

## **Comprehensive Mental Health Initiative (Youth Emphasis)**

*Submitted by Rock County School Districts*

### **Economic Status of Rock County Families**

Rock County, located in southern WI, has a population of 156,458 including 38,762 children under age 18, of these 16.2% live below the poverty line, exceeding WI's child poverty rate of 14% (2006-2008 American Community Survey). Over 33% (12,985) of Rock County children are low income (living below 200% of poverty), of these 48.3% (6,278) live below the poverty line (Isaacs and Smeeding 2009)

November 2008-2009 unemployment data suggests that low income and poverty rates may increase. The closing of Rock County's General Motors plant in December of 2008 has had a significant impact on unemployment rates (not seasonally adjusted) as shown in Table 1.

Table1: Comparison of local, state, & national unemployment rates	Time Period	Beloit	Janesville	Rock Co.	WI	US
	November 2009	16.2%	11.7%	10.9%	7.8%	9.4%
	November 2008	9.1%	8.5%	7.2%	5.2%	6.5%

**Note:** Milwaukee (WI's Largest City) Unemployment November 2009 – City =10.9% – County = 9.2% Source: WI Dept of Workforce Development: <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dwd/newsreleases/>

Rock County has the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest unemployment rate in WI. The cities of Beloit and Janesville rank 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> among WI cities (Wisconsin Department of Work Force Development 2009)

Rock County has 8 school districts serving 28,133 students in 19 communities (WI Department of Public Instruction WINNS). Janesville, in north Rock, has 63,436 residents; Beloit, to the south, has 34,175. The remaining communities range in size from just over 500 to 4,933. Rates of children living in low income homes have increased in all Rock County districts, as evidenced by Table 2.

Table 2: 8 Year Change in School District Economic Status - Low Income / Free & Reduced Lunch								
District	2008-200	2000-200	District	2008-200	2000-200	District	2008-200	2000-200
WI	33.6%	24.1%	Clinton	24.1%	12.1%	Milton	16.5%	8.9%
County	36.5%	23.0%	Edgerton	21.1%	11.9%	Parkview	13.9%	13.1%
Beloit	62.7%	49.7%	Evansville	21.1%	12.2%			
Turner	22.8%	9.8%	Janesville	35.9%	19.8%			

In school year 2000-2001, only Beloit exceeded the WI rate in the percentage of students eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch. By 2008-2009 Beloit, Clinton, and Janesville met or exceeded the WI. The County overall and five of eight school districts experienced a percentage increase that exceeded WI's percentage increase. Janesville experienced the largest percentage point increase of 16.1 as compared to the state percentage point increase of 9.5. Janesville's rate increased to over 43% in 2009-2010.

Based on unemployment data it is anticipated that the number of low-income Rock County students will continue to rise. Another indicator of hurt is the growing demand for help from Everyone Cooperating to Help Others Inc., a local faith-based organization. In 2003, the program provided 285,071 meals to Janesville-area residents in need of food. This climbed to 2,382,471 meals in 2007, then to 2,960,071 meals in 2009.

### **Needs of Rock County Youth**

#### **Mental Health/AODA**

Wisconsin consistently exceeds the Nation on almost all substance use indicators within all age groups. Rock County youth exceed Wisconsin's high rate in alcohol use. Over the past decade, significant efforts were made to reduce those rates with realized success. The Drug and alcohol use among Janesville students has shown a steady decrease from 1998 to 2007. However, in the 2009 Survey, alcohol, tobacco and drug use **increased** in all areas. This increase in drug and alcohol use coincides with the closing of numerous businesses in the Rock County area including General Motors. This increase could be due to the increase in family stress to help cope or reduce anxiety or because of the lack of supervision of our youth due to one parent living in another city and the home parent working. And then there's the rise in domestic abuse. In March 2008, the Janesville YWCA's Alternatives to Violence Shelter provided 232 nights of shelter. The following March, after the GM plant's closing, this disturbing figure had skyrocketed to 640, according to Marilyn Lensert-Harris of the YWCA.

In the fall of 2009 Partners in Prevention, our Rock County Drug free coalition, administered the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) tool in Rock County school districts. The YRBS monitors six categories of priority health –risk behaviors among youth including; behaviors that contribute to unintentional injuries and violence; tobacco use; alcohol and other drug use; sexual behaviors; dietary behaviors; and physical activity. A sampling of Rock County data include:

- 13% of middle school students had at least one drink of alcohol during the past 30 days
- 5% of middle school students have smoked cigarettes and 4% have smoked marijuana in the past 30 days.
- 7% of middle school students have used a prescription medication without a Dr. Prescription.
- 3% of high school students have reported using heroin at least once in their life
- 12% of high school students have taken a prescription medication to get high
- 22% of high school student have used marijuana in the past 30 days
- 45% of high school students have used alcohol during the past 30 days

An emerging issue for both youth and adults is heroin use. There were 11 local deaths from heroin overdose between March 2008 and April 2009, four were youth between the age of 18 to 20. Twenty percent of youth taking the Search Survey reported frequent depression and/or at least 1 suicide attempt in the past year. Rock County Human Services Department (RCHSD) records reveal an increasing trend in mental health detentions for youth under age 18.

	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>
Youth under age 18	46	68	85

*Source: Rock County Human Services Department*

Emerging trends

Per recent discussions with school administrators, student services staff and police liaison officers the following emerging trends have been noted:

- increased students anxiety about meeting their basic needs
- increased family stress because of the separation of parents due to transfer to an automobile plant out of state
- increased numbers of homeless students and unaccompanied youth
- increased gang membership
- increased requests for assistance with transportation to school
- increased requests for financial assistance with school supplies and field trips
- increased number of student looking for employment

All of these issues impact student achievement.

**Resources needed to address increasing student needs**

Student Services Staff

The School Districts of Janesville and Beloit represent about 60% of the student population in Rock County. Five of the remaining districts have enrollments of fewer than 2,000 students. Clearly, all available data suggest a need for mental health and substance abuse counseling for many youth in Rock County. School district staff play a key role in identifying these youth, providing appropriate interventions, and linking students to community service providers. The following table demonstrates that the two largest districts, Janesville and Beloit, fall significantly short of meeting the Federal recommendations for the number of student services staff.

<b>School Districts</b>	<b>Total Enrollment</b>	<b>Student Services FTE Positions 2009 - 2010</b>	<b>Federally Recommended Staff:Student Ratios</b>	<b>Additional Student Services Positions Needed</b>
Beloit	7,146	8.8 Psychologists 8 Social workers 15.4 Counselors	1:1000 Psychologists (currently 1:812) 1:800 Social Workers (currently 1:893) 1: 250 Counselors (currently 1:464)	1 Social Worker 13 Counselors
Janesville	10,531	9 Psychologists 10 Social Workers 26 Counselors	1:1000 Psychologists (currently 1:1170) 1:800 Social Workers (currently 1:1053) 1:250 Counselors (currently 1:405)	1.5 Psychologists 3 Social workers 16 Counselors

The School District of Janesville and Beloit would like to suggest funding for just one quarter of the student services positions needed according to federally recommended ratios to help address the increasing AODA/Mental Health issues. At five FTE positions for the Janesville schools and three FTE positions for the Beloit schools, the annual cost would be **\$600,000**.

**Unaccompanied homeless youth:** Rock County School Districts report more than **100 students** who are homeless and living without a parent or guardian. The majority of these students are in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades and need short term support to finish high school. Lutheran Social Services Runaway and Youth Services program in conjunction with the Homeless Education Action Team are launching a “Safe Homes” campaign to provide unaccompanied youth with temporary shelter and case management services to stabilize their living situations and keep them in school. The current proposal is to serve 25 Rock County Youth annually at a cost of **\$14,000**.

**Meeting student needs for full participation in school:** Increasing numbers of students are requesting assistance with transportation to school through city bus passes or gas cards for parents to provide transportation. Many students are requesting field trip fee waivers, and assistance getting necessary school supplies. **\$15,000** would help address the increasing needs of students that families are not able to meet due to their economic situation.