

FOREST GROVE

Together For Children Comprehensive Community Plan 2008-2014



The Forest Grove community has grown more slowly than the rest of the county in the past decade, growing by almost 30% in the 1990s, from 13,559 in 1990 to 17,524 in 2000. This compares with a county-wide growth rate of 43% during the same period.

Forest Grove continues to serve as a hub for the agricultural economic base of the area, which can be seen in the community profile.

There has been a shift in the ethnic and racial make up of Forest Grove since 1990, when 90% of the population was white. By 2000 just over 82% of the population was white. The Latino population in Forest Grove, as in much of the county, showed tremendous growth in the decade of the 1990s, growing from just over 9% of the population to over 16% of the population in 2000.

FOREST GROVE

27.5% of the population is under the age of 18, a higher percentage than for the county as a whole (26.8%). The majority of children live in 2 parent households, just over 76% compared to a county wide average of 78% of children.

Poverty

While the per capita income for Forest Grove rose, from \$10,759 in 1990 to \$16,992 in 2000; it remained well below that for the county as a whole where per capita income had risen more than 50% to 24,969 by 2000. This coupled with poverty rates for residents, suggests that there is an increasing income divide.

Poverty indicators for Forest Grove residents have improved since 1990, although they remained substantially worse than for the county as a whole. The following chart also illustrates that children are disproportionately affected by poverty.

Poverty by Age	1990 Forest Grove	2000 Forest Grove	2000 County
Children under 5	22.5%	17.7%	10.2%
Children under 18	18.1%	16.9%	8.8%
All residents	15.8%	14.3%	7.4%

Children who live in single parent households are even more likely to live in poverty; with almost one third (32%) of single parent households with children being in poverty in 2000. Among Latino children living in single parent households, the poverty rate climbs to 48.5%.

Free and reduced lunch rates provide additional insights into poverty. In the 2000-2001 school year, 37.5% of students in the Forest Grove School District were eligible for assistance, and by the 2006-

FOREST GROVE

07 school year, the percentage had grown to 50.9% of children being eligible for the program. While in most schools the proportion of students who participate in the free and reduced lunch program decline significantly as students enter middle and high school, 53.8% of middle school students and 43.3% of high school students in Forest Grove participate. Forest Grove High School has the highest participation rate among high schools in the county.



Education

Reflecting the agrarian background of the area, Forest Grove residents have somewhat lower educational attainment levels than other parts of the county. Over 20% residents over age 25 have not graduated from high school, compared with 11% of residents county-wide. Among white residents the percentage of high school graduates increases to almost 85%, compared to almost 95% county-wide; while among Latino residents only 28% have completed high school in Forest Grove, compared to 50% county-wide.

Educational attainment levels are correlated with poverty levels. Forest Grove residents are significantly less likely to have a college degree or a graduate degree than other county residents. 21% of Forest Grove residents had a Bachelor's degree in 2000, compared to almost 35% of residents county-wide, although Forest Grove hosts a university campus. Among white residents, in Forest Grove 23.4% had a Bachelor's degree in 2000 compared to 36% of whites county-wide. Among Latinos, in Forest Grove, 2.7% had a Bachelor's compared to 11% county-wide.

FOREST GROVE

Test scores at the third and eighth grade are used as measures to determine general school performance of children and their schools. In Forest Grove School District (which serves most Cornelius children), third graders are on a par with their peers state-wide, with the vast majority meeting or exceeding state standards in both reading and math. Consistent with state data, performance among eighth graders falls off; with Forest Grove eighth graders performing below their peers state-wide, although they have shown faster gains than statewide

Third Grade	Forest Grove Reading	State Reading	Forest Grove Math	State Math
% meeting / exceeding standard 2001-02	91%	85%	79%	77%
% meeting / exceeding standard in 2005-06	89%	90%	89%	88%
Eighth Grade				
% meeting / exceeding standard 2001-02	53%	64%	38%	56%
% meeting / exceeding standard 2005-06	56%	68%	50%	68%

Among children and youth, data suggests that while Latino youth are not doing as well educationally as their white peers, the gap is lessening. State test scores for third graders and eighth graders in the Forest Grove School District for the 2003-04 and 2005-06 school year illustrate:



FOREST GROVE

	Language Arts - Latino	Language Arts - White		Math – Latino	Math – White
% meeting / exceeding 02-03 standard	32.4%	67.1%		35%	58.2%
% meeting/ exceeding 05-06 standard	46%	73.8%		57.3%	79%
% Increase	42%	10%		64%	14%

Similarly, the school drop-out rate for students in Forest Grove has been declining in recent years, although it remains above the rate for the county as a whole. The drop out rate for Latino students also continues to be above that for students as a whole, although it has shown significant improvement.

	2000-01 Drop Out Rate	2005-06 Drop Out Rate	Percent Improvement
Forest Grove Schools	5.81%	2.4%	142%%
County	4.57%	3.4%	11.5%
Latino – Forest Grove	6.2%	3.3%	188%
Anglo – Forest Grove	5.7%	1.9%	300%

Census data suggests that the dropout rate may be higher. In 2000, among 16 to 19 year olds in Forest Grove, 11.6% were not enrolled in school and had not graduated from high school. Among white youth between 16 and 19, in 2000, just under 6% were not enrolled in school and had not graduated, while among Latino youth, more than 31% were not enrolled in school and

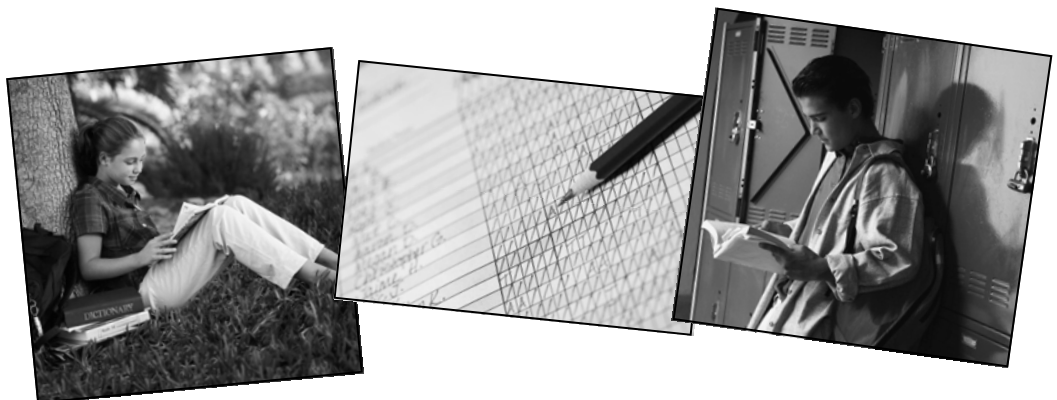
FOREST GROVE

had not graduated.

Community Needs and Issues

The Commission on Children and Families has spent the last year talking with hundreds of people in communities across the county to explore the issues facing children and families. In Forest Grove, these conversations revealed significant concerns relating to the health and well-being of our children, youth and families. The following issues emerged in conversations with school personnel and community leaders in Forest Grove:

- Although Forest Grove has experienced growth in new home construction, there is concern around the limited amount of affordable housing
- There is concern about the increase of homelessness
- There are not enough foster homes to serve the current needs
- There is concern that there is not access to health care
- Forest Grove is a smaller community with limited resources
- The same small businesses are asked multiple times for financial support
- There is a lack of adequate funding for schools
- The hours of operation for the library have been decreased
- They are concerned in the cuts in DHS
- In some cases it is a challenge to get the community involved and engaged in school and community programs



FOREST GROVE

- There continues to be tremendous growth in immigrant families, however there are not enough programs and services in native languages
- There is a lack of services for children and families and the existing services have long waiting lists
- Transportation is a major issue for those people who are not on a mass transit line

Existing Services and Supports

Conversations with the community revealed a number of strengths in the Forest Grove area, both in terms of the characteristics of residents and the community as well as in terms of community supports:

- Family Resource Center that provides food, clothing, access to dental care, etc
- Increased connection and collaboration with faith community
- Increased partnering and collaboration between and among community agencies, schools, etc
- Increased after school programming
- Increased outreach and support to targeted communities, including Latino children and families, improved access to services
- Early childhood services – all day kindergarten, OCDC/CAO & partnering with school district
- Decreasing juvenile crime – less gang activity, less juvenile crime
- Strong sense of volunteerism for the Family Resource Center and the School District
- Pacific University – provides a strong education foundation



FOREST GROVE

and community support

- The Forest Grove Library offers both English and Spanish pre-school reading programs, and the countywide Summer Reading Program

Conversations with school and community leaders in Forest Grove revealed a range of services and supports for children, youth and families in the Forest Grove area, although residents can also access a many services and supports in the nearby communities of Cornelius and Hillsboro. Services available in the Forest Grove area include:

Health

- ***Community Health Nursing*** – Washington County Health Nurses provide home visits and specialized services to new parents who have children with special medical needs. Community health nurses help families access other health and social services
- ***Health and Developmental Screening*** – Community health nurses provide regular health and developmental screening for children with special health needs. Children who participate in Head Start/Oregon Pre-Kindergarten services also receive health and developmental screening and



their families are assisted in accessing any needed services. New Parent Network/Healthy Start home visitors provide regular screening for at-risk first time parents and their babies as part of intensive home visitation services. Schools partner with the Lions Club, Pacific University and other health care organizations to provide screening and referral for follow up services

FOREST GROVE

for vision, hearing and other health concerns.

- **Direct Care** - Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center operates several clinics in Washington County serving lower income and uninsured residents, including a clinic in Cornelius and one in Hillsboro. During the migrant season, the clinic provides outreach services to migrant camps, including camps in the western Washington County. The Essential Health Clinic provides acute care for uninsured patients two evenings per week at the Hillsboro Public Health clinic.
- **Nutrition** – The Women Infants and Children nutrition program provides vouchers for dairy, cereal, fruit juices (and fruits/vegetables as Farmer’s Markets) for lower income pregnant women, and young children. Nutrition education is also provided through regular classes held in health clinic settings in a number of locations around the county.
- **Outpatient Mental Health and Addiction Treatment Services** – for children and families are available through a network of county-funded treatment providers. Services can be provided in home based settings to facilitate access to services. For children and youth experiencing serious mental health or substance abuse concerns, community treatment providers will work to assist families to access intensive community based treatment and or residential treatment services.



Parenting and Family Support

A number of parenting and family support services are available and are provided in the Forest Grove area:

FOREST GROVE

- **Forest Grove Family Resource Center** is a central resource for families who need emergency assistance, and who need help identifying and finding health and social services such as mental health, parenting, child care and other critical services. The Family Resource Center also provides a bridge between individuals and organizations seeking to provide assistance and families in need.
- **Parenting Classes** are available through the Forest Grove Family Resource Center, with classes regularly scheduled in English and Spanish.
- **Family Coaching** is a home-based skill building service for families with a child displaying high risk and/or challenging behaviors.
- **The New Parent Network/Healthy Start program** provides home visitation service to at-risk first time parents, providing individualized parenting education and support to assist parents in supporting their child's development and meeting their family's basic needs.
- **Babies First** provides community health nurse home visitation services for families who have an infant with special health needs.



- **Promotoras (LifeWorks NW)** visit families in their homes, at schools and health clinics to provide support, education, parenting classes, and resource information for Latino families with children and adolescents.
- **Family Support and Connections** – Community outreach specialists provide families involved in Department of Human Services programs (i.e. cash assistance) who are at-risk of involvement in the child welfare system with individualized support, case management and assistance accessing community resources.

FOREST GROVE

There are also a range of services available to support families from throughout the county. These services include:

- ***Self-Sufficiency Services*** – The Oregon Department of Human Services provides a range of services and programs for low income families, including cash assistance, food stamps, child care assistance, and Oregon Health Plan. Offices are located in Tigard, Beaverton and Hillsboro. Application materials are available at the Forest Grove Family Resource Center to facilitate families accessing services.
- ***Child Welfare*** – The Child Welfare Division of the Oregon Department of Human Services provides Child Protective Services to investigate allegations of abuse and neglect and assure safety of children, permanency planning for long term placement of children in foster care or adoptive homes, family reunification services to support children returning home, and system of care supports to provide specialized and individualized services for individualized wrap-around services to children in the Child Welfare System.
- ***Homeless Shelters*** – There are four shelter programs serving homeless families in the county, one shelter serving women and children leaving domestic violence situations, and one shelter serving runaway and homeless youth.
- ***Court Appointed Special Advocates*** – Community volunteers who are recruited, trained and supported to provide advocacy, monitoring and support for children in the Child Welfare system.

Youth Development

There are limited school and community-based services to support youth success in school and provide them with constructive activities during non-school hours. Those that are available in

FOREST GROVE

Forest Grove are highlighted below, followed by some county-wide supports which can be also be utilized by Forest Grove residents.

- ***After School Activities*** – There are a number of activities offered after school hours sponsored by the school district, including sports, academic enrichment and some activity clubs, which meet seasonally (sports) or on a regular basis. Through a partnership with Pacific University, there are additional activities available for students at all grade levels, which are interest based and offered on a seasonal basis.

- ***Public Library*** – Offers the Summer Reading program which includes special activities during the summer months to encourage children to read, and provides incentives at the end of the summer. During the school year, libraries offer reference assistance and access to the internet to aid students in completing school assignments. The libraries also offer story times and literacy workshops for parents with young children. Forest Grove Library offers bi-lingual pre-school literacy programs.



- ***Community Service*** – The annual Youth Summit provides an opportunity for middle and high school student teams to submit a proposal for funds to implement a school or community based project to improve conditions in their community.
- ***Counseling, Skill Building and Prevention Education Groups*** – Through school counselors and Youth Contact, a community mental health and alcohol treatment provider, individualized and group based counseling is offered to students. Additionally, skill building groups, education and

FOREST GROVE

awareness groups are offered in specific areas: substance abuse, violence prevention, problem solving, etc. The Health Department has health educators who can provide education programs in school and community settings for youth and adults on a range of topics from health topics to gambling to substance use.

- ***Alternative Education / Options*** – All school districts offer alternative education options programs for students for whom a traditional education program is not meeting their needs.



- ***Homeless Education Services*** – Under the auspices of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act, every school district has a designated staff person who works with building staff to identify homeless students (unaccompanied older students or students living with their homeless family), and works with staff to minimize disruption to students' education, works to develop plans to maintain students in their home school, and helps them (and their families) to access needed community resources.

County-wide services which are available to youth from Forest Grove, generally relying on families to provide transportation if needed, include:

- ***Mentoring*** – Programs such as Big Brothers, Big Sisters can provide adult mentors to at-risk youth who would benefit.
- ***Employment and Training*** – Several organizations provide specialized employment and training services for

FOREST GROVE

youth. Community supports range from the State Employment Division which offers basic pre-employment training and job search assistance regardless of income to federally funded employment and training services including educational supports, pre-employment supports, employer based training placements, job referrals and follow-up support and assistance accessing post secondary education and training opportunities for lower income youth. Housing Development Corporation offers youth employment and training services targeted to young people from the Forest Grove area through federal Workforce Investment Act funding.

- **Juvenile Department** – The Juvenile Department offers a range of services for youth referred to prevent further penetration into the juvenile justice system, provides sanctions and restitution, and provides youth with opportunities to develop skills and capacities to succeed in their family, school and community.
- **Runaway and Homeless Youth Services** – A short term, home based shelter program has been available for runaway youth and/or youth with a mental health crisis since the late 1970s. In May, 2007 Boys and Girls Aid opened the Safe Place Shelter, offering short term facility based shelter and transitional housing to runaway and homeless youth.



Additionally there is a small transitional housing program using scatter site apartments and case management for homeless youth. The 24-hour mental health crisis line provides crisis counseling for runaways and their families, as well as access to shelter services.

The Home Plate program is a community collaboration, which provides an evening meal, access to showers, a movie and social recreational activity, and referral to community resources for homeless youth once a week.

FOREST GROVE

Both the Safe Place Shelter and the Home Plate program are located in downtown Hillsboro.

School Readiness

There are a number of services available for families in Forest Grove with young children. A brief review of services in the community is provided below.

- ***Child Care Resource and Referral*** – CCRR, operated by Community Action, provides individualized phone support for parents seeking child care, offering information and education in how to select care, indicators of quality, opportunities for assistance in paying cost of care, as well as referrals and information about specific child care providers in family, group home or center based settings. CCRR also provides support and training for child care providers, and works to identify providers and to build capacity in the community for under-served populations. CCRR offers workshops for child care providers on promoting early literacy through reading and other activities, and has a structured early literacy curriculum that is offered to child care providers in their home or center based setting.
- ***Child Care Division, Oregon Employment Department*** – registers and licenses child care providers in the state of Oregon assuring that minimum standards for care are met.
- ***Oregon Department of Human Services*** – administers funds to help lower income families pay for the cost of



FOREST GROVE

care (Employment Related Day Care)

- **Head Start/Oregon Pre-Kindergarten** – Oregon Child Development Coalition offers several early childhood programs, including Oregon Pre-Kindergarten services for Western Washington County, Migrant Head Start and specialized



child care services for migrant farm worker families. OCDC also operates the HIPPY and Even Start programs, providing early childhood development, parenting and adult education for Latino families. Community Action operates a small Early Head Start program

serving families with children birth to age three located in Hillsboro. Transportation services are provided to assure that low income children and their families can participate in services.

- **New Parent Network/Healthy Start** – provides home visitation services including parenting and child development education and support for at-risk first time parents.
- **Early Intervention / Early Childhood Special Education** – the Northwest Regional Education Service District provides services for young children with disabilities for children from birth to school age. Services for children birth to age three (Early Intervention) are generally provided through home visits and parent training to support children’s optimal development, while services for preschool aged children (4 and 5 year olds) are provided in program sponsored classrooms, community placements and through parent groups.
- **Forest Grove Public Library** – Forest Grove has a library located near Pacific University which offers a number of early literacy services, including story hours where young children’s books are read aloud to model reading to young children and to provide exposure to books appropriate for different ages of children. ‘Theme bags’ can also be checked-out

FOREST GROVE

through inter-library loan that contain books, videos/ DVDs, games and resource information on a variety of topics.

- **Health Services** – Community health nurses provide home visits to families with a young child who has special health needs. The WIC program provides nutritional supplements and nutrition education for lower income families with young children. Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center provides primary health care to migrant and seasonal farm workers and other low income residents in three clinic locations in the county, including one in Cornelius, as well as outreach services to migrant camps during the summer months. Limited dental and vision care are also available through Virginia Garcia’s Cornelius clinic.
- **Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation** – is available to provide individual consultation and assistance accessing community based mental health services for children and their families around emergent behavioral and mental health concerns as well as consultation for child care providers and other early childhood professionals to provide information and training in supporting positive social emotional development and early intervention for children displaying early signs of mental health challenges.
- **Outpatient Mental Health Services** – for children and families are available through a network of county-funded treatment providers. Services can be provided in home based settings to facilitate access to services.



FOREST GROVE

Strategy Analysis

While there has been some growth in services available to families in Forest Grove in recent years, and many agencies are developing capacity to provide home based services, there continues to be limited services to meet the diverse needs of the growing Forest Grove community. There is limited awareness of services which do exist, and while many services may be able to be provided in schools or at home, families must often travel to other jurisdictions to complete eligibility processes (WIC, DHS services, Head Start, etc). In addition, on a county-wide basis, service capacity has not grown quickly enough to keep pace with overall population growth which further hampers the ability of service systems to respond to the needs of under-served geographic communities.

Gaps and Barriers to Service

- **Transportation.** There is a need to expand bus and other transportation services. Peak hour runs to major arterials could vastly improve access to services for Forest Grove residents: early morning for commuters; after school for students; early evening for commuters. Expansion of volunteer based transportation assistance for the elderly and the disabled, to include school age children/youth to help get them to medical, mental health, substance abuse treatment appointments to reduce barriers to access to care. Activity buses from the schools to transport students who participate in after school activities.
- **After School Activities.** There is a need to expand availability and variety of activities for school aged children and youth during non-school hours, including activities during school breaks and the summer months.
- **Health Care.** There is a need to facilitate access to health care for low income and uninsured children, youth and families from Forest Grove. Partnerships with Forest Grove School District, Head Start/Oregon Pre-Kindergarten programs, and

FOREST GROVE

others could assist with access and transportation. Expansion of screening and school based health services to enhance access to early treatment.

- **Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment.** Expansion of school based supports for mental health, to assist in identification of children, youth with behavioral health concerns and assist them and their families to access services.
- **Community Awareness.** There is limited awareness of needs of children, youth and families and the barriers that are faced in access to services. There is limited awareness of resources and services that are available and how to access them, and how individuals and community organizations could help with access and service expansion.
- **Need to increase availability of parenting and family support services,** to offer classes and individualized support to families in Forest Grove, and build local capacity to support parents/families.
- **Need to provide access to career exploration and employment options for Forest Grove area youth.** Entrepreneurship opportunities as well as traditional employment opportunities which may be available in nearby communities.
- **The quickly rising costs of housing in the Forest Grove area have made finding affordable rentals in the area difficult. There is a need for the development of units for lower income households.**

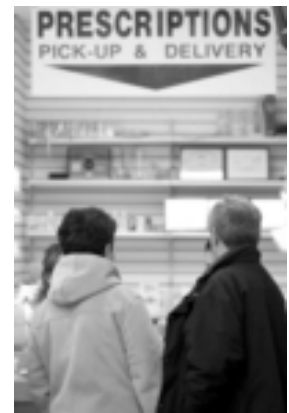


FOREST GROVE

Potential Solutions

There are several initiatives underway in the county which will help address some of the major concerns identified in Forest Grove.

- Forest Grove School District is working with a broad based community collaboration working to develop a county-wide system of School Based Health Centers over the next five to ten years. The feasibility of establishing a center in Forest Grove during the 2008-2009 school year is being explored.
- The NW Regional Education Service District is facilitating a collaborative effort to develop and implement systems to improve access to school and community mental health treatment supports for students. The collaboration involves all school districts, the County Mental Health Organization, the Juvenile Department, community behavioral health treatment providers and the Commission on Children and Families. To date, results of the initiative have included development of district and county-wide, cross-district crisis response protocols, training of district staff and mental health treatment staff in evidence-based practices to enhance identification, treatment and support of students with behavioral health concerns, and development of a guide for school staff to the county mental health system and services.
- In order to help facilitate access to needed health care, a county-wide initiative to enroll all eligible children in the Oregon Health Plan is being under-taken



Conversations with school and community leaders in Forest Grove and Cornelius also revealed a number of strategies that could be under-taken in the community to help address concerns identified. Potential strategies discussed included:

FOREST GROVE

- Expansion of after school and summer activities for children and youth to include non-sports activities.
- Increase neighborhood activities for those who do not have access to transportation
- Work to increase the minimum wage
- Increase employment opportunities in the community
- Address affordable housing needs by increasing HUD housing, establishing subsidies for first-time homeowners, establish emergency and long term housing and work with realtors and contractors to assist home buyers
- Continue to nurture and expand partnerships between agencies, faith based organizations, civic groups and schools

