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2009 Community Assessment Update

Head Start Child and Family Services, Inc.

Compiled by: Ronna Davis, LSW

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF SERVICE AREAS

According to the 2000 census, the population of Fort Smith is 80,268. The estimated population in July of 2002 was 81,519, a growth rate of 1.6%. The population density is 1,594 people per square mile.

The racial makeup of Fort Smith is as follows: White 77%, African American 8.65%, Native American 1.69%, Asian 4.59%, Pacific Islander 0.01%, and Hispanic 8.78% (2000 Census).

According to the 2000 Census, the total population of Van Buren is 18,986. The estimated population for 2002 was, 19,777, a 4.2% increase. The largest ethnic group in Van Buren is White / Non-Hispanic which makes up 87.4% of the population. African Americans make up 1.6%, Hispanics 2.3%, American Indians 2.0%, and Asians 2.8% of the population (2000 Census).

SOCIOECONOMIC DATA OF SERVICE AREAS

Industries providing employment include: Manufacturing 14.1%, Educational, health and social services 19.9%, and Retail trade 11.7%. Of the Fort Smith population, 3.7% is unemployed (2000 Census). Fort Smith contains over 300 industries. Top employers include Whirlpool Industries (4,300 employees), Sparks Health System (2,369 employees), St. Edward Mercy Medical Center (1,876 employees), Baldor Electric Company (1,780 employees), and Rheem Manufacturing Company (1,612 employees), (www.fschamber.com). The median household income for families living in Fort Smith is \$41,012 (2000 Census).

Fort Smith's population, who are 25 years and over, is broken down by percentages according to their educational level. The information is as follows: high school graduates 28.5%, bachelor's degree 11.9%, and graduate or professional degree 6.7% (2000 Census).

Fort Smith has six high schools, four which are public and two which are private. There are twenty primary/middle schools in the city of Fort Smith. Ten primary/middle schools are public and ten are private.

Throughout Van Buren, 32.3% of the population has a high school diploma, 8% has a bachelor's degree and 4% has a graduate or professional degree. The city of Van Buren has six elementary schools, two middle schools, two junior high schools, and one high school. The University of Arkansas at Fort Smith is located 19 miles from Van Buren. The main campus for the University of Arkansas is located 44 miles away from Van Buren in Fayetteville.

The Van Buren region has a diverse employment base, particularly in manufacturing which accounts for 27.7% of jobs. Retail trade accounts for 13.7% and educational, health and social services account for 17.3% of the jobs in Van Buren.

The largest industries in the Van Buren area include, Tyson Foods Inc. (950 employees), Van Buren School District (750 employees), and Simmons Inc. (720 employees). Over the past few years the city of Van Buren has had an average unemployment rate of 4.4%.

NEED FOR ASSISTANCE

In Arkansas, 51,810 of the 563,090 women of childbearing age become pregnant each year. 73% of these pregnancies result in live births, 11% result in abortions, and the remainder in miscarriage. Of the 8,980 teenage pregnancies each year in Arkansas, 71% result in live births and 13% result in abortions. In Arkansas, 18% of women aged 15-44 have incomes below the federal poverty level, and 25% of all women in this age-group are uninsured (i.e. do not have private health insurance or Medicaid coverage). Only 13% of women aged 13-44 are enrolled in Medicaid.

There are three birthing centers in the Crawford and Sebastian County Service Area: St. Edward Mercy Medical Center, Sparks Medical Center and Summit Medical Center. In January 2008, 297 children were born and 85% of those families are Medicaid or ArKids 1st (state funded medical insurance program) recipients. Twenty percent (21%) of births in Crawford County and 31.4% in Sebastian County are to mothers with less than a 12th grade education. 8.4% of the births in Crawford County and 13.8% of the births in Sebastian County are to teens ages 10-17 years old.

After speaking with representatives from both Van Buren and Fort Smith School Districts, a determination was made that at the present time there are at least 35-40 pregnant teen mothers in each school district.

Arkansas has the highest teenage pregnancy rate of any state. According to studies, teen mothers are less likely to finish high school, obtain a college degree or make gains in their financial situation. Only about one third of teen mothers get a high school diploma. Eighty percent of teen mothers will find themselves depending on public aid at some time. The youngest of teen mothers will lose any chance at completing their own childhoods; all teen mothers will miss many of the opportunities their non-mother peers will have for psychological, social and economic development reasons.

Consequences for babies born to teen mothers are just as bad. Teen mothers are more likely to have low birth weight babies, leaving them at higher risk for several disorders and for infant death. Teen mothers are less likely to have prenatal care or to receive adequate nutrition than older women. A report from the American Medical Association suggests that babies born to mothers who don't have regular prenatal care are four times more likely to die in their first year.

The Sebastian County Health Department reported in their FY 2008 Annual Report that, 7,969 mothers received WIC (Women, Infants and Children) services during the months of July 1, 2007 and June 30, 2008.

Fifteen percent (15%) of the population in Van Buren lives in poverty. Sixteen percent (16%) of the population in Fort Smith lives in poverty. According to the Arkansas KIDS COUNT Data Center, 221 children were born in 2006 in Crawford County and 234 in Sebastian County to teens ages 10-17. These families all live substantially under the federal poverty guidelines.

In 2005, an American Community Survey was conducted by the US Census Bureau. It stated that 22% of the children (1,370) in the Van Buren School District live in poverty. Forty percent (40%) of

the children, 0-3 years old in Crawford and Sebastian County are on Medicaid or ArKids 1st (state funded medical insurance program).

The Head Start Child and Family Services, Inc. 2008 Community Assessment states that there are currently ten child care centers in the Crawford County service area. These child care centers serve a total of 294 infant and toddler age children. Five of those centers, which serve 138 infant and toddler children, accept voucher assistance from the local Department of Human Services.

In Sebastian County, there are 29 child care centers, which serve a total of 537 infant and toddler age children. Fifteen of those centers, which serve a total of 209 infant and toddler children, accept voucher assistance from the local Department of Human Services.

According to the local Department of Human Services, waiting lists for vouchers are extremely long. Due to federal funding constraints with the Child Care Development Funds, effective July 2008, the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education implemented changes that raised the income eligibility for child care vouchers. Income eligibility was returned to 60% of the State Median Income (SMI), (i.e. \$29,000 for a family of four). Households above 40% of SMI were assessed a co-pay for child care based on sliding scale fee.

This change had a huge effect on the communities of Crawford and Sebastian Counties. A new population of families was created who needed child care more desperately than they ever had before. Families, who were qualified for vouchers before, do not qualify now because the income eligibility was raised.

According to surveys taken from Head Start parents, residents, and community organizations, the needs identified in regards to education are as follows: more job training, safety/condition of schools, improved schools and educational services, illiteracy and funding for college.

Many individuals surveyed, identified the need for themselves and their spouses to continue and complete college. Many stated that finances, time, and quality child care were not available for them to continue their college careers.

In the 2008 Head Start Child and Family Services, Inc. Community Needs Assessment, one of the greatest needs in the community was affordable childcare. Many of the Head Start families and Head Start eligible families surveyed stated that full time work was needed but they were hindered from attaining it based on the lack of quality full time child care available.

Since 2000, the number of people employed in Arkansas increased. During this time the unemployment rate ranged between 4.2% and 5.8%. In Arkansas 33.8% of total employment was in the Services Industry in 2005. The average annual wage in this segment was \$28,319. Government, Trade and Manufacturing make up another 42.7% of those employed with an average wage of \$40,155. Per capita personal income for Crawford County was \$22,590. This was 77.4% of the US per capita personal income; however, in 2000 Crawford County's percentage of the US was only 73.7%.

According to the local Unemployment Agency, in the Van Buren, Crawford County area, the unemployment rate is growing. The growth is due to the ever worsening economy as well as the lack of child care for working families. An Unemployment Agency Representative stated, "Extended hours of childcare for working families will enable parents to work longer hours and contribute more to their family's income".

In the Van Buren, Crawford County service area, there are 10, 742 people who live below the federal poverty guidelines. Eight hundred and ninety two of those families have children that are three and four years old. According to the latest census data from Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families, there are 1,576 three and four year old children in the Van Buren, Crawford County, service area. Five hundred and fifty two of those children do not have a father living in the home.

Only 42.1% (375) of those families have enrolled their children in a preschool/ pre-kindergarten program. A total of 21.9% of children, ages 3-4, in Crawford County, are living in poverty. There are a total of 345 three and four year old children in Crawford County who have been identified as children living under the poverty level (2007 US KIDSCOUNT Data Center Census Bureau Estimates).

Public school enrollment continues to grow steadily at a rate of 0.2% over 10 years. The number of students eligible for reduced and free lunches in Crawford County has increased steadily since 2000 to 2006 by 24.3%.

According to the Department of Health and Human Services, there are 18.3 children, ages 3-5, per preschool slot in Licensed Child Care Facilities which meet Quality Approved Standards.

In the Crawford County Service Area, there are 31 preschool sites, 28 of those sites care for Preschool age children. All 28 of those sites are licensed, and eight are quality approved. Four quality approved centers are funded by Head Start and administered by Head Start Child and Family Services, Inc. The other four quality approved preschool centers are ABC (Arkansas Better Chance) centers. Eighteen centers in the Crawford County area accept Child Care Vouchers from the Department of Health and Human Services, twelve of which are located in Van Buren.

According to recent Community Assessment data gathered by Head Start Child and Family Services Inc., 925 licensed slots are available for preschool age children. Eight hundred and twelve slots are available through the voucher program. Two hundred and sixty two slots are available free to families if they fall under appropriate federal guidelines (i.e. Head Start, ABC (Arkansas Better Chance)).

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This change had a huge effect on the community of Crawford County; creating a new population of families who needed child care more desperately than they ever had before. Families, who were qualified for vouchers before, do not qualify now because the income eligibility was raised.