

Sweetwater County Community Assessment 2011

Sweetwater County School District #1 Head Start



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Sweetwater County School District #1 Head Start Community Assessment of Sweetwater County 2011

An assessment of the needs of Sweetwater County was conducted between November 2010 and January 2011. Data was collected from a variety of sources including a survey of Head Start parents, community organizations, and childcare providers as well as internet searches for local demographic and economic trends/analyses.

Economy

Historically, Sweetwater County, as well as other mineral, gas and oil rich counties in our State, experiences cycles of economic “boom and bust”. The recent “boom” was predicted to last as long as 20 years. However, that prediction has proved to be extremely optimistic as the county economy is already cycling down to “bust”. Several oil and gas exploration companies have moved on to other locations within the State and region.

Many actual (non-transient) residents of our communities have had to follow the oil and gas exploration companies to retain their employment. That sometimes requires the entire family to move, but more frequently the worker lives away from the family for weeks at a time. Though these types of commutes are economically necessary, the lifestyle puts a strain on relationships with spouses and children.

The relocation of the transient workers has adversely affected our local economy. Local retailers, landlords, and other businesses are no doubt feeling the loss of income. SWEDA, the Sweetwater Economic Development Association, is updating the economic trends for Sweetwater County, however that data was not available at the publishing of this document.

The two most stable contributors to the Sweetwater County economy include trona/soda ash production (63 years) and coal mining (140 years). More than 2,000 workers are employed in the local mining industries. Approximately 4,000 (the majority are from outside our state) people worked in oil and gas industry. *[Source: U.S. Census Bureau]*

Please see ***Employment*** on page 11 for information about the impact of our economic downturn.

Poverty & Demographics

The 2010 U.S. Census states that the Sweetwater County population is 43,806 individuals. Of those, 4,182 people live in outlying towns or Census Data Populations (CDP) not served by our program. Therefore, our calculations will be based on a net population of 39,624, as appropriate and reasonable.

General Population

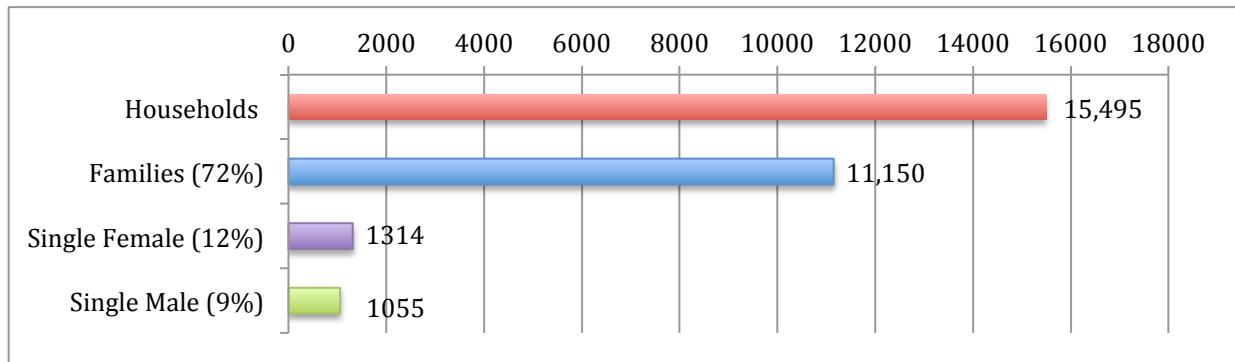
Income

In 2009, income levels dropped **below the poverty level** in an estimated 6% (669) of all families in Sweetwater County. Approximately 29% (381) of the households headed by a single female had income below the poverty level. Free (1,475) and reduced cost (446) lunches are provided to 37.8% of the 5,085 students enrolled in Sweetwater County School District Number One.

Approximately 5.8% of families living in poverty have children **under the age of five**. This percentage represents approximately 298 children. It is unknown how many of those children are three and four year olds. The racial breakdown of those child is listed in approximate numbers as: White, 264; Black, 3; American Indian or Alaskan Native, 3; Asian, 2; Native Hawaiian & other Pacific Islander, has a “value greater than zero but less than half unit of measure shown”; two or more races, 7. The ethnicities are: Hispanic or Latino, 46; White, not Hispanic, 241. Some persons choose to not indicate their race or ethnicity.

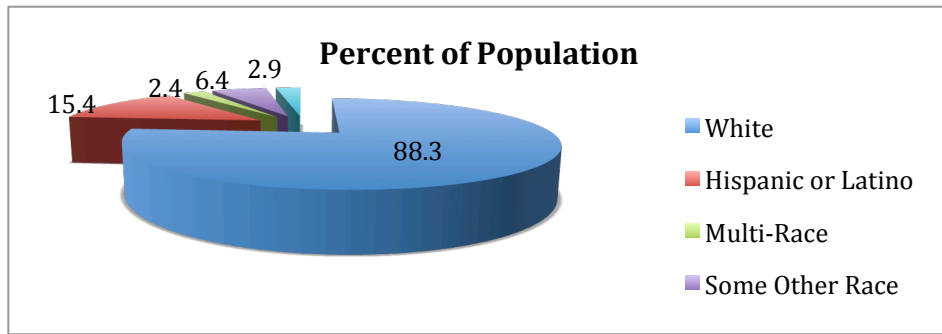
The majority of community organizations surveyed have seen an increase in the number of low-income individuals seeking their services. Multi-generational families seem to account for the increase. The organizations have **not** seen an increase in numbers of individuals who are only slightly over-income. Our Head Start program receives applications from approximately three *slightly* over-income families each year. We have many more who are significantly over income.

Households and Families



Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2009 Estimates

Population by Race

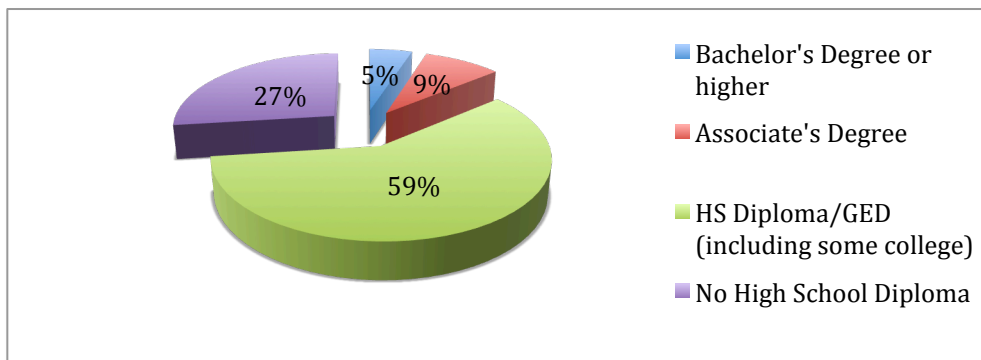


The category “All Other” includes 1.1% Black/African American; and <1% each American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian. *Source: U.S. Census 2010*

Education

According to the Corona Insights 2009 Community Assessment, “When examining the overall population in poverty, those without high school diplomas do not comprise the majority. In fact, nearly 70 percent of the adults living in poverty in the county have a high school diploma or higher. Therefore, a minimal attainment of a high school diploma is not sufficient to eliminate poverty for the majority of the poor in the county. In contrast, having a college degree cuts the likelihood of living in poverty in half compared even to those who hold a high school diploma or GED, and people with degrees are a small minority of people living in poverty. These data are presented in Exhibit 4-6.”

EXHIBIT 4-6
 PEOPLE IN POVERTY BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL,
 SWEETWATER COUNTY ADULTS OVER AGE 25



Though people who speak English less well are more likely to be in poverty, Corona Insights found that the proportion of people with poor English skills is quite small, so it was deemed to not be a major problem in our county. Native English Speakers, those who speak English “very well”, and those who speak English “well” account for 95% of the population in poverty. *[Source: Corona Insights, Inc., 2009 Community Needs Assessment Low-Income Households in Sweetwater County, Wyoming]*

During fiscal year 2009/2010, 47 low-income individuals completed job-training programs and obtained skills/competencies required for employment. Another 1,052 enrolled in local programs to obtain their ABE/GED and 146 received their certificate or diploma during the year.

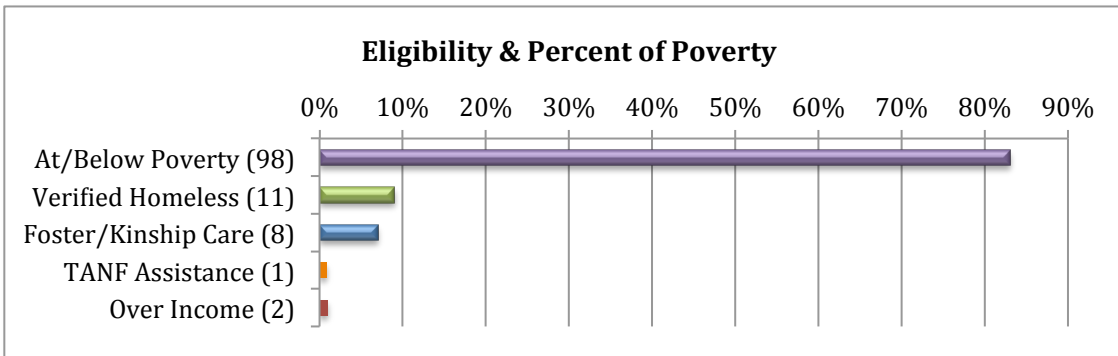
Programs serving low-income individuals report that three participants completed a post-secondary education program and obtained a certificate or diploma.

[Source: Sweetwater County Community Service Block Grant Provider National Priority Indicators Report FY 2010]

Head Start Families

Income

The income level of 83% of our currently enrolled families is at or below the Federal Poverty Guidelines.



The income levels of the two over income families are 102% and 144% of poverty. Over income families are selected only when all verified income eligible families have been selected.

Three Head Start children are being raised by their grandparents.

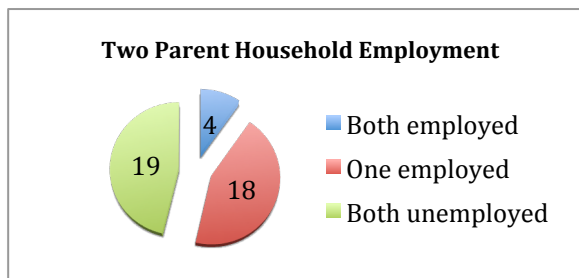
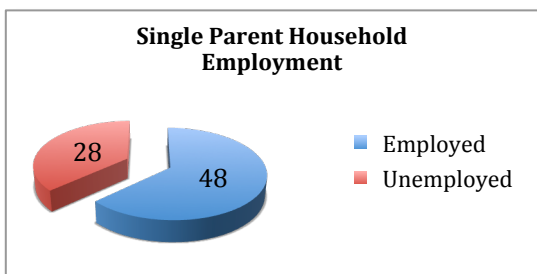
Children with Disabilities

Thirty-one (24% of all served this year) of our enrolled children have a diagnosed disability. Most of them receive all of their IEP services through CDC at Head Start.

Nine of our 42 parent survey respondents said their child receives developmental disability services and that they believe them to be appropriate and are provided in the appropriate location.

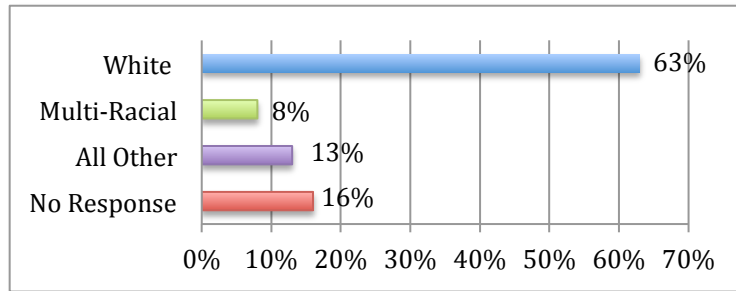
Households

Single parents head 76 of our Head Start households, and 44 of our families are two parent households.



Race

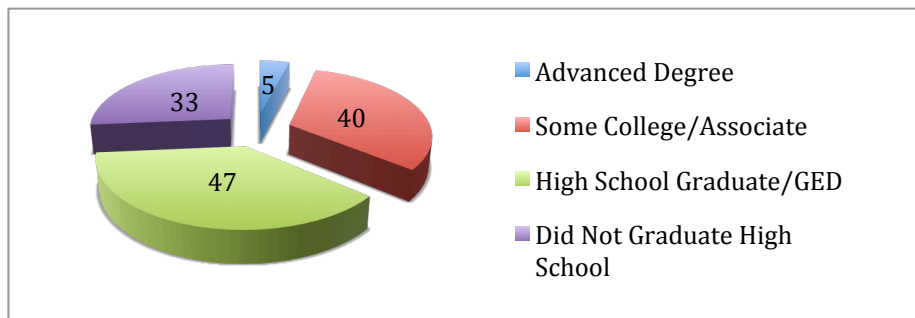
Spanish is the predominate language of 23% of our Head Start families. Two-thirds (67%) of our families identify their ethnic group as non-Hispanic and one third (33%) identify their family as Hispanic. Race was identified as follows:



The category “All Other” includes <1% each Black/African American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, and Asian; and just over 9% Other.

Education

Six of our parents are in school full or part-time. Education levels of our Head Start parents are varied:



Other Child Development & Childcare

For the past few years, there has been a lot of discussion in our community around the issue of available childcare. Based on those discussions, the subject has also been included in our annual grant applications. However, during Rock Springs and Green River City Council public meetings this past year, established to discuss the pros and cons of implementing a one-cent sales tax levy to Sweetwater non-food sales that would allow the Sweetwater County Child Developmental Center to build facilities in Rock Springs and Green River, some childcare programs denied that the need for additional childcare is still present. The exception seems to be infant/toddler care.

In September 2010, the City of Rock Springs distributed questionnaires to gather information about the level of need for childcare and preschool in our community. They received 794 responses. It is important to note that 82% of the respondents **did not** have a child in childcare. Those respondents were instructed to skip to another section.

The other 18% (143 individuals) responded to six questions specific to their childcare experience. The majority of respondents (47%) utilize commercial childcare/preschools while residential preschool is the preference for 36% of them. Results indicate that 17% of respondents utilize residential childcare only. It is unknown why residential preschool and childcare were separated while those same services through commercial providers were not.

According to the survey, 76% of the parents believe the program they use is licensed by the State of Wyoming. Fourteen-percent said it was not; 4% of those said the center is exempt from licensing. As far as we know, Head Start is the only program with such an exemption.

When respondents were asked how long it took them to find childcare 38% said it took them one month or less; it took 1 – 3 months for another 23%; 4 -6 months for 18%; and for 21% of the respondents, finding childcare took longer than 6 months.

When asked if they believe there is a shortage of daycare/preschool options in Rock Springs, a significant percentage (89%) of the 82% of respondents who said they **do have children in childcare** said yes. The other 11% do not believe there is a shortage.

Two of the remaining questions (responded to by all) focus on the impact of childcare centers (including home childcare providers) to residents in neighborhoods where they are located. Another asked respondents opinion about how many children home childcare providers should be permitted to serve. Nearly half said there should be no more than 4 – 6 children at a time permitted. They were also asked about the number of two-hour preschool sessions per day that they believe is acceptable. Nearly half said no more than two should be allowed; another 41% said there should be no more than three per day. Just over one-third of the respondents believe the City should have authority, without limitation, to approve in-home childcares/preschools if the number of children is limited to a maximum of six.

Only 8% of the City survey respondents are now or have ever been a childcare provider. The City asked if the houses containing in-home childcares should be physically separated from one another in order to minimize the impact to neighborhoods. More than 60% said no. Those who said yes believe that 150 feet to more than 600 feet should separate those houses. *[Source: City of Rock Springs Daycare/Preschool Questionnaire Results. Results and respondent comments are Attachment A]*

Head Start surveyed five childcare programs in Rock Springs. There were four respondents. Childcare programs provide care to 134 infants to age three, 102 three year olds, 116 four and five year olds, and 70 school age children (ages 6-12). All respondents believe there is a need for additional infant/toddler care in our community. [A copy of the survey is Attachment B]

All the respondents serve children with disabilities. They all also serve 3 and 4-year-old children living in poverty. The numbers of those children and types of subsidies received are:

- Center one, a non-profit, serves 34 children (30%) living in poverty and receives subsidies from Sweetwater County, CSBG, and the Department of Family Services Childcare Reimbursement
- Center two is a service of our community college, open to students only, serves approximately 48 children (50%) living in poverty and receives funding from the college

- Center three is privately owned and serves 15 children (25%) living in poverty, those enrollment slots are subsidized by the Department of Family Services Childcare Reimbursement
- Center four is also privately owned and serves 13 children (50-55%) living in poverty, those enrollments are also subsidized by the Department of Family Services Childcare Reimbursement and the Child and Adult Care Food Program

Three of the four serve non-English speaking children.

Two centers report that their staff either already have or are working on the Child Development Associate credential. Unfortunately, the other two are not interested in obtaining the credential.

Though numbers are not known, three centers said they have had to turn some families away for three reasons: lack of openings; outstanding bills; child behavior concerns. The reasons were not ranked.

Providers face some significant challenges in operation of their business. We asked them to list their most significant challenges:

- Finding substitutes that are appropriate for age groups needed
- Lack of staff with a formal education
- Budget and being able to provide staff with a worthy wage
- Finding and retaining staff
- Our facility does not meet our needs
- Turning parents away is frustrating

Overall, providers find it difficult to find staff training that is available in the evenings or on weekends to accommodate work schedules. One center noted that they would like to have time for in-house training. Two centers have been able to participate in trainings on Social/Emotional Development and Early Childhood Mental Health Concerns. All four centers stated they would like to attend trainings at Head Start. Topics of interest include: Child Development, curriculum, developmental disabilities, literacy, behavior, and family relationships.

Staff turnover is a challenge for only one of the four respondents. They stated the reason they struggle to retain staff is that they cannot offer a competitive wage.

All the respondents provide after school care. However one provides that care for kindergarten and first graders only.

Two of the centers participate in the Child Adult Care Food Program. It is unknown if any type of snack or meal is provided at the other two centers.

All the childcare providers surveyed indicated they are aware of resources in the community and how to access them, including the Child Developmental Center. All are also aware of Head Start and the services we provide. They also noted that they would be interested in collaborating with Head Start. In fact three of the centers said they already do.

We asked providers if they had suggestions for additional programs/services that Head Start could provide for the community. One provider said they would like us to open trainings to other agencies. They would also like for us to offer Early Head Start.

When asked if there are other resources needed in the community, one said there are none needed and another indicated the community needs more resources for parents of children with disabilities. Two did not respond.

Providers were also asked to contribute ideas to improve services for children and families in our communities. Their responses were:

- “I think directors need to get together to discuss changes, trainings, etc.”
- “Improved communication between agencies”

Other

Additional responses/results from our survey of community agencies are noted below.

Community strengths when working with low-income families:

- The type and availability of community resources
- Service providers give people options
- The increase in community collaboration
- Agency cooperation and coordination
- The community is small enough that providers know where to look for resources and it is a fairly wealthy community

Greatest obstacles when providing services to low-income families:

- Could use more communication about available resources
- Processes to help families get assistance is sometimes complicated and time consuming
- Finding quality childcare that is affordable. Licensed providers cannot afford to lower their rates and the process for reimbursement through DFS takes at least a month. It would be nice to find grants that could help providers provide care at a reduced cost to parents.
- Lack of safe, affordable housing
- Lack of available jobs (especially for unskilled workers)
- Lack of night and weekend transportation and childcare
- Lack of affordable health and dental care
- Attitudes about low-income families

One of the respondents said they have participated in training at Head Start. Four others said they would like to. Two said they might attend training at Head Start, depending on the topic. One said they were not interested in attending training at Head Start.

Barriers to people accessing community resources:

- Some agencies could be in a better location
- More public transportation is needed
- Not all providers are friendly
- Providers are overloaded
- Some services are not affordable
- Confidentiality is sometimes a concern

Some suggestions for additional programs or services that Head Start could offer were:

- More public transportation
- The ability to enroll more children and hire more teachers
- Help parents feel more academically competent so they are better able to help their children academically – partner with the college or other entities to achieve this?

Services to Children with Disabilities

According to **Ann Owen, Regional Coordinator** at Sweetwater County Child Developmental Center (CDC), they consider about 10% of the population to have a diagnosable disability.

Approximately **3899 children under the age of 5 live in Sweetwater County** [Source: *US Census 2010 Sweetwater County, Wyoming Quick Facts, June 21, 2011*]. Using CDC's method of estimation, approximately **389 Sweetwater County children under age 5** have a diagnosable disability. **However, their actual numbers served this year is 435 under the age of five years. Those children receive services for the following types of disabilities:**

- **Developmental Delay**
- **Autism Spectrum Disorder**
- **Cognitive Disability**
- **Deaf-Blindness**
- **Emotional Disability**
- **Hearing Impairment, including deafness**
- **Multiple Disabilities**
- **Orthopedic Impairment**
- **Other Health Impairment**
- **Speech or Language Impairment**
- **Visual Impairment**

As of the end of January 2011, CDC had served **435** children (birth to **4** years) in **Sweetwater County**. Head Start currently serves 31 of those children. Ten more children are in the referral process to determine whether or not a disability exists. The CDC provides services to our 31 children at our building. Through our partnership with the Southwest Counseling Services, 23 of those children receive mental health services.

The Sweetwater County Child Developmental Center is willing to serve any child with a disability, regardless of the type or severity of the disability. In addition to services provided in center in Rock Springs and Green River, they send teams of staff out to the outlying communities of Granger and Wamsutter to provide screening, evaluation or program services to children. While they will provide services in any setting necessary, most of their services are provided in their own centers or at Head Start.

Education, Health, Nutrition & Social Service Needs of Families

Living in Poverty

Data in this section was collected from a variety of sources including surveys of community agencies, other assessments of our community, the U.S. Census 2010 as well as other State and Federal information websites.

Surveys were distributed to 16 community organizations, eight were returned. All of the respondents provide services to low-income individuals and families. Six of the respondents believe their services are not duplicated by any other agency. As is relevant, their responses are noted in each section below. Our program also surveyed five childcare providers and four responded. Their responses are below in the Childcare section. [A copy of the survey is Attachment C]

Health

The majority of our community partners do not believe there has been any change in the availability of dental services in the community. With regard to quality mental health services, respondents were split between believing they have seen an increase in availability and believing there has been no change.

According to the 2009 Wyoming Kids Count Data, the Sweetwater County teen (15 – 19 years) birth rate declined between 2008 and 2009 from 63/1000 to 56/1000 [source: *The Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center, datacenter.kidscount.org*] This rate is still higher than the 2009 average (44.8/1000) for the State of Wyoming and the National average of 39.1/1000. [Source: <http://trib.com/news/state>, February 16, 2011]

Two of the organizations responding to our survey said they have noticed an increase in teen pregnancy in our county.

Health Care was identified by Corona Insights (in the source noted above) as one of the top three needs of people living in poverty. Forty-one percent of their respondents are either not getting the help they need, or are getting help but need more. The other two top needs were housing and short-term assistance with food supplies and paying bills.

The Community Health Center discussed in the Community Resources section below may provide some relief. In addition, there are two prescription drug assistance programs available in our community:

- The United Way distributes The FamilyWize discount card, through the FamilyWize community service partnership, in Sweetwater County. Consumers must shop at a preferred pharmacy, however the lists of pharmacies and allowable drugs are extensive and several of our local pharmacies are included. Those who qualify have no health insurance, are in their deductible period with their insurance, or need a prescription medicine not covered by health insurance, Medicare or other benefit plans. Consumers save an average of 30% with this card.
- The Together RX Access drug discount program is sponsored by many pharmaceutical companies and health organizations. To qualify, a person must not have prescription drug coverage or be eligible for Medicaid. The discount card saves consumers 25 – 40% on selected prescription drugs at participating pharmacies. Again, the list of drugs is considerable and several local pharmacies participate.

The cards and their accompanying information are also available in Spanish. Head Start distributes the cards to all our families. Many other local agencies and businesses (i.e. doctors' offices) also distribute the card.

Child abuse and neglect affects the health and overall well-being of children in Sweetwater County. Three of the community agency respondents to our survey report that they have seen an increase in this concern. In 2008 there were 94 **substantiated** cases of child abuse and neglect. Only Natrona County had more (141) substantiated cases during 2008. The city of Casper (largest in Natrona County) is approximately 22% larger than our entire county.

Two of our staff sit on the Child Protection Team that advises the Department of Family Services in their investigation of child abuse and neglect reports. Part of our role is to offer suggestions for services to the families. A great many of those cases involve illegal drugs and alcohol.

[Source: The Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center, datacenter.kidscount.org]

Nutrition

There is little opportunity to purchase fresh produce in our county. The selection in grocery store produce departments is sufficient to meet the need for variety in the diet. However, many varieties are quite expensive.

Growers from Utah and Colorado sell produce in the summertime out of trucks parked along main streets in Rock Springs. There are several growers to choose from each week. The produce is usually at least comparable in price to that offered in grocery stores and oftentimes it is less expensive. People wishing to can or freeze produce can order items in bulk.

A Farmer's Market is held in Green River on Wednesdays and Rock Springs on Thursdays during July and August. Local and regional (Colorado, Utah) grown fruits and vegetables are available for purchase. Farm fresh eggs and handmade breads are also available.

The Cent\$ible Nutrition program is offered at local libraries and provides people with ideas for healthy, inexpensive meals. They also provide general information on healthy nutrition and information about using those healthy nutrition tips for weight reduction.

A local group of consumers is working to bring Bountiful Baskets to Rock Springs and Green River. The program uses collective purchasing power to bring fresh produce to local consumers year-round. The food is delivered to our part of the state (currently in the Bridger Valley) via trucks from growers in Arizona.

The City of Rock Springs is developing a Community Garden. The project is just beginning and details are currently unavailable.

Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault

These social problems, like child abuse and neglect, are not bound by socio-economic factors. However, victims living in poverty have fewer options because they do not have the financial means to escape the problems.

During 2010, the YWCA Support and Safe House 357 unduplicated individuals:

- 248 Females
- 48 Children
- 25 Males

The majority of those served were victims of domestic violence, including 35 minors. There were 21 sexual assault cases, 7 of those were children. There were 35 reports of elder abuse.

The program assisted 46 victims with obtaining a Family Violence Protection Order and 32 Stalking Protection Orders were granted.

The program received 1,935 crisis calls and provided 3,008 in person contacts.

Four of our families surveyed reported domestic violence had affected their life in the past year.

Employment

According to the Wyoming Department of Employment, Research & Planning website, at the end of December 2010, 5.6% of the county's 23,688 workers were unemployed. The 2010 Wyoming Workforce Annual Report noted, "Once energy prices dropped dramatically, employment plummeted in Sublette and Sweetwater counties, which heavily depend on mining." Sweetwater County was one of three most affected by the economic downturn with a 182.6% increase in unemployment. Only Sublette County experienced a higher increase with a 300% change.

"Every county in the state experienced a large downturn, most with triple digit increase in UI covered unemployed workers in 2009. Counties tied heavily to the mining industry were hardest hit. Sublette, **Sweetwater**, and Campbell counties experienced the largest increase in UI covered unemployed workers, with increases of 484.6%, **341.9%**, and 284.7% respectively in 2009 compared to their 2007 levels."

In 2009, the number of persons collecting unemployment in Wyoming grew to its highest level since 1997 when 37,312 individuals (mostly in the construction and mining industries) lost their jobs. By the end of the year, nearly one-third of those had exhausted their unemployment insurance benefits. This rate was also the highest in 13 years.

Wyoming employment is expected to increase by only 0.9% between 2008 and 2018. The three occupations that will be the greatest contributors to that increase will be: Health Care and Social Assistance (2.2%); Professional and Business Services (1.5%); and Educational Services (1.4%).

However, the Department of Employment projects a 0.1% *decrease* in jobs (173 statewide) in the natural resources and mining industries between 2008 and 2018. If that projection is accurate, the future of those industries in Sweetwater County is dismal.

[Source: 2010 Wyoming Workforce Annual Report]

Illegal Drugs & Alcohol

Illegal drug use/sale/distribution continues to be a problem in our communities. Sweetwater County is still designated as a High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area by the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

In recent years, methamphetamine has emerged as the illicit drug of choice in Wyoming and is the most significant drug threat in the state. Methamphetamine abuse is of great concern to Wyoming law enforcement due to its correlation with violent crime, domestic violence and child abuse.

Federal Sentencing Statistics, Drug Offenses, Wyoming, FY 2006 Drug Type Involved	Offenses	Percent of Total
Powder cocaine	5	3.4%
Crack cocaine	7	4.8
Heroin	3	2.1
Marijuana	50	34.5
Methamphetamine	76	52.4
Other		2.8

Treatment

During 2006, there were 5,354 admissions to drug/alcohol treatment in Wyoming. There were 6,362 such treatment admissions in Wyoming during 2005. The number of treatment admissions during 2004 was 5,665.

[Source: Office of National Drug Control Policy, Profile of Drug Indicators, January 2008]

Education, Health, Nutrition & Social Service Needs Identified by Head Start Families

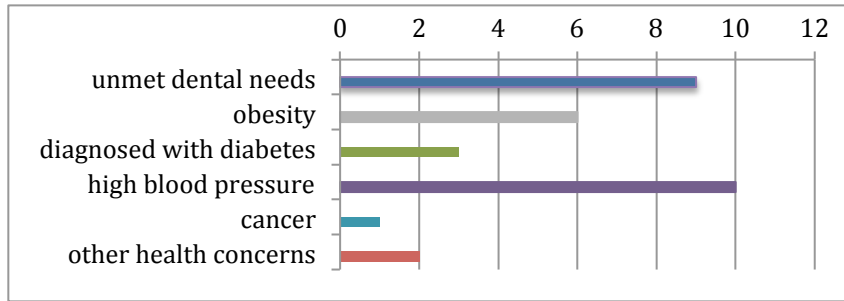
Current Head Start parents were surveyed in November 2010. Surveys were distributed to 120 families and 42 responses were received (35% rate of return). Eight respondents were Spanish-speakers. *[Copies of our survey forms are Attachments D and E]*

Health Care

The 42 survey respondents said their children receive health care through (some marked more than one):

- 34, Equality Care (Title 19/Medicaid)
- 4 families have private insurance
- 1 has military insurance coverage
- 7 lost their insurance benefits
- 2 families reported that they have no health care assistance

Surveyed families identified their health needs as:

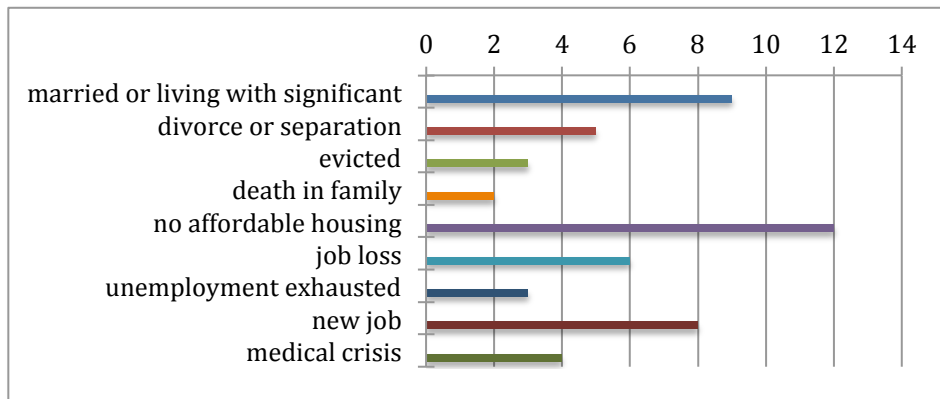


When asked if they have ever had any challenges obtaining services for dental, health, or mental health needs, the majority (24) said they have not. This has been a challenge for 15 of the responding families. Those that explained said (quoted verbatim):

- “for me, yes, I can’t afford, I don’t have any insurance”;
- “no insurance at all for adult, only for child”;
- “I had surgery over the summer (semi-emergency) and the DFS office had “issues” so I ended up not qualifying when I should have”;
- “I can’t afford it”;
- “no insurance, no money for insurance/services”;
- “It’s hard when you have medical issues and can’t afford Dr visits or don’t qualify for Medicaid because the income guidelines are so low”;
- “no insurance”; “The insurance plan that is offered through my work is expensive and requires that I travel 50 miles just to see a dentist who accepts that type of insurance.”.

Life Changes

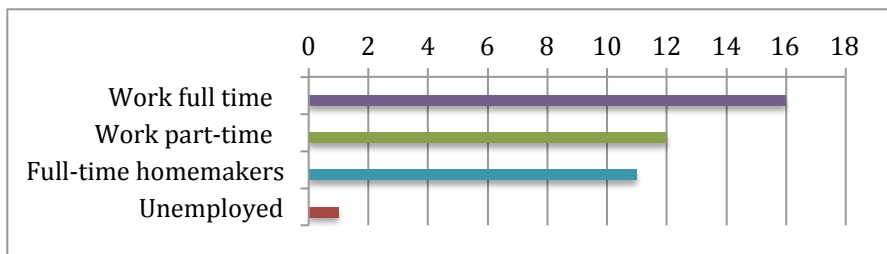
Many parents responding to our survey experienced significant changes during the past year:



The homelessness of the 12 who could not find affordable housing forced them to rely on family and/or friends for a place to live; however when specifically asked, only 8 actually deemed themselves homeless. Three of our community agency survey respondents stated that they believe there has been an increase in available, affordable housing in our communities. The 2010 U.S. Census revealed that there are now more than 1,800 housing units available in our service areas. It is unknown if those units are rentals or homes and if they would be affordable for families living in poverty.

Employment

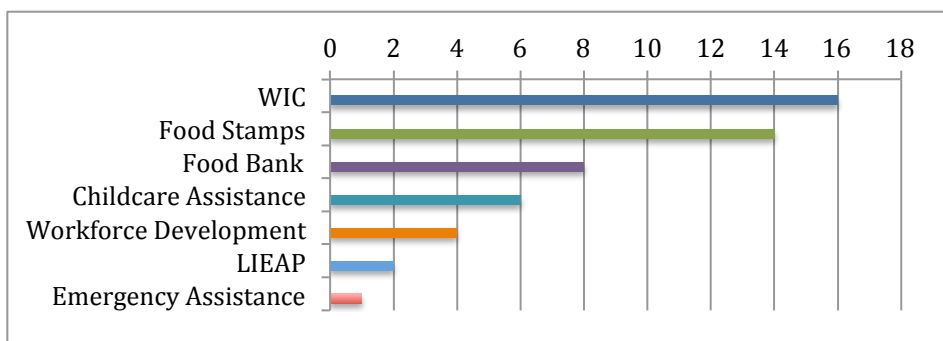
Most of our responding parents are employed. Their responses were:



Two of the 16 working full-time also attend school full-time; one attends part-time. Two of the 12 working part-time also attend school part-time.

Community Resources

Parents utilize community resources as follows:



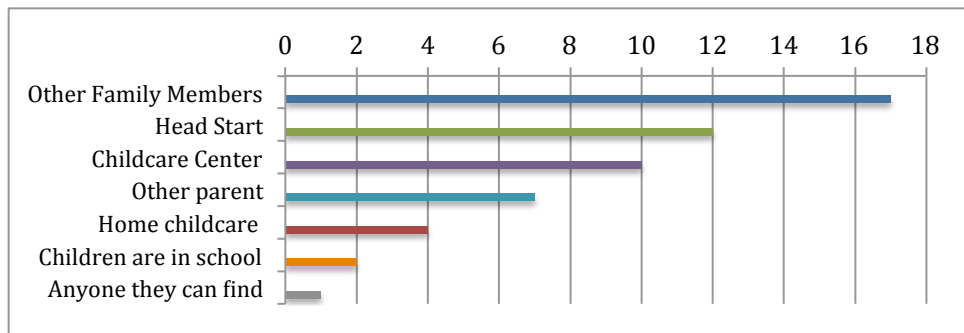
Illegal Drugs, Alcohol

Alcohol and/or illegal drug use affected 26 of the 42 parents responding to our survey.

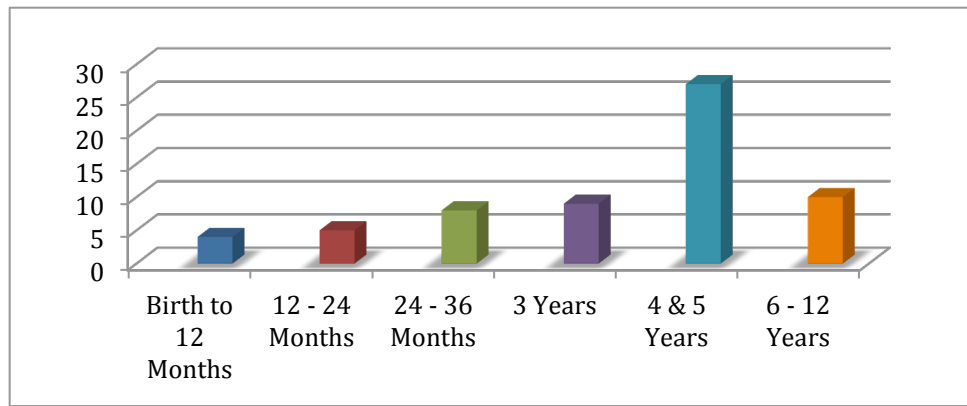
- 4 included arrests by law enforcement
- 4 involved jail
- 2 counseling/rehabilitation programs
- 4 involved domestic violence
- 4 families were reported to the Department of Family Services
- 2 involved neglect

Childcare Need of Those Working or Attending School

We asked parents who provides care for their child while they are at work or school. Several parents use more than one childcare provider.



Parents need care when working or attending school for the following ages of children:



Barriers (several have experienced more than one) to obtaining childcare include:

- 5 have been turned away due to lack of openings
- 7 have an outstanding childcare bill
- 4 children are not potty trained
- 1 cannot find care due to concerns about the child's behavior
- 5 reported that there were other barriers: 1 gave no explanation; 1 said the child is younger than 2 years old; 1 notes that they cannot find weekend care; 1 said it is too expensive; and 1 cites the need to pay a deposit and lack of state licensing

There is some variance of the time of day care is needed. Our parents stated their needs as follows:

- 11 use half day care; they were asked to specify 8:00-Noon or Noon-4:00, however most parents did not select which half of the day care is needed
- 12 have full day care
- 5 require preschool only
- 3 need overnight care
- 1 needs care until late at night
- 6 need weekend childcare
- 2 state that they want or need only a 9 month program
- 1 needs a 12 month program

Eight of the above report that their provider is licensed by the State; 12 said their provider is not licensed; and three were unsure of licensure

Parents were asked if they would use childcare offered through Head Start if it was available:

- 25 parents responding to this question said they would
- 2 said they would not (both have a family member who provides care)

Other

Transportation needs are met for 34 of our responding parents. However, six families do not have reliable transportation.

The majority of our survey respondents (39) find the newsletters and our website have information that is of interest to them. One does not find either helpful. Two did not respond to that question.

Only one parent did not find the developmental screening helpful.

Parents participated in the program by serving as Parent Committee Leaders and Policy Council members; assisting children during field trips; education and other service area home visits; helping to prepare materials; and volunteering in the classroom.

Parents were asked to rate the importance of several program factors as they relate to their family's Head Start experience:

Facilities & Equipment:	35 Very Important	3 Unsure	1 Not Important
Educational Planning and prep time:	36 Very Important	3 Unsure	
Hiring/keeping qualified staff:	39 Very Important	2 Unsure	
Staff training:	36 Very Important	3 Unsure	
Parent Activities & involvement	40 Very Important		
Attendance	36 Very Important	4 Unsure	
Consistent Routine & schedule	36 Very Important	4 Unsure	
Parent Training	33 Very Important	7 Unsure	

We asked parents what additional programs/services they feel we should offer to them and/or the community. Those who responded said:

- Some type of stranger danger lessons for the children *[This actually does occur in every classroom as part of the Talking About Touching program.]*
- Help finding employment or childcare *[Both services are offered through our Family and Community Partnerships service area. This misunderstanding may or may not signify a need to strengthen communication about services available to parents.]*
- None at this time
- They do a good job, I think nothing needs to be changed.
- I think what is being done is great, but when a new opportunity comes we/they could take the advantage and try it out.
- I feel Head Start has really gone out of their way to help our family.
- Nothing, what they do for me and the community are wonderful.
- Head Start offers many services & do a great job!

Parents were given the opportunity to make additional comments about the program, centers, or staff.

- “I don’t really need childcare at this time, my school is online thru my comp. I do have a vehicle - not really sure for how long – ex-husband is suppose to make the payment and he hasn’t for Nov yet. I do have a place to live but also not sure for how long. My only income is 326.00 I get from child support. Every month I worry I won’t be able to pay rent. I do get some help but I don’t know for how long – and it isn’t enough to cover all my rent. I applied for the LIEAP program haven’t heard back yet.” *[Head Start staff have offered assistance and made numerous referrals.]*
- “I agree completely that all the listed requirements and programs are most important *[This section followed the rating of factors relating to their child’s Head Start experience.]* because it teaches them responsibility and that’s extremely important. So I agree that they are all very important and I believe that good eating habits and table manners are also important because it teaches them about food, nutrition, good and bad eating habits. Teaches them about culinary arts and also good table manners, respect how to clean up and throw away, recycling as well.”
- “I personally love the program and how nice the staff is. They always answer all my questions and always have a smile on their face.”
- “Head Start has been very helpful w/our family needs.”
- “I live in Reliance & at times it’s difficult to get my son to school due to the fact there is no bus & I at times have enough gas to get me to work! So a bus would be nice & VERY helpful for the ones that live out this far.”
- “My child has enjoyed Head Start so much! It has been very helpful for her to prepare for kindergarden! She is very excited and loves all the staff!”
- “The program and staff are excellent. They have helped by grandchild a lot.”
- “Keep up the good work. You guys are doing great.”

Community Resources

Head Start parents are aware of community resources and how to access them through a directory provided to them at Parent Orientation. If parents encounter difficulties accessing services, our Family & Community Partnerships staff can advocate for them.

Approximately 60% of the community organizations responding to our survey have increased their services during the past year. The community resources that can be used to address the needs of our parents and those we partner with to extend or enhance Head Start services are discussed below.

Family Planning offers a wide array of services, on a sliding fee scale, to women in Sweetwater County. Medical exams that include annual pap test, pelvic exam, anemia screening, breast exam, blood pressure screening and weight assessment. Contraception information and supplies as well as pregnancy testing are available. They also screen for and treat Sexually Transmitted Infections. The organization can provide counseling for such issues as pregnancy (for teens and adults), infertility, sterilization, and adoption. The staff is available to educate the public about teen pregnancy, parent-teen communication, say “NO!!!”, methods of contraception, information on choices available, and cultural values and attitudes.

The **Community Health Center** discussed in previous Community Assessments and grant applications is planning to open in May of this year. There is not a lot of detail available about the full line of services they will offer, however we do know the group will accept health insurances and will offer medical and dental services on a sliding fee scale.

The **Wyoming Health Initiative (WHI)** provides free Pregnancy testing for teens. They also provide referrals to other community agencies as needed and education regarding birth control, abstinence, and planning for pregnancy when the time is right. All of their services are provided free of charge.

Through the **Wyoming Health Department, Dental Health Division**, State Dental Hygienist Raydon Butler, RDH provides screening services and topical fluoride treatments at Head Start at least once each year. She also assists families with low cost dental care for their children.

Southwest Wyoming Recovery Access Programs (SW-WRAP) recently received a TANF grant to help single parents (including pregnant women) who can't afford childcare or who need help eliminating various barriers to self-sufficiency. That may include assistance to obtain employment or retain a current job. The three major areas of service are: acquiring a wide variety of personal and household essentials and may include anything from diapers to deodorant, toothpaste, or work clothes; transportation (including car repairs and auto insurance); youth enrichment programs; cell phones; and modems.

They offer limited financial assistance for medical and dental needs through a Community Services Block Grant.

Collaboration with other agencies in the community is important to SW-WRAP. They plan to partner with Wyoming Quit Tobacco, to help nicotine addicted clients who are prioritizing nicotine products over essentials. Nicotine gum, patches, lozenges and help with prescription stop-smoking aides are available free of charge.

In addition to the services offered through their new grant, SW-WRAP can provide

- Advocacy, case management, individual services coordination
- Relapse prevention
- 12 Step Programs
- Certified Life Coaching
- Child Mental Health (they are a Child Mental Health Waiver provider)
- DUI/Alcohol classes
- Mental health evaluations
- EMDR Therapy

The organization has a website with basic information though most sections are still under construction. The organization is located in Green River. Their location can be prohibitive for Rock Springs residents, although inexpensive bus transportation is available through the Sweetwater Transit Authority Resources (STAR) and SW-WRAP can assist with that expense.

The ***Sweetwater Transit Authority Resources (STAR)*** is the local bus service in, around, and between the cities of Rock Springs and Green River. While the service is not free for most individuals, the \$2.00 each way cost is considered reasonable by most. The agency receives subsidies for those who cannot pay and to meet the full cost of transportation. Many human service providers purchase tickets for their clients to be able to receive services. The system now has bus stops at regular intervals, which has helped needy people plan their visits to doctors or other service providers.

Sweetwater County Child Developmental Center (CDC) services are available to all Sweetwater County children with a diagnosed disability (as discussed above). Routine developmental screenings are conducted for all children up to age five of families who request them.

CDC provides preschool services for children with a diagnosed disability through State, County and Federal funding. Their preschool program for At-Risk children is funded through a TANF grant. Services provided to Head Start children are provided in a designated area of our building and in individual classrooms.

They are also a Child Mental Health Waiver provider and have a therapist on staff.

The ***Parent Information Center (PIC)*** has begun a series of workshops for parents with children who have emotional disabilities. This area of need is becoming a primary focus for PIC due to the increased number of children with emotional disabilities who struggle in school because of their propensity for violence and manipulation.

The ***Sweetwater Family Resource Center*** receives TANF funds to assist people with childcare needs while they are in job training programs or looking for work. They are also able to provide some rental assistance for a very limited time for those seeking employment. Other services offered include parenting, anger management, and relationship classes that are conducted in both Rock Springs and Green River.

The ***Young at Heart Senior Center's Grandparents Raising Grandchildren*** program provides a monthly support group. Relevant guest speakers are frequently part of the support group activities. Grandparents can bring their grandchildren to the meetings and a group meal is served. A newsletter with information, tips, and statistics is sent to more than 100 people each month. All of our grandparents who are raising their grandchildren are referred to this program.

The ***Rock Springs Housing Authority*** has received a homelessness prevention grant. To qualify, recipients must be legally allowed to work in the United States and have a job that will be sufficient to sustain future rent payments. To be considered eligible for this assistance, the applicant cannot have received Rock Springs Housing Authority assistance in the past. If the RSHA cannot help an individual, they refer them to other federally subsidized housing. Head Start refers to all subsidized housing and information about each of them is in the Community Resources Handbook given to parents at orientation.

WIC serves to safeguard the health of low-income women, infants, & children up to age 5 who are at nutritional risk by providing nutritious supplemental foods, health and nutrition screening and education, breastfeeding support, and referrals to healthcare.

The ***Western Wyoming Community College Learning Center*** provides GED preparation and testing on the Rock Springs and Green River campuses. They also offer English Language Learner classes and Citizenship classes.

CLIMB Wyoming helps move single mothers out of poverty - *permanently*. To meet Wyoming's workforce needs, the CLIMB programs are helping women enter construction and energy trades as well as health care, office careers and more.

Though it is basically a job training and placement program, the developers of the program understood that other skills are needed for permanent life change. Other needed skills are those that ensure successful relationships on the job and in the home. To help develop those skills, the program provides mental health services that address personal barriers that have impeded success in the past.

Several past Head Start parents completed the CLIMB program.

Best Beginnings for Wyoming Babies assesses needs and risks of pregnant women and coordinates services with community agencies/organizations to assure early and ongoing prenatal family services. They can provide some financial assistance to begin prenatal care and referrals to other agencies and programs as needed. Personal advocacy and emotional support is available for the pregnant women and their families. The services are also available to other parents of children under five years old. The agency provides childbirth classes and early parenting instruction and support to pregnant women and their families and other parenting persons regardless of their financial status. However, those needing prenatal care must meet income guidelines.

Head Start and Best Beginnings partner to provide The Nurturing Program (a parenting program) to Head Start parents and other members of the community. The 16-week classes are held twice each year at the Head Start building.

Child Care Finder assists parents to find childcare services that best meet their unique needs by referring to programs that are licensed and monitored by Wyoming Department of Family Services. Child Care Finder provides some parent workshops as well as recruitment, training and technical assistance for licensed providers. Head Start parents are referred to this organization as well as individual providers and preschools. A list is included in the Community Resource Handbook they are given at orientation.

Child Support Services of Wyoming establishes new child support orders and enforces existing orders. The office is located in Green River and there is a toll-free number.

The ***Community Nursing Service*** operates the Best Beginnings program and offers drop-in clinics and skilled nursing care for pregnant women and infants with acute conditions. Nurses conduct home visits to assist first-time mothers and the agency accesses Medicaid Presumptive Eligibility to pay for prenatal care. Child and adult immunizations (including flu vaccinations) are also available. Through Child Health Services funds they are able to provide some dental health services; teen prenatal education; classes for parents or providers on health related topics; and pregnancy tests. Most services are provided regardless of a person's ability to pay. Some income guidelines may apply.

The ***Department of Family Services (DFS)*** offers economic assistance through the Personal Opportunities with Employment Responsibilities (POWER) program which provides short-term cash assistance to single parents and families with dependent children who meet eligibility, work, and child support performance requirements. Participants must be working or looking for work 40 hours each week.

Food Stamps and medical assistance (including counseling) are provided to individuals who meet income guidelines and other eligibility criteria.

Childcare assistance is also available for those who qualify. Payment is made directly to childcare providers to assist parents or other care-givers with childcare expenses while they work or attend school or training.

DFS conducts investigations into alleged child and adult abuse and neglect complaints and provides protection services to the abused or neglected child or adult and their family as deemed appropriate following investigation.

They provide referrals, supervised visits, preventive and educational group activities and presentations, and foster care. Their staff also assists in coordinating services with other organizations and agencies on behalf of clients.

Youth Services include work with youth and families who have behaviors that place them at risk and/or are on juvenile probation including children in need of supervision (CHINS).

LIEAP (Low Income Energy Assistance Program) is a State and Federally funded program that helps income eligible people pay home heating bills between October and May. LIEAP is open to qualifying home owners and renters, and it helps cover the costs of electric, natural gas, propane, wood, diesel heating oil, coal and pellets used for heating a home.

People who are approved for assistance through LIEAP may also be eligible for Weatherization services to make their homes more energy efficient and further lower heating costs.

Energy Share of Wyoming provides energy assistance for those who do not qualify for LIEAP and are experiencing a medical or family crisis or have some other situation that makes it difficult to pay their energy bills. Utility companies, customers, local businesses and private donations fund the program.

The ***Food Bank of Sweetwater County*** provides emergency food supplies and routine food provisions to those who meet income guidelines. They also provide some emergency health and dental assistance through a Community Service Block Grant. Application for any service must include verification of identity and income for each household member, and proof of residency.

Head Start partners with the Food Bank to distribute Totes of Hope (packets of food) to all Head Start children each Friday. The food provides supplements for children during the weekend.

Southwest Counseling Service provides comprehensive mental health services and substance abuse recovery services. They also conduct psychological evaluations (including drugs and alcohol), psychiatric services and medication management. Residential and intensive outpatient treatment is available for persons recovering from drug and/or alcohol addiction. A sliding fee scale is applied for most services.

Head Start partners with Southwest Counseling's Early Intervention Project to provide play therapy and self esteem groups to Head Start children. The services are provided at Head Start. There are currently 20 open cases and seven referrals pending. All of the seven children awaiting intake for play therapy attend the self esteem group.

The ***Wyoming Division of Vocational Rehabilitation*** provides diagnostics, retraining and other costs associated with preparing individuals for employment that can be retained with their limitations. Individuals must have a disability which constitutes a handicap in employment.

The ***YWCA Support and Safe House*** provides legal and peer advocacy to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. The agency assists victims/survivors with applying for Family Violence Protection Orders or Restraining Orders and accompanies them to court for a ruling on the Orders.

The agency operates a 24-hour crisis line with toll free numbers in Rock Springs and Green River. They are able to offer emergency use cell phones to victims who either cannot access their own cell phone or do not have one.

YWCA Support and Safe House staff provide advocacy at a public walk-in office during business hours. Volunteer advocates staff the crisis line after hours. A safe house is in a confidential location in Rock Springs. Women and their children may stay at the safe house up to six weeks. Male victims and their children are provided safety in other locations.

Some financial assistance is available for rent or vehicle repair. The staff and volunteer advocates can often provide a great deal of assistance in securing housing.

The ***Boys and Girls Club of Sweetwater County*** provides afterschool programs and academic support to young children in our community. The group recently received the Boys and Girls Club of America designation and has been operational as such for only the past few months. The fee is \$10/month for each participant.



Closing

The residents of the communities served by SCSD #1 Head Start are struggling with the recent economic downturn. Jobs are more difficult to find and many families are separated for extended periods while at least one member of the household travels long distances for employment.

The social problems that have affected our youth and young adults for years are still present. Some of them have lead to the death of several youths in the past two years. While there is little typical gang activity, the youth of our county are experimenting with a variety of illegal drugs as well as 'legal' means of getting high, including huffing vapors of common household products, and smoking Salvia. Regular sexual activity, most often unprotected, even among the very

young, is common. These social problems may be contributors to the poor graduation rate (71%, though this is a 4% increase over the previous year) in Rock Springs. *[Source: Wyoming Department of Education]*

The high community concern for affordable health and dental care may be allayed with the opening of the anticipated Community Health Center. Creative marketing that extends beyond newspaper ads and radio spots will be critical to insure those services are available to our most needy residents.

The communities of Green River and Rock Springs offer a wide variety of programs to assist families in need. Community agencies collaborate well for the benefit of those families.

Despite it's economic and social struggles, the people of Sweetwater County are generally supportive of others. This is evident in their willingness to add an additional one percent to the sales tax to build a facility for the Sweetwater County Child Developmental Center in Green River. The City of Green River stated that the building must also serve as the Head Start site.