

Family Connection

**Community Multi-Year
Strategic Plan**

FY 2013 - FY 2017
(July 1, 2012 - June 30, 2017)

Plan Cover Sheet

County: Haralson Region: 1

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I. Community Strategic Planning Process

Data Collection Methods

The Community Strategic Planning process began with the creation of the Community Assessment Team in April of 2011. This Team was responsible for making key decisions about and carrying out the community assessment process. The CA Team was composed of 16-20 collaborative and other community members representing eleven agencies and organizations and two members of the business community. They met a total of eight times between May 16 and September 28. Members of this committee were very involved with all decisions guiding the assessment process, and also carried out the majority of the assessment instruments. Organizations represented were:

- Local CLCP (Certified Literate Community Program)
- Dept. of Juvenile Justice
- Haralson County School System
- Haralson County Sheriff's Department
- Haralson County Development Authority and Haralson County Chamber of Commerce
- Higgins General Hospital
- Bremen City Schools
- State Senator Bill Heath's office
- Juvenile Court Judge Mark Murphy's office
- DFACS
- Local behavioral health community

All told there were more than twenty individual persons that took part in the meetings of the CA Team with an average attendance of ten persons. As a result of their work the Community Assessment Team approved, developed, and implemented instruments for use in assessing community opinion regarding the most pressing challenges and issues for families and children in Haralson County. All forms of community assessment were to be completed and reported on by the end of September, 2011. This goal was met and the results of this study were presented to the collaborative on Thursday, October 15, 2011,

at its annual meeting.

The most important decisions of the CA Team were to create a timeline of tasks and decide how to collect and report opinion data, develop the instruments, and implement them. The collaborative coordinator had the responsibility of gathering statistical data, mostly as it relates to opinion data, then to match the data together and prepare a presentation and reports for the collaborative, our local authorities, and for use as the basis for information in the Five-Year Community Strategic Plan.

The CA Team decided that the following methods would be used to collect opinion data. A community survey was included simply because the organization has not done one since 2003.

- 1. Focus Groups**
- 2. Key Leader Interviews**
- 3. Key Informant Interviews**
- 4. Community Survey**

The CA Team reviewed instruments used in the last community assessment from 2009, as well as instruments used in other communities, and using mostly revised or combined instruments started the community assessment process in July, 2011. The survey that was used was virtually the same as the one used in 2003, as a review of the document and results indicated that this instrument did a very good job of providing useful data.

Focus Groups Summary:

Focus groups consisted of a total of 83 participants, ages 16 to 93, of which 65% were female/35% male. Race breakdown was 88% white/9% black/3% Hispanic. Focus groups were facilitated by the collaborative coordinator with at least one member from the CA Team present to assist and take notes. ***Note: Approximately one-half of the individuals represent families that have some service connection to one or more collaborative partners.*** The following groups were convened by community assessment team members for focus groups:

- GED class at West Georgia Technical College
- Alternative School Students from Bremen School System
- Senior Citizens (Tallapoosa)
- Head Start parents

- Higgins Hospital employees
- Business leaders from Chamber of Commerce, Educated Workforce Team

Questions asked were:

A. - Group members were shown a small sampling of community statistics and asked which of the statistics they found to be most disturbing.

B. - What do you think the top 3 priorities should be for action by the community?

C. - Which of the top 3 issues that you indicated do you think the community and its services can have the most positive effect on?

Key Interviews: (key leaders and community informants)

Interviews were scheduled and completed by members of the Community Assessment Team. Interview subjects included 22 top agency and school administrators, key business leaders, and elected officials in Haralson County. Specifically they represented both school systems, DFCS, Dept. of Health, mayors of cities, police departments, county government, and other organizations. In addition, 20 line staff from many organizations were interviewed. They were shown a one page compilation of statistics about our county, and asked one simple question.

Question: From your perspective what are the most important issues/challenges facing the families and children in Haralson County?

Community Survey:

Nine locations were chosen for surveys to be filled out throughout the county. These were locations that serve our at-risk populations such as Tallatoona Community Action Program, Haralson County Sheriff's Department, Community Health, and others. The group also decided to put this instrument on Survey Monkey. This made it very convenient to get opinion data from agency/school staff, and from individuals using computers at the local libraries. A total of 306 community members and staff line personnel filled out the community survey. The respondents broke down into demographics as follows:

- Male 15%/Female 85%
- Ages: Under 18=3%, 18-24=7%, 25-36=23%, 37-64=65%, 65-up=2%
- African American=3%, white=95%, other=2%
- Nearly 70% of respondents have lived in Haralson Co. for 10+ years, 11% for 6-

10 years.

- **32%** from Bremen, **18%** from Buchanan, **29%** from Tallapoosa, and **6%** or less from each of the communities of Corinth, Steadman, Draketown, Buncombe, Felton and Waco.
- **2%** are now attending high school, **6%** did not complete high school, **21%** completed high school, **1%** are now attending GED classes, **8%** completed GED, **3%** are attending technical college, **6%** are technical college graduates, **2%** are attending 4-year college/university, **14%** are graduates of 4-year college/univ., **37%** have graduate/professional degrees.
- Community survey completers came from Bremen City Schools and Haralson County Schools districts and represented every community in the county in direct proportion to the distribution of population.
- Respondents were asked one question, which was, “In the past 3 years to what extent have you, or anyone else you know living in Haralson County, been directly affected by any of the following issues?” (Please check all that apply). Then they were asked to rate 38 specific conditions in terms of the following choices; no problem, minor problem, major problem. Items on the survey reflect the 5 areas of community concern: healthy children, children ready to start school, children succeeding in school, stable/self-sufficient families, and strong communities.

Sources of Data

The most up to date statistical data regarding social, health, economic, and education conditions in Haralson County was gathered by the collaborative coordinator from the following sources:

- Kids Count
- Georgia Department of Labor
- Governor’s Office of Student Achievement
- Haralson County Department of Juvenile Justice
- Department of Family and Children Services
- U.S. Census Bureau

- American Community Survey (2009)
- Haralson Co. Schools/Bremen City Schools Websites
- Georgia Student Health Survey (FY 2010)
- GASTATS.UGA.EDU

Choosing Priorities and Developing Strategies

A presentation of statistical and opinion data gathered by the community assessment team was made to the entire collaborative at its annual meeting on October 15, 2011. In addition to other important generally accepted demographic information such as population, ethnicity, and various economic factors, the presentation included information from all five areas of focus by the Georgia Family Connection Partnership. These areas are: Healthy Children, Children Ready for School, Children Succeeding in School, Safe/Stable Families, and Strong Communities. After considering the information that was presented the collaborative was given the responsibility of deciding which issues were most appropriate for action. Three broad ideas emerged as being the desired primary areas of focus for the five-year community strategic plan. They are *School Success, Workforce Readiness, and Stable Families*.

Development of these broad ideas into specific issues that could be included in the Five-year Community Strategic Plan was handed over to strategy teams who would consider and decide on priority focus populations, benchmarks, development of strategies, etc. The collaborative already had two active strategy teams in place to take the process and develop the more specific “bones” for the strategic plan. These teams are the Safe and Stable Families Strategy Team, and the Workforce Development Strategy Team. The Safe and Stable Families Team consists of 25-30 members from the community representing DFACS, DJJ, Bremen City and Haralson County schools, the Community Health Department, local behavioral health providers, and the juvenile court system. The Workforce Readiness Team is comprised of 15-20 members of the business community, personnel from the two public school systems, and West Georgia Technical College.

II. Community Description and Summary of Issues

Verbal Picture of County

Haralson County is a rural county in extreme west Georgia, which is very well connected to Atlanta and Birmingham, Alabama via I-20 (east and west), and Columbus and Chattanooga, Tennessee via Hwy 27 (north and south). This proximity to major economic areas is seen as one of the most prominent positive geographic/economic features of this county. However, just as many rural counties experience, Haralson County continues to have rising numbers of families living in poverty, declining but with still a high number (30%) of citizens over age 25 without a high school diploma, below state average high school graduation rates, a high unemployment rate, and inadequate infrastructure to support new industry and jobs.

On the positive side the area is characterized by relatively low crime rates, convenient and low cost post-secondary education/job skills acquisition opportunities at West Georgia Technical College, access to quality healthcare and assessment services with Higgins General Hospital in Bremen and Tanner Medical Center in Carrollton just twelve miles away, public schools systems that have met or are very close to meeting AYP standards and have strong leadership and faculties, and better than state average healthy birth weights, births to teens, and other factors.

In 2010 Haralson County had a total population of 28,780. This represents a total growth of 12% from a total of 25,680 in 2000. Georgia grew at a rate of 18% for the same time period. Population growth for Haralson has slowed from a gain of 16% during 1990-2000. Twenty-six percent of the population was under 18 years and fourteen percent was 65 years and older. The number of children ages 0 thru 4 continues to follow the national trend downward as in 2000 Haralson County children of that age group accounted for 10% of the population. The 2010 census revealed a 1% decline in percentage. This age group has been shrinking as far back as 1940. (All population data come from U.S. Census Bureau and 2009 American Community Survey).

Since 2000 the percentage of white citizens has declined from 93% to 91.7%, the African American population has grown 1% from 5% to almost 6%. Other populations are growing, albeit very slowly, with Hispanic population growing the most rapidly with a 50% increase from .5% to 1%.

The fastest growing segments of population related to age is persons over 65 (% doubling since 1940 from 6.5 to 13.8%) and persons 45-64 (which also has shown growth every decade since 1940), growing by about 75% from 14.7% in 1940 to about 24% presently. The 20-45 segment remains stable (has only varied from 31% to 35% since 1940) at about 34% while all other age groups show shrinkage (percent) at a regular rate

over the decades since 1940. These percentages are very similar to the pattern in Georgia as a whole, as well as the nation.

The characteristics of residency for citizens of Haralson County can be described as stable. In 2009, 84 percent of the people at least one year old living in Haralson County were living in the same residence one year earlier; 7 percent had moved during the past year from another residence in the same county, 8 percent from another county in the same state, 1 percent from another state, and less than 0.5 percent from abroad. (2009 ACS) On the Community Survey 85% of the respondents indicated that they had lived in Haralson County for 10 or more years. Less than 25% of the population growth during the last decade is from in-migration according to census estimates.

Current Economy and Workforce: This community has been hit especially hard economically with downsizing and closings of many industries over the past 10 years. A large part of our workforce was in construction during the boom years of 1995-2005 and many of those jobs were lost in the housing bust of the past few years. Total employment (jobs in county, 4th quarter, 2010) is 7,284, representing a 10 percent decrease from peak employment of 8149 in 2007. Employment opportunities in Haralson in the manufacturing/industry sector have made a significant switch from the traditional low-wage/low-skill jobs of the 1900's to the higher education/higher skills jobs of the 21st century.

In January of 2011 the unemployment rate exceeded 12%. This rate has fluctuated between 10.5 and 12% since 2007 and is currently about 11%. This represents a higher percentage than the state at about 10%. Thirty-one percent of the citizens aged 25 and up do not have a high school diploma or GED. Only nine percent have a post-secondary education. The most highly educated typically work in the areas of public school education, health and social services, and management in the private sector (not including self-employed). Twenty percent of all employed persons work in these services while about 70% work in manufacturing, retail, construction, utilities, and other categories. Approximately 10% of workers are self-employed. According to the 2009 American Community Survey 54% of Haralson working age adults (that are working) are employed outside of Haralson County.

A recent economic community assessment done for the Haralson County Development Authority revealed that local industries/manufacturers have to screen a high number of applicants to find suitable workers from the Haralson pool to fill "line" positions, and that they frequently hire from outside the county. They also have difficulty finding "local talent" to fill management positions.

Haralson County has a pending designation as a "Workforce Ready" Certified Community.

The median family income (ACS) for Haralson County in 2009 was \$38,290 versus \$31,656 in 2000. This represents an average gain of 2.7% per year. The rate of inflation in Georgia averaged 5.9% per year during the same period (indexmundi.com). The median average income for families in Georgia is \$47,500 (2010).

School Success: Haralson County continues to suffer some of the effects from a pre-1990s dependency on low wage-low skill jobs that required no high school completion. It was a time when a person without a diploma could go to work in one of the local plants and make a decent wage for family. In large part, the value of a high school diploma was not fully recognized until the area started bringing in new industries (replacing primarily the textile industries) with jobs that require high school or GED completion.

The total public school enrollment in Haralson County was 5579 in 2011 (School system websites). For that same year Head Start enrollment was 45 (Head Start records) and state supported Pre-K enrollment was 310 in 2010, 164 of which were from low income families. (KidsCount).

From 2002 through 2010 the aggregate graduation rate (combination of Bremen High School and Haralson County High School) went from 58% in FY2003 to 81% in FY2010. The state average for 2010 was 81%. While Bremen High School routinely graduates 90+% of students from year to year the bulk of graduation improvement has occurred at Haralson County High School. In FY2010 the graduation rate was 78%, which represents a cycle of improving graduation rates from less than 50% in 2000 to the 2010 high of 78%. For FY2011 the rate took a downward turn to 64.2%. Polk County High Schools had a similar track history with a decline to 65% for 2011. A part of the difference appears to be in the areas of “students with disabilities” for both counties. Haralson went from a graduation rate of this subgroup of 44.2% in FY2010 to 25% in FY2011, while Polk went from 45.2% to 23.9%. The state experienced an uptick of graduations by students with disabilities from 41.4% to 44.4% for the same period.

The rate of graduation for economically disadvantaged students at Haralson Co. High has varied from 75% in FY2008, to 60% in FY 2009, to 67% in FY2010. For 2011 55% of economically disadvantaged students graduated on time.

Reading skills are one of the biggest indicators of a student’s future success. Haralson County has a continued history of improvement in scores on the Reading CRCT for its students. A critical junction in the life of a student occurs at grade four when a child is expected to be able to “read to learn” rather than “learn to read.” For the past three years about 8% of 3rd grade students in Haralson schools did not meet state standards as identified in the CRCT tests administered by the school systems, which mirrors the state average. About 20% of Haralson students with disabilities and 14% of students that are

economically disadvantaged did not meet state standards. That is some better than the state as a whole with 25% of students with disabilities and 16% of students that are economically disadvantaged not meeting state standards.

Of note is the trend for Bremen City Schools to have increasing numbers of economically disadvantaged students. In 2004 Bremen City Schools had 16% of its students qualifying for free and reduced price lunches. That percentage has grown to 26% as of the FY 2011 school year. While this number is significantly below the state average of 56% it represents a large shift in the traditionally strong economic makeup for the school system, and may indicate the need for additional services to help “at-risk” students in a successful school experience. During the 1990’s the percent was in the low to mid 20’s.

Poverty Indicators: Keeping in mind that the population of Haralson County only rose 12% during the past decade, it is clear that Haralson County has lost a lot of ground in terms of economically sound families. For example, the number of children living at or below the federal poverty guidelines increased from 1254 to 2030 from 2000 to 2010, a jump of 62%. The number children that qualify for free or reduced priced lunches rose steadily from 1942 to 2833, increase of 46%. The average number of families in the county receiving food stamps rose from 558 to 750, growing by 35%.

- Additionally, 42% of female householders/no children, and 56% of female householders with children meet the poverty guidelines (ACS).
- Childbearing behavior has a great influence on whether young women complete their high school education and begin the process of personal economic development through job training and occupational development. Opportunities are scant for young women who become pregnant during high school years, and continue childbirth without at least a high school education.
- During 2009 eighty children were born to mothers without a high school or GED completion, or 22% of all live births in the county. This number fluctuates over the past 10 years from a high of 142 births in 2002 to a low of 78 in 2008.
- On average in Haralson County, since 1994, approximately fifty-five teen births (15-19) occur per year along with about 25 pregnancies for girls ages 15-17.
- Second births to mothers under the age of 20 happen in Haralson County at a rate of 22/year on average (Kids Count).
- During 2008 there were 144 births to unwed mothers of all ages (gastats.uga.edu).
- In 2009 there were 10,766 occupied housing units in Haralson County. Twenty-seven percent of Haralson County residents lived in rented housing, 25% of all residents lived in mobile homes (Haralson County has the fewest restrictions on

mobile home communities that any other county west of Atlanta.).

- Eight percent of all households had no phone, and 5% of households had no access to private transportation (2010 Census).

Child Abuse and Neglect:

According to www.gastats.uga.edu in 2010 there were twenty-two cases of substantiated child abuse, eighty-eight substantiated cases of child neglect in 2010, CASA of Polk/Haralson reports that in 2010 there were seventy-five children in foster care.

Youth Behaviors and Concerns:

It is difficult to define risky behaviors by teens in a county where statistics for behaviors such as smoking, using illegal drugs, using legal drugs illegally, and alcohol abuse by teens are not routinely collected and monitored. We were able to ascertain from the Georgia Student Health Survey (2010) that school age children are willing to tell us what their risk behaviors are:

- Local DJJ reports and stats from gastats.uga.edu reveal that in 2010 there were 23 admissions to RYDC, and 172 juvenile cases adjudicated (103 status offenses and 69 delinquent offenders)

Drug Abuse (students grades 8-12)

- 15% used alcohol in past 30 days
- 15% used tobacco in past 30 days
- 7% used marijuana and other drugs in past 30 days
- 20-30% reported that drugs of all kinds are easy to get

School Success (GA Student Health Survey)

- 19% reported that they do not feel safe at school
- 16% reported that they'd been bullied
- 20% reported that they thought about dropping out of school
- In 2010, 14% of students missed 15 or more days of school
- In 2010, about 12% of all students in HC Schools qualified as homeless under the McKinney Vento Act.

- Approximately 30% of students did not graduate high school on time with their peers

Sexual Behaviors (gastats.uga.edu and KidsCount)

- On the average since 2000 there have been 14 cases of teen STDs recorded each year
- Kids Count numbers tell us that on average in Haralson County, since 1994, approximately fifty-five teen births (15-19) occur per year, as well as about 25 births to teens aged 15-17

Adult Crime:

As in most communities across the state property crimes comprise the majority of crimes in Haralson County. Since 2000 an average of 700 property crimes are committed each year (642 in 2010). Haralson County reports that during the same ten year period that an average of 130 crimes against persons are committed. Burglary and theft charges made up about 65% of all crimes. Twelve percent of all charges were related to assault, battery, and terroristic threats.

Most Important Issues

Focus Groups Summary-

Group members were asked to tell the facilitator what they thought were the most challenging issues facing families in Haralson County. Responses indicated the following concerns in common for 3 or more groups:

- Poverty/Families lacking enough money for basic needs
- Transportation to work/school/family appointments
- Effects of drug abuse on community
- Unemployment
- Teen pregnancy
- Drug abuse

Q.A. - Group members were shown a small sampling of community statistics and asked

which of the statistics they found to be most disturbing. The results were:

- Children living in poverty
- 3rd grade reading- CRCT
- Students graduating on time
- Children absent from school >15 days
- Birth to teens 15-19
- 2nd births to mothers >20 years of age

Q.B. - What do you think the top 3 priorities should be for action by the community?

- Births to teens 15-19
- Adult education attainment
- Effects of drug abuse on community

Q.C. - Which of the top 3 issues that you indicated do you think the community and its services can have the most positive effect on?

- Births to teens 15-19
- Adult education attainment
- Drug abuse

Key Interviews: (key leaders and community informants)

Question: From your perspective what are the most important issues/challenges facing the families and children in Haralson County?

Most common answers in order of most often mentioned were:

- Financially/structurally weak families/unengaged parents
- Unemployment

- Cycle of poverty
- Lack of parental involvement in schools
- Teen and adult drug abuse
- Teen pregnancy/unprepared young mothers
- Transportation for family appointments, school, work, etc.
- More affordable health care options

Community Survey:

Respondents were asked one question, which was, “In the past 3 years to what extent have you, or anyone else you know living in Haralson County, been directly affected by any of the following issues?” Then they were asked to rate 38 specific conditions in terms of the following choices; no problem, minor problem, major problem. Items on the survey reflect the 5 areas of community concern: healthy children, children ready to start school, children succeeding in school, stable/self-sufficient families, and strong communities. Reported here are the top two-thirds of issues rated major problem.

- Lack of employment opportunities 75%
- Illegal drug use by adults 67%
- Illegal drug use by teens 55%
- Access to affordable health insurance 54%
- Alcohol use by adults 54%
- Tobacco use by teens 54%
- Tobacco use by adults 54%
- Alcohol use by teens 53%
- Lack of parental involvement in child development/school 52%
- Adult criminal activity 50%
- Adult prescription drug abuse 50%
- Teen pregnancy 50%

• Absenteeism in school	46%
• Child abuse and neglect	45%
• Lack of food for family	43%
• Juvenile criminal activity	42%
• School dropout rate	36%
• Domestic violence	36%
• Adult literacy	36%
• Transportation	33%

Highly Prevalent Issues Identified by the Community Assessment Process

From the opinion data that was gathered it was ascertained that the following issues and concerns were the most prevalent among opinion participants and across all assessment methods.

1. People are first and foremost concerned about the economy generally, and specifically for individual families. Many perceive that there are not ample job opportunities in our immediate area, that there is rampant unemployment, low confidence in our workforce by employers, and that poverty is a growing problem in our county. (Relates to Strong Community, Safe/Self-Sufficient Families)

2. People are of the opinion that a large number of families are not strong. They believe that many parents are not taking full responsibility for their families, i.e. encouraging their children to succeed in school, able to meet more than basic needs, not properly supervising children, etc. Further, that parent drug/alcohol abuse and domestic violence continue to be problems in many families. There are too many kids involved in deprivation hearings and foster care. (Relates to Stable/Self-Sufficient Families, Children Succeeding in School, Healthy Children, and Children Ready for School). The rates of child abuse and neglect, while lower than many communities, is still considered intolerable.

3. People believe that transportation is a big problem in our area. The local transit system is very limited in the type of services they offer. Many of our respondents believe that too many families do not have reliable transportation to work, to go to literacy classes, and to get to key family appointments.

4. People in Haralson County believe that teen pregnancy is a major problem.

(Relates to Children Succeeding in School, and Strong Community)

5. Participants agree that poor access to health care is a major problem. Many families do not have/can't afford health care insurance. The ER has become their health plan.

The opinion of community members is that the community can have the biggest impact on items 1, 2, and 4. For purposes of strategic planning it is felt that the community can set measurable outcomes/benchmarks associated with these items. Items 3 and 5 were deemed important issues that could be areas of advocacy for Haralson Family Connection Coalition.

Statistical Data that Supports the Highly Prevalent Issues as Determined by Community Assessment

The population of Haralson County has grown 12% during the period of 2000-2010. Yet the frequency of children living in families at or below poverty level has grown 62% (68% state, 83% Polk County). The frequency of children qualifying for free and reduced price lunches grew by 44% (53% state, 64% Polk County). The unemployment rate has been as high as 11.5% during the past year, and has most recently been hovering at 9.5 to 10%. Other than very recently it has not been under 10% since 2008. It is currently on par with the unemployment rate of the state. Fifty-four percent of single moms with children are living at or below the federal poverty guidelines. Increases in median incomes for families have increased from a median income of \$31,656 in 2000 to \$38,996 in 2010 (2% per year increase) have not been adequate to offset average consumer price increases of over six percent per year. The median income in Georgia was \$49,347 and for Polk County was \$38,646. In Haralson County at any given time there are from 250-350 youth ages 16-19 that are disconnected from education, the work force, and the community in general. Since this average amount has remained fairly constant over the years we can assume that there are an equal number of disconnected youth in the 20-25 at range. (This is important because the census only measures adults (aged 26 and up) when reporting the number of workforce age individuals don't have a GED or high school graduation.

Approximately 12-15% of our school children qualify for services under the McKinney-Vento Act. Thirty percent of the adult residents of Haralson County do not have a GED or HS diploma. The percentage of "disadvantaged students" that graduated from high school on time went from 67% in FY 2010 to 55% in 2011. In FY 2010 14.5% (9.7% state, 7.2% Polk County) of all children in our schools missed fifteen days or more of school. During 2009 eighty children (22% of all births) were born to mothers without a high school or GED. The state rate was 22.9%, and Polk County was 40.1%. During 2008 there were 144 births to unwed mothers of all ages.

Teen pregnancies/births threaten the viability of young women graduating on time with their peers. In Haralson County, on average, twenty-five pregnancies have occurred with teens aged 15-17 each year since 1994. In 2009 there were 26 pregnancies or 45.4/1000. In the state there were 31.3/1000, and in nearby Polk County there were 36.4/1000. On average since 1994 fifty-five births occur per year with teens aged 15-19. In 2009 there were 58 births to teens or 63.2/1000. The rate for the state in 2009 was 47.5/1000, and in Polk County the rate was 72.9/1000. On average about 25% of teen mothers have a second child before age 20 vs. about 22% for the state and about 22% for Polk County.

Last year there were between 75 and 100 kids in foster care in Haralson County at any given time. There were 88 substantiated cases of child neglect (12.2/1000) and 23 (3/1000) substantiated cases of child abuse. Polk County experienced child neglect at a rate of 17.7/1000, and child abuse at a rate of 8.2/1000.

Community Priorities

At the October meeting of the Haralson Family Connection Coalition, partner organizations designated three broad areas of focus that should be developed for inclusion in the strategic plan.

- School Success
- Stable Families
- Workforce Readiness

During the months of November through March aggregate information and summary material from the community assessment results was considered by our Safe and Stable Families and Workforce Readiness Strategy Teams. During the meetings of these strategy teams, specific issues and root causes were identified as the most important for the community to include in the strategic plan.

Many issues of importance came to light during the community assessment process. Obviously all areas of concern cannot be dealt with in the five-year community strategic plan. Our community suffers from issues such as a high poverty rate, higher than state average unemployment, high dropout rate, high teen pregnancy rates, and below state average in percent of population with a GED/HS completion. The collaboration, from the outset, was focused on issues that we can improve upon that will help strengthen families both economically and socially for the betterment of the community, and help provide our community with the highest possible caliber of worker for our community's

industries.

The primary issues that Haralson Family Connection Coalition decided to focus on are GED completion and workforce preparedness by youth and adults, attendance in school for students, and reduced frequency of child abuse/neglect and need for foster care services.

Issues specifically related to Safe/Stable Families and School Success, as it relates to children, were referred to the Safe and Stable Families Strategy Team and issues related to Workforce Readiness, as it relates to older youth and adults, were referred to the Workforce Readiness Strategy Team.

Reducing the teen pregnancy rate will not be a part of the plan for his five-year period. There are already many efforts in place by the school system to combat this issue. The strategy teams preferred to impact this group with efforts to help these young ladies finish their education, be ready for the workplace, and have good parenting habits; thus helping them find a productive path to well being and fulfillment as a parent and a community member. This should help reduce the enormous cost of adolescent child bearing in our county.

Workforce Readiness Strategy Team

The Workforce Readiness Strategy Team chose two populations of focus. There is a deep interest in helping “disconnected youth ages 16-24” to find their way toward a vision for themselves, to encourage them to finish school through the GED program, and to get workforce training (or equivalent) and move toward self-reliance, especially when children are present in the family. The results of the 2009 American Community Survey estimates that there 21.4% (284) of teens 16-19 were not engaged in educational or occupational pursuits. In the state that rate is 10.6% and for Polk County the rate was 13.1%. The dropout rate for Haralson County was reported as 18.7% for all residents ages 16-19. Polk County experienced a rate of 14.6 percent and Georgia was 8.8%. This subgroup will also include pregnant teens and young mothers who have dropped out of high school, as well as young mothers giving birth to a second child. The graduation rates for economically disadvantaged youth and youth with disabilities in Haralson County (at 56% for FY 2011) is well below the state rate and is represented by drop outs in this age range as well.

The second area of focus will be “adults aged 25-40 without a high school diploma or GED.” This is a critical group because it includes families with young children, is characterized by poor income potential, and represents a large portion of the current and developing workforce. Furthermore, this group is very likely to be consumers of various community/state resources available in Haralson County with a strong likelihood of continuing that path. This group has been included in many of our past strategic plans.

An emphasis on this age group should have an impact on the county's 30% of adults (age 26-up) that do not have a high school diploma or GED, compared to 20% for the state. Haralson County continues to improve the rate of adults with GED or high school diploma by an average of 7% per decade since 1940. Graduation rates have improved from 48% in 2006 to 81% in FY 2010. The FY 2011 rate, according to the new calculation method adopted by the state, is about 75-80%.

Safe and Stable Families

Because children aged 0-5 are still considered to be the most vulnerable people in the community the Safe and Stable Families Strategy Team wants to include this group of families in their target population. As the discussion continued and local information pointed to specific areas of the county where the most need for services are indicated (i.e. school attendance, unsubstantiated allegations of neglect/abuse, high numbers of disadvantaged and students with disabilities, etc.) , the group decided to serve the families with students attending Tallapoosa Primary School. At this school 36% of the students are in the Early Intervention Program (the highest of any school in the district)and are identified as children with disabilities who are at risk for poor performance in school. TPS students with disabilities and/or are economically disadvantaged experiences the highest rate of students missing more than 15 days of school that are 25% to 40% higher than the other primary or elementary schools in the district, and has a slightly higher rate of children qualifying for free and reduced price lunches. The Tallapoosa area has been identified by DFCS as one of the areas of Haralson that produces a high frequency of unsubstantiated complaints for neglect and abuse of children.

Of course, extra effort will be made to find these individual families and be sure that the "bevy" of services is provided. Already our collaborative has located new programs to bring to Haralson County to address our specific issues. The Job Corps program will assist young disconnected citizens to better themselves through attainment of GED and work skills, and West Georgia Technical College is offering a short term free continuing education certificate to help develop skills necessary for jobs in the industry sector. The Northwest Georgia SOC is providing access to the "Babies Can't Wait" program and the "SOCKS" program that helps link parent with children with disabilities to needed services.

Most of the conversation about families was about helping them to develop into safer environments for children, becoming more economically and socially self-sufficient, and parents encouraging and participating in their child's school success. There are members of the group that are interested in working on the issues of domestic/family violence and drug abuse by establishing, or re-establishing, community task forces to enhance awareness, bringing additional risk reduction programs to our county, and to work hand in hand with our community program providers and courts to reduce these behaviors.

Program gaps in our efforts include community access to acute and longer term in-home parenting skills training, a cohesive approach to training on fiscal management/development, availability of local apprenticeship training programs, and additional skills development / job acquisition pathways for people who want a skill but are not able to or interested in getting the GED.

III. Results for Children, Families, and Communities

Strategies and Benchmarks

Goal: Improved conditions for children and families in Haralson County

Disconnected Youth Ages 16-24

Provide 16-24 year-olds who are not in school and not working, or those at high risk, with an array of activities designed to assist them to attain the necessary skills and knowledge to become employable by offering them non-traditional schooling, training, and life skill development opportunities geared to their age and life situations.

Programs and activities will include access to adult literacy classes for purpose of GED completion, youth training/work programs, assistance with transportation to adult literacy classes, and access to post-secondary credit and non-credit training opportunities. The collaborative will seek support for increased opportunities with local industry for apprenticeships and training programs, and seek to create a mentoring program geared to this target group. At least one family member will be added to the strategy team and efforts will be made to keep them fully engaged in informing other families and providing feedback to the team.

Rationale:

Studies have clearly shown that a young people that do not complete at least a high school diploma are more likely to be unemployed, dependent on public assistance, and a member of the prison population. (from U.S. Department of Education and National Dropout Prevention Center and Network publications). In an article by Peter L. Benson and Gary Walker "The Five Promises" he states the following five fundamental resources as positive assets to youth development: Caring adults, safe places and structured activities, a healthy start for a healthy future, marketable skills, and opportunities to give back through service to one's community.

Target Group(s): 16-19 year-olds who are not in school and not working; high school students in eminent danger of dropping out

Benchmark Objective: Increase # of industries that include some form of preference for prospects with a valid Work Ready Certificate from zero in FY 2012 to six by end of FY 2017 (Data source: Educated Workforce Team-Chamber of Commerce. Note: meeting minutes)

Code: LD10

Indicator: Industry preference for workers with Work Ready Certification

Benchmark Objective: The percent of children living in poverty in Haralson County will decrease from 25% in 2010 to 22% in 2017 (Data source: Kids County,

gafcp.org, 2010)

Code: CS7

Indicator: Teens ages 16-19 not in school and not working

Benchmark Objective: Teens ages 16-19 not in school and not working from 20.9% in 2009 to 17.9% in FY2017 (Data source: Kids Count, gafcp.org, 2009)

Code: CS7

Indicator: Teens ages 16-19 not in school and not working

No High School Diploma or GED

Support adults aged 26-40 who do not have their high school diploma with an array of activities that will assist them in completion of the GED program and skills development/job acquisition.

Programs and activities will include efforts by our local Certified Literacy Community Program, computer based and classroom adult literacy instruction, local skills training programs, access to assistance with costs associated with training and education, and help with job acquisition skills.

Rationale:

Students who report that their parents did not graduate from high school read approximately three grade levels behind students with more educated parents. (?Left Behind: Six Million At-Risk Secondary Students,? Issue Brief, Alliance For Excellent Education, Revised November 2003). Nevertheless, regardless of parents? educational status, every major study has confirmed that involved parents who hold high aspirations for their children make the difference between success and failure. (Judith Martinez, ?Developing a Framework to Increase Parental Involvement in Schools,? National Center for School Engagement Presentation, March 4, 2004)

Target Group(s): Adults aged 26-40 without a high school diploma or GED

Benchmark Objective: Increase # of industries that include some form of preference for prospects with a valid Work Ready Certificate from zero in FY 2012 to six by end of FY 2017 (Data source: Educated Workforce Team-Chamber of Commerce. Note: meeting minutes)

Code: LD10

Indicator: Industry preference for workers with Work Ready Certification

Benchmark Objective: By the end of FY 2017 the percent of adults 25-up that do not have a GED or HS completion will be 20% vs. 30% in 2009 (Data source: American Community Survey, census.gov, 2009)

Code: SC1a

Indicator: - Adult educational attainment: High school graduate or higher

Benchmark Objective: The percent of children living in poverty in Haralson County will decrease from 25% in 2010 to 22% in 2017 (Data source: Kids County, gafcp.org, 2010)

Code: **CS7**

Indicator: Teens ages 16-19 not in school and not working

Families with Children that Attend Tallapoosa Primary School

Provide families with children attending Tallapoosa Primary School with an array of activities and services that enhance family stability, help provide a safe and nurturing environment for children, and foster public school readiness/success.

Types of programs and activities will include home visitation, fatherhood initiatives, assistance for parents of children with special needs, parenting education, substance abuse treatment, community literacy initiatives for adults, early childhood education, post-secondary job training, and children's health programs, child advocacy efforts, and activities offered by the local mental health community. New collaborative partners will be recruited. At least one family member will be added to the strategy team and efforts will be made to keep them fully engaged in informing other families and providing feedback to the team.

Rationale:

Children from birth through age 3 are most likely to be victims. In 2003, almost 25 of every 1,000 Georgia children in this age group were victims (Child Maltreatment 2003). Recent brain development research concludes that children who have positive, enriching experiences during early childhood can more readily develop the wiring in the brain that will need for abilities that are fundamental in later life and that families can benefit from access to a wide range of services and supports, including educational, health, mental health, family support and resources, social services, home visiting, and empowerment programs, which can assist in meeting the needs of young children. (Family Connection Partnership, Policy Practice Series)

Target Group(s): Families with children attending Tallapoosa Primary School.

Benchmark Objective: By the end of FY 2017 the percent of adults 25-up that do not have a GED or HS completion will be 20% vs. 30% in 2009 (Data source: American Community Survey, census.gov, 2009)

Code: **SC1a**

Indicator: - Adult educational attainment: High school graduate or higher

Benchmark Objective: Decrease % of students of Tallapoosa Primary School on free and reduced priced lunches from 70% in FY 2011 to 55% in FY 2017 (Data source: Kids Count, gafcp.org, 2010)

Code: **SC4**

Indicator: Poverty Status: Students eligible for free or reduced price meals

Benchmark Objective: The percent of children living in poverty in Haralson County will decrease from 25% in 2010 to 22% in 2017 (Data source: Kids County, gafcp.org, 2010)

Code: CS7

Indicator: Teens ages 16-19 not in school and not working

Benchmark Objective: Decrease the % of students at Tallapoosa Elementary School missing 15 or more days of school from 10.6 in FY 2011 to 7.5% by end of FY 2017 (Data source: Governor's Office of Student Achievement, gaosa.org, FY 2011)

Code: CS1

Indicator: Children absent more than 15 days from school

IV. Sustainability

Collaborative Development and Sustainability

Collaborative Description

The Haralson County collaborative actually began in 1992 as a meet-and-confer interagency council of representatives from the schools, state agencies, and concerned citizens. Shortly thereafter a board of directors was formed and established the Haralson Coalition for Children, Youth, and Families. In 1995 the Coalition partnered with the statewide Family Connection initiative and began implementing a framework of goals, benchmarks, and strategies into an annual operating plan. In 1998 the Coalition incorporated as a 501c(3) non-profit organization. In 1999, House Bill 920 was passed changing the Coalition's governance structure to that of a legislative authority. The formal name became the Haralson County Family Connection Authority, but to retain some recognition of its previous identity the organization began to do business as the Haralson Family Connection Coalition.

The board of directors for the authority meets quarterly. Our by-laws provide for the annual election of a nine-member executive/finance committee, which also meets quarterly, but communicates more frequently as necessary through called meetings and group email facilitated by the Coalition Coordinator. The executive committee is comprised of four officers that include a chairperson, a vice-chair, a treasurer, a secretary, and five executive members at large. The executive committee serves as the finance committee and the nominations committee, and effectively gives supervision to the coalition coordinator. Following the October meeting of the collaborative when decisions were made about the issues to be included in the plan the Coalition created two new strategy teams. They are the Safe and Stable Families and Workforce Readiness strategy teams. These teams are scheduled to meet monthly and were given the responsibility to complete development of the focus populations, results, and benchmarks to be included in the five-year community strategic plan. They will also prepare reports for the collaborative at its regular meetings.

Due to the absence of a coordinator during most of FY2008, the Coalition was reorganized under a contract during FY 2009 with specific deliverables focused on the strategic planning process, and to receive specific technical assistance in finance and planning from the GFPC staff. Upon completion of the reorganization plan the collaborative accomplished all of the milestones which were set forth in the reorganization plan. In July of 2008 The Bremen City Board of Education began serving

as the fiscal agent for the collaborative.

The Haralson Family Connection Coalition has been very successful at bringing people together from the following agencies and organizations in this rural county; Department of Family and Children Services, Department of Juvenile Justice, Haralson County Health Department, public and private behavioral health, Georgia Department of Labor, Haralson County Board of Health, Juvenile Courts, Haralson County and Bremen City Schools, West Georgia Technical College (technical programs of study, adult literacy, and WIA), Chamber of Commerce, Head Start, West Georgia Bar Association, Cooperative Extension Service, Housing Authorities in Bremen, Buchanan, and Tallapoosa; Higgins General Hospital, CASA, Bremen Food and Clothing Bank, Haralson County Sheriff's office, all local police departments, West Georgia Counseling and Educational Services, mayors from Bremen, Buchanan, Tallapoosa, and Waco, the Haralson County Commission Board, State Legislative Representatives, WIN Georgia, Higgins General Hospital, Willowbrooke Center, Tallatoona CAP, L.A.M.P. (CLCP), and the business and the faith communities. They participate as board members, on strategy team and committees, or as interested parties to make sure the work of the collaborative is done.

The Coalition has much room for improvement in terms of effectiveness and efficiency. More input and direct involvement from the faith community and the families that are served is necessary for the future. Increased information about the collaborative to, and interest from, the business community and the community at large is desired so that all citizens of the county have a stake in creating opportunity for all families to be self-sustaining, strong, and healthy.

Vision Statement

The vision of the Haralson Family Connection Coalition is a community of strong, self-sufficient families in which all children and teens will be healthy, free of abuse, neglect and pregnancy, able to value education and succeed in school, and who will become productive citizens. Adults will take responsibility for their families including securing gainful employment in order to meet their needs. Parents will work in partnership with their schools and communities to ensure that each child reaches his or her full potential. Senior adults will have adequate resources and needed services to reside in their homes in safety and will be productive members of society.

Mission Statement

As a collaborative community based partnership, the Haralson Family Connection Coalition is committed to building a strong base of community support to assist families and their children in becoming responsible, productive citizens able to contribute to society. The Coalition will work toward, and become responsible for the development

and coordination of community based prevention and intervention strategies that lend themselves to positive outcomes for families, children, and senior adults. Outcomes will focus on child health, school readiness, school performance, family support and economic self-sufficiency. The Coalition will assist communities in creating local solutions to their problems through sharing responsibilities and resources.

Family Engagement

During this year the collaboration will complete the Family Engagement Assessment instrument provided by GaFCP staff, and work with GaFCP technical assistance providers to develop and begin implementation of a Family Engagement plan.

Our collaborative currently has one family board member who is engaged in the activities of the organization.

Strategy Resource Development and Sustainability

Strategy Sustainability

The Haralson Family Connection collaborative has talked about adding home visiting services to the strategy for families of children ages 0-5. This type of service has not been offered to our community in several years. The emphasis of this strategy is to help provide more sensible, stable, and consistent parenting. We need to add home visitation services like Parents as Teachers, or some similar program, to improve family function and early learning. We will need to identify a partner in the collaborative to manage the program, a grant to fund service start-up, and a clear understanding of the referral network for the program.

Transportation continues to be a concern for folks that want to attend adult literacy classes. We have identified a small grant to pilot a transportation reimbursement program for students who will help with transportation issues of those who are at risk due to this deficiency. If this program is helpful we will seek out further grant moneys to continue this program. We will approach local foundations for grant funding.

We are in the process of implementing two new programs to our Educated Workforce initiative. They are (1)the Job Corps to help our disconnected youth and (2)the Manufacturing Workforce Training Program offered by our local technical college to help improve the quality of our current workforce, and to develop new workers. Neither program requires local funding.

Strategy Team Description and Communication

The Educated Workforce Strategy Team will be primarily responsible for sustaining the efforts of the collaborative regarding its “Workforce Development” focus. This is a group of 15-20 community members from Bremen City Schools, Haralson County Schools, West Georgia Technical College, Workforce Investment, Haralson County Chamber of Commerce, H.C. Development Authority, L.A.M.P. (CLCP), and representatives from local businesses (primarily industrial). The chairman of this committee is the Executive Director of the H.C. Development Authority. She will be responsible for keeping the collaborative up to date by reporting specific results at the regularly scheduled quarterly collaborative meetings.

The Safe and Stable Families Strategy Team will be primarily responsible for sustaining the efforts of the collaborative with respect to our “Stable Families” focus. This is a group of 25-30 community members from DFACS, Dept. of Health, DJJ, Juvenile Court, Bremen City Schools, Haralson County Schools, local behavioral health providers, Bremen P.D., Haralson Co. Sheriff’s Dept., CASA, office of chief magistrate, and the office of the district attorney. A selected member of this group will be asked to report the specific results at the regularly scheduled quarterly collaborative meetings.

The collaborative coordinator will keep records of these reports to be used in PR for the general community and communication with community leaders.