

ACTION for Healthy Communities

San Luis Obispo County
Comprehensive Report

October 2001

About ACTION for Healthy Communities

ACTION for Healthy Communities is a cooperative, collaborative effort of individual agencies and organizations, public and private, that are committed to improving the overall quality of life of San Luis Obispo County. A list of those organizations involved with the collaborative effort is found in the Introduction to this report. ACTION completed its first benchmark study of community issues in 1999. This report represents the first time comparative results are available for a number of criteria that measure local community health and well-being.

About the Researcher

Campbell Research is a full-service research firm dedicated to assisting organizations and communities to listen effectively to their constituencies. Systematic forms of listening include surveys, focus groups and collection/analysis of internal and external data. Founder and President Bruce Campbell is a resident of San Luis Obispo County.

With headquarters on the Central Coast, Campbell Research has a stake in the region's quality of life. The ACTION for Healthy Communities project is a prime example of a comprehensive evaluation of the needs of

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The Indicators Report may be downloaded from www.unitedwayslo.org for free.

the community. Its goal is to stimulate dialogue about growing trends and to devise informed strategies for shaping future policies and effective actions.

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Project Overview

What is the quality of life like in San Luis Obispo County? Do residents feel safe? Are there enough employment opportunities? Do people feel they have access to good schools and services? Is our community healthy?

These are just a few of the questions that a consortium of public and private health, education, business, environmental, human service and civic organizations set out to answer when they began the ACTION for Healthy Communities project in the late 1990s. As defined, the project goals are:

- Raise public awareness of human needs, changing trends, emerging issues and community problems;
- Provide accurate, credible and valid information on an ongoing basis to human services planners and those providing funds;

-Provide information for individual institutions to guide decision-making about creation, management, and redesign of programs;

-Establish community goals using measurable Quality-of-Life Indicators that will lead to positive, healthy development for individuals, families and communities;

-Develop and support collaborative action plans to achieve the community goals.

The first wave of data collection occurred in 1999. This 2001 survey represents the first follow-up, in which many of the measures have been re-examined for changes. In addition, results of the initial wave suggested new areas that could be examined.

ACTION for Healthy Communities will provide survey results and data to the community through this Comprehensive Report and a separate Indicators Report.

Introduction

ACTION for Healthy Communities believes that by sharing resources and working together, more comprehensive useful planning tools can be developed. ACTION also believes that a more comprehensive approach to assessing the quality of life in San Luis Obispo County will enable organizations that allocate resources to more effectively address critical community concerns.

In December 2000, ACTION selected Campbell Research, a non-profit social research firm, to conduct the assessment for San Luis Obispo County. The Comprehensive Report is considered one step in this comprehensive planning process. The next phase involves identifying goals and action plans.

ACTION celebrates the collaborative spirit of all individuals and organizations involved with this ongoing effort. We especially thank our financial sponsors for their support, encouragement and faith in the process.

Mission and Guiding Principles

The mission of ACTION is to “develop a comprehensive planning approach to identify and address community needs through collaborative efforts with community partners to implement effective programs that improve community health and well being.”

ACTION has adopted these guiding principles:

- Long-term approach to planning and program development
- Creation of a collaborative planning mechanism
- Commitment to a community-driven process with consumer empowerment
- Assessment should result in identification of priorities and action plans

Desired Outcomes

ACTION has developed the following desired outcomes for this community assessment:

To study the community health and services that exist in order to:

1. Provide accurate, credible and valid information on an ongoing basis to health and human service planners, policy makers, and funders concerning the creation, management and support of programs.
2. Encourage collaboration and partnerships to facilitate improved service delivery that is

coordinated, holistic and consolidated within the community.

3. Set Community Indicators that can serve as the basis for the formulation of Community Goals that will lead to a community-wide vision and plan for improving community health.
4. Re-assess key indicators every two years to track progress and to identify emerging gaps and resources so that strategies for responding to the gaps can be developed.

Acknowledgements

Steering Committee

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Collaborative Partners

Adult Services Policy Council	Foundation for Community Design
Area Agency on Aging	Paso Robles Health Collaborative
Arroyo Grande Community Hospital/French Hospital Medical Center	People's Self Help Housing Corporation
Atascadero Community Link	SLOCO Access
Atascadero Youth Task Force	San Luis Obispo Chamber of Commerce
Children's Services Network	San Luis Obispo Childcare Planning Council
City of San Luis Obispo Human Relations Commission	San Luis Obispo Community Health Foundation
Community Health Centers of the Central Coast	San Luis Obispo County Community Foundation
County of San Luis Obispo: Department of Social Services	San Luis Obispo County Health Commission
Health Agency	San Luis Obispo County HIV CARE Consortium
Library	San Luis Obispo County Medical Society
Planning Department	San Luis Obispo County Office of Education
Probation Department	San Luis Obispo County YMCA
Economic Opportunity Commission	Taylor Consulting Group
Economic Vitality Corporation	Tenet Health Systems
Environmental Center of San Luis Obispo	United Way of San Luis Obispo County

Major Financial Sponsors

Arroyo Grande Community Hospital/French
Hospital Medical Center
Children & Families Commission of SLO County
Community Health Centers of the Central Coast
County of San Luis Obispo:
Health Agency
Department of Social Services
Planning Department

Probation Department
Economic Opportunity Commission of SLO
County
San Luis Obispo Community Health Foundation
San Luis Obispo County Community Foundation
Sierra Vista Regional Medical Center
The California Endowment
United Way of San Luis Obispo County

Supporting Financial Sponsors

Area Agency on Aging
Foundation for Community Design
Mission Community Bank

San Luis Obispo County Office of Education
San Luis Obispo County YMCA

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**A special thank you to all of the San Luis Obispo County volunteers and
businesses who assisted in surveying their community**

The Community Assessment Process

This community assessment model provides a comprehensive view of the quality of life in San Luis Obispo County. It is based on primary (public opinion) data and secondary (empirical trend) data that are gathered for a series of

indicators in seven areas —basic needs, education, the economy, health, natural environment, public safety, and social environment. These components are described below.

Methodology

Primary Data

Measures of community progress depend upon consistent, reliable, and scientifically accurate sources of data. One of the types of data gathered for this project is primary (public opinion) data. There is much to be learned from people's perception of their community, especially when perceptions contradict the empirical evidence about its conditions. For instance, in the area of public safety, crime rates may be going down while perceptions of danger are going up.

For this reason, in February 2001, Campbell Research conducted a random telephone survey of 809 county residents in both English and Spanish. Telephone numbers were randomly and proportionately selected from all valid exchanges in the County, including unlisted numbers. The intent of the survey is to be representative of the overall demographics of the county while ensuring representation of special population groups. Respondents are asked open-ended questions that elicit opinion as well as questions that present options to choose.

There is a 95% confidence that the opinions of survey respondents reflect those of the general population within approximately +/- 3.5%. It is important to note that all surveys have some inherent biases. This study's bias probably appears in the area of respondent self-selection and the capturing of opinion of those willing to contribute 17 minutes of their time to the community.

In many cases, questions used in the 1999 ACTION telephone survey were used for tracking purposes. That survey, fielded in March 1999, interviewed 534 County residents using the same random-sampling process.

Legend

Some survey responses are reported by geographic sub-areas. Those sub-areas are organized as follows:

In addition to the telephone surveying, a community survey was conducted by ACTION member organizations. These organizations surveyed their clients, patients, or members using a four-page, self-administered survey. These surveys enabled the project to explore in greater depth those groups that have special interests or needs, or who may be under-represented in the telephone survey (such as those who do not have a telephone or who have difficulty with their non-native language). Over 900 such surveys were collected. Copies of the telephone and community questionnaires are included in the Appendix of this report.

Secondary Data

Another type of data used for this project is secondary or empirical data. Secondary data is collected from a variety of sources including but not limited to: the U.S. Census, federal, state, and local government agencies, academic institutions, economic development groups, health care institutions, libraries, schools, local police, sheriff and fire departments and computerized sources through on-line databases and the internet.

Data Report

Every two years, the primary and secondary data will be compiled into a Data Report. The intent of this report is to provide an in-depth look at all aspects of life in San Luis Obispo County. Ethnicity, income, senior and geographic breakdowns have been incorporated in many of the primary data items as well. Please refer to the legend for explanations of frequently used symbols and notations throughout the report.

North County Adelaide, Atascadero, California Valley, Camp Roberts, Cholame, Creston, Lake Nacimiento, Paso Robles, Pozo, San Miguel, Santa

Margarita, Shandon, Templeton, Welsona, Whitley Gardens

North Coast Baywood, Cambria, Cayucos, Harmony, Los Osos, Morro Bay, San Simeon

San Luis Obispo City of San Luis Obispo, Avila Beach

South County Arroyo Grande, Grover Beach, Halcyon, Huasna, Nipomo, Oceano, Pismo Beach, Shell Beach

% Change Describes change in value between the current and previous year data

 Denotes a telephone survey question

Suggested Uses of this Report

Because the scope of this project is so broad it may take a while to become familiar with the data and format of the report. The tips shown below are offered to make the report more useful to the user.

For a Broad Overview of Quality of Life Issues in San Luis Obispo County

It is best to review the first page of each of the seven sections of the report— basic needs, education, the economy, health, natural environment, public safety, and social environment. Each of these sections begins with a summary of the research area.

For Information About Trends that May Impact Your Business or Organization

Within each of the seven research areas there is a wealth of information on a wide range of issues. One of the most useful features of this report is the display of trend data, where it is available. A tremendous amount of detailed information can be found that may help identify new customers or emerging needs, or explain changes in the local

environment that will have future impacts. In selected areas, demographic breakdowns of data, most commonly by ethnicity, income, seniors or geographic areas have been included.

For Data to Support or Refine Your Services and Products

This information is intended to be used in your own reports and proposals, and as a baseline for performance systems. Whenever report data is used, ACTION should be acknowledged. ACTION representatives are available to speak with groups about the information in this report.

Supplementary Reports Available

In addition to this Comprehensive Report, an Indicators Report is available which highlights and provides analysis of over 42 key Quality of Life Indicators. Separate detailed computer tabulations of the 2001 telephone survey and community surveys are available, as well as, computer tables comparing 1999 and 2001 survey results. These are available from ACTION at nominal prices.