

Youth

Youth development programs; foster care; court-related issues; education-related issues; physical fitness; and alcohol, drug and tobacco use prevention.

PUSD administered the California Healthy Kids Survey in Fall 1999. The survey consists of a required module and a series of supplementary ones of specific health risk topics customized for each district. The core focused on alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use, violence, and school safety. It also included items relating to physical health and nutrition. Four schools participated, with responses from 170 seventh graders, 166 ninth graders, and 113 eleventh graders.

Alcohol and drug use questions revealed that by 9th grade, the vast majority of children had tried some drug or alcohol (70%). Most had tried alcohol (64%), almost half had tried marijuana (45%), 14% had tried inhalants, and 10% LSD or other psychedelics. In contrast, by 7th grade, 61% had tried nothing, and most of those who did had tried alcohol (37%).

However, it is important to note that 10% had already tried inhalants, and 13% had tried marijuana. By 11th grade, only 15% had abstained. Almost 80% had tried alcohol, 61% marijuana, 20% inhalants and other illegal drugs, 10% methamphetamines and LSD, 7% cocaine, and 3% had tried heroin.

When asked about use in the past 30 days, 74% of 7th graders, 60% of 9th graders, and 40% of 11th graders reported abstinence from all alcohol or other drugs. While 83% of 7th graders reported never having been very drunk or sick from alcohol, the number dropped to 59% by 9th grade, and only 33% by 11th grade.

As many as 42% of 11th graders reported being very drunk or sick from it three or more times. Also of concern was the percentage of students reporting current binge drinking: 5% of 7th graders, 11% of 9th graders, and 24% of 11th graders. More than a third (37%) of 11th graders reported that they had binged on alcohol in the past month, compared to 44% of 9th graders, and 13% of 7th graders.

Only 51% of the 11th graders and 70% of 9th graders reported never driving or being driven by someone who had been drinking. The seventh graders also reported high rates of being a passenger in the car of a driver who had been drinking.

The perceived effects of alcohol use also seem to become minimized by age: only 60% of 11th graders perceived frequent (daily use) of alcohol to be extremely harmful, compared to 69% of 7th graders. Access to drugs and alcohol were also perceived as easy to obtain, even on school property.

Tobacco use questions revealed again that the older the student the more likely the student had experimented with tobacco products: 13% of 7th graders, 30% of 9th graders, and 58% of 11th graders had smoked. But the damage was done early: 5% of 7th graders reported use in the past 30 days, as did 15% of 9th graders and 27% of 11th

graders. The percent of youth smoking daily is low: 1% of 7th graders, and 6% each of 9th and 11th graders. Most understand the harm of frequent tobacco use – the perception of which actually increased with age, to 83% in 9th and 11th grades. However, 76 – 91% of 9th and 11th graders reported it was easy or very easy to obtain.

Safety questions revealed that Plumas County youth are relatively safe in terms of physical violence: about 90% reported zero incidents of being threatened or injured with a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club. However, 65 – 75% had had property stolen or deliberately damaged. More 7th and 9th graders participated in physical fights on school property (36% and 32% respectively), compared to only 16% of 11th graders. Consistently 1% of youth had carried a gun to school in the past 30 days, although the percent of youth carrying a knife ranged from 5% for 7th graders to 13% for 11th and 15% for 9th graders. About 8% of the youth had ever been involved in gangs, a consistent number throughout the grades. Between 2-6% had experienced physical violence by a boy or girlfriend in the past twelve months. More than 90% felt safe in their school and neighborhoods. However, most children do not use seat belts every time they are in a car.

Nutrition. Over 90% of all students reported drinking at least one glass of milk a day. However, all other self-reports of nutrition show a lack of a balanced diet, in terms of eating fruits and vegetables or eating breakfast. More than three quarters had participated in physical exercise of 20 minutes duration on a regular basis of several times a week.

Emotional health. Between a 25 - 34% of youth, increasing with age, reported a frequency of sad and hopeless feelings in the past twelve months. Too many youth seriously considered suicide (22% of 7th, 13% of 9th, and 20% of 11th graders). Even more of a concern is that 9% of 7th graders, and 7% of 9th and 11th graders reported attempting suicide in the past year.

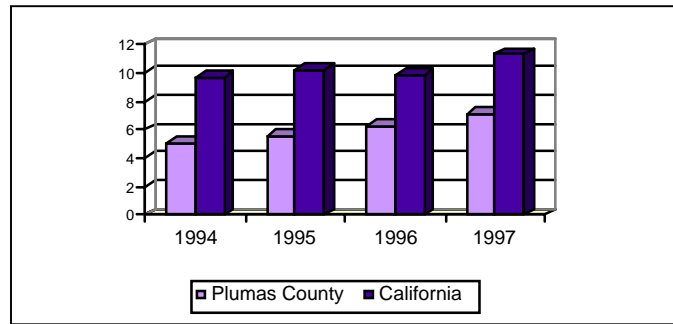
Sexual activity. Plumas County youth report having had sexual activity at increasing numbers by age: 14% of 7th, 30% of 9th, and 21% of 11th graders. Most who had intercourse reported using some method of birth control, while only 5% reported using none. Six to seven percent had either been pregnant or gotten someone pregnant. Four to five percent reported having been forced to have unwanted sexual intercourse. Almost half strongly agree that teen abstinence is a better choice than sexual intercourse. The number is consistent throughout the grades.

Table 1 shows the results of the Plumas County survey for selected questions compared to the results statewide and nationally.

Foster Care Placements. In 1998, Children's Protective Services (CPS) and Probation averaged 41 out-of-home placements per month, ten in foster homes and 32 in group homes. The average cost was \$1,533 per children for a total cost of \$754,000. In 1996, CPS and Probation averaged 38 out-of-home placements per month (eight foster home and 30 group home) at a cost of \$1,672 per placement. The total cost was \$762,000.

CPS had 521 referrals in 1996, 453 in 1997, and 433 in 1998. Referrals were evenly distributed across the county. As can be seen from Chart 1 below, the placement rate in Plumas County is much smaller than the state rate. However, the count rate is rising more rapidly than the state.

Chart 1: Foster Care Rates per 1,000: Comparison of Plumas County and California, 1994 – 1997



Source: Children Now. *California County Data Book '99*.

Table 1: Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug use, Comparison with 1997 State and National Results

	7 th Grade		9 th Grade			11 th Grade		
	PUSD	CA	PUSD	CA	US	PUSD	CA	US
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Lifetime and Current Alcohol and Drug Use								
During your life, did you ever								
• Smoke a cigarette	13	26	29	52	68	58	56	69
• Drink alcohol (glass)	37	52	63	73	72	79	81	82
• Use inhalants	10	17	14	25	19	20	20	15
• Smoke marijuana	13	11	45	33	39	61	46	50
During the past 30 days, did you								
• Smoke a cigarette	5	11	15	23	33	27	27	37
• Drink alcohol (glass)	25	22	37	38	44	52	47	53
• Use inhalants	2	8	2	9	19	1	6	15
• Smoke marijuana	8	8	21	18	24	35	26	29
Level of involvement								
During your life have you ever								
• Been very drunk or sick after drinking	17	9	41	21	NA	67	38	NA
• Been high from using drugs	12	11	24	33	NA	64	43	NA
Perceived harm								
Frequent (daily or almost daily) use of ... is extremely harmful								
• Cigarettes	77	50	83	41	NA	83	43	NA
• Alcohol	69	46	65	35	NA	60	36	NA
• Marijuana	82	73	65	73	NA	63	42	NA
During the past 12 months at school, have you								
• Been harassed because of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or disability	19	NA	33	NA	NA	17	NA	NA
• Been in a physical fight	36	30	32	32	21	16	23	13
During the past 30 days at school did you carry a weapon	6	11	16	15	10	15	16	9
Feels safe from physical harm								
• In school	90	71	93	66	NA	96	69	NA
• In the neighborhood	94	79	94	76	NA	99	74	NA
Ever belonged to a gang?	8	22	9	15	NA	7	13	NA

Source: Plumas Unified School District Key Findings, California Healthy Kids Survey, 1999.

Community Input

Residents of each community in the county participated in community meetings or completed surveys which were tabulated separately for adults and teens. At the community meetings, each participant was asked to name key issues in fourteen areas and then to prioritize their top five local and top three countywide priorities, by using red dots for local and blue dots for countywide priorities. Therefore the number of times an item was mentioned in a community meeting would not match the number of dots. Respondents to the surveys were asked to comment on each of the fourteen areas and to set three priorities for local and countywide improvements. The survey totals show the number of times a topic was commented upon in a survey. Each respondent had several opportunities to comment on each area and generally took that opportunity. The number does not address the range of comments within a topic, for instance, “better teachers” and “teachers are great” or simply the comment “yes.” The “total” column adds up all the dots, participants and responses from the surveys. Each response was counted and reported in Table 2.

Table 2: Comparison of Input about Youth and Education from Community Meetings and Adult and Teen Surveys, by Community

	Community Meetings			Adult Survey	Teen Surveys	Total
	Red	Blue	#			
Youth						
Chester/Lake Almanor	32	8	57	13	67	177
Indian Valley	9	1	16	25		51
Mohawk Valley	18	3	22	15	6	184
Portola	19	0	50	34	32	135
Quincy	24	0	19	15	126	135
Education						
Indian Valley	29	10	84	30	245	408
Mohawk Valley	4	3	10	18	3	38
Quincy	10	10	19	64	5	350
Portola	16	16	72	70	29	203
Chester/Lake Almanor	8	4	23	70	271	205

Table 3 shows the number of responses in the subtopics mentioned most frequently in the area of youth and education, by community and type of input. They are listed in the order of most frequently mentioned, from most frequently to least.

Table 3: Most Frequently Raised Issues within Youth and Education, by Community and Type of Input

CM = Community Meetings T = Teen Surveys A = Adult Surveys	Total			Chester/Lake Almanor			Indian Valley			Mohawk Valley			Portola			Quincy		
	CM	A	T	CM	A	T	CM	A	T	CM	A	T	CM	A	T	CM	A	T
More activities for youth	34	23	203	3	6	57	4			3			19	10	21	5	7	125
Youth center	44	13	160	22		8	5			4	2	1	3	6	9	10	5	142
Better schools	47	50	118	19	11	27	2	11	1	6	15	2	16	6	6	4	7	82
More recreation	47	13	151	6		13		2		6	6	1	33	4	5	2	1	132
Better teachers	8	24	65	5	5	37		2		1	9	1	2	3	1		5	26
More money for schools	12	18	65	2	1	8		2		4	5	1	5	2	1	1	8	55
More programs in schools	15	11	67	2	6	11	2	1		1	2	1	7	2	3	3		52
Skateboard park	17	5	68	5		4	1	1		1			3	2	1	7	2	63
Everything is OK	0	13	59		2	12		4	1		3			1	22		3	24
More schools	11	14	47	2	1	33			1	2	5	2	7	6	3		2	8
Youth jobs	30	19	11	14	1		6	15		5	1	4	5	2	1			6
Junior college	23	29	8	9	5	6	0	2	0	8	12	0	3	9	0	3	1	2
Dances	7	1	47	7		1											1	46
Drugs/mental health	15	5	13	8	2			1		1			4	1	4	2	1	9
Help college bound students	20	4	7	13		2							7	3			1	5
Parental involvement	23	6	1	4			2			1	2		4	1		12	3	1
Mentors	20	7	1	4	1		1	3		7	2			1		8		1
Split Jr/sr. high	6	2	18	5		13					1					1	1	5
More community involvement	15	4	4	5		2	2			3	2		4	1		1	1	2
Listen to kids	5	10	6		3		3	1		1	1		1	4			1	6
Swimming pool	9	4	8	3	2	5		1					6	1	1			2
Movies	2	1	17										2		3		1	14
Counselors (guidance/career)	11	1	1	9			1						1	1				1

Detail of categories in Table 3:

- More activities for youth: this includes all non-recreation activities or other activities listed specifically, to keep them busy and in place.
- Youth center: this includes a youth center, recreation center, clubs, Boys and Girls Club, any place to meet to keep youth safe and off the streets.
- Better schools: this includes improvements in schools, administration, programs, literature, supplies, classroom size, etc.
- More recreation: any type of recreation listed specifically for youth, except skateboard park, pool, and movies.
- Better teachers: this includes more training, more experience, more care of students, better pay, etc.
- More money for schools: this includes all funding ideas.
- More programs in schools: this includes language, computers, shop, etc.
- Skateboard park: any mention of the skateboard park. This is also mentioned in the recreation monograph.
- Everything is OK: comments specifically that all is well in education and/or youth.
- More schools: this includes issues about space, additional classrooms, and more school sites.
- Youth jobs: employment, training, vocational programs, etc.
- Junior college: any issues about junior college and satellites.
- Dances: this includes dances and dance clubs.
- Drugs/mental health: this includes counseling, classes, prevention programs.
- Help college bound students: this includes scholarships, information, more challenging classes, etc.
- Parental involvement: this includes parenting classes, responsibility of parents in disciplining, involvement in schools, etc.
- Mentors: this includes any mention of mentors for youth, including seniors, community, business people.
- Split Jr/sr. high: this includes splitting the schools and creating a middle school.
- More community involvement: this includes any mention of including the community in addressing issues of education or youth, including in funding, sports, youth training, etc.
- Listen to kids: this includes bringing youth into discussions about them and about changes in the community.
- Swimming pool: this is specifically about pools for youth.
- Movies: this is specifically about movies and theatres for youth.
- Counselors (guidance/career): this includes school guidance, college and career counselors.

Sources

Coe, Liz, MS. Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention "Best Practices" Report, Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Network, September 1998.

Leslie, Pat. Plumas Children's Network Evaluation Report 1999.

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Publications List.

Plumas County Mental Health, Plumas County Children's System of Care: Narrative and Three Year Plan.

Plumas County Probation Department, 1999 Annual Report.

Plumas Unified School District Technical Report Fall 1999, California Survey for Healthy Kids.

Needs Assessment Committee (of what?) (Children's System of Care?)

State of California, Office of the Attorney General. Bureau of Criminal Information and Analysis. Report on Juvenile Felony Arrests in California, 1998. Criminal Justice Statistics Center Report Series. Volume 2, Number 1, March, 2000.