



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

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Mineral County Needs Assessment: Youth Development

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Introduction

Mineral County is located in West-Central Nevada encompassing approximately 3,756 square miles. The county is unique in that it is mostly mountainous, with canyons and large arid plateaus rising upward from the Walker Lake Basin. While Hawthorne is the county seat, other small outlying communities include Schurz, Walker Lake, Luning and Mina.

The U.S. Census Bureau reported that the population of Mineral County in the 2000 Census was 5,071. The 2000 Census reported that the per capita income of Mineral County was \$16,952 with private wage and salary workers comprising the largest segment of the workforce at 61.5 percent.

According to the Nevada Rural and Frontier Health 2002 Data Book, Mineral County has an estimated 25.4 percent of its families with a female householder, no husband present, and below the poverty level with related children under 18 years old. From 1998 to 2000, annual change in personal income decreased in the county 3.7 percent while most Nevada Counties showed an increase in personal income.

Mineral County School District is comprised of four schools in the county. They include Hawthorne Primary School, Hawthorne Elementary

and Junior High School, Mineral County High School and Schurz Elementary School located on the Walker River Indian Reservation. The total student population is 733 students with 41 percent benefiting from the free and reduced lunch program. The estimated educational attainment (percent of population 25 years and over) is 77 percent for high school graduate or higher, which ranks the county as the third lowest in the State and well below the state average of 81 percent. Only 10 percent of graduates attain a bachelor's degree or higher falling well below the state average of 18 percent (Packham, 2002).

Needs Assessment

A formal needs assessment was completed by the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension Central Northeast Area to identify Cooperative Extension programming needs for the geographical area within the boundaries of Mineral County. A needs assessment was completed using a survey instrument which solicited options, ideas and perceptions about the problems and issues facing youth in the community.

The survey instrument was designed using information collected from previous meetings and a focus group at the high school. There was a sample

of 540 households located in Mineral County, 207 households that responded containing about 440 individuals including 88 children.

The survey instrument integrated 27 sets of questions identifying community involvement, needs, issues, quality of life, youth issues, and demographic characteristics. The results were first compiled by the University Center for Economic Development in order to facilitate the qualifications needed for the Mineral County Extension Educator position. The Extension Educator, once hired, analyzed the data compiled from the survey instrument and gathered additional data through public meetings, newspapers, minutes from meetings and any other additional information readily available.

The results of the comprehensive survey instrument required that Mineral County’s need assessment be reported in multiple fact sheets. This fact sheet reports on youth development. The other fact sheets resulting from the needs assessment report on community needs and issues, and community demographics.

Youth Issues

The respondents living in Mineral County were asked to prioritize youth issues. The survey instrument listed 29 possible needs that were obtained from community meetings and additional research. Respondents were asked to give each possible need in the survey instrument a rating (1 through 4). The rating 1 equaled major problem and a rating of 4 equaled no problem.

Nevada which were randomly selected. There were

The responses from the 207 respondents’ households were calculated and given an average value for each youth issue. After the average was calculated, the youth issues were ranked. The youth issues are ranked and identified in Table 1.

Existing Programs

Jobs skills training and/or preparation were identified as a major problem for the youth in Mineral County. Mineral County School District is already working toward preparing youth for the work force through the Schools to Career program and the Gear Up program. There are several committees and specific programs established with students, parents, business leaders, community members and school personnel to assist youth in obtaining job skills and preparing youth for the work force.

Consolidated Agencies of Human Services (CAHS) is just one agency that provides assistance and programs to help youth and families from a crisis situation to self-sufficiency. CAHS is the location of the family resource center and deals with issues such as teen pregnancy, educating young mothers and drugs and alcohol abuse in youth. Other organizations working with at-risk youth include the community health program, the county juvenile probation department, KARRS, and Mineral County’s youth recreation facility, YCAC. A coalition was created by CAHS so that all organizations can coordinate activities to offer the best possible services to the youth in Mineral County.

Table 1. Youth issues identified in Mineral County with the percentage of households responding that the issue was a major problem.

Youth Issues in Mineral County	Percentage of 207 Households Responding	Average
1. Job skills training/preparation	89%	1.429
2. Preventing teenage pregnancy	90%	1.441
3. Use of drugs and alcohol	92%	1.461
4. Local access to tech/vocational school	86%	1.480
5. Finances to continue education	88%	1.511
6. What to do after school	87%	1.511

Conclusions

Respondents of 207 households identified their perceptions and views about specific youth issues in Mineral County. The greatest need, according to citizens, is job skills preparations and training. Following closely behind was preventing teenage pregnancy and the use of drugs and alcohol. The results of the survey with other compiled data

provide a strong foundation for developing programs to meet the needs of the communities in Mineral County. The data can also be used further to explore and target certain areas of interest. Additional information is currently being compiled from other needs assessments, informal citizen input, and youth coalition facilitated discussions to make certain quality youth programming in Mineral County will occur.

References

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