

**TEN YEARS AFTER;
STATUS REPORT ON YOUTH, 2003**

**PREPARED BY THE MAYOR'S TASK FORCE ON YOUTH
FOR ITS 10TH ANNIVERSARY
March 2003**

By many measures, life is better for young people in Juneau than it was ten years ago when the Mayor's Task Force on Youth (MTFY) was formed in the wake of a teen suicide. A substantial array of new services and opportunities has been developed locally in the last ten years. However, several important areas deserve attention, and monitoring of social services for youth has taken on special urgency since the City and Borough of Juneau eliminated its Health and Social Services Division nearly three years ago.

One-third of Juneau's population – just over 10,000 individuals – are under 19 years old. About half of them are in school – a segment that increased dramatically between the 1990 and 2000 census. There are about 3,000 teenagers in Juneau (ages 12-19, in grades 6-12).

For its decade anniversary, the task force (an informal coalition of about 35 agencies and organizations committed to working on issues effecting youth – mostly associated with alcohol and other drugs) prepared this overview of the status of youth today, compared to ten years ago.

Many positive indicators imply the improved health and well-being of Juneau's young people since 1993:

- Enforcement of tobacco and alcohol laws is up
- Teen pregnancy has declined
- The number of suicides has dropped

- Drop-out rates are down
- Recreational opportunities abound
- Chemical dependency treatment options are re-building and unifying
- Youth activity revenues generate nearly \$500,000 annually

However, there are also worrisome data:

- Use of controlled substances by minors remains above national norms
- Access to mental health services can be challenging
- A greater proportion of drops out is Alaska Natives
- Motor vehicle deaths are more numerous
- Emergency shelter for on-the-street youths is extremely limited
- More kids are living below poverty levels
- Livable wage jobs are tough to find for youth just out of high school

CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY SERVICES: IN RECOVERY

Prevention of access to, use, and abuse of controlled substances by minors has been the primary focus of the Mayor's Task Force on Youth for ten years. Since the City & Borough of Juneau eliminated its Division of Health and Social Services three years ago, non-profit organizations have had to patchwork together services. The good news is that these newly developed services are more likely to be based on "proven outcomes" and to be increasingly aligned and unified within the community than they were ten years ago.

Stronger enforcement of age-checking by liquor store clerks, a tax increase of a "buck a pack" on tobacco, a tax increase of a "dime a drink" on alcohol (the state's first since 1982), the emergence of a strong local chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (and it's teen counterpart, Youth In Action), the local outlaw of smoking in or near most public establishments, the dedication of some of the state's share of national tobacco company lawsuit

settlement funds to anti-smoking campaigns, and the elimination of easily-accessed tobacco vending have contributed to a probable decrease in teen use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs (if national trends are any indication).

(Unfortunately, the most recent data for Juneau are four years old due to a legislative change in 2000 which requires an “active,” rather than “passive” written consent from parents prior to administering student questionnaires. A paucity of signed permission forms has meant that Juneau schools have not collected data on teen behaviors since 1999, although an effort is underway to secure sufficient permissions and to participate in the national Youth Risk Behavior survey this spring.)

However, while more minors are being adjudicated for use of tobacco and alcohol – thanks in great part to an “after-school court” -- substance use by teens remains above national averages. Alcohol remains, by far, the drug of choice for teens. In 1999, fully 80% of high schoolers stated they had experienced alcohol use; 40% reported using alcohol in the previous 30 days and about one in five had been drunk in the previous week. Marijuana use also remains above national norms, with 55% of Juneau high school students having smoked pot, 24% of whom claimed to have used it in the previous month.

When asked in February, 2003, what kind of issue they or their friends had been dealing with in the last year, 60 percent of the 75 Alaska Native youth respondents in Southeast (primarily from Juneau) named drugs or alcohol. (The next most prevalent issue was anger/violence, identified by 35 percent.)

(Because several variables effecting the number of arrests for minor consuming, such as how it's classified by the state as a violation or misdemeanor, have changed in the last ten years, and, because the confidentiality of juvenile data makes it impossible to identify repeat offenders, it's difficult to know if such statistics are of value. For example, in 1992, there were 184 citations and ten years later there were 263 (a 43% increase).

However, in 1991, there were 304 citations and in 2001 there were 358, only a 17% increase. The numbers have varied on a year-by-year basis.)

While use, particularly of alcohol, remains high and enforcement increases, the availability of chemical dependency prevention and intervention services is recovering from the closure of private providers and the city's social services unit.

Ten years ago, there were four local venues for out-patient chemical dependency treatment for youth (those under 18): Lakeside Recovery Center, North Star Outpatient Clinic, Tongass Community Counseling, and Christian Counseling Center. (Only the latter two still exist.) In FY '92, 363 youth received treatment services of some sort through those agencies. In 2002, about 182 youth (about a 50% difference) accessed chemical dependency treatment services through Tongass (84), Christian (19) and Juneau Youth Services (79,) which has coordinated the bulk of CD treatment services since CBJ dropped its social services department in 2000.

Assessments were completed by the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD) and JYS provided a community work service component, both on contract to the CBJ. NCADD no longer performs full-scale assessments (just initial screenings, about one-in-five of which indicate the need for full assessment and treatment which now are completed through Juneau Youth Services). NCADD does offer a 12-hour Alcohol and Information School for adjudicated youth who are not required to go through more formalized treatment.

The CBJ Health and Social Services Division provided two prevention specialists in the middle schools and one at the high school. Those positions no longer exist in each building. However, NCADD employs four fulltime prevention specialists (Double the number ten years ago) who deliver "best practices" programs to targeted populations at the middle and high schools.

The eighteen-month-old Juneau Effective Prevention Project, under the direction of the University of Washington Center for the Study and Teaching of At-Risk students, has established a community-wide process to integrate local substance abuse and treatment systems. The goal is to have a unified process that coordinates school, court, prevention, and treatment services for kids who use. For example, the JEPP process has resulted in a unified intervention process (administered by Juneau Youth Services) for by all students who are caught with or want help with substances. In addition, the JEPP process has contributed to restoring on-site options at schools. A Medicaid-funded recovery class is offered for credit at JDHS and the counselor/teacher serves as a “care coordinator” to assist families through the intervention process. JYS provides a case manager at JDHS to monitor kids working on prevention plans.

However, there appears to be a dearth of organized or recreational alcohol-free activities for youth who are out of high school but not yet 21.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES: DEPRESSED

Adolescent mental health needs are increasing. However, while more kids are seeking and getting psychological help, the consistency and availability of services has been uncertain. For example, while the proportion of visits to the high school-based Teen Health Center for mental health reasons has remained stable at about one-third (excluding sports physicals and test results which weren't offered when it first started in 1993), the actual number of individuals seeking such counseling has increased by more than 50 percent (from 152 individuals in 1993-1994 to 236 youth in 2001-2002) – with no increase in clinician hours.

In 1993, the CBJ Health and Social Services Division, served 11 severely emotionally-disturbed children (using a state grant) through contracted in-home

services. The HSS division was discontinued by the city in 2000 and for two years there was no central coordination of such services. DREAMS Therapeutic Foster Care was started in 2002, attempting to provide intensive residential, outpatient, educational, respite, and school-based services to 31 emotionally-disturbed youth. However, its billings could not support the services and it closed suddenly after a year. Those services are being provided on a short-term contractual basis by Juneau Youth Services with no guarantee of continuance.

The CBJ also operated a Mental Health Center with seven clinicians providing services on a sliding scale fee system. Juneau Youth Services currently has an on-site staff of six mental health clinicians (five private providers are on contract). About 244 youth accessed mental health services through JYS in FY 2002 (and an on-contract psychiatrist currently serves 43 patients) less than what a former CBJ clinician estimates were served ten years ago.

A new initiative is being developed by the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indians of Alaska using a three-year planning grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration. The purpose of Circles of Care is to improve mental health programs throughout Southeast Alaska for Native youth to age 22 through inclusion of culturally-appropriate components, such as traditional healing methods. However, no direct services currently are being provided although for the past three years, a T&H-funded counselor has worked with an average of about 15 teens on a regular basis annually.

EMERGENCY SERVICES EXPANDED

There are greater resources today than ten years ago for kids who face crises, but a shelter for the estimated population of up to 100 homeless or street youth remains elusive. The Glory Hole does not house minors, nor does St.

Vincent's family housing or the AWARE shelter normally serve minors not with parents.

Cornerstone Residential Services provides 12 emergency beds – twice the number it did ten years ago. It serves up to 200 different individuals a year. It is the only emergency shelter in the state that has an on-site classroom which serves residential and community clients. However, most residents are relatively short-term and are referred by their parents or public authorities, as opposed to on-the-street youth seeking shelter.

The federally-funded Mobile Crisis Unit (operated by Juneau Youth Services) operates a van eight hours each evening which makes contact with youth on the streets, and provides in-home mediation and family skill development. The MCU made contacts with about 400 different youth during calendar year 2002.

Bartlett Regional Hospital, in conjunction with Juneau Alliance for the Mentally Ill, can provide emergency mental health assessments at the ER.

A safety hotline (463-1889) for anonymous reports of bullying or harm of students was established at JDHS in the fall of 2002.

RATES OF HARM REDUCED; ACCIDENTAL DEATHS UP

While fewer Juneau teens are intentionally taking their own lives, a greater number are losing their lives accidentally. Between 1991-1995, four teens committed suicide, but only two lost their lives through unintentional injury. Between 1996 and 2000, no teens committed suicide, but eight lost their lives in accidents, six of which involved motorized vehicles.

Reports of abuse and neglect have been stable. The five-year average on reports of harm to the Juneau office of the Division of Family and Youth

Services (on children through age 17), dropped just slightly in the most recent five-year reporting period (1997-2001) to 4.9 reports per 1,000 residents, compared to a rate of 5 per thousand in the previous reporting period.

DROP-OUT RATES DROP, BUT MORE ARE NATIVES

A smaller percentage of young in 2000 were without a high school diploma or General Education Diploma than ten years previous (3.8 % vs. 17.2%) and the percentage of “early leavers” at Juneau-Douglas High School (students who were enrolled in the previous year but did not return the following fall) also is declining. In the 1992-1993 school year, 8.9 percent did not return; in 2000-2001, 6.8 percent failed to re-enroll. It is likely that both positive trends can be attributed to the creation of the Yaakoosge’ Daakahiki Alternative High School which serves about 100 students, 16-21, who have left JDHS. However, the proportion of those early leavers who are of Alaska Native heritage is climbing, from 27 percent to 38 percent in the same period. (In contrast, Native students comprise about 18 percent of the JDHS student body.)

Meanwhile, the percent of children in Juneau having difficulty speaking English is multiplying (0.1% in 1990 to 2.2% in 2000). This shift is developing as Alaska approaches the 2004 requirement that high schoolers must pass a three-part exit exam in order to get a diploma. It could be an ominous trend inasmuch recent local data indicate that English-language learners generally perform more poorly than dominant-culture peers on high stakes exams, meaning that those who struggle with English may have a tougher time qualifying for a diploma.

SECURITY PRESENCE ON CAMPUS: STRETCHED

Juneau offers a relatively safe environment, yet campus security is inconsistent (in 1999, almost 6% of the high school -- or about 105 students -- reported taking a gun to school in the previous 30 days and 9% -- or about 150

students – said they used pot on campus in the same period). While the city funds four community resource officers for Juneau schools (compared to a single position ten years ago), one of those positions has remained unfilled, so three officers serve ten school sites. While the school district funds a truancy officer, no security positions are funded by the district or the city for school facilities.

SOCIO-ECONOMICS: MORE POOR; HIGH-COST HOUSING

Juneau has a relatively high per capita personal income (\$34,230, which is 4th in the state and 115 percent of the Alaska average), but its growth has been slower than the national average. And, while the Alaska minimum wage recently rose from \$5.65 to \$7.15 an hour, Juneau is the 9th most costly urban area in the U.S. A “living wage” in Juneau has been estimated (by Housing First) to be at least \$13 an hour. Most unskilled jobs for young people (retail, food service) start at \$8-\$9 per hour. A two-bedroom apartment or single-family home costs more in Juneau than in any other sizable Alaska city. While the number of units of low-income housing has increased in the last decade, those rents soon will go up due to adjustments of federal guidelines.

While Denali Kid Care, established four years ago, has provided expanded access to health care for poor children, a greater proportion of children in Juneau live below poverty (7.7% vs. 8.1%) than they did ten years ago. Meanwhile, recent local data show that kids from low socio-economic status tend to be the worst performers on standardized tests.

TEEN BIRTH RATES DOWN

While teen birth rates for girls 15-19 have dropped by nearly one-third (54.2 per thousand between 1991-1993, to 36.9 in 1998-2000) the percent of children living in single-parent households was greater in 2000 than ten years earlier (20.1% vs. 23%).

A PLETHORA OF RECENT RESOURCES

Certainly, there are expanded opportunities for young people since the MTFY was created a decade ago. Newly developed supports and opportunities include:

- “After-school” court, Fridays at 3 p.m.; operated by District Court Judge Peter Froehlich, adjudicates tobacco and alcohol offenses which could not be dealt with by Juvenile Probation; processes 10-20 youth per week; established 1997.
- Alaska Scholars Program offers four years of free tuition at any University of Alaska campus for high school students who graduate in the top ten percent of their class; established 2000.
- Bartlett Regional Hospital Mental Health Unit, provides emergency assessments and six beds for treatment; usually serves adults only, but can accommodate youth with one-on-one staffing; established 1994. A clinician from the Juneau Alliance for the Mentally Ill can do an emergency mental health assessment for youth at Bartlett, but provides ongoing services only for those 18 and older.
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters school mentoring, serves 78 students in nine Juneau schools; established 1998.
- Boys & Girls Club, established in 2000, served 522 primarily low-income youth in 2002 (mostly in the 10-12 age group).
- Child Advocacy Center, operated by Catholic Community Services, offering a safe, culturally-sensitive environment where children and non-

offending parents are interviewed and receive services in cases of child sexual and physical abuse.

- Children of Incarcerated Parents Project, operated by Catholic Community Services, provides support to minors whose parents are in jail.

- College Connection, an agreement between the Juneau School District and the University of Alaska Southeast Juneau permits about 70 high school students each semester to take college classes for high school credit; established in school year 1999-2000.

- Early Scholars, with University of Southeast financial support, serves about 25 students of Alaska Native heritage annually in a college-oriented curriculum supervised by a JDHS teacher; established 1996.

- Family Resource Center, operated by Catholic Community Services in cooperation with other agencies, located at St. Vincent's de Paul, provides parenting and life skills classes, counseling and case management, as well as after-school/weekend/summer programs for children and homework supervision for homeless children. Free weekly pediatric clinic.

- 4-H expansion from 65 leaders serving 315 youth to 110 leaders serving 605 youth.

- Healthy Families Dads' Program, operated by Catholic Community Services, teaches new, young dads responsibility and provides structured opportunities to learn how to care for an infant or to do things with children.

- High school construction in the valley approved, planning for which is proceeding; to serve 1050 students; tentatively slated to open in fall, 2006.

- Juneau Youth Court, involving 18 trained youth advocates who set sentences for peers who plead guilty to various shoplifting, property, and minor-in-possession crimes; established 2000; about 40 cases will be processed in FY 2003.

- Peer mediation services at the high school and several other schools; the Family Mediation Center offers family and victim-offender mediation.

- Mobile Crisis Unit, operated by Juneau Youth Services, provides transportation, crisis intervention, in-home mediation, and food and water to kids on the street; made 2350 contacts in calendar '02 to about 400 different youth, established in 2001.

- Recreation expansion such as the addition of ball fields at Dimond Park and at 16-Mile Glacier Highway and the development of private, non-profit leagues or clubs for soccer, sailing, softball, baseball, basketball, swimming, hockey, and performing arts, as well as:

- Several playgrounds have been re-modeled and made safer.

- Pipeline Skate Park, opened thanks to the initiative and fund-raising of high school students in the former Phoenix program; established 1998.

- The Rock Dump, a privately-owned, for-profit climbing wall; established 2002. A climbing wall also was constructed at the Zach Gordon Teen Center.

- The UAS Student Activities Center (also includes a climbing wall).

- Treadwell Ice Rink, funded by the city and other donors; established 2003.

- Scouting has expanded. Boys Scouts served nearly 900 boys in 2002 and about 500 local girls are in the Girl Scouts; 120 of them in the middle school age-range.

- Students for Social Responsibility, involving about 60 students, provide peer mediation, leadership opportunities, community service projects, and facilitation services at JDHS; established 1996. For the last two years these students have worked closely with the JDHS Site Council to promote “positive climate” initiatives at the high school.

- Teen Family Center, staffed by one person, funded by Catholic Community Services and housed at the Zach Gordon Teen Center, provides support and to teen parents and their children; established 1999.

- Teen Health Center, operating in the school district’s Marie Drake building under a cooperative agreement of the district, Southeast Regional Health Corporation, the City and Borough of Juneau and the State of Alaska Division of Public Health, which served nearly 1,100 visits during school year 01-02, providing initial services, education, and referrals associated with mental health, physical health, and reproductive health; established 1993-1994 (414 visits during first year of operation).

- Tlingit & Haida Youth Leadership program emerged this year and involves about 30 local Native youth.

- University of Alaska Southeast expansion of two-and-four-year degree programs, including Preparing Indigenous Teachers for Alaska Schools; established in 2000.

- Youth Activities Grant, provides 1/2 of 1% of sales tax revenues, or about \$250,000 per year to support various youth-related activities and an additional \$200,000 to school activities, established 1995.

- Young Alaskans Building Affordable Housing, sponsored by the Southeast Guidance Association, Tlingit & Haida Regional Housing Authority, and the Southeast Regional Resource Center, serving 14 youth, ages, 16-25, who earn their GED and access social services while learning construction skills for a minimum wage and an educational stipend of \$4,725; established 1999.

This report is being released in conjunction with preparation for the Youth Action Fair and Community Summit, April 4, 2003. Its purpose is to highlight needs of and opportunities for young people in our community and to acknowledge the 10th anniversary of the Mayor's Task Force on Youth. For more information on the sources of data for this report, contact author Laury Scandling, JDHS liaison to the MTFY, 523-1567.