



# COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

*Bringing the University to You*

---

Fact Sheet 00-16

## Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe Youth-At-Risk Needs Assessment

Don Breazeale, Pershing County Extension Educator  
Michelle Bolzle, New Frontier Prevention Specialist

It is estimated that approximately 25% of the nation's youth are involved in "high risk" activities such as alcohol use, drug and tobacco use, and delinquency (William T. Grant Commission on Work, Family, and Citizenship, 1988). Because of these high-risk activities, youth become a burden to society rather than contributors (Boyd, Herring, and Briers, 1992). As a result, Cooperative Extension has initiated youth-at-risk programming in several states. However, this problem is not something that Cooperative Extension can solve independently. Extension efforts usually involve collaborating with other agencies that also have mandates to work with young people.

One such effort involves the New Frontier Prevention Program of Fallon, the Pershing County Cooperative Extension office, and the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribal Community. This was the second collaborative effort to include a youth-at-risk needs assessment and strategic plan for implementing prevention services for Native Americans. A previous assignment involved the Lovelock Paiute Community.

As in the previous effort, Pershing County Cooperative Extension provided expertise and assistance during the assessment phase and New Frontier took the lead in developing the strategic plan. Once again, both components involved close collaboration with the tribal leadership. New Frontier Prevention Program, formerly Churchill Council on Alcohol and Other Drugs, has been providing prevention services to rural Nevada communities since 1971. The prevention services that are provided through this program focus on reducing participation in risk factors while increasing protective factors throughout each participant's individual development. Through these specialized services they are able to help reduce the rate of personal and social conflict while promoting healthy, pro-social growth.

### **Needs Assessment**

Before implementing a prevention program for the Fallon tribal community it was imperative to identify the risk factors that needed to be addressed within the contracted service area. A review of literature found several research-based risk factors that have been shown to increase the chances of developing health and behavioral problems (Reed, 1999). Reed also compiled a listing of "best practices" for prevention programs. Additional literature also indicated that a

modified-Delphi approach (Butler and Howell, 1980) was an appropriate method for this type of need assessment. It was decided to use two different questionnaires for this assessment, one for the tribal community and one for community agencies (e.g. police, sheriff, juvenile authorities, and social service personnel, etc.).

The tribal community questionnaire consisted of 14 risk factors identified by Reed (1999). In addition to input from Reed’s work (1999), the questionnaire was also based upon New Frontier’s previous prevention work with Native American groups. Tribal members were asked to rank the 14 risk factors for importance using a nine-point scale (i.e. 1 being most important, 9 being least important). Seventy-five individual adult tribal members participated in face-to-face home-interviews conducted by New Frontier personnel. These individuals represented approximately 10 percent of all adults between the ages of 16 and 64 years of age.

The agency questionnaire was developed using a different format than the tribal community questionnaire. Participating agency personnel were first requested to list up to five risk factors that affect youth in the tribal community. Eleven different risk factors were identified by the participating agencies. After compiling this list, a second questionnaire asked the participants to rank the previously identified eleven risk factors. The agency questionnaire was utilized for two reasons. In addition to gaining a non-tribal perspective on risk factors, the results of this questionnaire were intended to confirm the risk factor rankings made by the tribal community. This was important since many of the risk factors that were ranked by the tribal community involve non-tribal agencies, organizations, and/or private businesses.

**Results of the Assessment**

Local community agencies identified and ranked eleven risk factors. The tribal community residents ranked fourteen risk factors that were identified through a review of documented research-based youth-at-risk literature. Tribal members also prioritized three age groups for need.

Local Community Agencies

The scores ranged from a high of 1.3 (with 1.0 = most important) to a low of 3.1 (with 9.0 = least important).

Mentors/Positive Role Models	1.3	Academic Failure	2.2
Family History of Substance Abuse	1.3	Unemployment Rate	2.3
Parent Involvement	1.4	Community Laws/Enforcement	2.4
Friends Who Engage in Problem Behavior	1.7	School Administration	2.4
Family Management Problems	1.8	Availability of Drugs	3.1
Lack of Tribal Agency Support	2.1		

Local Community Tribal Residents

The scores ranged from a high of 1.8 (with 1.0 = most important) to a low of 4.2 (with 9.0 = least important).

Parent Involvement	1.8	Early Initiation of Problem Behavior	3.4
Community Disorganization	2.1	Friends Who Engage in Problem Behavior	3.5
Family Management problems	2.4	Early and Persistent Anti-Social Behavior	3.7
Family History of Substance Abuse	2.5	Availability of Drugs	3.7
Family Conflict	2.9	Academic Failure Beginning in Early Elementary School	3.8
Community Laws/Enforcement	3.2	School/Grade Changes	4.2
Lack of Commitment to School	3.2		
Alienation/Rebelliousness	3.4		

At Risk Age Groups:

10-18 years of age	(1.4):	ranked number one
3-10 years of age	(1.8)	ranked number two
18 years of age and over	(2.6)	ranked number three

**Summary and Conclusions**

Based on the results of this needs assessment, it is clear that both tribal agency representatives and tribal community members acknowledge similar concerns with regards to the risk factors that they feel contribute to substance abuse issues within their community. Among the risk factors rated, both groups ranked family issues among the highest risk factors. However, both groups surveyed also ranked Community Disorganization and lack of Tribal Agency Supports at 2.1, agreeing that efforts to enhance community services needs to be addressed. Local Tribal Agencies ranked Mentors/Lack of Positive Role Models as their highest risk factor (1.3) with the Tribal Probation Department strongly supporting the development of such services specifically for local community members residing on or near the Fallon Tribe. The risk factors listed below are accompanied with prevention strategy recommendations to serve as examples of positive prevention services that can be utilized by the Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe.

Parent Involvement / Family History of Substance Abuse / Family Management /Family Conflict: Considering the high level of concern and sensitivity which encompasses personal family issues, two possible target strategies are suggested which include alternative family activities that can promote healthy family growth while excluding substance use. Another

strategy focuses on building healthy relationships while promoting cultural identity and positive self-image. The New Frontier Prevention Program could assist in the development and of family wellness courses including assisting in the coordination of local parent support groups. The development and implementation of creative strategies in which to present substance abuse educational information is vital for maintaining group interest and continued participation.

Community Disorganization / Lack of Tribal Agency Support: Possible strategies targeting these items could focus on promoting more intense collaboration, networking, and follow-up of services provided. This could include, but is not limited to, the services of the Justice and Tribal Courts, City/Sheriff/Tribal Law Enforcement Agencies, and State/County/Tribal Family Services, enabling the community to access a wider range of more complete services. Efforts could be made to assist in bringing these parties together to develop and implement effective programs to address this highly rated risk area.

Availability of Drugs: Responses to this risk factor varied greatly. Tribal Agencies rated it lower than all other risk factors while community members residing in a subdivision or in the colony itself rated it higher than those members living in more isolated rural areas. Those living in isolated rural areas indicated that they lacked knowledge about this risk factor due to their secluded residence. However, considering the high concern of this risk factor among residents living in the tribal sub-divisions and colony, prevention efforts may be needed which specifically target this risk factor. Possible strategies could focus on intense community anti-drug campaigns, increased monitoring of alcohol and tobacco sales to minors and strict adherence to local laws as they pertain to substance purchase/use/abuse.

**References**

Boyd, B.L., Herring, D.E., and Briers, G.E. (winter, 1992). Developing Life Skills in Youth. *Journal of Extension*, 30 (4).

Butler, L.M. and Howell, R.E. (1980). *Coping with Growth: Community Needs Assessment Techniques*. Washington State University. WREP 44.

Reed, K. (1999). *Building a Successful Prevention Program*. Western Regional Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies <[www.unr.edu/westcapt/](http://www.unr.edu/westcapt/)>.

William T. Grant Commission on Work, Family, and Citizenship. (1988). *The Forgotten Half: Pathways to Success for America's Youth and Young Families*. Washington, D.C.

<b>UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA</b>	The University of Nevada, Reno is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, creed, national origin, veteran status, physical or mental disability, , or sexual orientation, in any program or activity it operates. The University of Nevada employs only United States Citizens and aliens lawfully authorized to work in the United States.
-----------------------------	---