

# ACTION

## for Healthy Communities A Community Collaboration

### Top Community Priorities

## Affordable Housing is the Number 1 Concern for Residents

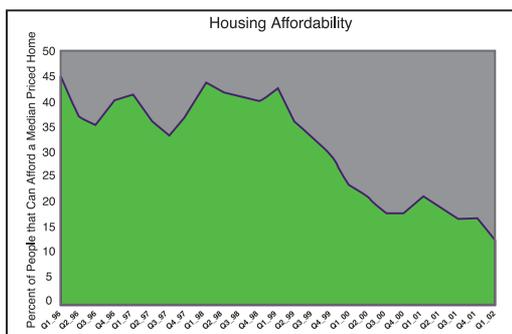


**ACTION for Healthy Communities** released its latest survey of San Luis Obispo County residents in the fall of 2003. Once again, more than 68% of respondents indicated that their greatest area of concern was affordable housing.

In 2002, the National Association of Home Builders estimated that only 13% of families in San Luis Obispo County could afford to buy the median priced home, down from 45% in 1996. San Luis Obispo ranked as the fourth least affordable county in the nation for housing. The availability of affordable rental units is declining as well. The Fair Market Rent for a two bedroom unit in 2004 is \$917/month. In the January 17, 2004 issue of the Tribune, only two units were available at \$917/month or less. Even if availability wasn't a problem, an individual earning minimum wage (\$6.75/hour) would have to work 105 hours per week to afford that rent (National Low Income Housing Coalition).

The lack of affordable housing impacts everyone! Dr. Terri Swartz, Interim Dean, Orfalea College of Business, California Polytechnic State University said, "In the Fall of 2003, we made 15 job offers to fill 12 open faculty positions, but only four applicants accepted. With salaries in the \$65,000 to \$90,000/year range, the lack of affordable housing and the high cost of living were definitely factors for the candidates."

Housing is considered "affordable" if the rent or mortgage, plus utilities and all other housing costs, total no more than 30% of the occupant's gross income.



Source: UCSB Economic Forecast Project

In its updated Vision statement, the Chamber of Commerce lists the lack of affordable workforce housing as the top concern of local business for the fourth year running! High housing costs make it increasingly difficult for employers to attract and retain qualified workers.

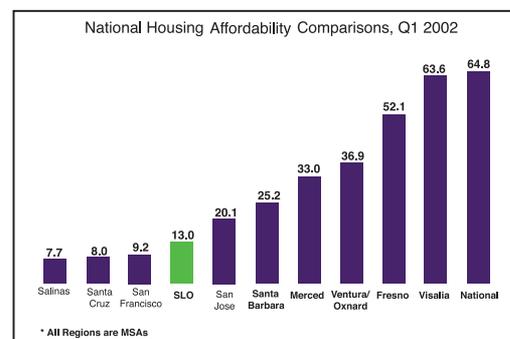
"To afford the \$413,640 median priced home (December, 2003) in SLO County, a household must earn \$98,000," according to the Tribune, June 18, 2004. With the median household income in 2003 at \$57,700, it is becoming increasingly challenging for the people who work here to be able to afford to live here. It is even more challenging for children who grow up here to stay here, for seniors to enjoy an affordable retirement, or for individuals with special needs to survive.

### What is Happening in San Luis Obispo County?

City and county government continue to address the issue of affordable housing, working closely with developers. The City of San Luis Obispo required that the developer of the deTolosa Ranch Apartments allocate 15% of the rental units for "affordable housing." Eric McGovern and his wife, both college graduates with good jobs in the community, were able to qualify for a one bedroom unit for \$625/month (approximately 50% of the rent for comparable units in the building).

Several coalitions and organizations (e.g., the San Luis Obispo County Housing Trust Fund, the Workforce Housing Coalition, the Housing Authority of the City of San Luis Obispo, Peoples' Self-Help Housing, the Supportive Housing Consortium, Habitat for Humanity, etc.) advocate to increase the supply of affordable housing and address the needs of low income and special needs residents. The Housing Trust Fund, a non-profit organization incorporated in 2003, has the support of hundreds of organizations and agencies in the community and intends to solicit financing for construction, rehabilitation, and acquisition of rental, ownership, and transition housing.

Preston Allen, Director of Housing at Cal Poly, says the University is "committed to doing our part to make more housing available" and has recently opened new on-campus housing, which will accommodate 800 students. This will help to create greater availability of rental units in San Luis Obispo.



Source: National Association of Home Builders

**For more information about affordable housing in SLO County, contact:**

**San Luis Obispo County Housing Trust Fund,**  
805-543-5970, [www.sloctf.org](http://www.sloctf.org)

**Workforce Housing Coalition,**  
805-546-0226, [www.slowhc.org](http://www.slowhc.org)

**Housing Authority of the City of San Luis Obispo,**  
805-543-4478

**Peoples' Self-Help Housing,**  
805-781-3088

**Supportive Housing Consortium,**  
c/o Rachel Richardson, 805-781-3660

**Habitat for Humanity,** 805-782-0687

**SLO County Board of Supervisors,** 805-781-5450



The City of San Luis Obispo required the developer of the deTolosa Ranch Apartments to designate 15% of the rental units as "affordable housing" with reduced monthly rental fees.

Cut this out and keep for future reference



### Things You Can Do:

1. Email, send a letter, call, or testify in person to your City Council, County Board of Supervisors, or the Planning Commission to advocate for:
  - "Inclusionary" zoning (i.e., every new development includes some affordable units).
  - Density bonuses (i.e., more units built per acre of land).
  - Greater housing diversity in development projects (i.e., single family homes, condominiums, duplexes/triplexes, apartments, etc.).
  - Building permit incentives & tax incentives for affordable housing development.
  - A well-funded, dedicated revenue source to support local affordable housing solutions (i.e., Housing Trust Fund).
2. Donate your time, energy, or money to organizations in the community which support affordable housing.

# Access to Healthcare in San Luis Obispo County is Improving

The most recent results of the ACTION for Healthy Communities survey indicate that 11% of county residents are unable to receive healthcare and 21% do not have a regular source of primary health care. According to Dr. David Harris, "Access to healthcare in the county is a

complex issue, one that does not lend itself to short sound bites. It requires the reader to become informed." The challenges with healthcare in SLO County are reflective of those nationwide and a few key concepts have emerged. The first challenge is that there are simply not enough physicians in the county. Although the Census reports a population of over 250,000, the number of people needing access to healthcare increases to 390,000, due to students, migrant workers, and tourists. According to Kaye Mickelson, Executive Director of the San Luis Obispo County Medical Society, the AMA 2003 projections indicate that there should be 260 physicians for every 100,000 people. That would mean that San Luis Obispo should have over 1,000 physicians, instead of the 393 physicians currently practicing in the county. That's a 61% shortage! A contributing factor is the fact that 90 physicians left the area in

the past two years and new doctors have been difficult to recruit due to the lack of affordable housing, the high cost of living, skyrocketing medical malpractice insurance premiums, and the low Medicare reimbursement rates (providers in SLO County are reimbursed at a "rural" rate, 12 to 18% less than providers practicing in Santa Maria or King City, which are classified "urban"). The average family practice physician in SLO has 5,000 to 7,000 patients, compared to the national average of 2,700. As a result, it takes an average of 21 days for an established patient to get an appointment with a primary care physician.

It is even more difficult to attract and retain specialists (e.g., orthopedists, cardiologists, etc.) since services by specialists are reimbursed in LA at twice the rate of SLO. As a result, some specialists are unwilling or unable to accept uninsured, Medicare, or Medi-Cal patients, requiring many residents to travel out of county to receive care. Unfortunately, the situation will only get worse when Medicare implements a 35% reimbursement rate reduction (5%/year over 7 years) beginning in 2006.



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### Things You Can Do:

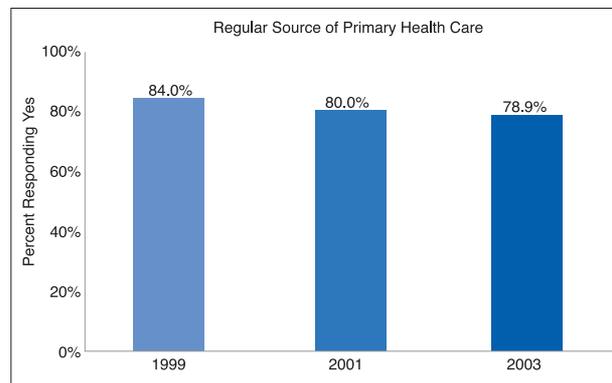
1. Practice healthy behaviors such as: eating right, exercising regularly, avoiding smoking, getting plenty of rest, avoiding unsafe sexual encounters.
2. Don't drink and drive; wear a seat belt.
3. Educate yourself as a consumer about local and national healthcare issues.
4. Learn about the local healthcare system and providers.
5. Take charge of your healthcare. Get answers to your questions.
6. Talk to your employer about your health coverage in advance of illness or injury.
7. Email, write, or call your local legislators (e.g., Capps, Thomas, Boxer, Feinstein, Maldonado, McPherson, Gov. Schwarzenegger) to advocate for Medicare reimbursement rates for SLO County to be increased from the rural to urban reimbursement rates.

### For more information on access to healthcare in San Luis Obispo County, contact:

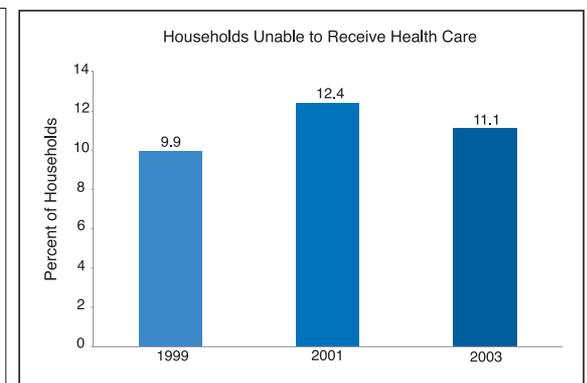
**San Luis Obispo County Medical Society:** 805-544-3020  
**Healthcare Safety Net/Ombudsperson:** 805-441-0616  
**First 5 Children and Families Commission:** 805-781-4058  
**San Luis Obispo County Public Health Dept.:** 805-781-5520

*"The smartest thing that someone in San Luis Obispo can do to address their concerns about healthcare is to stay healthy."*

Dr. Gregory Thomas, SLO County Public Health Officer



Source: ACTION for Healthy Communities telephone survey, 1999, 2001, 2003



Source: ACTION for Healthy Communities telephone survey, 1999, 2001, 2003

## What is Happening in San Luis Obispo County?

Access to healthcare in San Luis Obispo County should improve significantly due to several local efforts being undertaken to address the issue. First, the County of San Luis Obispo recently signed a contract with the Community Health Centers of the Central Coast (CHC), a non-profit organization, operating in San Luis Obispo County for 25 years. The contract with CHC will expand services to provide 10 full-service primary care clinics (adult medicine, pediatrics, and obstetrics/gynecology) to serve adults and children throughout the county, with expanded evening and weekend hours, free transportation, referrals for dental services, pharmacy services, and radiological services. By expanding services and providing a "medical home," patients' overall health status should improve and hospital utilization (especially emergency rooms) should decline.

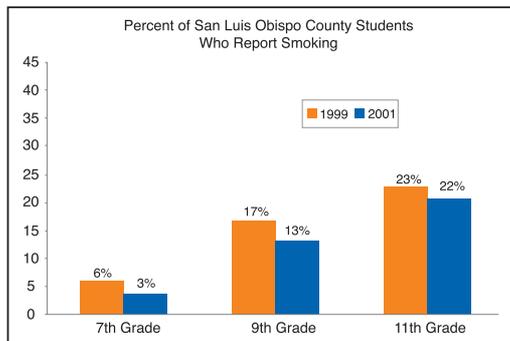
Since CHC provides primary care services, the need for services delivered by specialists will continue. The San Luis Obispo County Medical Society is working to recruit new physicians and specialists to the area and to influence existing specialists to work together to develop collaborative solutions. In addition, the county recently increased the reimbursement rate for physician specialists for uninsured individuals eligible for the county's CMSP program. It is expected that the higher reimbursement rate will influence the physicians' ability and/or willingness to see patients who do not have insurance.

The Children's Health Initiative is a local collaborative effort, convened by the First 5 Children and Families Commission of SLO, to ensure that the estimated 3,000 uninsured children, ages 0-18, in the county, have health coverage. The Children's Health Initiative will provide a seamless enrollment process for children eligible for Medi-Cal, Healthy Families, or other forms of insurance. For the children who are not eligible for other insurance coverage, the Initiative will provide local health coverage.

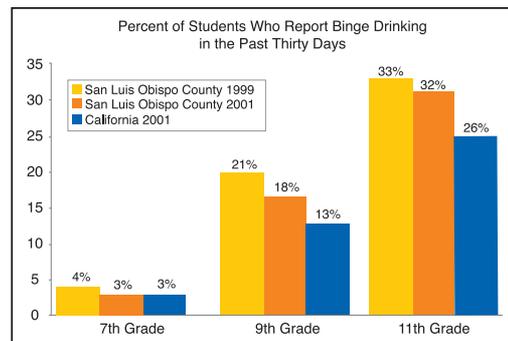
# Do You Know What Your Teenager is Doing?

Parents surveyed by ACTION for Healthy Communities indicated that they are less concerned about alcohol or drugs in the schools and believe there are adequate after school activities for youth and teens. However, one in three 11th graders reported binge drinking during a 30 day period, 22% smoke, and substance abuse for teenagers in San Luis Obispo County is higher than state averages.

If you are the parent of a teen, it is important to recognize that your child or one of their friends is likely to be abusing tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs. Increase your awareness of the signs of abuse and get involved! Clip out the "Twelve Things You Can Do" and start talking to your teen today!



Source: California Healthy Kids Survey, 1999, 2001



Source: California Healthy Kids Survey, 2001

## What You Need To Know About Tobacco, Alcohol, Other Drugs, and Your Child:

- Teens who smoke are three times more likely than non-smokers to use alcohol, eight times more likely to use marijuana, and 22 times more likely to use cocaine.
- Alcohol is the leading cause of death, and the leading drug of choice among youth, and 65% of young people who drink get their alcohol from family and friends.
- Teens may smoke, drink, or use drugs in order to "fit in," to do what their friends are doing, to escape pain, to take risks, or just to have fun or beat boredom.
- Alcohol, marijuana, and other drug use can lead to physical harm, slowed growth, school failure, violence, illness, injuries, sexual assault, isolation, memory loss, and even death.
- Young people who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcoholism than those who begin drinking at 21.
- Adults who host parties for minors with alcohol or drugs may face criminal charges and liability for injuries and damages.
- One third of high school teens engage in high-risk "binge" drinking (five or more drinks in a two-hour period). This can lead to severe illness and death from overdose.
- Know the signs that your child may be using tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs:
  - Change in moods — more irritable, secretive, withdrawn, overly sensitive, inappropriately angry, and euphoric.
  - Less responsible — late coming home, late for school or class, dishonest.
  - Changing friends or changing lifestyles — new interests, unexplained cash.
  - Physical deterioration — difficulty in concentration, loss of coordination, loss of weight, unhealthy appearance.
  - Withdrawn — refuses to talk or be around family.

Prepared by SLO County Drug & Alcohol Services,  
SLO County Tobacco Control Program

**For more information about Teen Abuse of Tobacco, Alcohol, and other Drugs, contact:**

**SLO County Drug & Alcohol Services, 805-781-4275**  
**SLO County Tobacco Control Program, 805-781-5564**

Cut this out and keep for future reference



### Things You Can Do:

1. **Talk.** Open communication is the key to supporting your child's healthy lifestyle. Tell your kids that you love them and you want them to be healthy and happy.
2. **Let them know you do not find alcohol and other illegal drug use acceptable.** Many parents never state this simple principle.
3. **Discuss the legal issues.** A conviction for a drug offense can lead to time in prison or cost someone a job, driver's license, or college loan.
4. **Talk about positive, drug-free alternatives,** and how you can explore them together. Some ideas include sports, reading, movies, bike rides, hikes, camping, cooking, games, and concerts. Involve your kids' friends.
5. **Be consistent and follow through.** Set limits, monitor your child, and allow them to earn your trust.
6. **Get information.** Know the names of your child's friends and their parents.
7. **If your child is attending a party,** know the host's name, address and phone number. Call ahead to make sure the host's parents will be there and no alcohol or drugs will be served. Be home and awake when your child returns and be available to listen.
8. **In a crisis, avoid becoming physically aggressive,** keep anger under control, keep communication open, and ask for help.
9. **Set an example.** Nothing is more convincing than a parent who practices what they preach.
10. **Get involved!** Volunteer with drug and alcohol prevention efforts like your local youth coalition, Friday Night Live, youth sports, churches, and school activities.
11. **Get help.** When your teen needs help because of a drug or alcohol problem, seek professional help.
12. **Partner with other parents.** Seek training from a "Parent Project" class, join a neighborhood parenting group, or network with parents at your child's school.

**SLO County Drug & Alcohol Services**  
**805-781-4275**

# ACTION

## *for Healthy Communities A Community Collaboration*

**ACTION for Healthy Communities is a cooperative, collaborative effort of public and private organizations committed to improving the overall quality of life in San Luis Obispo County. For more information, call (805) 543-2323 or visit [www.unitedwayslo.org](http://www.unitedwayslo.org).**

### **THE 2003 ACTION REPORT CARD:**

Since February 1998, ACTION for Healthy Communities has conducted countywide assessments of the quality of life for county residents, identified specific needs of the county's more vulnerable populations, and assessed overall community needs. The 2003 Report Card highlights a variety of indicators tracking the quality of life in San Luis Obispo County as expressed by the community. It is divided into seven sections corresponding to the seven adopted goals of ACTION for Healthy Communities. Additional reports and information are available at no cost on the United Way of SLO County website: [www.unitedwayslo.org](http://www.unitedwayslo.org).

### **THE ACTION DATA:**

Assessments have been conducted every two years since 1999, and are based on primary (public opinion) data and secondary (empirical trend) data gathered for a series of indicators based on the seven adopted goals of ACTION for Healthy Communities. The data used in this year's reports come from a wide variety of

sources including state and local government agencies and ACTION's countywide telephone surveys. Under contract to ACTION, the UCSB Economic Forecast Project compiled the secondary data and conducted the 2003 telephone survey.

### **WHAT ARE ACTION'S PLANS FOR THE FUTURE?**

Members of the ACTION for Healthy Communities collaborative were surveyed in May 2004 to determine the future direction of the program. The survey resulted in a clear message that the collection and tracking of data (both primary and secondary) to identify community needs and issues was important to a majority of the respondents.

### **WHAT WILL ACTION DO NEXT?**

As a result of the survey, the Steering Committee has determined that ACTION will continue to focus on data collection to identify community needs and issues and distribute that data every three years.

## **Our 2003 Sponsors and Partners**

### **Major Financial Sponsors:**

County of San Luis Obispo:  
Administrative Office  
Department of Social Services  
Probation Department  
Public Health Department  
Economic Opportunity Commission of SLO County  
First 5 Children & Families Commission of SLO County  
San Luis Obispo County Community Foundation  
United Way of San Luis Obispo County

### **Supporting Financial Sponsors:**

Area Agency on Aging  
Atascadero Linkages  
Community Health Centers of the Central Coast  
Long Term Care Ombudsman  
Peoples' Self-Help Housing Corporation  
SLO County Arts Council  
SLO Mozart Festival  
SLO Symphony

### **Collaborative Partners:**

Achievement House  
Adult Services Policy Council  
Area Agency on Aging  
Arroyo Grande Community Hospital/  
French Hospital Medical Center  
Atascadero Community LINK  
Atascadero Youth Task Force  
Boys & Girls Club of So. SLO County  
Children's Services Network  
City of San Luis Obispo Human Relations  
Commission  
Community Health Centers of the  
Central Coast  
County of San Luis Obispo:  
Department of Social Services  
Public Health Department  
Library  
Planning & Building Department  
Probation Department  
Economic Opportunity Commission of SLO County  
Economic Vitality Corporation  
Environmental Center of San Luis Obispo

First 5 Children & Families Commission of SLO County  
Habitat for Humanity of SLO County  
Long Term Care Ombudsman  
Partnership for the Public's Health  
Paso Robles and San Miguel Health Collaborative  
Peoples' Self-Help Housing Corporation  
SLOCO Access  
SLO Chamber of Commerce  
SLO Childcare Planning Council  
SLO Community Health Foundation  
SLO County Arts Council  
SLO County Community Foundation  
SLO County Health Commission  
SLO County Prevention, Advocacy & CARE Consortium  
SLO County Medical Society  
SLO County Office of Education  
SLO County YMCA  
SLO County Mozart Festival  
SLO Symphony  
Taylor Consulting Group  
Tenet Health Systems  
Transitions-Mental Health Association  
United Way of San Luis Obispo County

**ACTION Comprehensive and Indicator Reports are available by calling 805-543-2323 or by going to the United Way website: <http://www.unitedwayslo.org>**

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