth at Risk)
- Alternative Choices for Teens
- Orleans County Health Department (Health Educator)
- GCASA (All Programs)
- Regional Action Phone (RAP)
- Catholic Charities (School Intervention Program)
- Planned Parenthood
- Orleans County Cooperative Extension
- The medical community

Objective 7: All individuals will have access to timely and appropriate preventive and primary health care.

- Orleans County Health Department (Health Educator, Immunization Program)
- The medical community
- Head Start
- Planned Parenthood
- Department of Social Services

Objective 8: All individuals with special health care needs will experience an optimal quality of life. (Individuals with special health care needs are those children, youth or adults who have or are suspected of having a serious or chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional condition and who also require health and related services of a type or amount beyond that required by individuals generally.)

- Orleans County Health Department (Early Intervention Program, Physically Handicapped Children's Program, Infant and Children Health Assessment Program, Lead Poisoning Prevention/Education Program)

- Orleans County Mental Health Department
- The Arc of Orleans County (All Programs)
- Head Start
- Department of Social Services
- VESID
- Office for the Aging
- The medical community

Objective 9: All individuals with service needs due to mental illness, developmental disabilities and/or substance abuse problems will have access to timely and appropriate services.

- Orleans County Health Department (Physically Handicapped Children's Program)
- The Arc of Orleans County (All Programs)
- Orleans County Department of Mental Health
- GCASA (All Programs)
- Catholic Charities (School Intervention Program)
- Orleans County School Districts
- Office for the Aging
- Legal Aid Society–Youth Advocate Program
- Probation Department
- Orleans County Department of Social Services
- The medical community

## Education

**GOAL 4: All individuals will leave school prepared to live, learn and work in a community as contributing members of society.**

Objective 1: Children will come to school ready to learn.

- Project Even Start
- The Arc of Orleans County (Rainbow Preschool)
- Head Start

Objective 2: Students will meet or exceed high standards for academic performance and demonstrate knowledge and skills required for lifelong learning and self-sufficiency in a dynamic world.



- Orleans County School Districts
- County of Orleans Job Development Agency
- Head Start
- Genesee Community College
- Literacy Volunteers of America–Orleans County

Objective 3: Students will be educated in a safe, supportive, drug free and nurturing environment.

- Orleans County School Districts
- GCASA
- DARE Program
- Genesee Community College
- Literacy Volunteers of America–Orleans County

Objective 4: Students will stay in school until successful completion.

- Orleans County School Districts
- LIFE Program
- County of Orleans Job Development Agency
- VESID
- Educational Opportunity Commission

## Citizenship

**GOAL 5: All individuals will demonstrate good citizenship as law-abiding, contributing members of their families, schools and communities.**

Objective 1: All individuals will assume personal responsibility for their behavior.

- Orleans County DSS TASA Program
- Genesee/Orleans Youth Bureau
- Orleans County Probation Dept.
- Youth Diversion Program
- Orleans County District Attorney Victim Awareness Program
- Alternative Choices for Teens
- Genesee-Orleans Ministry of Concern–Just Friend Program
- GCASA (All Programs)
- LIFE Program

- Catholic Charities School Intervention Program
- Lake Plains YMCA
- County of Orleans Job Development Agency
- Orleans County Sheriff's Department
- Local Police Departments
- Orleans County School Districts
- Local Faith/Religious Community
- Orleans County Cooperative Extension
- Family/Criminal Court System

Objective 2: All individuals will demonstrate ethical behavior and civic values.

- Orleans County School Districts
- Local Faith/Religious Community
- YMCA
- Orleans County Cooperative Extension

Objective 3: All individuals will understand and respect people who are different from themselves.

- Local Faith/Religious Community
- Orleans County School Districts
- Lake Plains YMCA
- Orleans County Cooperative Extension
- The Arc of Orleans County

Objective 4: All individuals will participate in family and community activities.

- Genesee/Orleans Youth Bureau sponsored Recreation programs
- The Arc of Orleans County Rainbow Preschool
- Lake Plains YMCA
- Orleans County School Districts
- Local Faith/Religious Community
- Orleans County Cooperative Extension

Objective 5: All individuals will have positive peer interactions.

- Genesee/Orleans Youth Bureau sponsored Recreation Programs
- Alternative Choices for Teens
- Project Even Start Early Childhood Education

- The Arc of Orleans County Rainbow Preschool
- Orleans Community Action Head Start and Community Kids' Place
- Lake Plains YMCA
- Local Faith/Religious Community
- Orleans County School Districts
- Orleans County Cooperative Extension
- Literacy Volunteers of America–Orleans County

Objective 6: All individuals will make constructive use of leisure time.

- Genesee/Orleans Youth Bureau
- Lake Plains YMCA
- Orleans County School Districts
- Local Faith/Religious Community
- Orleans County Cooperative Extension
- Literacy Volunteers of America–Orleans County

Objective 7: Youth will delay becoming parents until adulthood.

- Alternative Choices for Teens
- Orleans County School Districts
- Local Faith/Religious Community
- Planned Parenthood

Objective 8: All individuals will refrain from violence and other illegal behaviors.

- Orleans County Mental Health
- Genesee/Orleans Youth Bureau Youth at Risk Program, Juvenile Officer Program and Recreation Programs
- Orleans County Probation Dept. Youth Diversion
- Orleans County District Attorney Victim Awareness Program
- Orleans County Sheriff's Department
- Local Police Departments
- Police Department DARE Programs
- Orleans Community Action Community Kids' Place
- Orleans County School Districts
- Local Faith/Religious Community
- Orleans County Cooperative Extension
- Family/Criminal Court System

## Family

### **GOAL 6: All individuals will reside in safe, stable and nurturing environments.**

Objective 1: Parents/caregivers will provide children with a stable family relationship.

- Orleans County Department of Social Services
- Orleans County Mental Health
- Project Even Start
- The Arc of Orleans County
- GCASA
- Rural Opportunities Domestic Violence Program
- Catholic Charities Family Counseling
- Local Faith/Religious Community

Objective 2: Parents/caregivers will possess and practice adequate child rearing skills.

- Orleans County Department of Social Services
- Orleans County Health Department
- Orleans County Mental Health
- Project Even Start
- The Arc of Orleans County
- GCASA
- Rural Opportunities Domestic Violence Program
- Catholic Charities Family Counseling
- Literacy Volunteers of America–Orleans County

Objective 3: All individuals will be literate.

- Project Even Start
- LIFE Program
- Orleans County School Districts
- Literacy Volunteers of America–Orleans County

Objective 4: Parents/caregivers will be positively involved in their children's learning.

- Orleans County School Districts
- Project Even Start
- Orleans County Libraries
- Literacy Volunteers of America–Orleans County

Objective 5: All individuals will have the knowledge and ability to access support services for their children, themselves or other members of their family.

- Orleans County School Districts
- Orleans County Department of Social Services
- Regional Action Phone
- Legal Aid Society – Youth Advocacy Program
- Local Faith/Religious Community
- The Medical Community
- Office for the Aging
- The Arc of Orleans County
- Literacy Volunteers of America–Orleans County

Objective 6: All individuals will reside in households free from physical and emotional abuse, neglect and domestic violence.

- Orleans County Department of Social Services
- Catholic Charities Man-to-Man Program
- Rural Opportunities Domestic Violence Program
- Orleans County Mental Health
- GCASA
- Local Faith/Religious Community
- Orleans County Department of Health (Maternal and Child Health Home Visits)
- Office for the Aging

Objective 7: All individuals will reside in households free from alcohol and other substance abuse.

- GCASA
- Local Faith/Religious Community
- DARE Programs
- Department of Mental Health
- Department of Public Health
- Orleans County Department of Social Services

## **Community**

**GOAL 7: New York State communities, and specifically Orleans County, will provide children, families and adults with healthy, safe, and thriving environments.**

Objective 1: Communities will be economically sound.

- Local Chamber of Commerce
- County of Orleans Job Development Agency
- County of Orleans Industrial Development Agency (COIDA)
- Orleans County Cooperative Extension

Objective 2: The environment will be free of pollutants (e.g., air and water quality will meet healthful standards).

- Orleans County Health Department
- Orleans County Cooperative Extension

Objective 3: Neighborhoods will be crime free.

- Orleans County Sheriff's Department
- Local Police Departments
- Orleans County Probation Department
- Family/Criminal Court Systems

Objective 4: Adequate housing will be available.

- Local Code Enforcement Officials
- The Arc of Orleans County

Objective 5: Adequate transportation will be available.

- Orleans Community Action Transportation Services
- The Arc of Orleans County

**GOAL 8: New York State communities, and specifically Orleans County, will provide all individuals with opportunities to help them meet their needs for physical, social, moral, and emotional growth.**

Objective 1: Communities will make available and accessible formal and informal services (e.g., child care, parent training, recreation, youth services, libraries, museums, parks).

- Genesee/Orleans Youth Bureau
- Lake Plains YMCA
- Orleans County Department of Social Services
- Orleans County Office for the Aging

- Alternative Choices for Teens
- Project Even Start
- Genesee-Orleans Ministry of Concern Just Friends Program
- The Arc of Orleans County
- Orleans Community Action Committee
- GCASA Student Assistance Program
- LIFE Program
- Catholic Charities
- Orleans County School Districts
- Local Faith/Religious Community
- Orleans County Health Department
- Orleans County Cooperative Extension
- Orleans County Public Libraries
- Local Museums and Historical Societies
- Literacy Volunteers of America–Orleans County

Objective 2: Adults in the community will provide youth with good role models and opportunities for positive adult interactions.

- Genesee/Orleans Youth Bureau Recreation Programs
- Project Even Start
- Genesee-Orleans Ministry of Concern Just Friends Program
- Lake Plains YMCA
- Orleans County School Districts
- Local Faith/Religious Community
- DARE Programs
- Orleans County Cooperative Extension
- Orleans County Public Libraries
- Literacy Volunteers of America–Orleans County

Objective 3: Communities will provide opportunities for all individuals to make positive contributions to community life and to practice skill development.

- County of Orleans Job Development Agency
- Genesee/Orleans Youth Bureau
- Orleans County School Districts
- Local Faith/Religious Community
- Orleans County Cooperative Extension

- Lake Plains YMCA
- The Arc of Orleans County
- VESID
- Literacy Volunteers of America–Orleans County

## **B. Data Measures by Goals and Objectives**

This section lists the same Touchstones goals and objectives noted in Section A, but instead the measures for which CGR was able to collect data are listed for each. The section provides an indication of the extent to which it is or is not currently possible to measure community progress against specific goals and objectives. Some of the measures listed are not particularly good indices of community outcomes, but represent what is currently available. Other measures may become available in the future and indeed, for many of the objectives, the community and its agencies will need to develop better outcome measures in order to effectively assess community progress against those objectives. In the meantime, however, this section provides a useful baseline measure of what data exist and what they begin to tell the community about where it stands with regard to the specified goals and objectives.

If no specific data measures are listed under a particular objective, it is because we have not yet been able in our consultations with various agencies to determine any existing measures for that objective. To the extent that good measures exist for an objective, a brief summary section of text follows *in italics* indicating important highlights of existing data and trends for one or more objectives; similarly, deficiencies in groups of measures are also noted in the text following particular objectives.

It should be noted that summary data from the Genesee County student survey are included in this section as illustrative data for some of the objectives. Even though there is no way of knowing exactly how Orleans County youth would respond if they were surveyed, CGR and the Core Committee have agreed to include selected summary information from that survey in the belief that the findings from a similar, immediately adjacent county would at least be illustrative in shedding light on how youth in Orleans County may think about the same subjects.

NOTE: For each measure listed, the source of the data is noted in parentheses. Abbreviations used for each source are:

ACT: Alternative Choices for Teens



ARC: The ARC of Orleans County  
 CB: U.S. Census Bureau (and the NYS Census Data Center)  
 CHI: Community Health Initiative  
 DMH: Orleans County Department of Mental Health  
 DSS: Orleans County Department of Social Services  
 ES: EvenStart Family Literacy Program  
 JDA: Orleans County Job Development Agency  
 LIFE: Liberty Increases Future Experiences Program  
 MHA: Mental Health Association  
 MoC: Genesee-Orleans Ministry of Concern  
 OCAC: Orleans Community Action Committee  
 OFA: Office for the Aging  
 PRISMS: Prevention Risk Indicator/Services Monitoring System  
 PROB: County Probation Department  
 RAP: Regional Action Phone  
 ROI: Rural Opportunities, Inc.  
 SI: Search Institute Survey (discussed in previous chapter)  
 TASA: Planned Parenthood TASA Program  
 TS: New York State Touchstones 1998 Data Book  
 WIC: Women, Infants, Children Program  
 YB: Genesee-Orleans Youth Bureau

The listing of data measures, and the summary of data findings, follows for each goal and objective. The actual detailed data tables on which the following information is based are available for review at the Genesee-Orleans Youth Bureau in Batavia.

## **Economic Security**

**GOAL 1: All individuals will reside in households with sufficient economic resources to meet their basic needs.**

Objective 1: All individuals will reside in households with sufficient economic resources to provide food, clothing, shelter and other necessities.

Measure 1: Children and Youth living below poverty. (TS)

Measure 2: Children receiving public assistance ages 0-17. (TS)

Measure 3: Children receiving food stamps ages 0-17. (TS)

Measure 4: Use of emergency services at Ministry of Concern. (MoC)

Measure 5: Employment in households that met income eligibility for Orleans Community Action Committee services. (OCAC)

Measure 6: Sources of income among persons who are income-eligible for services provided by Orleans Community Action Committee. (OCAC)

Measure 7: Elderly clients receiving home delivered meals. (OFA)

Measure 8: County per capita income. (CB)

Objective 2: Children and youth will receive adequate financial support from absent parents.

Measure 1: TASA clients and child support received. (TASA)

*The per capita income level for Orleans County is almost \$10,500 below the upstate New York level. The children's poverty level in 1990 was higher than the upstate rate. Between 1993 and 1997, the numbers and proportions of children through the age of 17 who received public assistance declined substantially, and those receiving food stamps also declined, although at a lower rate. At the other end of the age spectrum, the number of elderly persons receiving home delivered meals also declined through 1998. However, the numbers of people using Ministry of Concern emergency services increased through the mid-1990s. Most of the other measures for these objectives, including the single measure for Objective 2, have no historical data for perspective or are otherwise too limited in other ways at this point to offer significant insights.*

**GOAL 2: All individuals will be prepared for their eventual economic self-sufficiency.**

Objective 1: All individuals will have skills, attitudes, and competencies to enter college, the work force, or other meaningful activities.

Measure 1: Reduced utilization of Public Assistance. (TASA)

Measure 2: Increased level of education. (TASA)

Measure 3: Improved independent living skills. (TASA)

Measure 4: Improved housing situation. (TASA)

Measure 5: Youth participants aged 14-21 in Orleans County Job Development Programs. (JDA)

Measure 6: Student reported achievement motivation levels. (SI)

See also Goal 4, Objective 4 below.

Objective 2: All individuals who can work will have opportunities for employment.

Measure 1: Resident civilian unemployment rate. (TS)

*Orleans County's unemployment rate in recent years has averaged about 6 percent per year, typically a percentage point or more higher than the comparable upstate rate. After a decline there appear to have been recent steady increases in the number of summer youth employment participants. Almost three-quarters of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in Genesee County reported being motivated to do well in school, compared with about 60 percent of 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders. Almost 30 percent of the students reported getting mostly A's in school, but most reported doing little homework per night. Most of the other measures for these two objectives involve too few people or have other limitations which limit their ability to offer significant insights at this time.*

## **Physical and Emotional Health**

Note that for some of the following measures pertaining to the physical and emotional health goal, reference is made to how Orleans County compares to Healthy People 2000 national goals. Healthy People 2000 is a set of objectives, or measurable targets, designed as part of a strategy to improve the health of all Americans. The effort was coordinated by the U.S. Public Health Service, and involved 22 expert working groups, almost 300 national organizations and all State health departments, the Institute of Medicine, and others. Within 22 priority areas, goals are set as targets for communities and the nation as a whole to strive to reach as we enter the new millennium. Where appropriate, these goals or targets are referenced for comparison in this section.

### **GOAL 3: All individuals will have optimal physical and emotional health.**

Objective 1: Children will be born healthy.

Measure 1: Low birthweight births (<2500 grams). (TS)

Measure 2: Infant mortality, 3-year average. (TS)

Measure 3: Births to women receiving early (1<sup>st</sup> trimester) prenatal care. (TS)

Measure 4: Very low birthweight births (TS)

Measure 5: Pregnancy Outcomes (TASA)

*The number and proportion of low birthweight births declined through the mid-1990s, to a level below the upstate rate and, at 5.1 percent in 1996, virtually identical to the Healthy People 2000 national goal of 5.0 percent. The infant mortality rate has been consistent over time (between about 7.5 and 8.5 per 1,000 live births), and the county rate is consistently a bit higher (worse) than both the upstate rate and the Healthy People 2000 goal of 7 per 1,000 live births.*

*The proportion of births to women receiving early prenatal care is consistently just under 75 percent; as such it is consistently slightly lower than the upstate rate, and is considerably lower than the national goal of 90 percent.*

Objective 2: All individuals will be free from preventable disease and injury.

Measure 1: Hospitalizations resulting from unintentional injuries, ages 0-19. (TS)

Measure 2: Hospitalizations resulting from self-inflicted injuries, ages 10-19. (TS)

Measure 3: Hospitalizations resulting from self-inflicted injuries, ages 10+ (CHI)

Measure 4: Mortality on the job (CHI)

Measure 5: Non-motor vehicle accident mortality (CHI)

See also objective 6 below.

Objective 3: All individuals will have nutritious diets.

Measure 1: % of respondents reporting less than two nutritious meals per day in winter due to lack of money (OCAC)

Measure 2: Number of WIC recipients (WIC)

Objective 4: All individuals will be physically fit.

Measure 1: Cardiovascular Heart Disease mortality (1994-1996). (CHI)

Measure 2: Students reporting good health maintenance (healthy nutrition and exercise). (SI)

*Most of the measures for objectives 2 through 4 either show no change over time, or do not have enough historical data to show any trends, or are otherwise too limited to offer significant insights. The proportion of income-eligible households reporting being able to eat less than two nutritious meals a day almost doubled to more than 20 percent between 1994 and 1997, but this may be a function of the survey and sampling process used. About 55 percent of Genesee County 7<sup>th</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> graders reported paying attention to healthy nutrition and exercise.*

Objective 5: All individuals will be emotionally healthy.

Measure 1: Clinical services provided by Orleans Mental Health Services. (DMH)

Measure 2: Mental Health Association Services. (MHA)

Measure 3: TASA Mental health utilization. (TASA)

Measure 4: Number of youth placing calls to RAP (RAP)

Measure 5: Intrapersonal problems (PRISMS)

Measure 6: Students reporting attempted suicides. (SI)

*Most of the measures have insufficient data to offer insights at this point. However, Orleans County mental health referrals were up substantially between 1993 and 1997, and formal admissions more than doubled during that period. Also, 16 percent of high school students in adjacent Genesee County reported that they had attempted suicide at least once in their life.*

Objective 6: All individuals will be free from health risk behaviors (e.g., smoking, drinking, substance abuse, unsafe sexual activity).

Measure 1: Reported cases of early syphilis in youth aged 15-19 (3-year average). (TS)

Measure 2: Reported cases of gonorrhea in youth aged 15-19 (3-year) average. (TS)

Measure 3: Adolescent pregnancies by maternal age. (TS)

Measure 4: Adolescent pregnancy rates by maternal age. (TS)

Measure 5: Lung Cancer [CHI]

Measure 6: TASA clients and STDs (TASA)

Measure 7: Youth Sexuality (PRISMS)

Measure 8: Youth Alcohol Use (PRISMS)

Measure 9: Youth Drug Use (PRISMS)

Measure 10: Students reporting use of alcohol, cigarettes and marijuana. (SI)

*There has been only one reported case of early syphilis in the county in recent years for which data were available. The number and rate of reported cases of teenage gonorrhea have fluctuated up and down, often slightly above the upstate rates, but they remain well below the Healthy People 2000 goal. The county's adolescent pregnancy rates have remained relatively stable in recent years, but they remain higher than the upstate rates. Outside New York City, the county's teen pregnancy rate (for those 15 through 19) was ninth highest in the state in 1996, the most recent year for which data were available. For only those ages 15-17, the county ranks seventh highest, although the pregnancy rate of just under 50 per 1,000 females ages 15-17 is virtually identical to the Healthy People 2000 national goal. The proportions of students in the adjacent county who reported using alcohol at least once in the past month, reported smoking in the past month, and reported using marijuana in the past year, all far exceeded the Healthy People 2000 national goals. More measures based on adult behavior are needed in the future for this objective.*

Objective 7: All individuals will have access to timely and appropriate preventive and primary health care.

Measure 1: Hospitalizations resulting from asthma (youth aged 0-14). (TS)

Measure 2: TASA clients increased effective utilization of health care system (TASA)

Measure 3: Number of trips outside county for health care (OCAC)

Measure 4: % of households where at least one person has no health insurance (OCAC)

Objective 8: All individuals with special health care needs will experience an optimal quality of life. (Individuals with special health care needs are those children, youth or adults who have or are suspected of having a serious or chronic physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional condition and who also require health and related services of a type or amount beyond that required by individuals generally.)

No measures available.

Objective 9: All individuals with service needs due to mental illness, developmental disabilities and/or substance abuse problems will have access to timely and appropriate services.

Measure 1: Intensive case management for children with chronic mental illness (DMH)

Measure 2: Developmentally delayed case management. (DMH)

Measure 3: Day Treatment for individuals with serious illness. (DMH)

Measure 4: Continuing Day Treatment case management. (DMH)

Measure 5: ARC services (ARC)

Measure 6: Unity Behavioral Health, Department of Chemical Dependency Svc. (DMH)

*The measures for Objectives 7 through 9 are not sufficiently well developed or comprehensive at this time to be especially helpful in tracking performance against these objectives. Surveys of households income-eligible for Community Action Committee services suggest that the proportion of households with at least one uninsured person has remained at about the 30 percent level between 1994 and 1997, but it is not clear to what extent this may be at least in part a function of small samples and differences in the survey approaches.*

## Education

### **GOAL 4: All individuals will leave school prepared to live, learn and work in a community as contributing members of society.**

Objective 1: Children will come to school ready to learn.

Measure 1: Number of students with limited English proficiency. (TS)

Measure 2: Even Start population by age. (ES)

Measure 3: Percent of EvenStart students participating in educational services. (ES)

Measure 4: Percent of EvenStart students participating in non-educational programs.  
(ES)

Measure 5: Percent of EvenStart students participating in special services. (ES)

Measure 6: Developmental Observational Checklist System (DOCS). (ES)

Measure 7: Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT). (ES)

*The data in this area are of little overall countywide value and need to be further refined and supplemented with other measures to be useful in tracking community performance on this objective. For example, pre-kindergarten screening data on various measures would be helpful.*

Objective 2: Students will meet or exceed high standards for academic performance and demonstrate knowledge and skills required for lifelong learning and self-sufficiency in a dynamic world.

Measure 1: PEP tests, grade 3 reading. (TS)

Measure 2: PEP tests, grade 3 math. (TS)

Measure 3: PEP tests, grade 6 reading. (TS)

Measure 4: PEP tests, grade 6 math. (TS)

Measure 5: Number above mastery level, grade 6 reading. (TS)

Measure 6: Participation in Liberty Increases Future Experiences (LIFE) program.  
(LIFE)

Measure 7: Academic Failure (PRISMS)

Measure 8: School Conduct (PRISMS)

Measure 9: Students reporting success in school and motivation to achieve. (SI)

*PEP scores are typically relatively high in the county (especially in math), and have remained relatively stable through 1997, though typically below the upstate performance levels by a percentage point or so. More than a fourth of all Genesee County students surveyed*

*reported receiving mostly A's in their classes. However, only 55 percent of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders and 40 percent of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders reported having parents and teachers setting high expectations and encouraging them to do well. Almost three-quarters of the younger students and 60 percent of the older students reported being self-motivated to do well in school.*

Objective 3: Students will be educated in a safe, supportive, drug free and nurturing environment.

No measures available.

Objective 4: Students will stay in school until successful completion.

Measure 1: Annual dropouts in public schools.(TS)

Measure 2: High School graduates receiving Regents diplomas in public schools. (TS)

Measure 3: High School graduates intending to enter college from public schools.  
(TS)

Measure 4: School Separation (PRISMS)

*Dropout rates, typically around 2 percent, are generally lower than upstate rates. Proportions of graduates receiving Regents diplomas are typically slightly below the upstate average, but have been increasing through 1996/97 to almost half of all graduates. The roughly two-thirds of high school graduates each year who say they intend to enter college is typically considerably lower than the upstate annual rates of about 80%.*

## **Citizenship**

**GOAL 5: All individuals will demonstrate good citizenship as law-abiding, contributing members of their families, schools and communities.**

Objective 1: All individuals will assume personal responsibility for their behavior.

Measure 1: Students who report accepting personal responsibility. (SI)

Measure 2: Students reporting ability to resist peer pressure. (SI)

*Adult measures are needed for this and most of the other objectives under this goal. Among students, about 55 percent of those in the adjacent county accepted and assumed personal responsibility for their actions. However, the skills to resist peer pressure appear to erode over time: Almost half of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders reported the ability to resist negative peer pressure, but that declined to only a third of those in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades.*



Objective 2: All individuals will demonstrate ethical behavior and civic values.

Measure 1: Students who report placing a high value on helping others. (SI)

Measure 2: Students reporting that they value integrity and act on their convictions. (SI)

Measure 3: Students reporting they value honesty and telling the truth even when it is not easy. (SI)

*Although only 40 percent of all Genesee County surveyed students reported that they placed a high value on helping others, more than 80 percent also reported that they help friends or neighbors at least an hour a week. Just over half of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders and more than 60 percent of those in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades say they act on their convictions and stand up for what they believe, and between 55 and 60 percent of all students reported that they place a high value on personal honesty.*

Objective 3: All individuals will understand and respect people who are different from themselves.

Measure 1: Students reporting knowledge of/comfort with those of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds. (SI)

Measure 2: Students reporting that they value diversity. (SI)

*Half of the neighboring county's 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders indicated that they place a high value on getting to know people of other racial/ethnic groups. However, smaller proportions, 43 percent of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders and a third of 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders, reported having knowledge of and comfort with people of such different backgrounds.*

Objective 4: All individuals will participate in family and community activities.

Measure 1: Students reporting active involvement in youth sports, clubs or other organizations. (SI)

Measure 2: Students reporting active community service involvement. (SI)

Measure 3: Students reporting regular involvement in religious activities. (SI)

*More than 55 percent of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders and about two-thirds of 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders said they spend at least three hours a week in various sports, clubs or organizations in school or the larger community. About 45 percent of all students reported community service*

*involvement for at least an hour a week. More than half said they spend at least an hour a week in religious activities.*

Objective 5: All individuals will have positive peer interactions.

Measure 1: Students reporting positive peer influence. (SI)

*More than two-thirds of the younger students in Genesee County reported that their best friends model responsible behavior; among 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders, slightly less than half reported positive peer influence. Beyond that, other measures for this objective need to be developed and strengthened.*

Objective 6: All individuals will make constructive use of leisure time.

Measure 1: Students reporting involvement in creative activities. (SI)

Measure 2: Students reporting reading for pleasure. (SI)

*About 15 percent of all students reported being active in lessons or practice in music, theater or other artistic/creative endeavors. About one-fifth said they read simply for pleasure at least three hours a week. As with most of the previous measures, there are at this point no comparable measures of leisure time use among adults.*

Objective 7: Youth will delay becoming parents until adulthood.

Measure 1: Alternative Choices for Teens (ACT) participation. (ACT)

Measure 2: Number of adolescent pregnancies. (ACT)

Measure 3: Teen pregnancy outcomes. (ACT)

Measure 4: Teen parent education program participation. (ACT)

Measure 5: Risk of primary/secondary pregnancy. (ACT)

*See earlier discussion under Goal 3, Objective 6.*

Objective 8: All individuals will refrain from violence and other illegal behaviors.

Measure 1: Adolescent arrest rate- violent index offenses. (TS)

Measure 2: Adolescent arrest rate-property index offenses. (TS)

Measure 3: Arrests for drug use/possession/sale/DUI. (TS)

Measure 4: DWI ages 16-20. (TS)

Measure 5: PINS cases. (TS)

Measure 6: Hospitalizations resulting from assault, ages 10-19. (TS)

- Measure 7: Intoxicated youth involved in auto accidents, ages 16-20. (TS)
- Measure 8: Alcohol-related auto accidents: number killed or injured. (CHI)
- Measure 9: Delinquency (PRISMS)
- Measure 10: Number of Probation JD and PINS Cases in Orleans County (PROB)
- Measure 11: Students reporting being in trouble with police. (SI)

*Adolescent arrest rates for violent and property index offenses had both declined through 1996, and the annual county rates were typically below the upstate New York rates. On the other hand, the number and rate of cases opened for PINS services increased rapidly between 1993 and 1996, but may have declined since then, although the data bases may be slightly different and need further analysis to confirm the more recent data. A fifth of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders in Genesee County reported having been in trouble with the police in the previous year.*

## **Family**

### **GOAL 6: All individuals will reside in safe, stable and nurturing environments.**

Objective 1: Parents/caregivers will provide children with a stable family relationship.

- Measure 1: Presence of parents among youth aged 0-17. (TS)
- Measure 2: Adoption trend data. (DSS)
- Measure 3: Number of children in Foster Care. (DSS)
- Measure 4: Foster care among TASA clients. (TASA)
- Measure 5: Family Dysfunction (PRISMS)
- Measure 6: Students reporting family support. (SI)
- Measure 7: Students reporting positive family communications. (SI)

*The number of new admissions to foster care settings has remained relatively stable in recent years, at rates just above comparable counties. But the total numbers of children in care at a given time has been steadily decreasing to levels below comparable counties, thus suggesting that children are staying in foster homes for shorter periods of time. Adoptions through the Department of Social Services typically number no more than five a year. More than two-thirds of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students and 60 percent of the older students reported high levels of family support, although half of the younger students and only a quarter of the older ones reported positive levels of ongoing communications within their families.*

Objective 2: Parents/caregivers will possess and practice adequate child rearing skills.  
No measures available.

Objective 3: All individuals will be literate.

Measure 1: Adult participation in education services. (ES)

Measure 2: Time spent in adult education and parenting education. (ES)

*Better and more comprehensive measures are needed for Objectives 2 and 3.*

Objective 4: Parents/caregivers will be positively involved in their children's learning.

Measure 1: Students reporting active parent involvement in schooling. (SI)

Measure 2: Students reporting that parents and teachers set high expectations and encourage them to do well in school. (SI)

*More than half (55 percent) of the younger students in Genesee County reported high expectations and levels of encouragement, but only 40 percent of the older students reported such encouragement. Only a third of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade parents, and a fourth of the parents of the older students, were reported to be actively involved in their child's schooling.*

Objective 5: All individuals will have the knowledge and ability to access support services for their children, themselves and other members of their family.

Measure 1: Office of Aging service utilization. (OFA)

*The number of home-delivered meals, as many as more than 3,700 in the mid-1990s, has leveled off at about 3,000 for each of the past three years. A broader range of data are needed to measure progress against this objective.*

Objective 6: All individuals will reside in households free from physical and emotional abuse, neglect and domestic violence.

Measure 1: Indicated reports of child abuse and maltreatment. (TS)

Measure 2: Indicated child protective service cases with a subsequent report of abuse/maltreatment. (TS)

Measure 3: Child protective services trend data. (DSS)

Measure 4: Children requiring preventive services. (DSS)

Measure 5: Number of youth utilizing Rural Opportunities Domestic Violence program. (ROI)

*After some increases in the number of indicated cases in recent years, the number dropped back to previous levels in 1998. Rates of indicated cases in the county have typically been slightly lower than the upstate rate. The numbers of preventive case openings and active preventive cases have not changed substantially in recent years, remaining slightly higher than the rates for comparable counties.*

Objective 7: All individuals will reside in households free from alcohol and other substance abuse.

Measure 1: TASA clients: reduced substance abuse. (TASA)

Measure 2: Students reporting use of alcohol. (SI)

*A third of younger students and almost half of the older students in Genesee County reported using alcohol at least once in the previous month.*

## **Community**

**GOAL 7: New York State communities, and specifically Orleans County, will provide children, families and adults with healthy, safe, and thriving environments.**

Objective 1: Communities will be economically sound.

Measure 1: Resident civilian unemployment rates. (TS)

Measure 2: Births to women with primary financial coverage of Medicaid or self-pay (uninsured). (TS)

*The unemployment rate in Orleans County through 1997 was typically 1 to more than 1.5 percentage points higher than the upstate rate. One third of all births to women in the county each year involve women with primary financial coverage of Medicaid or self-pay (no insurance coverage)--several percentage points higher than the upstate rates for the comparable years.*

Objective 2: The environment will be free of pollutants (e.g., air and water quality will meet healthful standards).

No measures available.

Objective 3: Neighborhoods will be crime free.

Measure 1: Property index offenses. (TS)

Measure 2: Violent index offenses. (TS)

Measure 3: Firearm related index crimes. (TS)

Measure 4: Assault-related hospitalization (CHI)

*The property and violent index offense rates for the county are consistently lower than the comparable upstate rates.*

Objective 4: Adequate housing will be available.

Measure 1: % of household income spent on housing (OCAC)

Measure 2: Number of calls placed to RAP for housing info (RAP)

Objective 5: Adequate transportation will be available.

No measures available.

*Measures of objectives 4 and 5 need to be developed and strengthened for the future.*

**GOAL 8: New York State communities, and specifically Orleans County, will provide all individuals with opportunities to help them meet their needs for physical, social, moral, and emotional growth.**

Objective 1: Communities will make available and accessible formal and informal services (e.g., child care, parent training, recreation, youth services, libraries, museums, parks).

Measure 1: Number of youth served by Youth Bureau prevention programs. (YB)

Measure 2: Number of youth served by Youth Bureau Intervention programs. (YB)

Measure 3: Number of youth served by Youth Bureau Administration programs. (YB)

Measure 4: Most important teen services (OCAC)

*While the numbers of people in Orleans County who were served by the prevention and administration programs funded by the Youth Bureau remained fairly constant in recent years, the numbers served by intervention programs dropped dramatically. Beyond those data, better information is needed from a number of agencies regarding access by the entire community to various resources.*

Objective 2: Adults in the community will provide youth with good role models and opportunities for positive adult interactions.

Measure 1: Students reporting supportive relationships with nonparent adults. (SI)

Measure 2: Students reporting caring neighbors. (SI)

Measure 3: Students reporting that adults in the community value youth. (SI)

Measure 4: Students reporting positive adult role models in their lives. (SI)

*Less than 45 percent of the students in Genesee County reported that they experience caring neighbors, and about 45 percent said they receive support from three or more nonparent adults. Only a little over a fourth of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders and 17 percent of the older students believe that adults in the community value youth. Only a third of the younger students and a fourth of the older students reported having a positive adult role model (parent or other adult) in their lives.*

Objective 3: Communities will provide opportunities for all individuals to make positive contributions to community life and to practice skill development.

Measure 1: Students reporting that youth are used as resources in the community. (SI)

*Only one-fourth of the younger students and 17 percent of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders in the neighboring county said that young people are given useful roles to play in the community.*

## **VI. EXISTING SERVICES TO CHILDREN, ADULTS AND FAMILIES**

### **A. Orleans County Public Sector Departments and Services**

Services to children, youth and their families, and other adults are spread through a variety of Orleans County departments and other public agencies such as local police departments. This section outlines programs within those public agencies that provide direct services to children, youth and their families, and adults. The next section of the chapter contains descriptions of a variety of other, non-profit service providers throughout the county. The services and agencies are presented in no particular order of priority.

#### **Orleans County Department of Social Services**

The Children and Family Services Unit administers a variety of programs providing direct services to children, youth and their families, and other adults in Orleans County. Although the Department is located in Albion, the Services Unit operates throughout the county through home visits. Besides the programs detailed below, the unit also provides an intake worker who meets with persons applying for temporary assistance to determine their need for other services. Children and Family Services includes:

- ❖ **Child Protective Services:** Investigates cases of suspected child abuse and neglect received from the state central registry. These reports can be called in to the state hotline by any family member, neighbor, teacher, medical staff, or any other person who sees or suspects a case of neglect or abuse. The state passes these reports along to the County, which must respond (within 24 hours) with an immediate investigation and risk analysis. This investigation leads to a ruling of indicated (legally defined abuse or neglect exists) or unfounded. A protective case is held open for a minimum of 30 days and a determination must be made within 60 days. Trend data published by the NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) show that Orleans County Child Protective Services received between 385-453 reports per year from 1993 through 1998 (an average of 427 reports per year). Of those reports, between 78 and 124 were indicated each year (an average of 103 indicated cases per year), with the numbers increasing over that time by 59 percent. Over the past year, the unit has received about 40 reports per month.



Child Protective Services has five caseworkers, each of whom carries a caseload of about 20 families at any given time. The Supervisor also carries two cases, besides regular supervisory duties. The senior caseworker has had special training and handles mostly cases involving sexual abuse.

- ❖ **Preventive Services:** Three caseworkers and a caseworker assistant provide ongoing preventive services. A preventive case may begin as a hotline report and protective investigation. Where such a case is deemed indicated, preventive services can be mandatory and parents must meet with a caseworker at least twice a month. Where the case is deemed unfounded, preventive services may be offered on a voluntary basis. Or, a family with problems may be referred for or request preventive services without having been reported. However, about 90 percent of the preventive services cases are mandated as a result of a court order or indicated Child Protective case; only about 10 percent of the preventive cases are estimated to be voluntary on the parent's part. However, many families connect with preventive services through the school intervention program detailed below. In such cases, preventive services are voluntary and the caseworker and family meet periodically. As a part of Preventive Services, the unit was the primary provider of parenting classes in the county. One caseworker offered three six-week parenting classes per year. However, that caseworker has now retired and the unit is investigating collaboration with other agencies to provide parenting classes. OCFS trend data show 103 to 177 mandated preventive cases opened each year (1993-1997), with an average of 140 openings per year. The numbers of cases peaked in 1995 and declined in the two years after that. The population on the last day of the year ranged between 116 and 171 (an average end-of-year population of 154 per year).
- ❖ **School Intervention Program:** Contracts have been developed by DSS with individual schools to provide assigned preventive caseworkers to work within the schools. These caseworkers have been in place for five years. All five school districts in the county are participating and each school district has one caseworker to work with any at-risk child as identified by the school's personnel team. Children referred are usually exhibiting behavioral problems. The five current caseworkers each have an office in both the Department of Social Services and the assigned school district. The caseworkers in Albion and Medina are assigned to the elementary schools in those districts (grades K-4). Caseworkers in Kendall, Holley and Lyndonville cover mostly elementary and middle school grades (children ages 6 through 14). Three of the five districts have had the same caseworker assigned for all five years. The goal of this program is to work with the

family to develop appropriate changes in a child's behavior, which in turn will help prevent future PINS petitions, JD cases, and out-of-home placements. Once a referral is made, the caseworker contacts the parents to offer voluntary preventive services. The caseworker works with the child and his/her parents both in the school and in the home.

- ❖ **Domestic Violence:** Provides core services to public assistance recipients who are victims of domestic violence. The intake caseworker screens for domestic violence and provides information on domestic violence and referral to shelter, counseling, or other necessary services. The unit will also assist the client in obtaining an order of protection. The unit collaborates with other agencies through the Domestic Violence Task Force to provide community education and awareness.
- ❖ **Foster Care Services and Foster Home Certification:** Locates, funds and certifies foster care homes and provides foster care case management services. Typically there are about 25 active "regular" foster homes and two cluster homes with capacities of five or six beds for more at-risk youth. From 1993 through 1997, there was an average of 42 new admissions to foster care per year, with an average of 41 discharges per year. Of these, about 10 to 12 are placed in the cluster homes, which are designed to prevent more expensive out-of-county institutional placements. The majority of foster care placements are mandated by the court through Child Protective investigations, PINS petitions, or Juvenile Delinquency cases. Only about 5-10 percent of foster care placements are voluntary.
- ❖ **Adoptions and Adoption Home Studies:** Provides home studies of prospective adoptive parents and arranges adoptions for children whose parents have lost their parental rights. From 1993 through 1997, an average of three children per year were freed for adoption, with about three children placed for adoption each year. It is assumed that the demand for adoption services may increase somewhat in future years as a result of the Adoption and Safe Families Act, and that there may be more older, hard-to-place young people being freed for adoption.
- ❖ **Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS) Diversion:** This program responds to school or parental referrals to prevent Family Court involvement in certain juvenile cases. DSS Children's Services is collaborating with Mental Health, Probation, the Youth Bureau,

schools, and law enforcement agencies in the county to provide a single point of entry for all youth diversion activities and services.

- ❖ **Subsidized Day Care:** Provides subsidies for child care for low income families with income of up to 200 percent of Federal poverty income guidelines who are not eligible for Temporary Assistance to Needy Families or Safety Net assistance. The unit also provides a matching service between families needing day care and day care providers. Day care services paid for through the unit include day care centers, licensed day care homes, and informal (relative or friend) day care providers. At the present time, subsidies could be provided for about 20 percent more families than are currently using the services.
- ❖ **TASA (Teenage Services Act) Program:** At the time of this report, Orleans County DSS has ended its contract with Planned Parenthood and taken over provision of the TASA Program. The program provides comprehensive outreach case management services to pregnant and parenting teens and youth at-risk for pregnancy. Eligible persons are (1) under age 21, pregnant and Medicaid eligible, or (2) under 21, a mother or father, and either parent or child is Medicaid eligible. During 1998, Planned Parenthood's TASA program served 15 pregnant and/or parenting teens.
- ❖ **Adult Services:** The two caseworkers in Adult Services handle both Adult Protective and Adult Preventive Services. Services are provided to adults from age 18 and up, with the oldest person they have served being 101 years old. The unit has two caseworkers. Adults needing services are usually those with a physical or mental disability who do not have someone available to assist them. Adult Protective provides investigative and protective services to adults who are suspected of being abused or neglected by their families or caregivers. Referrals may come through friends, neighbors, family members, service providers, physicians, or police. If a case is founded, Adult Preventive services will be provided in collaboration with Mental Health and the Office for the Aging. DSS can also get a court order for medical care and/or guardianship for nursing home placement. Preventive Services also does financial management for adults receiving SSI or Social Security who cannot handle their own finances or have had their monies misappropriated by others. The client's check is sent directly to the Commissioner and the caseworker pays the client's bills and provides an allowance for food and clothing. The department handles about 25 financial management clients at a time. The unit also works with the State to provide private duty nursing services to children who would

otherwise be hospitalized. The unit does an investigation of the need and recommends that the state provide payment for nursing services. The unit then monitors the case until services are no longer needed. There are about six ongoing cases at a time.

## **Orleans County Department of Mental Health**

The Orleans County Department of Mental Health operates a non-mandated County Mental Health Clinic which is the primary provider of mental health services to children, families and adults in the county. In 1997, the clinic had 899 referrals and assessments, 510 admissions, 532 terminations, 255 crisis interventions, and provided 9,100 units of service to the community. The clinic has seen a steady increase in admissions and total units of service, up from 237 admissions and 4,781 units of service reported in 1993. The Mental Health Clinic is located in Albion and provides most of its counseling services in that clinic.

Five state mental health employees are assigned to the department: two social workers, a community mental health nurse, and two mental health therapy aides. The Department of Mental Health offers a variety of programs, including:

- ❖ **Outpatient Mental Health Clinic:** The clinical staff of licensed professionals provides individual and group counseling as well as crisis intervention. The clinic also offers consultations and evaluations in the Orleans County Nursing Home, Oak Orchard Manor Nursing Home, Medina Memorial Hospital, and the County Jail. Clinic psychologists also conduct court ordered evaluations as needed. In 1997, 302 children and youth ages 0-17, 591 adult aged 18-64, and 6 adults age 65+ were referred to the clinic. From 1993 to 1997 the number of children seen in the clinic has remained fairly steady at about one-third of the total clinic population. The Department would like to have a more consistent presence in area schools, but discussions to date have not been successful in enabling that to happen in most districts.
- ❖ **Intensive Case Management:** The intensive case management staff provides advocacy and support to individuals with chronic mental illnesses. Services provided may include: supportive counseling, crisis management, behavior modification, links and referrals to other services, instruction in daily living skills, and coaching on effective parenting. The department offers separate Intensive Case Managers for adults and for children. In 1997, a total of 25 children and adults received intensive case management services. The

department is also trying to hire an additional Intensive Case Manager for JD/PINS youth, using community reinvestment funds.

- ❖ **Case Management Services:** One case manager provides services to adults who are seriously and persistently mentally ill, including housing liaison; link with vocational opportunities; assistance with legal processes, including referrals; obtaining emergency food, shelter, and basic living supplies; transportation for medical appointments; medication compliance monitoring; coordination of care and continuity of services; protection of housing during incarceration or hospitalization; budget planning and applications to entitlements; and outreach to community members unable to access clinic services. In 1997 the average monthly caseload was 25 adults.
- ❖ **Continuing Day Treatment:** A staff of six includes the Mental Health Program Director, one mental health therapy aide, two shared state staff mental health therapy aides, one community mental health nurse, and a local artist who teaches art classes. This program serves adults with serious and persistent mental illnesses with the goal of helping these people achieve their highest level of functioning with the greatest degree of independence. The average number of participants per month was 49 in 1997.
- ❖ **Continuing Day Treatment Program Case Management:** One case manager provides case management services, delivered both on and off-site, including coordination of care between family members and other provider agencies. In 1997, these services were provided to an average of 32 clients per month.
- ❖ **Psychosocial Club:** One Leisure Time Activity Director provides an opportunity for mentally ill adults to participate in recreational activities outside of treatment. An average of 32 adults participated each month in 1997.

## Orleans County Health Department

The Health Department provides a number of health-related services to all children, families and other adults in the Orleans County community. Although the Health Department is located in Albion, and many of its services are provided in that location, a number of services to children and families are provided in the home and/or other community locations, as noted in

the program sections below. The Health Department served between 1,900 and 2,000 children through its programs last year. Services include:

- ❖ **Communicable Disease Control and Investigation:** Provides investigative follow-up on all reportable communicable diseases. This surveillance allows an opportunity to provide information to Orleans County residents in order to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.
- ❖ **Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) Control:** Services are either referred out or examination and treatment are provided via the Medical Consultant's office. Confidential follow-up and treatment are provided through the Nursing Division. Information and educational programs are offered upon request.
- ❖ **Tuberculosis Control:** Provides examination, x-rays, follow-up and treatment of TB cases. Tuberculin skin testing is available at the Health Department along with community outreach. Educational programs are also available.
- ❖ **HIV/AIDS Counseling and Confidential Testing:** Provides HIV/AIDS counseling and confidential testing or can refer/arrange for HIV testing. Educational materials/programs are available upon request.
- ❖ **Rabies Control:** Free rabies immunization clinics are offered at various sites throughout the county during the Spring and Fall. Testing of wild animals (bats, foxes, skunks, raccoons, etc.) and of unvaccinated domestic pets is performed as needed.
- ❖ **Flu Immunizations:** Flu clinics are scheduled yearly in the fall for people in high risk categories.
- ❖ **Nursing Home Assessments:** Nursing visits are provided to people in the community who are considering nursing home placement in order to assess the level of care needed and to complete the required PRI/screening assessment forms.
- ❖ **Home Health Care:** Provides professional and assistive health services to patients in their homes.

- ❖ The Health Department also provides a variety of other community health services including: food protection, evaluation of private water supplies and septic system permits and inspections.

In addition to these basic services, the Health Department offers several specific programs targeted to children and their families, including:

- ❖ **Early Intervention Program:** Provides support services to children with disabilities or developmental delays, including screening and tracking of children at risk, case management services for eligible children and families, multidisciplinary evaluation of child's eligibility, development of an Individualized Family Service Plan for each eligible child (IFSP), delivery of IFSP services free of cost, and delivery of intervention services in natural settings (home, day care centers, family day care, libraries) to the maximum extent appropriate. This program serves an average of 130-150 children per year.
- ❖ **Physically Handicapped Children's Program:** Provides financial assistance to assist parents of qualifying children up to the age of 21 to pay medical bills not covered by insurance or other programs. The program also provides service planning and management to help parents or guardians to solve any problems they may experience raising a child with chronic health problems or handicaps. This program serves about 25 children per year for medical bills and about 60 children per year for orthodontics.
- ❖ **Infant and Children Health Assessment Program (ICHAP):** Identifies those newborns and children at risk for developmental delays. These children are referred to the program by hospitals, private physicians and newborn screening programs. Children who meet ICHAP criteria receive Growth and Development testing in their home. The ICHAP program serves about 130-140 children per year.
- ❖ **Immunization Program:** Immunizations are given for protection against Poliomyelitis, Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis (Whooping Cough), Mumps, Rubella, Measles and Hib (Haemophilus b disease—various types of meningitis, pneumonia and other problems), and Hepatitis B, according to guidelines established by the New York State Department of Health. About 200 children per year are immunized through this program.

- ❖ **Lead Screening Program:** Provides lead screening for children not covered by health insurance, education on reducing lead exposure and when to repeat lead testing, sampling of paint, soil or water to identify lead source, and advice regarding safe lead removal. About 350 lead screenings are done each year by primary care providers and the Health Department throughout the county.
- ❖ **Maternal and Child Health:** Nursing visits to pregnant women and to mothers, newborns and children can be provided when referred by hospital, physician, family, friend or women themselves. Visits are free and may include a maternal/child health assessment and teaching regarding one or more of the following: safety, diet, community services, infant care, growth and development, immunizations and other issues as needed. According to the Health Department, nursing visits may range from one to 500 per year depending upon the number of staff and student nurses available to make these visits.
- ❖ **Health Educator:** Provides linkages with school and community groups by coordinating health education throughout the county. Education services include, but are not limited to, the promotion of health and healthy lifestyles through public presentations, programs, speakers, in-service training seminars, train the trainer programs and free literature on numerous health concerns. A free lending library is also available to the public, which includes videos and other resource materials.

The Health Department is also establishing a support group for pregnant and parenting teens in schools, to help young women stay in school while receiving support for their parenting efforts. The Department hopes to expand this effort to additional schools in the future.

## Orleans County Job Development Agency

The mission of the Job Development Agency is to operate, administer, direct, plan and implement federal employment programs under the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). Under JTPA, the youth and adults served must meet low income, disadvantaged guidelines. The agency serves approximately 500 individuals per year, with about 100 of those youth between the ages of 14 and 21. It provides employment and training activities for youth and adults, programming for at risk youth and work activities for youth and adults. The agency's activities may be changing somewhat as JTPA ends on June 30, 2000, and is replaced by the Workforce Investment Act. The agency's present programs include:



- ❖ **Adult Job Development Services:** Job Development provides employment and training activities for adults which include adult remediation, referral to job training or adult education programs, job search assistance, resume writing assistance and paid work experiences. The agency also works closely with the Department of Social Services to provide these services to assist public assistance clients who need to move toward self-sufficiency. The agency serves about 400 adult clients each year.
- ❖ **Adolescent Basic Education and GED Preparation:** Provides basic skills remediation for 16 and 17 years old high school dropouts and GED Preparation for 18-21 year-old dropouts in need of a GED. These students are not able to return to their home school district and are not eligible to enter a local state certified Alternative Education Program.
- ❖ **Pre-employment Work Maturity Skills Training:** Provides career exploration, goal setting, job seeking and keeping skills training. Usually connected to a paid work experience enabling youth to obtain those desired work maturity skills, i.e. time and attendance, attitude, responsibility following instructors, adhering to work site policies, etc.
- ❖ **Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP):** This is a work experience program that runs during the months of July and August. Youth between 16 and 21 earn minimum wage for jobs ranging from 25 to 40 hours per week. Job titles typically include activity aide, recreation aide, clerical aide, maintenance aide, and cleaning aide, and are located in a variety of county departments, schools, town and village office, Nutrifare sites, and other locations throughout the county. The program is available to in-school youth and drop-outs. The jobs are designed to help youth develop work maturity skills (being on time, following instructions, developing respect for others, proper dress and deportment) rather than job skills. All youth are pre-tested for reading and math skills and those who test at least one grade or more below grade level in reading and math are required to participate in a one day per week academic enrichment program. The program is provided through a contract with the local BOCES. Participating youth are post-tested at the end of the program. The program usually provides jobs for 40-50 youth each summer.
- ❖ **Vocational Exploration and Life Skills Program (VELS):** This summer program is available to youth 15 years-old and is provided through a contract with BOCES. It

provides a hands-on experience of occupations such as food service, computers, information technology, auto mechanic, and building trades. Youth research demand, educational requirements, types of jobs, wages, and job characteristics. Participating youth also get remediation in reading, writing and math skills. Youth also learn life skills such as conflict resolution, budgeting, and career decision making. The VELS experience is treated like a job, with youth expected to attend regularly, be punctual, adopt a dress code, and develop appropriate job behavior. The program includes field trips and visits from employers. They are paid minimum wage for 25-30 hours per week for six weeks. The program can accommodate 20-22 youth and generally turns away 40-50 youth each summer. The budget for both summer programs is about \$175,000 per year.

- ❖ **Work Experience:** This year-round work experience program provides part-time work experience for either in-school or drop-out youth. In school youth work 10-15 hours per week and drop-out youth work 20 hours per week, again to develop work maturity skills rather than job skills. Youth receive basic assistance with an employment development plan, career exploration, career counseling, and remediation or GED preparation through BOCES. The present budget for the year-round work experience is \$18,000, down from \$60,000 to \$70,000 just five years ago. The program survives because the agency diverts some summer program monies into the year-round program.
- ❖ **Occupational Classroom Training:** The agency also has some funding to pay for full-time classroom vocational training through BOCES training programs or community college programs for some youth.
- ❖ **Limited Internships:** This program provides youth between the ages of 16 and 21 with an opportunity to work at a private sector worksite for up to 250 hours of work experience/training. The agency pays the youth's salary during the internship experience. If the youth has successfully accomplished the skills necessary for the job, the employer is expected to continue the youth on the payroll. This program generally accommodates 25-30 youth per year.

## Genesee/Orleans Youth Bureau

The Genesee/Orleans Youth Bureau is responsible for county-wide planning of youth services in both counties through a shared Executive Director and staff. Each county has its own

Advisory Board. The Bureau does not provide direct services, but awards grants to programs that address a gap in service or meet an unmet need through population-based funding made available by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services. The programs funded by the Youth Bureau are located in towns and villages throughout Orleans County. The Orleans County programs presently receiving partial funding include:

- ❖ **The Juvenile Officer Program:** Creates a law enforcement division, with specifically trained officers, specialized in prevention as well as investigation of juvenile crime. Juvenile Aid Officers are funded in the Orleans County Sheriff's Department (one full-time officer), and in Police Departments in the Village of Medina (one full-time officer), the Village of Albion (2 full-time officers), and the Village of Holley (one full-time officer).
- ❖ **Adolescent Basic Education:** Provides Basic Skills Remediation for 16- and 17-year-old high school drop outs and GED preparation for 18-to-21-year-olds in need of a GED. These students are not able to return to their home district and not eligible to enter a local state certified Alternative Education Program. The programs are provided by the Orleans County Job Development Bureau.
- ❖ **Just Friends Program:** Provides a Big Brother/Big Sister type of program that matches a mature, stable adult with a youngster that may be from a one-parent home, living in an isolated area, has school behavioral problems, or is at high risk of becoming delinquent. The program is run under the auspices of the Genesee/Orleans Ministry of Concern.
- ❖ **CONTACT: Youth Crisis Services:** Provides Orleans County residents and youth with an information and referral service to youth services. The program is provided by Regional Action Phone, Inc.
- ❖ **Youth Diversion:** Provides direct intervention services for a limited number of youth and families with complex problems. The anticipated result is diversion from further involvement with the legal system. The program is run by the Orleans County Probation Department.

- ❖ **Youth Advocacy Program:** Provides direct case representation/advocacy to ensure access to programs and services which meet the individual need of the child. The program is offered through the Rochester Legal Aid Society.
- ❖ **Camp Rainbow:** Offers recreational experiences for youth with developmental or other disabilities through a six week summer day camp program. Activities offered include swimming, athletics, arts & crafts, music, group games and nature appreciation. Meals are provided free of charge and transportation is available. Camp Rainbow is run by The Arc of Orleans County.
- ❖ **“Y Not” Program:** A collaborative effort between the Genesee-Orleans Youth Bureau and the Lake Plains YMCA to enhance after school recreational and educational opportunities for middle school youth.
- ❖ **Recreation Programs:** The Youth Bureau also provides funds to a number of towns and villages throughout the county for recreation programs. In 1998, a total of \$15,438 was disbursed to the towns of Albion, Barre, Carlton, Clarendon, Gaines, Kendall, Murray, Ridgeway, Shelby and Yates and the villages of Albion, Holley, Lyndonville and Medina. The funding for each locality is based upon the youth population of that locality. These localities use these funds to sponsor a variety of programs such as summer park programs, sports teams, swimming programs, and field trips.

## Family Court

There is one Family Court judge in Orleans County. The current judge, in conjunction with the director of the Probation Department, was instrumental in establishing a functioning PINS and JD diversion program. The judge is often involved in providing a “threat” of court intervention if other alternatives don’t work. The Court prefers to divert cases, but is not averse to having cases formally petitioned to the Court if the diversion is not successful. The judge recognizes the need for better two-way flow of information and accountability in the future between the Court, Probation and other agencies, and the schools, in order to assure that all parties can act cooperatively and consistently in the best interests of the young person and family whose problems are being addressed. Often petitions are filed as a “last resort” in order to simply provide a formal structure to needed services, and to create an ability to mandate certain services. The Court makes referrals as needed for particular types of services, but recognizes the need for

expanded mentoring/Big Brother/Big Sister types of services in order to provide the Court with needed options often not now available as court-ordered services are determined.

## **Orleans County Probation Department**

In addition to its Adult Probation services, the Orleans County Probation Department runs a voluntary Youth Diversion program. The program serves as an alternative to Orleans County Family Court for youth between the ages of seven and 15 who have committed a crime or have been designated a Person In Need of Supervision (PINS). The goal of Youth Diversion is to intervene in early anti-social and delinquent behavior in the hopes that this intervention will reduce the occurrence and prevent the escalation of such behavior. The Youth Diversion assessment team includes members from Probation, Department of Social Services, and Mental Health. Referrals may be made by police, schools, or parents. Referrals are assigned to a Probation Officer or a Caseworker according to the needs of the child and family. Services offered include: intensive case management, service coordination, and collaboration with other local service providers (drug and alcohol treatment, individual and family counseling, vocational and educational services, and others).

Youth Diversion also administers the Youth Court. Youth Court is a peers-helping-peers program for first time juvenile delinquent offenders who admit their guilt and show remorse for their actions. The offender appears for a sentencing hearing before a court of their peers who, as Youth Court Members, serve as judges, attorneys, and court clerks and bailiffs. Members are volunteers between the ages of 14 and 19 who are currently Orleans County residents enrolled in high school. Members have successfully completed an intensive eight-week law-related education training program and must achieve a minimum 80% score on a final exam.

Youth Diversion also offers Personal Challenge Programs to youth attempting to improve their lives. Personal Challenge Programs are of little or no cost to families and are facilitated or chaperoned by Youth Diversion staff. Programs include: ropes courses or adventure trainings, youth assistance program, reality training weekends, YMCA scholarships, tutorial services, wilderness training, youth and parent support groups, and victims awareness education.

## **County of Orleans District Attorney**

The District Attorney's Office provides assistance to victims and witnesses of crime through the Crime Victim/Witness Assistance Program. This program is funded by the New

York State Crime Victims Board and the County of Orleans and is located at the District Attorney's Office. The program provides a number of services that impact on children, families and other adults when a crime is involved. Services include:

- ❖ **New York State Crime Victim Compensation:** Provides information and assistance with the filing of claims for medical and counseling expenses, loss of earnings, essential personal property losses or funeral expenses which resulted from a crime.
- ❖ **Outreach:** Contacts and assists victims who have reported crimes to local law enforcement agencies.
- ❖ **Court Assistance:** Provides assistance and information about the criminal justice process, updates on case status, and court preparation, accompaniment and emotional support to victims/witnesses and their families.
- ❖ **Referrals:** Referrals are provided to counseling agencies, shelters, housing programs, legal aid, emergency needs, medical services and others.
- ❖ **Probation/Parole Process Information:** The program can assist victims who are in need of information from Corrections, Parole and Probation Services. This includes dealing with the Parole board when an offender comes before them for an early release from a correctional facility.
- ❖ **Victim Awareness Program:** This program is provided in conjunction with the Orleans County Youth Diversion Program. The goal is to teach first time Juvenile Offenders what impact the crime they have committed has upon victims and the community. This is done through education sessions and presentations by actual victims of crime.

## Orleans County Sheriff's Department

The Orleans County Sheriff's Department provides law enforcement services through the county. It also provides referrals to a variety of community agencies for children, families and other adults in crisis situations. The Sheriff's Department has one trained Juvenile Officer at this time. The Department cooperates and assists in DARE programs run by local police departments

throughout the county. The Department is also working with the Youth Bureau to obtain grant funding for officers in the schools.

## **Albion Police Department**

The Albion Police Department provides law enforcement services through the city of Albion and also provides referrals to a variety of community agencies for children, families and other adults in crisis situations. The Department also has a Juvenile Aid Bureau staffed by juvenile officers. The Juvenile Officer Program is a law enforcement division, with specifically trained officers, specialized in prevention as well as investigation of juvenile crime. This program is partially funded through the Genesee/Orleans Youth Bureau. The Department has two trained Juvenile Officers, one of whom runs the 17 week DARE program for elementary school students. Juveniles who have been arrested are referred by the County Youth Diversion Office. The Police Department also sponsors a basketball program with high school students in Albion.

## **Medina Police Department**

The Medina Police Department provides law enforcement services through the village of Medina, as well as providing referrals to a variety of community agencies for children, families and other adults in crisis situations. The Medina Police Department has one full-time Juvenile Officer. That officer works in collaboration with other agencies and schools in Medina to provide appropriate referrals for youth who have run-ins with law enforcement. Medina also has a curfew for youth up to age 16 of 11:00 o'clock on school nights and 12:00 o'clock on weekends.

## **Women, Infants, Children (WIC) Program**

The area WIC program is sponsored by the Oak Orchard Community Health Center in Brockport. There are 14 staff, with an annual budget of \$358,000 in state and federal funding. The mission of WIC is to provide supplemental food and nutrition education to low-income families. New clients meet one-on-one with a nutritionist. They have an initial appointment, with follow-up visits every six months. Every other month participants receive a food voucher that allows them to obtain a certain group of foods such as milk, cheese, peanut butter, cereal, peas, beans, baby formula, carrots, and tuna from an approved WIC site. In order to participate, women must be below 185% of the federal poverty level, and must either be pregnant,

breastfeeding, or have a child under five years of age. As of March 1999, the program was serving 930 clients in Orleans County, and another 1,300 in Genesee County.

Breastfeeding peer counseling is provided through WIC. Clients are trained for eight weeks, and are then available to counsel fellow clients who are having trouble breastfeeding. Clients may also borrow breast pumps from WIC. Another program provides Farmer's Market coupons. Under this program clients can take coupons to the market and purchase fruits and vegetables. These coupons are equivalent to \$20 per client per summer. Other services include voter registration, documentation of immunizations for the children, and high-risk nutrition counseling.

## Orleans County Office for the Aging

The Orleans County Office for the Aging (OFA) develops community based services to insure that persons over age 60 have maximum opportunities to live with independence and dignity in their communities. The Office's role includes advocating for the rights of older people, providing community based services, and planning with other service agencies to meet the needs of older people. The quality of life of senior citizens in the community has a direct impact on the quality of life of their extended families and on senior citizens' abilities to participate in intergenerational activities with their families and in the larger community. Although the Office is located in Albion, many of its programs are offered throughout home visits or at nutrition sites throughout the county. The office provides a variety of services to the community, including:

- ❖ **Congregate Nutrition Sites:** Hot noon meals at five sites throughout the county (Medina, Albion, Holley, Lyndonville, and Kendall), with scheduled daily activities. These sites combined serve an average of 1,457 meals per month.
- ❖ **Meals-On-Wheels:** A hot nutritious meal is delivered to the client's home at noon. Meals-On-Wheels delivers an average of 3,022 meals per month in Orleans County.
- ❖ **Case Management:** Professional advice and discussion on how to meet home care needs. The case manager provides an average of 111 case management hours per month.
- ❖ **Home Care Aides:** Personal care and homemaker aides to help people in their homes; cost is income based.



- ❖ **Outreach Visits:** Visits to homebound, frail elderly to link to necessary community services. No fee is charged for this service. An average of 50 outreach visits are made each month.
- ❖ **Home Modification Assessments:** OFA staff will do a home visit to assess the home for adaptations that could make the home safer for an aging person.
- ❖ **Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Program, Low Impact Exercise Classes:** Health related programs are offered at the meal sites, with a variety of topics addressed throughout the year. Low impact exercise classes are offered at the Senior Center.
- ❖ **Title V Employment:** Subsidized employment for income eligible seniors over age 55 in a non-profit agency.
- ❖ **Long Term Care Information:** Information and/or referral to all long term care services, including home care, senior citizen housing, adult homes, and nursing homes.
- ❖ **Health Insurance Counseling:** Assistance with filing insurance claims, Medicare and HMO questions, supplemental insurance policy comparison, and long-term care insurance information.
- ❖ **Weatherization:** Assistance with locating information, referrals, and funding for weatherization or energy related needs.
- ❖ **Alzheimer's Support Group:** Monthly support group for caregivers and victims of Alzheimer's disease.

## **B. Summary of Private Non-Profit Agency Services**

A variety of not-for-profit agencies offer services to children, adults and families in Orleans County. In all cases CGR interviewed the director of the agency, and in some cases the director was joined by one or more staff members for the interview. The agencies are presented below in no particular order of priority.

## Orleans Community Action Committee

Orleans Community Action Committee was created in 1965 to assess needs, provide assistance, and advocate for services for people with financial and physical needs. It is a national human service provision program. The funding is federal, through the State Department. Community Action serves as an umbrella organization for several programs, including services such as Head Start, Child Care Resource and Referral, Alternative Choices for Teens, and Even Start. Services are available to persons throughout the county, but its primary program locations are in Albion. It provides a variety of services, including:

- ❖ **Orleans Community Action Transportation System (CATS):** CATS has operated within Orleans County since 1974. It provides transportation for the elderly and disabled within the county to medical appointments in doctor's offices or other health care sites, Nutrifare sites, and grocery stores. Its operations include both fixed route and on-demand services on a year-round, five-day-a-week basis. The program has 11 vehicles, nine of which are active at any given time. Nine of the vehicles are wheelchair accessible, and drivers provide door-to-door personalized assistance. In 1998, 476 persons were served by CATS. During the first six months of 1999, 325 persons used CATS transportation services. Community Action estimates that the service makes about 40,000 one way trips per year.
- ❖ **Head Start:** Community Action operates this free federally funded comprehensive program for three and four year olds, county-wide. The program provides a comprehensive development program to meet social competence, cognitive development, and health and nutrition needs of the children of low income families throughout Orleans County. Also included are social services and parental involvement to address the needs of each individual child and the family. In 1998, Head Start served 96 children. In the first six months of 1999, Head Start served 130 children.
- ❖ **Community Kids' Place:** Kids' Place is a wraparound program to meet the before and after schools child care needs of Head Start families. The program uses an Alternative Conflict resolution curriculum to facilitate alternatives to violence through supervised cooperative play, critical thinking skills and communication. The program provides before and after school child care, vacation care, hot lunches and a nutritious snack, individualized tutoring (help with homework), and story telling.

- ❖ **Food Pantry:** Community Action offers a food pantry at two sites in Orleans County, one in Albion and another in Holley. The food pantry offers donated surplus food to those in need, most of whom are the working poor. During 1998, the food pantry served 227 individuals, and during the first six months of 1999, it served 325 individuals.
- ❖ **Eastern Orleans Community Center:** The Community Center is located in Holley and serves people residing in the eastern end of the county. It offers a variety of programs, including: congregate meals for senior citizens; activity programs for all ages; pre-school for three-to-five-year-olds; surplus commodities when available; holiday baskets distributed to income eligible families on Thanksgiving and Christmas (with the assistance of St. Vincent De Paul of Holley); and emergency services such as food pantry, clothing, and car seats.
- ❖ **Yesterday's Treasures:** The Yesterday's Treasures thrift store is located on Main Street in Albion. Donated clothes and household items are sold at a reasonable low cost or are given on a referral basis to families or individuals who cannot afford to purchase items. Yesterday's Treasures works closely with Red Cross, Ministry of Concern, Department of Social Services, and other county agencies. Yesterday's Treasures also works with Job Development to help prepare individuals for job interviews. The thrift shop was utilized by 152 people in 1998, and 204 people in the first half of 1999.
- ❖ **Orleans/Genesee Weatherization Program:** Homeowners and renters are eligible for the Weatherization Program (certain criteria must be met by a landlord before weatherization can be done on rental property). Priority is given to frail elderly and households with small children that are at risk. Households without heat or health hazards such as carbon monoxide in the home have top priority. In 1998, 130 people had their homes weatherized. In the first half of 1999, 38 people received weatherization services.
- ❖ **Family Development/Emergency Services Program:** This program provides caseworkers to assist families in becoming as independent and self-sufficient as possible. This can include assistance in employment, education, parenting, nutrition and financial management. This program served a total of 888 persons in 1998, and a total of 274 in the first six months of 1999.

- ❖ **Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR):** CCRR maintains a computerized database of licensed child care in the county and can provide a free basic referral listing of child care providers. CCRR also helps individuals learn to become licensed providers of day care, and helps participants with their licensing applications. In 1998, 132 persons became employed through CCRR training. In the first half of 1999, 54 persons became trained and employed as child care providers.

## Alternative Choices for Teens

Alternative Choices for Teens (ACT) is funded under the Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Services Act through the New York State Office of Children and Family Services, and has operated in Orleans County since 1985. Although located primarily in Albion, ACT also provides services in the Medina and Holley middle schools. ACT's services are available to youth throughout the county, but in effect serve mostly those in the more populated areas of Albion, Medina and Holley due to transportation problems. ACT's lead agency is Orleans Community Action Committee. Although ACT was formed in response to the county's high teenage pregnancy rate, it also provides programming on inter-related topics for youth at-risk for teen pregnancy. All services are free of charge to youth. ACT also works to enhance community awareness of teen issues. Fifteen youth participated in ACT's Adopt-A-Highway program and 939 youth benefitted from school presentations throughout the county. From September 1, 1997 through August 31, 1998, 1,097 youth received services from ACT. Services offered include:

- ❖ **Youth Workers:** Two Youth Workers (one for males, one for females) provide short-term (6 months) case management to teens at risk of sexual promiscuity/pregnancy due to peer influence or negative behaviors. One-on-one, age appropriate, education/training is given to teens (10-16 years old) on how to make informed decisions and to accept the subsequent consequences of their decisions and actions. Concentration is placed on abstinence through the development of positive self-image, confidence, independent thought and conflict resolution skills necessary to make healthy choices. Youth advocacy is provided as a means of support. From Sept. 1, 1997 through Aug. 31, 1998, 27 females and 26 males received case management services.
- ❖ **Referrals:** Participants' needs are assessed and met comprehensively through appropriate services via information and/or referrals.

- ❖ **Group Programming:** Provides healthy relationship education in a non-threatening, non-instructional informal setting using community awareness, activities, socialization and recreational opportunities. Groups include after school clubs in the Medina and Holley middle schools, Baby Think It Over (from 9/1/97 through 8/31/98, 8 females participated), and Male Responsibility (24 males participated).
- ❖ **Summer Programming:** Includes Camp Achieve, a horse camp for teens 13-16 years old (in Summer 1998, 16 youth participated), a healthy relationships program called Youth Experience for youth 10-13 years old (12 youth participated in Summer 1998), and a Reunion Day for all past participants (11 youth attended).

## Project Even Start

Project Even Start is funded by the New York State Education Department. Even Start helps break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy by improving the educational opportunities of families most in need. It does this through partnerships with the Albion Central School District and the Orleans Community Action Committee Head Start Program. *Services are only available to families residing in the Albion School District.* The family: must have at least one child between the ages of 0-8 years; must have at least one adult in the family who (a) has not graduated from high school, or (b) has graduated but has literacy levels below the 8<sup>th</sup> grade; and must meet income guidelines (Head Start guidelines or Free/Reduced Lunch Income Guidelines) upon enrollment. Most referrals come through (a) the school district (particularly at kindergarten registration); (b) Head Start, Rainbow and Orleans Agri-Business Preschool Programs; and (c) the Department of Social Services and through self-referral. From September 1, 1997 through August 30, 1998, Even Start served 50 families with a total of 105 children. Many other families are seen throughout the year, but may be found ineligible or they refuse service. Those families found ineligible are referred to other services.

Even Start offers an Adult Education Component designed to help parents increase their educational opportunities. As a part of that component, all parents participate in home visits with their children. While the adults attend the component, the children are also involved in educational readiness or assistance programs that are explained below. The Adult Education Component includes:

- ❖ **Adult Education Program:** Even Start participants are prioritized for inclusion in the Albion Central School District Adult Education Program. This program is specifically designed to include family literacy programming (parenting, life skills, etc.).
- ❖ **BOCES:** Adults may be referred to GRASP, an at home GED program facilitated through BOCES with Even Start home education liaisons as the contact person. Adults may also be referred to “Changing Directions/Action for Personal Choice,” a BOCES sponsored program leading towards GED completion.
- ❖ **Literacy Volunteers:** Adults may be referred to the Literacy Volunteer program and meet with a volunteer at least two hours a week.
- ❖ **Teen Parents:** Teen parents may continue their regular education program through the school district.
- ❖ **Parenting Education Component:** All parents participate in at least one parenting education activity. Activities include: Parent Education Group (ten weeks of 90 minute sessions focusing on topics chosen by the group), Home Based Education (individual parenting goals worked on), Adult Education Program (parenting skills such as budgeting, early childhood education, and effective discipline are integrated into the education program), and individual workshops presented throughout the year.

While parents are involved in adult education through Even Start, their children are involved in preschool and school-age programming to increase their readiness for school and enrich their school experience. Even Start’s Early Childhood Education Component includes:

- ❖ **Preschool:** Children are referred to age/developmentally appropriate preschool programs, including Head Start, Rainbow Preschool (for children with special needs, can be home-based or center-based), Orleans Agri-Business Child Development (Migrant Head Start), and Even Start Child Care with education component.
- ❖ **After School Kindergarten (ASK) Program:** This enrichment program focuses on social and academic skills, making the transition to the primary grades easier. Focusing on exposure to early childhood activities and cooperative learning, this program enhances children’s first exposure to school.

- ❖ **First and Second Grade:** Children between the ages of six and eight can be provided with a teacher aide in a regular classroom setting.
- ❖ **Home-Based:** All families in the above programs participate in home visits for supplemental programming. Many birth-to-three-year-olds utilize home based programming as their primary early education program. These home visits combine the Early Childhood Education Program with Parenting and Adult Education (see above).
- ❖ **Computer PACT:** Funded by Even Start, this Parent and Child Activity program is offered once a week to all families.
- ❖ **Community Schools After School Program:** Funded by Community Schools, the “Even Start Club” is offered to second grade Even Start participants. This literacy program focuses on the fun of reading. A certified teacher provides one hour programming once a week.
- ❖ **Summer Enrichment Program:** The Even Start summer program runs six weeks, three days a week, three hours a day. Non-school age children are in child care while their parents attend GED and their siblings attend school-age programming (Pre-K through fourth grade).

## Genesee-Orleans Ministry of Concern

The Ministry of Concern grew out of the Migrant Ministry committees of the churches in Orleans and Genesee Counties in the 1950s, a time when the seasonal migration of farm workers to the area was high. As migrants settled in the area, they faced new problems, including discrimination in jobs and housing. To meet their year-round needs the committees formed the Genesee-Orleans Ministry of Concern. Current funding comes from church denominations and groups, organizations and other “friends” throughout Genesee and Orleans Counties, Western New York and the Eastern United States.

The Genesee-Orleans Ministry of Concern (GOMOC) is known as the “agency of last resort” because it works with people who have nowhere else to go. The services provided by GOMOC are available to residents of Genesee and Orleans Counties. For 1996 (the most recent

year numbers were available) a total of 3,039 Orleans residents were served by GOMOC. The Ministry does not keep numbers served by program for most of its services. GOMOC provides services, advocacy and networking in a number of areas:

- ❖ **Tenant Certification Program:** This program is designed to improve landlord-tenant relations, tenant apartment care, and landlord relations with neighbors. GOMOC sponsors a certification meeting that covers tenant responsibility, unlicensed cars, housekeeping, trash and debris, recycling, basic maintenance, neighborhood awareness, and drugs. Tenants have a cash incentive (\$50.00 after three months occupancy) to complete the program, meet all terms of their lease, and maintain the property.
- ❖ **Just Friends:** Just Friends recruits volunteers and pairs them with a child needing friendship and guidance. Volunteers are asked to spend three hours a week sharing activities with a child who would not otherwise receive attention from an adult role model. Although many of the children served are from Albion and Medina, the program does have children throughout Orleans County. At the present time there is a total of 26 children paired with adult volunteers, 12 boys and 14 girls. As with programs of this type elsewhere, it is easier to find female volunteers. The present waiting list has 34 children, 20 of whom are boys and 14 are girls.
- ❖ **Overnight Shelter:** GOMOC helps find overnight emergency shelter for any adult or family who cannot access the Department of Social Services until the next day.
- ❖ **Utilities:** GOMOC tries to find funding for those who need one-time assistance with utility bills.
- ❖ **Prescriptions:** GOMOC maintains a fund to help people in poverty who need emergency medical prescriptions that are not covered by insurance.
- ❖ **Jail Visitation/Bail:** GOMOC will connect clients with bail bondsmen and will help poor families arrange visitation with incarcerated family members.
- ❖ **Furniture Distribution:** GOMOC matches used furniture donations with requests and maintains a group of volunteers who will pick up from donors and relay to recipients.



## The Arc of Orleans County

The Arc of Orleans County offers support, advocacy and a variety of services and opportunities for individuals with disabilities and their families to pursue their desired quality of life. It is one of 51 chapters of New York State Arc (NYSARC) which is a voluntary non-profit agency serving people with developmental disabilities. It was started in Orleans County in 1970 by a group of parents of children suffering from mental retardation. At the present time the governing board includes 50 percent parents. Although the Arc's primary site is in Albion, it provides services in homes, educational sites, employment sites, and community living sites throughout the county. The Arc offers a wide variety of services to children and adults with disabilities, including:

- ❖ **Rainbow Preschool:** Provides educational and support services for children with disabilities, ages birth to five, and their families. The preschool provides a center-based classroom program that includes activities focused on improvement of speech, language skills, gross and fine motor skills, self-help and feeding skills, socialization and cognitive skills. The preschool is also open to "Nursery School Friends," children from the community who do not have a disability and attend Rainbow Preschool for a small tuition fee. The "Nursery Friend" (the non-disabled child) models appropriate social, language, play, cognitive, motor and self-help skills for those preschool children with special needs. The center-based preschool served 72 children during 1997. Rainbow also provides instructional and support services, including Speech, Physical or Occupational Therapy, and Assistive Technology Services to children out in the community, and served 85 children during 1997. Services are provided in the home, day care, nursery school or at the Head Start facility.
- ❖ **Vocational Services:** Serves adults in vocational and day programs. *Orleans Enterprises* serves individuals through Vocational Assessments, Personal Adjustment Training, Long Term Sheltered Employment, and transportation to and from work when needed. *Auto Detail* provides professional auto cleaning services to individuals and businesses. *Day Habilitation* provides full and part-time volunteer, recreational, social and educational activities. *Supported Work* provides intensive job training and follow-along, and provides rides for consumers to Supported Work sites. *Mobile Crews* provide professional cleaning services to area businesses and agencies. A total of 234 individuals were served in vocational and day programs during 1997.

- ❖ **Family Support Services:** Provides service and support to families and individuals throughout the community through several programs. *Service Coordination–Adult* provides service coordination which helped 116 adults to live and participate in the community according to their personal goals, preferences and needs during 1997. *Service Coordination–Children* provides service coordination to children 18 years and under, including Early Intervention, case management, and linkage and referral to appropriate resources/agencies depending upon identified needs. During 1997, Early Intervention served 26 children, 16 children received case management services, and eight children received Medical Waiver Service Coordination. *Family Reimbursement* helps families struggling with the extra expenses of caring for an individual with a developmental disability, to purchase one time services and items they need. Funds from the Family Reimbursement Grant were distributed to 45 individuals and families to meet a variety of needs (1997). The *Empowering Families* grant enables The Arc to form a parent-to-parent advocacy network, including information and training sessions. During 1997, advocacy was provided to 66 individuals and information and referral services were provided to assist 128 more families. Three Special Education Advocacy trainings were conducted during the year (with a total of 32 individuals attending), and a total of seven information and trainings sessions were conducted during the year (with a total of 69 individuals attending). The *Family Care Program* is a cost effective alternative to residential placement that provides an individual with a developmental disability the opportunity to learn skills which increase their independence in a loving, family-like setting. Eight Family Care beds continued to be certified during 1997, with seven individuals continuing their enrollment in the program. *Recreation* programs help individuals with developmental disabilities work on social skills while giving their families a much needed break from care giving. During 1997, recreational opportunities were provided for 117 individuals. *Respite Care* allows families a break in providing primary care responsibilities by furnishing trained respite providers in their home. The Home Care Respite program had 16 families receiving 10 hours per month of free respite care, with another seven families having approved respite services through the Home and Community Based Waiver Program. *Camp Rainbow* offers summer day activities in a setting where children with and without disabilities have the opportunity to learn and play together. The Camp operated for five weeks during the summer of 1997 and 41 children attended.
  
- ❖ **Community Living Services:** Three programs provide community-based housing for individuals with developmental disabilities. The *Stork Street Residence* in Medina

provides 24-hour assistance to 12 adults, including social activities and developing living skills. *West Avenue* in Albion offers 24 hour supervised living to 12 adults with mental health issues. The *Supportive Apartment Program* provides up to 21 hours per week of support to 18 persons served. *Supported Parenting* provides both individualized and group support to 17 individual parents that have a disability, as well as teaching parenting skills and assisting parents in maintaining their children in their home. *Community Integration* provides supports to 17 single adults in their own homes, eight children/young adults living in their family home, and two individuals residing in an IRA located in Albion, tailored to meet the individual needs of people residing in the community.

## **Lake Plains Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)**

The Lake Plains YMCA is the only YMCA facility in Orleans County, located in Medina. The YMCA tries to develop self-esteem, teach values, support families, reflect the diversity of the community, promote leadership, build life skills, respond to demographic trends and social issues, develop cross-cutting programs, and collaborate internally and externally. As a mission-driven organization there is a lot of flexibility in the services they can provide. The YMCA does not deny services or participation in programs based on ability to pay. They offer scholarships for camp and other activities and actively seek scholarship participants. Because of its location at the western end of the county, it draws its participants primarily from Medina and Lyndonville. In addition to its own facility, it offers access to the Wise Middle School pool for swimming lessons and a swim team. It offers a variety of programs for children, families and other adults in Medina and the surrounding community, including:

- ❖ **Youth Recreation Programs:** The Lake Plains YMCA offers special programs in: gymnastics, dance, tumbling, swimming, basketball, baseball, soccer and floor hockey. There are currently 274 youth members of the YMCA and 303 unduplicated youth who participated in youth sports that include soccer, basketball, floor hockey and tee-ball.
- ❖ **Adult Fitness and Recreation Programs:** The YMCA offers a wide variety of facilities for adult recreation and fitness, including: a Nautilus Center, four stairclimbers, a rowing machine, exercise bicycles, two regulation basketball courts, two racquetball courts, free weights, universal, an aerobics room, a sauna, and three treadmills. It also offers aerobics classes and adult sports leagues.

- ❖ **After School Recreation Program:** Designed for ages five through twelve, this program operates from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. school days in three locations: the YMCA building (18 current participants), the Lyndonville elementary school (30 current participants), and the Medina elementary school (30 current participants). Activities include arts and crafts, exercise, games, roller-skating, swimming, and field trips.
- ❖ **School's Out Program/Holiday Program/Summer Day Camp:** This program is designed for ages three through twelve and operates on school holidays and vacations. The program is located at the YMCA and includes games, arts and crafts, music, snacks and group activities. During 1998, 97 youths participated in the summer day camp program.

### **Genesee/Orleans Council on Alcoholism & Substance Abuse (GCASA)**

GCASA has been operating alcoholism and substance abuse services in Genesee County for several years and last year submitted a proposal to provide those services in Orleans County. That proposal was accepted by the Orleans County Legislature and GCASA began operating programs in Orleans County on March 1, 1999. As of July 1, 1999, GCASA has 121 active and admitted clients. The majority of these individuals are in adult programming. The Adolescent Group has two individuals and the new MICA group has three individuals. The programming offered now or to be offered in the near future *within* Orleans County includes:

- ❖ **Adult and Adolescent Chemical Dependency:** Group and individual counseling provide education and support to change behaviors associated with alcohol and other drug use. Specialty groups are also available including Aggression Replacement Therapy (ART). GCASA will also be offering specialty groups for women and mentally ill chemically dependent (MICA) clients. GCASA will also work with the Orleans County Jail to provide a program within the jail facility.
- ❖ **Alcohol Crisis Center (ACC):** The ACC provides a safe setting and emotional support to persons under the influence of alcohol or other drugs. Assistance and referrals are provided for individuals and family members.

- ❖ **Children of Alcoholics Group:** Individual and group counseling are available for all ages eight to adult.
- ❖ **Family Program:** Individual and group counseling for family members with or without the chemical abuser receiving treatment.
- ❖ **Education Programs:** Prevention programs provide age-appropriate information for all target populations from the preschooler to the senior citizen.
- ❖ **Student Assistance Program:** The Student Assistance Program is a school-based prevention/intervention program designed to reduce the use of alcohol and other substances and provide support services to students and their families including assessments, counseling and referrals. *This service is just becoming available in the county at present, and GCASA will be offering it to all school districts in Orleans County.*
- ❖ **Employee Assistance Program (EAP):** EAP provides comprehensive services to organizations, employers, employees and their families. Services include assessments, technical assistance, counseling and referrals.

Several additional GCASA programs are located *only* in Genesee County, but will be available through referrals to Orleans County residents. Camp Hope is a residential summer camp for children whose lives have been affected by someone else's alcohol and other drug use. Camp Hope is for children ages 10-16. The Atwater Home Community Residence is a 16-bed residential treatment facility offering a safe, supportive environment for individuals in recovery. Residents continue with outpatient treatment, counseling, job training and education. The Supportive Living Program provides housing and support for adults in recovery. *GCASA will be assessing the need for providing supportive living apartments and/or a community residence within Orleans County.*

## **Liberty Increases Future Experiences (LIFE)**

The LIFE program serves only the *Medina Central School District* and the *Albion Central School District*. LIFE provides youth at risk of dropping out of school with the opportunities, resources and support to help them develop self-esteem, personal and academic goals, and the tools needed to meet life's challenges. The program provides a full-time casework facilitator in

each middle and high school in Medina and Albion to provide individual and group casework; serve as liaison between home and school; make home visits for parent meetings, information gathering and attendance concerns; make referrals to outside agencies and serve as liaison between the school and those agencies; and consult and collaborate with school personnel on specific cases. The program also provides paid and volunteer tutoring services and a mentoring component. The Summer Program meets daily for three hours throughout the summer and focuses on career development using guest speakers and field trips to local businesses and work sites, along with sports, crafts, and self-esteem building activities. The Enrichment Program exposes students to cultural, recreational, and educational experiences, including tours of college campuses, theater performances, sporting events, volunteering for Special Olympics, and a visit to the local BOCES. The LIFE Program served a total of 100 students during the period from July 1, 1997 through June 30, 1998, 61 in Albion and 39 in Medina.

## **Rural Opportunities Domestic Violence Program**

Rural Opportunities sponsors a domestic violence program based in a safe house in Orleans County. The program began in January of 1998 and served a total of 88 individuals during 1998. Of those 88 individuals, 39 were ages 14 and younger, while 49 were ages 15 and above. The program provides a safe living environment for domestic violence victims and their children, along with group and individual counseling to develop self-sufficiency and safety plans. The shelter has eight beds total, including women and their children. For example, one woman and her five children take up 6 beds, leaving only two beds for others. All clients are referred to mental health for domestic violence counseling. Referrals are also made to Legal Aid for Orders of Protection and temporary custody of children. Rural Opportunities has also worked on the Domestic Violence Task Force with the Department of Mental Health, Department of Social Services, District Attorney, and local law enforcement agencies to develop a protocol for handling domestic violence cases and educating the community about domestic violence.

## **Educational Opportunities Commission (EOC)**

The EOC began in 1985 with a federally-funded grant to help adults return to school in whatever capacity they need. One goal of the EOC is to increase the number of underrepresented individuals in college-level education. Underrepresented individuals include those whose family income is less than 150% of the federal poverty rate, and those for whom neither parent graduated from a four year college by the time the child was 19. However, anyone is eligible to receive help from the EOC. Most referrals come from WIC, Head Start, or self-referral.

The seven staff members provide a variety of services including career counseling, financial aid counseling, help with filling out application forms, and assessment of educational needs. The EOC is charged with helping people to pursue their educational goals. They are located on the campus of Genesee Community College, but the program helps people to further their education on campuses throughout the entire GLOW (Genesee, Livingston, Orleans, Wyoming counties) region. Approximately 1,300 clients are seen each year, and about half go on to enroll in college or some other post-secondary program. An additional 200-300 enroll in a GED program. EOC considers itself very accessible to the general population.

## **Regional Action Phone (RAP)**

Regional Action Phone, Inc. (RAP) provides a free, confidential, 24-hour hotline service for the residents of Genesee and Orleans Counties. There has been one phone line servicing Orleans County since 1994, and five phone lines service Genesee County. RAP started in 1972 when a group of volunteers determined there was a need for an evening hotline for drug and alcohol problems. The service expanded soon thereafter to all issues including suicide prevention. In 1986 the service went to a 24 hour hotline. There are 12-13 paid staff, of whom two are full-time. The annual budget is \$145,000, and sources of funding include the NYS Department of Mental Health, Genesee and Orleans Counties, and the United Way. The hotline receives approximately 30,000 calls per year, with the 1998 total for Orleans County being 2,454. The numbers are increasing, but that is a trend across the country.

Services include: crisis and suicide prevention, crisis and suicide intervention, information and referral to over 725 health and human services, and after hours linkage to staff from Mental Health and Rape Crisis. RAP also serves as an emergency clearing house and linkage to after hours emergency food and shelter. Crisis intervention is the most prevalent service needed by callers to RAP, and involves developing strategies with the callers to help them in coping with their problems.

## **Catholic Charities**

Catholic Charities primarily provides counseling services to children, adults, and families in the community. There is a family or group counseling focus, instead of an individual focus whenever possible. The counseling is not mental health focused, but rather places an emphasis on education about the issues of interest. At times Catholic Charities offers support groups for women, for people with depression, or with a self-esteem focus, but those are not currently

ongoing. There are charges for the counseling services on a sliding scale basis. Other programs offered include:

- ❖ **Financial Assistance:** Catholic Charities provides some financial assistance to persons in need. This includes food assistance, money for small material needs such as special shoes for work, and some prescription medicine assistance. However, the monetary limit for the three counties served (Genesee, Orleans, and Wyoming) is \$20,000.
- ❖ **Man-to-Man:** This program is part of a community response to domestic violence, offering group education to men and providing tools to stop violent and abusive behavior. Referrals are accepted through the criminal justice system. Sliding fee scale based on income. *This program is available in Genesee County. Orleans County residents can access it by referral.*

## **Rochester Legal Aid Society–Youth Advocate Program**

The Legal Aid Society has a 1/4 FTE working in Genesee County and a 1/4 FTE working in Orleans County. Funding is from the NYS Office of Child and Family Services and from the Genesee/Orleans Youth Bureau. The “Youth Advocacy” program is available to children from birth to age 21. The goal of the program is to assist youth who have difficulties in educational settings to become more successful in school. Technical assistance and information is provided regarding service providers and the rights and responsibilities of youth and families.

There are several types of problems with which the Youth Advocacy program can help. The first is a situation in which a child has trouble registering for school because he or she lives with someone other than a parent or legal guardian, and this places the child in a different school district. From the school’s point of view, the child is a resident of the district where the parent or legal guardian resides. This situation arises mostly with youth aged 16 and older who are legally allowed to leave home.

A second situation occurs when a child is in school but is alleged to have committed misconduct, and the school superintendent wants to suspend the child for more than five days. A hearing is held, and Legal Aid is available to help the child and the child’s family through the process. The Legal Aid advocate assures due process, provides fact-finding help, and general advice. If the procedure moves beyond a school hearing and into a family or criminal court hearing, then Legal Aid can no longer help because the advocate is not an attorney.



A third area in which Legal Aid intervenes is when a student is suspected of or identified as being disabled. The issue is brought to the attention of the Committee on Special Education (CSE). This multi-disciplinary team does an evaluation, meets with the parents and the Legal Aid advocate (at the parents' request), and decides on an appropriate course of action. This is the area in which the Legal Aid advocate does the most work in Genesee and Orleans Counties. In 1998, 124 youth were served in the two counties.

## **G.L.O.W. Family Support Services**

The G.L.O.W. Family Support Program is a collaborative effort between the Genesee, Livingston, Orleans, and Wyoming County Departments of Mental Health and Hillside Children's Center. Services are available to any family residing in a G.L.O.W. county who has a child with emotional or behavioral problems. The program sponsors parent-facilitated support groups that provide understanding, support, education and ideas to parents. Groups regularly address such issues as acceptance, behavior management, grieving, school, stress, and taking care of oneself. Participating families also have access to respite care provided by specially trained individuals. From January through May of 1999, Family Support has had 12 referrals and served 26 families with a total of 32 children.

## **Orleans County Cooperative Extension**

Cornell Cooperative Extension is a community-based, not-for-profit, educational organization created by New York State Law. Their mission is to improve the lives of people and communities through partnerships that put experience and research knowledge to work. The organization is governed by an elected, volunteer board of directors. The Orleans County Legislature, New York State and the federal government provide financial support for Extension through annual appropriations supplemented with grants, contracts, program and user fees, and contributions. The Orleans County Cooperative Extension is going through a period of change, growth and development. A new director, the only paid staff member at the present time, was recently hired and as of this writing had only been on the job for five weeks. No data about program usage are available at this time.

At the present time, several programs are offered including the following:

- ❖ **Youth Development:** The Extension's goal is to help youth to build character through improving youth leadership skills, developing a sense of responsibility, improving their

life skills, learning to set priorities, and thinking things through. It does this through its 4H program. 4H helps youth through project in dairy science, livestock raising, horticulture, nutrition/food science, personal health, agricultural business management, human development, and natural resources management. The Extension also sponsors a local 4H fair which is open to the community and fun for all, as well as showcasing a wide variety of youth 4H projects. It also sponsors the yearly clothing review/fashion show, again showcasing the talents of local youth. Both are also used as teaching tools for personal responsibility and leadership.

- ❖ **Adult Agriculture Programs:** The Extension also provides programming in both commercial and consumer agriculture. The commercial agriculture programs include the skills related to the production of both food and fiber, including safe pesticide use, crop management, and business management. Consumer agriculture programs include backyard and residential property maintenance and gardening.

The Extension's vision of the future includes hiring 1½ 4H educators, 1½ agricultural educators, and developing area teams that will provide technical support to local farmers. The Extension would also like to develop programs that would help target the natural resources available in Orleans County. Before development of any further programming happens, the Extension will be working to identify the areas of need in the county that can be addressed by Extension activities.

## **Literacy Volunteers of America–Orleans County, Inc. (LVA-OC)**

This local Literacy Volunteers of America affiliate was established in 1974 as a result of a growing concern over the rate of countywide illiteracy. The program has three paid staff members, including the director. It also has about 80 volunteer tutors, as well as a number of volunteers who fill other positions such as librarian, resource manager, office worker, newsletter staff, and others. Each volunteer must attend 30 hours of training over ten weeks to become a one-on-one literacy tutor. Although the program maintains a roster of about 80 tutors, the number of *available* tutors may fluctuate due to vacations, family responsibilities, or seniors spending their winters in warmer climates. At the present time, there are 25 matches between tutors and students. The waiting list fluctuates between five and 20 potential students during the year and it takes about three months to match a potential student with a volunteer. Although students range in age from teens through senior citizens, the average student is 40-60 years old. Once a student is matched with a tutor, they meet for about one to two hours per week. The

program gets referrals from almost every human services agency in the county, although the primary referrals come from Job Development/JTPA programs and Probation. Often students recommend the program to their friends as well. All programs are free of charge.

Literacy Volunteers operates several literacy programs, including:

- ❖ **Basic Literacy:** This program provides tutoring for native English speakers. It can be used for the completely non-literate to those needing help with comprehension or spelling. All methods are considered, including phonics and whole language. This is the original program formed by Literacy Volunteers.
- ❖ **English for Speakers of Other Languages (E.S.O.L.):** This program provides tutoring to non-native English speakers. Survival terms, telephone usage, how to shop, and asking and giving directions are part of the curriculum.
- ❖ **Family Literacy:** Family Literacy was established in response to requests from LVA-OC clients wanting to help their children with homework and read to their children. The tutoring sessions usually revolve around children's books and nursery rhymes. Using a version of "trickle-down theory," adults are taught either one-to-one or in small groups, then encouraged to use their newly found skills at home, thereby breaking a cycle of inter-generational illiteracy.
- ❖ **Ch.A.P.T.E.R. (Children And Parents Together Enjoying Reading):** Created from a grant through the New York Foundation as a result of the growing rate of births to teen parents, the teen parent focus uses a direct child/direct parent approach in a large group setting. These parents traditionally come from homes whose parents lacked or didn't practice good parenting skills and hosted multi-generational illiteracy. This program is designed to assist parent literacy, modeling and child/parent skills.
- ❖ **Workplace Literacy:** This program is designed for those who are currently employed. Skills for the current job are taught with client goals ranging from job promotion to better employment (and/or wages) elsewhere. An occupational literacy component is incorporated in this program. It was established with grants from the Wendt Foundation and Rochester Area Community Foundation in response to a countywide cry for better educated employees.

- ❖ **U-WAVE (Unionized Workplace Accelerated Vocational Education):** Created through a grant from the N.Y. State Education Department for unionized employees, this program uses class settings in the workplace.
- ❖ **Pre-G.E.D.:** This program is for those clients who have finished with the Basic Literacy program, or are coming from a G.E.D. class, who are not ready for the G.E.D. classes, or who need a one-to-one or small group tutoring atmosphere.
- ❖ **Computer Literacy:** Everything from basic skills (i.e., turning the computer on, using the mouse and keyboarding) to higher skills are taught through one-to-one, small group, or class settings. Although computer literacy is offered as a stand-alone class, computer literacy and skill-building is also offered to persons involved in any of the other literacy programs offered.

LVA-OC is presently researching an expansion of services. It would like to develop a learning disabilities center in Orleans County and is likely to collaborate with other human services agencies to do so.

**APPENDIX 1**

**SEARCH INSTITUTE**  
**40 DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS**



# 40 Developmental Assets

Search Institute has identified the following building blocks of healthy development that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.

CATEGORY		ASSET NAME AND DEFINITION
External Assets	<b>Support</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Family support</b>—Family life provides high levels of love and support.</li> <li>2. <b>Positive family communication</b>—Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parent(s).</li> <li>3. <b>Other adult relationships</b>—Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults.</li> <li>4. <b>Caring neighborhood</b>—Young person experiences caring neighbors.</li> <li>5. <b>Caring school climate</b>—School provides a caring, encouraging environment.</li> <li>6. <b>Parent involvement in schooling</b>—Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.</li> </ol>
	<b>Empowerment</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. <b>Community values youth</b>—Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.</li> <li>8. <b>Youth as resources</b>—Young people are given useful roles in the community.</li> <li>9. <b>Service to others</b>—Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.</li> <li>10. <b>Safety</b>—Young person feels safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood.</li> </ol>
	<b>Boundaries &amp; Expectations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. <b>Family boundaries</b>—Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts.</li> <li>12. <b>School boundaries</b>—School provides clear rules and consequences.</li> <li>13. <b>Neighborhood boundaries</b>—Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.</li> <li>14. <b>Adult role models</b>—Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.</li> <li>15. <b>Positive peer influence</b>—Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.</li> <li>16. <b>High expectations</b>—Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.</li> </ol>
	<b>Constructive Use of Time</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>17. <b>Creative activities</b>—Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.</li> <li>18. <b>Youth programs</b>—Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community.</li> <li>19. <b>Religious community</b>—Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution.</li> <li>20. <b>Time at home</b>—Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.</li> </ol>
Internal Assets	<b>Commitment to Learning</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>21. <b>Achievement motivation</b>—Young person is motivated to do well in school.</li> <li>22. <b>School engagement</b>—Young person is actively engaged in learning.</li> <li>23. <b>Homework</b>—Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.</li> <li>24. <b>Bonding to school</b>—Young person cares about her or his school.</li> <li>25. <b>Reading for pleasure</b>—Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.</li> </ol>
	<b>Positive Values</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>26. <b>Caring</b>—Young person places high value on helping other people.</li> <li>27. <b>Equality and social justice</b>—Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.</li> <li>28. <b>Integrity</b>—Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.</li> <li>29. <b>Honesty</b>—Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy."</li> <li>30. <b>Responsibility</b>—Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.</li> <li>31. <b>Restraint</b>—Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.</li> </ol>
	<b>Social Competencies</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>32. <b>Planning and decision making</b>—Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.</li> <li>33. <b>Interpersonal competence</b>—Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.</li> <li>34. <b>Cultural competence</b>—Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.</li> <li>35. <b>Resistance skills</b>—Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.</li> <li>36. <b>Peaceful conflict resolution</b>—Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.</li> </ol>
	<b>Positive Identity</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>37. <b>Personal power</b>—Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me."</li> <li>38. <b>Self-esteem</b>—Young person reports having a high self-esteem.</li> <li>39. <b>Sense of purpose</b>—Young person reports that "my life has a purpose."</li> <li>40. <b>Positive view of personal future</b>—Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.</li> </ol>