

[Graphic omitted]

***Crawford County Needs Assessment
for
Children, Youth, and Families***

Prepared for

***The Pritchett Trust
First State Bank and Trust Co.
Pittsburg, Kansas***

March 2000

***Jack Harrington Consulting
1284 W. 72nd Street
Kansas City, Missouri 64114
Phone: (816)363-5818***

In cooperation with

***Office of Graduate Studies and Research
Pittsburg State University
Pittsburg, Kansas***

Acknowledgements

I would like to personally thank everyone associated with this assessment of the needs of children, youth, and families in Crawford County, but it would take more time to do this than it took to conduct the project. To truly express my appreciation to all the community leaders, agency directors, service providers, parents, youth, children, and other citizens of Crawford County who participated in this study, I would need to rent a large hall and host a community party. This is obviously not feasible. The findings and recommendations in this assessment merely reflect the conscience and concerns of the above-mentioned citizens of Crawford County. It is my hope, therefore, that this information will prove useful not only to the Pritchett Trust and its Trust Committee, but also to all those who care about the children, youth, and families of Crawford County—especially those individuals and organizations who may be able to use this information in their community-building efforts and their work on behalf of children, youth, and families.

It goes without saying that the Pritchett Trust, its committee members, and the First State Bank and Trust Company deserve acknowledgement and gratitude for their interest in assessing the needs of the community while examining their first six years of grant making. Odd as it may seem, some philanthropic organizations don't look very far into the communities they serve to find out the real needs and the real problems that the community must deal with. Others are not particularly interested in spending the time, effort, and expense to better balance the hard choices they must make about real people's lives. For their efforts in this matter, the Pritchett Trust is to be congratulated.

Dr. Oliver Hensley, Dean of Graduate Studies and Research at Pittsburg State University, was enthusiastic about this project from the first phone call, both for its potential value to the community and for the opportunity for PSU graduate students to learn about survey research and about the needs and problems of real people and organizations in the real world. Dr. Hensley, as much as anyone, made this project a reality through his leadership in putting the resources of PSU and the Office of Graduate Studies and Research at our disposal.

Dr. Marjorie Donovan, Associate Professor of Sociology at PSU, served as principal investigator for this project, and supervised the graduate students who collected the data and conducted the interviews and focus groups. She worked tirelessly to design interview protocols and to organize the overwhelming mass of information from which this report is distilled. She is an inspiration to her students, and to her credit she never stops learning herself, even as she teaches and counsels.

Dr. Kenneth Erickson and his colleague Gavin Johnston, of the Center for Ethnographic Research at the University of Missouri—Kansas City, provided valuable training to the PSU graduate students in interview and focus group techniques and grounded them in the principles of ethnography as a social research methodology. Most of the students had little experience in collecting qualitative data or interviewing or conducting focus groups. Dr. Erickson and Mr. Johnston set them at ease from the beginning and are largely responsible for the quality of the data we were able to produce.

Angela Jin, graduate student in educational technology who has now completed her Education Specialist degree, served as the on-site project coordinator at PSU, and made sure all the interview appointments, project scheduling, and personnel logistics were executed efficiently and on time. She also provided oversight for all the participating students and the project budget and administration. She was a solid anchor for the project, which consumed a significant amount of her last semester in graduate school and competed heavily with her course work and her thesis.

Cheryl Wyczynski, full-time graduate student and single mother, served this project under many hats, including numbers cruncher, data collector, graphic artist, photographer, interviewer, focus group director, and crew member in charge of harassment of officials and bureaucrats in search of the truth. She not only located all the baseline data on children, youth, and families, but actually made sense of it in a way that, we hope, is helpful to the readers. She designed the photo montages that separate the sections of the report and used her computer and writing skills to great effect in enhancing this project both aesthetically and in substance. Additionally, she edited the final draft and worked with the printer to produce the final report.

A special thanks to all the graduate students who, we hope, got as much out of the assessment process as they contributed. They all performed in an enthusiastic and professional manner, and the quality of the finished product is in large part due to their efforts. They are, in no particular order:

Natalya Androsova

Rama Chaturvedula

Verlin Gazaway

Fernanco Balsevich

Lingam Balakrishnan

Sarah Ingram

Sam Timmerman

Sara Turpin

Nick Burch

Jessica Holder

Jack Harrington
Jack Harrington Consulting
Kansas City, Missouri
March 15, 2000

Table of Contents

Section I:	Executive Summary.....	1
Section II:	Searching for the Right Answers.....	3
	<i>Methods Used to Gather Data About Children, Youth, and Families</i>	
Section III:	Taking a Look Back in History.....	6
	<i>A Brief Summary of the History of Crawford County</i>	
Section IV:	How Does It All Stack Up?.....	16
	<i>Existing Data on Children, Youth, and Families</i>	
Section V:	Who's Getting a Piece of the Pie?.....	24
	<i>How Pritchett Funding Has Been Spent as of 1999</i>	
Section VI:	Our Children, Youth, and Families.....	28
	<i>Analysis and Findings on Current Status of Children, Youth, and Families</i>	
Section VII:	Looking to our Future.....	51
	<i>Recommendations for Future Grantmaking by the Pritchett Trust</i>	

[Graphic omitted]

Section I

Executive Summary

This Crawford County Needs Assessment for Children, Youth, and Families began in September, 1999, and concluded in February 2000. It was commissioned by the Pritchett Trust Committee which is overseen by the First State Bank and Trust Company of Pittsburg, Kansas.

Section II outlines the methodology for this study. This consisted of the collection of existing baseline data about the status of children, youth and families; 30 in-depth interviews with “stakeholder” community leaders and agency directors; 35 interviews with private citizens; and 11 focus groups. The focus groups included a diverse sampling of Crawford County’s citizens such as parents, teens, children, Kiwanis Club members, human service providers, international students and child-services agency board members. The assessment team included the principal consultant, Jack Harrington, of Jack Harrington Consulting of Kansas City; the Dean of the Graduate School at Pittsburg State University; an Associate Professor of Sociology at PSU; and a team of PSU graduate students. The graduate students were trained in ethnographic interviewing and observational skills by representatives of the Center for Ethnographic Research at the University of Missouri at Kansas City.

Section III is a brief history of Crawford County that focuses on the ownership by Cherokee Indians of the area now called Crawford County, the later division of this area and its formation into Cherokee and Crawford County, and the evolution of railroads and mining in the area. Additionally highlighted are the interests of early settlers in obtaining an education for their children, in protecting and preserving their families, and in sometimes responding unconventionally to conditions they felt were oppressive and detrimental to their quality of life.

Section IV describes the data collected from secondary sources about the status of children, youth, and families in Crawford County.

Section V analyzes the Pritchett Trust grantmaking program from 1994 through 1999. The information on grant making is divided into a number of categories in order to help the reader to understand the Trust’s priorities over the past years.

Section VI presents an analysis of the data in seven key issue areas. These issue areas are education, health, child care and early education, after-school and weekend organized activities,

community-wide access to information about services and programs, services for “working poor” families, and the increasing ethnic and language diversity. Each issue area is presented with an analysis of the issues involved, gaps in services, community perspective, quotes from interviewees and focus group members, and pertinent findings.

Section VII presents six key recommendations to the Pritchett Trust Committee with regard to future grantmaking.

[Graphic omitted]

Section II

Searching for the Right Answers

Methods Used to Gather Data About Children, Youth, and Families

Purpose

The purpose of the Crawford County Needs Assessment for Children, Youth, and Families was, as stated in the original proposal, to determine and measure the status of children, youth, and families in Pittsburg and Crawford County in order to inform the grantmaking decisions of the Pritchett Trust. After five years of grantmaking, primarily in support of programs serving children, youth, and families, the Trust Committee expressed concern about whether the Trust should continue its "wide open" grantmaking program, or whether there are some significant unmet needs that might be targeted.

Assessment Team

Jack Harrington Consulting negotiated with Oliver Hensley, Dean of Graduate Studies at Pittsburg State University, to provide a lead graduate student to coordinate the project on site in Crawford County, as well as a team of graduate students to collect data, and to schedule and conduct interviews and focus groups. All participating students were paid \$20 per hour for their services. The lead graduate student, Angela Jin, received half of her semester stipend from Jack Harrington Consulting and half from PSU University. Professor Marjorie Donovan, Ph.D., was assigned as the principal investigator and was responsible for overseeing the methodology, development of instruments, assembly and analysis of data, and other duties as they were deemed necessary. Jack Harrington was on site at least once per week during the needs assessment and frequently, for two days per week.

Additionally, Jack Harrington Consulting contracted with the Center for Ethnographic Research at the University of Missouri at Kansas City for the services of Dr. Kenneth Erickson and his colleagues, who have a wide range of experience in collection of qualitative data through interviews and focus groups to assess marketing strategies, the impact of community initiatives and policies, and other measures where clear-cut numbers are not available or appropriate. Dr.

Erickson and his colleagues provided training to the PSU graduate students in ethnographic interview and observational skills.

Methodology

The methodology proposed to collect four different kinds of data. These included secondary research for existing baseline data on the status of children, youth, and families. The team initially listed the following data to be collected:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty rate • Literacy or basic skills levels • Elementary school retention rates • Student mobility rates • Chronic absenteeism rates • Percentage of 9th graders who finish 12th grade on time • Child immunization rates • Number of foster care placements • Number of families on day care waiting lists • Youth employment data • Juvenile crime and incarceration rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of college-bound high school graduates • Percentage of low birth-weight babies • Mothers giving birth under 19 years of age • Reported child abuse and neglect cases • Sustained child abuse and neglect cases • Existing and new AFDC cases • Adult unemployment data • Voter participation rates • Housing mobility rates • Other data as available • Percentage of substandard housing
---	--

Cheryl Wyczynski, team member, sought out and uncovered most of the above data, analyzed it in collaboration with Jack Harrington and Dr. Donovan, and developed a narrative description of the significance of the data. A few data items were unavailable or contradictory, and others were deemed to be irrelevant for the purposes of the study as it unfolded. The data collected is described in Section IV of this report.

The second data source was interviews with various “stakeholders,” such as community leaders, agency directors, direct service providers, individuals in business and government, members of law enforcement and other fields with some knowledge of the needs of Crawford County related to issues concerning children, youth, and families. The team conducted 30 individual interviews with stakeholders of approximately one hour each and then transcribed the interview results according to Dr. Erickson’s instructions for converting field notes into useful information.

The third data source was interviews with individual residents of Crawford County who were not necessarily involved in providing services, but who more likely were either recipients of services or potential recipients—or people who had some experience with the human services system sufficiently to provide insight about how it meets the needs of children, youth and families. The team conducted thirty-five “bottom up” interviews, as they came to be known (as differentiated from the stakeholder interviews, which were referred to as “top down”). These were likewise transcribed from field notes and converted into usable information.

The fourth data source was 11 focus groups conducted around the county. These included three focus groups with parents (including one group of single parents); two with teens (including one with teens living in a rural community); two with elementary age children; one with human services providers; one with members of the Kiwanis Club; one with international students now living in Crawford County; and one with the board of directors of a child-serving agency.

Whenever possible at least two team members participated in the focus group interviews, and occasionally more when they were available. Jack Harrington attended sessions in all categories. Field notes from all team members were consolidated and analyzed following each session.

When all data was collected, team members poured over each write-up and discussed the points made by the interviewees and focus group members. They next collated their responses for frequency and context in order to extract the respondent’s depth of feeling for a particular issue and the degree to which his or her own experience was driving the answers. All responses were charted and tallied, and then re-analyzed for content and meaning.

Team members re-contacted a number of interviewees when questions arose, or when there was a need for specific understanding of a particular point or service or agency. In addition, a number of data items from the secondary research were rechecked and confirmed (or not) because of information that surfaced in an interview or focus group.

Finally, all the collected data were translated into the findings, the conclusions, and the recommendations to the Pritchett Trust that the reader will find in this report.

[Graphic omitted]

Section III

Taking A Look Back In History:

A Brief Summary of the History of Crawford County

By Virlin L. Gazaway
Graduate Student
Department of History
Pittsburg State University

Edited by Marjorie Donovan, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Sociology
Pittsburg State University

Introduction

The part of Kansas known as Crawford County is a unique area of the world. Upon examination of its history, we find the evolution of an uncommon pioneering county. This history commences with Paleolithic Indian artifacts that have been located in the Crawford County area, as well as several Indian dwelling sites and grave sites and continues today with an ongoing process of change. The area was originally part of the great Louisiana Purchase. The brief history of Crawford County that follows suggests that an uncommon, non-conforming, and pioneering spirit has characterized this area since its earliest days. History offers a view of seven major stages in the development of the county: (1) the transition from Louisiana Purchase lands to the Neutral Lands of the Cherokee; (2) the transition from the Neutral Lands of the Cherokee to part of the Confederate States of America; (3) the county's role as part of the Overland Trail and the development of its citizenry; (4) the effect of mining and railroads; (5) the "Little Balkans" and labor unrest; (6) agriculture and dairy farming; and (7) the evolution of its educational facilities.

The Beginning

The territory now known as Crawford County was once part of the Louisiana Purchase, and later part of the Kansas Territory. In 1828 the extreme southeast corner of the territory was given to the Cherokee Indians by the United States government in payment for their ancestral homelands in the State of Georgia, from which the Cherokee had been relocated for the benefit of white settlers in

that area.

At the division of the territory into counties, the extreme southeast portion was named McGhee County. On February 18, 1860, the name was changed to Cherokee County. In 1861, Kansas attained statehood and on February 13, 1867, the state legislature divided Cherokee County into two counties with the southern county retaining the name Cherokee and the northern county given the name Crawford in honor of then Kansas Governor Crawford.

The Cherokee Neutral Lands

In the Kansas Territory the area given to the Cherokee Nation was known as the Cherokee Neutral Lands. The counties of Cherokee, Crawford, and part of Bourbon County—six hundred thousand acres—were known as the Cherokee Neutral Lands. The Cherokee actually resided in the Oklahoma area of the reservation and are said never to have occupied the Cherokee Neutral Lands.

Crawford County was at one time a part of The Confederate States of America. At the beginning of the Civil War the Cherokee sold their interest in the land for \$250,000 in gold and silver, plus \$250,000 in Confederate Dollars, and the Cherokee raised two companies of soldiers to fight for the Confederacy.

Settlers and the Overland Trail

By 1850 white settlers began illegally moving into the Cherokee Neutral Lands. By 1860 there were many white families scattered throughout the area. One of these early white settlers was John Rogers, who came from Fort Scott in 1854 to establish both a general store and a freight hauling service in the Cato area, which at that time was part of Bourbon County. Rogers' store was located on the present road that runs from Arcadia to Humbolt. This store was a day's ride by wagon from Fort Scott and it served as a stopping place for travelers on the Overland Trail—a travel route which was created by settlers seeking land in the West and Southwest. Ruts remaining from this early trail can still be seen on some undisturbed pasture land and in the bedrock of Drywood Creek south of the current site of Cato, Kansas.

The First Town

Cato is the earliest continuously occupied town site in Crawford County. However, Cato was not the first town to be established in the county. The first town in Crawford County was Pleasant Ridge, in the southern part of the county. The town site is believed to have been located three-fourths of a mile east of the intersection of Fourth Street and Broadway in present-day Pittsburg. Nothing remains of the only building erected in Pleasant Ridge, a schoolhouse. The early settlers brought with them their knowledge of farming, tools, personal belongings, livestock, and their education. The desire to educate children continued throughout the history of the county. The Pleasant Ridge School was constructed in 1858 and served as a school for only one term. The school was burned to the ground in 1860 by the United States Army under the orders of President Buchanan.

The Removal of Settlers

In the 1850s, the Cherokee Nation noted that white settlers were homesteading in the Cherokee Neutral Lands. Although the Cherokee people never occupied the area, they saw settlement as an opportunity to obtain a cash payment for the land from the government. The tribe sent a delegation to Washington, D.C. to request money in exchange for the land. The President, James Buchanan, offered no money, but promised that the settlers would be removed from the Cherokee Neutral Lands.

In the fall of 1860 United States soldiers began driving settlers out of the Cherokee Neutral Lands. Beginning at the southern line of the Cherokee Neutral Lands the soldiers burned cabins, barns, fences, hay, and grain. The homesteaders were forced to travel northward by wagon, horse, and foot. They were driven completely out of the Cherokee Neutral Lands and into Bourbon County. The settlers sent a messenger to Washington to plead their case for the right to settle in Crawford County. By the time the messenger arrived in Washington, the Civil War had begun. The attempt to remove the settlers was abandoned, along with the Cherokee Neutral Lands. In a strip of land across the northern end of the county, some settlers were to be held pending further relocation. Some remained until the end of the war.

After the war, the government voided the sale of the land by the Cherokees to the Confederacy. The entire area of the Cherokee Neutral Lands was sold to James F. Joy for a reported sum of \$600,000 in cash. The money was given to the Cherokee Indians who then

relinquished all claims to the land.

High Technology: 1867

During the Civil War, some settlers did return to homesteads in the Cherokee Neutral Lands. Although most homesteads had been torched, some of those returning found their homesteads still intact. Still, the town of Pleasant Ridge was never again occupied as a town. At the end of the war, the area was named McGhee County and became part of the State of Kansas which had been created in 1861. Cato became the leading frontier town in the area. In 1876 the state legislature divided McGhee County into two counties: the southern part was named Cherokee and the northern part was named Crawford. To equalize the size of the counties, a six-mile strip of the southern end of Bourbon County was placed in Crawford County forming the current dimensions of the county.

In 1867, two entrepreneurs established both a steam-powered gristmill and sawmill in the frontier town of Cato, and another established a brick works in conjunction with a freight hauling business. Locally-mined coal fueled the new industries, and the products of manufacturing were hauled to Fort Scott for trade.

Education was Important Early in Crawford County's Existence

Though times were tough in the frontier towns, the people still took the time and effort to come together to build permanent structures for formal schooling and religious education. Among the first buildings constructed at Cato was a schoolhouse. The building is of stone construction and still stands today. It contains some of the original artifacts of the time as well as some more recent one-room-school fixtures. One of the older churches of the area can also be found in Cato, which was the early hub of the county with a population of several hundred. However, future railroads bypassed Cato and it was eventually relegated to the status of frontier town only.

The Orphan Trains

During the late 1800s unwanted children from the east were sent to the states and territories in the west to find homes with homesteaders. They were shipped by wagon and later by train, and the phenomenon became known as the Orphan Trains. The Orphan Trains stopped at way stations such as Cato and local families turned out to “adopt” a child or children. Many adoptions may have

been for humanitarian reasons, but many others were seen as a source of cheap farm labor. Many children grew into adulthood as indentured servants or laborers which subsequently produced many with physical and mental disabilities.

Mining, the Railroads, and the Growth and Decline of Towns

Coal was discovered in Crawford County in 1857. By 1864, coal was being mined in quantity and transported for sale to Leavenworth and other locations. Two factors that influenced and hastened the growth of coal mining in Crawford County were the discovery of lead and zinc deposits near Galena, Kansas and the westward expansion of railroads.

Lead and zinc deposits were discovered in the Galena-Joplin Mining District near Baxter Springs, Cherokee County, Kansas, in 1872. A short time later deposits were found near Galena, Kansas, in Cherokee County. These discoveries ultimately changed the course of history in southeast Kansas. The need for coal for both smelting lead and zinc and for railroads encouraged the development of coal mining in both Crawford and Cherokee Counties (Skubitz, 1934, page 6). At that time, coal was being mined by small companies in Crawford and Cherokee Counties for railroad use, as well as for shipment to Kansas City and other areas for sale. Later, this would change.

In the early years of the railroad, its infrastructure in the county had been based on freight and passenger service. By 1883, many major railroad operations such as the Kansas City, Fort Scott and Gulf Railroad, the Missouri Pacific, and the St. Louis and San Francisco criss-crossed Crawford County. The demise of Cato was directly connected to the extension of railroads into the county. From the beginning there were bad feelings between the residents of Cato and the railroad, which may have been instigated by Peter Smith to save his wagon-freight line. Local residents formed the Land League to oppose the practice of the government making land grants to railroads, who would then resell the land back to those who already lived on it. The Girard Press newspaper supported the railroads and the paper's office was burned to the ground during this dispute, allegedly by the Land League. The railroad abandoned the prospective route through Cato and instead located the route six miles northwest, in Anna. From there the route went to Farlington. At Farlington, an earthen dam was constructed both to hold water for the steam engines and to bridge a ravine. The body of water is known today as Farlington Lake, just south of Crawford State Park

Lake. Additionally, a huge grove of Catalpa trees was planted at Farlington for use as railroad ties.

Prior to 1885, the major coal producing companies had been the Central Coal and Coke Company and the Kansas and Texas Coal Company. However, as railroad lines consolidated and expanded, the rail companies purchased many of the most productive mines. The railroads raised freight rates in a successful effort to force the remaining independent mines to close. The Frisco Railroad became the dominant railroad in Crawford County and also controlled the major coal company in the county, and was thereby able to further control both coal and freight prices. The State of Kansas enacted legislation prohibiting railroad companies from owning coal companies, and the Frisco was forced to divest its mining operations. It is widely believed that the coal companies formed as a result of this action were merely front companies for the Frisco. Later competition from other railroads ended the dominance of the Frisco line in the mid-1880s. From 1885-1900, the major coal companies to emerge in Crawford County were the Western Coal and Mining Company, Pittsburg-Midway Coal Company, and the Cherokee-Pittsburg Coal and Mining company.

The Shaft Mining of Coal and Company Stores

Mining methodology in Crawford County before the Great Depression was known as “shaft” or “deep” mining, requiring the sinking of a vertical shaft to a coal layer. Horizontal shafts were then dug to remove the coal. Drift mining was used if a vein of coal was located at or near the surface of a hillside, requiring that a horizontal shaft be dug into the coal to remove it. The first commercial shaft coal mine in Crawford County is widely held to have been sunk in 1877 on the southeast corner of the intersection of 2nd Street and Pine Street in the city of Pittsburg. The mine was bought by the Oswego Coal Company, which additionally purchased land near Litchfield and sunk a mine there. At the Litchfield mine, the company built 28 houses and a store for the miners. These were the first “company houses” and “company store” in Crawford County. They would not be the last. In some camps, the companies also built schools for the children of the miners.

The company stores had a significant impact on the miners and their families. Purchases and rent were made against future pay and families were left with little cash. Miners who frequented the camp tavern, also owned by the company, further depleted their family’s available cash.

The Little Balkans

During the rapid development of coal mining in the early part of the twentieth century, Crawford County became known as the “Little Balkans” of southeast Kansas. Many of the miners were immigrants from central Europe, France, Sweden, Britain, Germany, Italy, and Eastern Europe. Descendants of the early white settlers held these new immigrants in low esteem.

The coal companies were mostly interested in production and gave little regard to the safety or health of the miners and their families. Marked social-class divisions developed in the area. The native-born white rural residents and business owners occupied the top rungs of the social and economic ladders, and the foreign-born miners clung precariously to the lowest rungs.

Labor Unrest

At the height of mining operations in the 1920s the population of Crawford County reached nearly 65,000. Most inhabitants were either coal miners or laborers in the lead and zinc smelting industries. Union organizing was active and a number of strikes were held for better wages and working conditions at many of the mines.

One well-documented incident was the march of the Amazon Army in 1921. The Amazon Army was a group of two to three thousand wives, daughters, sisters, and mothers of miners who marched on the mines protesting the harsh treatment of the miners. The march is cited by labor historians as a defining event in labor relations in America. The marches ended when the Governor of Kansas called out the State National Guard to protect the mines. The troops fired into the ground in front of one group of marchers who then dispersed.

After the March of the Amazons, legislation was passed to improve the lot of the miners. Company stores were outlawed. Unions were brought in to bargain for better wages and working conditions. The advent of higher wages and more expensive working conditions may have aided in the gradual decline of profitable mining in Crawford County.

In 1929, America and the rest of the world entered the Great Depression. At the same time, drought struck the central United States and the Dust Bowl engulfed Kansas. Shaft coal mining never fully recovered in southeast Kansas and the associated industries of lead and zinc mining collapsed because of the exhaustion of the deposits. Lack of employment in mining and

manufacturing and the departure of many farmers depleted the population and economy of Crawford County. Neither the mining nor the manufacturing industry have ever fully recovered.

Strip Mining

Strip mining is a method in which the overburden, (earth and rock on top of the coal) is dug up and then dumped to the side. In the early days of strip mining horse-drawn drags were used to remove the overburden. The arrival of mechanized steam shovels and electric shovels greatly increased the depth at which coal could be mined by stripping. But strip mining destroys the land, and in the late 1960s, federal regulations were put into force that required all strip mines to be restored to a usable condition. In Crawford County, the added expense of re-claiming the land and the low quality of the high-sulfur coal lowered the profit margin. Production declined from the 1970s until the late 1990s when the last coal mine in Crawford County closed due to bankruptcy.

Agriculture and Dairy Farming

Crawford County began as an agricultural economy that evolved into the leading industrial center of Kansas in the 1920s. However, for a significant period of time, the farming population of Crawford County steadily increased, especially with the decline of the industrial economy towards the end of the 1920s. Many of the farms were 40 to 80 acres in size, and farm families included as few as two or three people to as many as a dozen or more. Eventually, farm sizes increased and the rural population subsequently decreased. While the income of each farmer increased, the cash turnover within the county decreased. Fewer farms meant fewer purchases of equipment, parts, feed, and supplies. Fewer farms also meant less diversified production. The sale of such items as cream and eggs by farm families changed to the purchase of the same items by the remaining farm families.

Up to the 1960s many of the farms were dairies. Most had milking herds of modest size that could be cared for by one person or family. Some dairies sold their milk as Grade A for consumption. More sold milk as Grade C, referred to as “cheese grade,” because Grade C milk was processed into cheese.

Federal regulations were different for the two grades of milk and Grade A regulations were much stricter for milking parlors than Grade C. The regulations changed in the 1960s and

1970s, and Grade C producers were required to upgrade to Grade A for sanitary reasons. Many of the smaller farmers could not afford the expense, and they either quit milking or quit farming entirely. Later attempts by the Department of Agriculture to reduce the national milk supply to increase prices further decimated the ranks of dairy farmers, along with the economy's cash flow and the agricultural service industry. Feed mills, implement dealers, welding shops, veterinarians and many other Main-Street businesses in the smaller communities were all adversely affected.

Schools and Innovation

Schools have always been a priority for the residents of Crawford County. The first recorded classes in the County were held in 1858 in a log cabin that previously had been a residence. The Pleasant Ridge schoolhouse was the first building constructed for that specific purpose. After the white settlers were allowed to return in 1866, other white settlers soon followed, and schools were built where needed. Eventually, the haphazard method of building schools was abandoned in favor of a more structured method, the first such system established in Kansas.

In the new school system school buildings were located on east-west mile lines every other mile from north to south. This arrangement ensured that no children would have further than one mile to travel north or south to a school. Distance between schools varied somewhat along the east-west lines, but the distance was generally between two and three miles. These one- or two-room schools were mostly of wood-frame construction, although some were of stone or brick. Some of the wood frame buildings survive to this day.

The long, slow consolidation of smaller farms into larger acreage farms reduced the number of children living in rural areas of the county. As a result, the one-room schools closed as the need for them decreased. In the 1960s, the state of Kansas closed all the remaining one-room schools in favor of bussing students to consolidated schools. By the late 1960s, the decrease in population in many of the smaller communities in Kansas mandated the further consolidation of urban schools to central locations for economic reasons.

With the consolidation of schools came a more economical education system, along with a perceived demise of many of the communities that "lost" their schools. Many residents referred to the loss of their schools by saying that the heart and soul of their communities had been removed.

Summary

The current population of Crawford County is about 35,000. The term “Little Balkans” mirrors its namesake as one of the lowest-wage areas in the United States of America. Population within the county has shifted over the years as mining and agriculture declined and Pittsburg has now become the major economic center of the county. Schools in the county have been forced to consolidate, contributing to the decline of many of the smaller communities that survived the end of the mining era.

This brief history of the past 150 years has attempted to impart to the reader an appreciation of some of the key features that characterize the continuing evolution of Crawford County, particularly as it effects the lives of children, youth, and families. One common thread that this history has is an enduring pride in rugged individualism and innovation. For example, the views of the average person on the street often sharply diverged from the viewpoints of community leaders. Thus, it is no surprise that interviews for the Crawford County Needs Assessment in late 1999 and early 2000 also reveal that the perceived “needs of children, youth, and families” are framed somewhat differently by consumers of services than they are in interviews with community leaders and service providers. There is a long history in Crawford County of ordinary people formulating their own views of social life and holding tenaciously to those views.

[Graphic omitted]

Section IV

How Does It All Stack Up?

What Does Existing Data on Children, Youth, and Families Show?

The population of Crawford County is just over 35,000, and has increased very little since the 1990 census (approximately 1.3%). According to the Southeast Kansas Community Action Program's 1998-99 community assessment, the ethnic distribution in the county is 95.7% white, 1.3% African American, 1.2% Asian, 0.8% Native American, and an uncertain percentage Hispanic. Sixty-nine percent of the population resides in the communities of Pittsburg, Girard, Frontenac, and Arma.

Crawford County is a relatively low-income community overall, with a per capita income of \$19,342 and a median family income of \$26,516, which is 20% below the state median income of \$32,966.

The county has not grown significantly in the years since the decline of the mining industry and the decline of family farms in the 1960s and 1970s, although the unemployment rate remains low during the current economic boom. The primary source of jobs are in manufacturing, retail, services, transportation and government. The availability of meat-packing jobs at the Sugar Creek Packing Company has attracted a rapidly-growing number of Hispanic families, and city and county officials are looking to Garden City (Finney County) and other communities for advice on addressing problems of language barriers and cultural diversity in education and other sectors of the community.

This section of the Crawford County Needs Assessment will examine seven indicators of well-being for children, youth and families to develop a snapshots of their status in the community. Those indicators include poverty, education, child care, health, employment, housing, and child abuse.

1. Poverty

The poverty rate in Crawford County is approximately 13% of its population, which indicates that 13% of families live below the federally-established poverty level of \$17,050 for a

family of four.¹ This rate places Crawford County in the 10th decile rank among Kansas Counties, according to the 1999 Kansas Kids Count Data Book.² Decile ranks indicate a comparison with other counties on a scale of one to ten. The most favorable rankings are indicated by the lowest numbers, such as 1, 2, or 3; the most unfavorable rankings are indicated by higher numbers, such as 7, 8, or 9. Being in the 10th decile rank for poverty indicates that Crawford County has more poverty than most other Kansas counties. Accordingly, there are 2,250 children living at or below the poverty level in Crawford County.

According to Benny Skahan, Economic Employment Support Supervisor, for the Crawford County office of the state Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services, the number of persons on the Welfare roles have declined 50% since the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) was enacted in 1996. Commonly known as Welfare Reform, this legislation replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and replaced it with a new program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Kansas enacted its own legislation soon after the federal law took effect, known in this state as Temporary Assistance for Families (TAF). The purpose of the legislation, at both federal and state levels, was to end the dependence of needy parents on government assistance by promoting job preparation, work and marriage. Kansas policies for its “welfare to work” program include subsidized child care, medical assistance, food stamps, and employment preparation services.

As a result, significant numbers of former AFDC recipients have been cycled off of public assistance in Kansas and nationally. Between 1996 and 1998, Kansas experienced a decline of approximately 50% in the number of recipients. But according to Kansas Action for Children, Inc., “Although Kansas families and children are moving off of, or being denied, cash assistance in record numbers, they are not necessarily gainfully employed, economically stable, or even living above the poverty line. In fact, Kansas may be failing at the very heart of the federal legislation: to

¹ The so-called “poverty line” is officially established as an annual income of \$8,350 for a single person; \$11,250 for a family of two; \$14,150 for three; \$17,050 for four; \$19,950 for five; \$22,850 for six; \$25,750 for seven; and \$28,650 for eight.

² *Kansas Kids Count Data Book*, Kansas Action for Children, Inc., 1999.

increase economic independence and family stability.”³

There are currently 315 families receiving Temporary Assistance to Families (TAF) benefits, 44 persons receiving General Assistance, and 1,127 families receiving food stamps in Crawford County. Since there are approximately 2.21 persons per family in Crawford County, these figures indicate that approximately 696 persons are currently receiving TAF benefits and 2,491 persons are currently receiving food stamp benefits. Crawford County has historically maintained a significantly higher rate of food stamp recipients than other Kansas counties. Figures from 1998 indicate that there were 85 children per thousand living in families receiving food stamps in all Kansas counties. The figures for the same period in Crawford County were 152 children per thousand. Another indicator of poverty is the percentage of children approved for free and reduced-cost school meals, which stands at 32.4% in Crawford County and ranks in the lower ten percent of Kansas Counties.

2. Education

The picture of Crawford County education is generally a good one. There are approximately 6,000 children and youth enrolled in Crawford County schools who are taught by some 450 teachers. Students in Crawford County consistently score at or near the state averages for Kansas Assessment Test examinations measuring reading comprehension, writing, and math problem-solving and reasoning capability. While some educators, particularly in rural schools, report that many students do not enter kindergarten prepared to learn, they appear to perform relatively well once they are in school for a few years. The retention rate for elementary schools (students held back at least one grade) is less than one percent throughout county schools. The average daily school attendance for the county is 96%, a full percentage point above the statewide figure, indicating no significant problem with chronic absenteeism.

The rate of graduation from high school is measured as the number of 12th grade graduates divided by the sum of (a) all graduates, and (b) all dropouts reported since the specific graduating class entered the 9th grade. The graduation rate is adjusted for transfers during the high school

³ *Welfare Reform in Kansas: Snapshots of Children and their families*, Kansas Action for Children, Inc., March 1999.

years. By this measure, Crawford County's graduation rate has fluctuated between 80% and 85% in recent years.⁴

Of the approximately 28,000 residents of Crawford County who are 16 years old or older, 49% have some college or a college degree and another 28% have a high school diploma or equivalent. Thirteen percent have some high school education, and 11% have less than a 9th grade education.⁵ The rates for college education are substantially higher than in the surrounding counties of Cherokee (33%), Labette (41%) and Montgomery (42%).

Of the 457 high school seniors in Crawford County expected to graduate with the class of 2000, high school counselors estimate that 305, or 66.7% will enter college or some form of post-secondary education or training in the Fall of 2000.

Significant majorities of surveyed Crawford County⁶ students report feeling safe in their schools (87.6%); that teachers notice when they are doing good work (71.5%); that there are opportunities for one-on-one communications with teachers (77.0%); that there are opportunities to be part of class discussions or activities (83.9%); and that there are lots of opportunities in school to become involved in sports, clubs and other activities outside of class.

3. Child Care

There are 123 licensed child care facilities in Crawford County with the capacity to care for 1,437 children, or 26 of every 100 children in the county. Compared to other counties, Crawford ranks in the 4th decile (see remainder of paragraph at top of page 17 for more explanation about decile ranking). This represents a relatively positive ranking.⁷ According to Monica Belicek, Infant/Toddler Specialist for the Kansas Child Care Census, there are 210 children under the age of three on child care waiting lists in the county

⁴ *Connect Kansas Crawford County Data and Planning Guide, 1999*, Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services, and *Kansas Kids Count Data Book*, previously cited. Sources vary slightly in reporting graduation rates for specific years.

⁵ *Southeast Kansas Community Action Program Community Assessment*, previously cited.

⁶ *Kansas Communities That Care Youth Survey*, Kansas Alcohol and Drug Services, administered by Research Services of Greenbush, 1999.

⁷ *Kansas Kids Count Data Book, 1999*, previously cited.

However, most providers in Crawford County will only accept children older than 18 months, and others may only accept a limited number of infants because of the cost and the labor-intensity of infant care.

4. Health

The health care system in Crawford County is relatively sound, with hospital, clinic and county health department care available for most residents, and an adequate number of medical and dental providers. The county demonstrates a relatively high rate of immunizations for children reaching age two (73%); a high level of births with early prenatal care (85.6%); a percentage of low birth-weight babies (5.3%) that is below the statewide average of 6.9%; and an infant mortality rate per 1,000 births (4.1) that is slightly more than half the statewide rate of 7.4⁸ per 1,000 births.

However, there is troubling data in the area of high-risk behaviors affecting health and well-being. In 1998, 10.8% of all live births were to single mothers between the ages of 10 and 19, a 20% increase from previous years.⁹ While the percentage is not markedly above the statewide rate of 9.7%, the increase is noteworthy.

The Kansas Communities That Care Youth Survey of Crawford County 6th, 8th, 10th and 12th Graders indicated 28.4% had smoked cigarettes during the past 30 days; 46.1% had consumed alcohol; 16.2% had used marijuana; and 29.5% had consumed five or more alcoholic drinks in a row at least once during the previous two weeks. Of those responding to the “binge drinking” question, 42.2% of 10th graders and 51.1% of the 12th graders indicated they had consumed five or more drinks in a row within the past two weeks.

While there is no current data on numbers of children without health insurance, the experience of other counties indicates that, partly as a result of welfare reform, significant numbers of families have been cycled off of public assistance and Medicaid coverage, and while they may be working they are not necessarily covered by health insurance or other benefits. Moreover, access to health care is a chronic problem among Spanish-speaking populations in any community and Crawford County’s Hispanic population is growing rapidly.

⁸ *Kansas Kids Count Data Book*, 1999, previously cited.

⁹ *Ibid*

5. Employment

According to the Kansas Labor Market Information web page, in December, 1999 the unemployment rate was 3.3% in Crawford County. In the month of September, 1999, the unemployment rate was 3.0%, the lowest adult unemployment rate in Crawford County since May, 1979. A comparison of the unemployment rates for October, November, and December for the years of 1997 through 1999 is displayed in the chart on the following page.

YEAR	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
1997	4.6	4.9	5.1
1998	3.9	3.9	3.4
1999	3.1	3.7	3.3

While this is generally good news for the community in a time of economic boom, there are significant numbers of families in which one or both parents are employed in low paying jobs that do not adequately raise them out of poverty and often offer only minimal or no health care insurance.

6. Housing

Affordable housing for low-income families is an acute problem in the Southeast Kansas four-county area including Crawford County, according to a Southeast Kansas Community Action survey of Head Start parents and other consumers of social services. Because of a five percent vacancy rate among rental units and long waiting lists for subsidized housing assistance, many families share living quarters with others in single-family dwellings. Financial and housing instability often combine with other risk factors (substance abuse, unstable relationships, single parenthood, lack of child care) to produce a negative impact on family health, child safety, and children's success in school.

Housing For All, a shelter and basic services agency in Pittsburg, reports providing emergency shelter services to 93 adults and 34 children during the third quarter of 1999, numbers

that are increasing each quarter. Most clients are homeless individuals and families in search of available housing and housing subsidies.

The Pittsburg Public Housing Agency provides housing assistance vouchers to more than 300 families in subsidized housing, more than 76% of whom are headed by single females. Those families include 284 children whose average age is seven. The agency estimates that more than 40% of the 4,229 rental housing units in Pittsburg are substandard—unsafe because of structural or sanitation problems, inadequate plumbing and refrigeration, inadequate heating, and a general lack of maintenance.

The student mobility rate indicates how many times families have changed homes or schools within a specified period of time. Of the Crawford County 6th, 8th, 10th and 12th graders participating in the Kansas Communities That Care survey, 68.6% reported they had changed homes at least once since kindergarten; 18.1% had changed homes in the past 12 months; and 15.5% had changed schools in the past 12 months. While these numbers are not out of proportion compared to other counties in the region, they do indicate a significant level of movement between homes and schools for young children that is probably affected directly by the availability and affordability of housing in the community.

7. *Child Abuse and Neglect*

Child abuse and/or neglect represent an extreme form of family dysfunction and a serious social problem for Crawford County. The varying degrees of child abuse and neglect consist of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, medical neglect, abandonment, or lack of proper supervision.

During the base years of 1995-96 Crawford County's reported abuse and neglect rate included 77.7 out of every 1000 children in the county. During the same time period the rate for the State of Kansas averaged only 39.3 children per 1000. The numbers for Crawford County translated to an average of 699 reported cases of child abuse and neglect during each of the base years, placing Crawford County at the 10th decile statewide, one out of only seven counties in Kansas to score so poorly. In 1997 that rate rose to 85.8 out of every 1000 children living in the

county, or a total of 759 reported cases of child abuse and neglect.¹⁰ According to Wayne Sranek, Supervisor in the Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services, there were 674 reported cases of child abuse and neglect in Crawford County in 1999.

Reported abuse, of course, does not mean that actual abuse has occurred, or that the reported incident was severe enough to warrant removal of the child from the home or other legal action. In 1977, of the nearly 700 reported cases of abuse, 293 were substantiated or sustained upon investigation, indicating a county child abuse rate of 33.1 per 1,000 population, which ranked Crawford among the highest rates in the state, in the 9th decile. In 1999, according to Mr. Sranek, only 95 reported cases of abuse and neglect were sustained, a drastic decrease from previous years.

Despite high rates of reported child abuse and neglect in the mid-1990s and a corresponding high rate of placement of children in foster care, Crawford County has been able to significantly reduce its levels of out-of-home placement. Foster care placements include children and youth who are in state custody and living outside their own homes at some time during the reporting period. The majority of these children are placed in foster homes because they are victims of abuse and neglect within their own families.

In the base years of 1994 to 1997, Crawford County had 134 children and youth placed in foster care, or 14 per 1,000 population. By 1998 Crawford County had an average number of nine children and youth per 1000 placed in foster care, or a total of only 89 children and youth.¹¹

¹⁰ *Connect Kansas Crawford County Data and Planning Guide*, previously cited

¹¹ *Kids Count Data Book*, 1999, previously cited.

[Graphic omitted]

Section V

Who's Getting a Piece of the Pie? How Has Pritchett Funding Been Spent as of 1999?

Nearly six of every ten Pritchett Trust grant dollars (57.9%) over the past six years, since the inception of the Trust, have been allocated primarily to education (non-technology grants), technology grants (excluding the Kansas Technology Center), and child care/early education. As displayed in the table on the following page, non-technological education grants accounted for 24.6% of all grants, followed by technology (19.1%) and child care/early education (14.2%). Grants to the Kansas Technology Center account for another 13.3% of all grantmaking.. Including KTC grants and funding for education-related arts programs (7.1%), these four categories comprise more than three-fourths (78.3%) of all grantmaking since 1994.

Other grant categories within the overall Trust that focus on children, youth, and families include enrichment programs, domestic violence, libraries, recreation, safety, health, scouting programs, children's play equipment; and parent support and education. Definitions of the grant categories, as analyzed as a part of the Community Needs Assessment, are as follows:

- **Child Care/Early Education (\$267,620):** Grants for providing child care and pre-school services for infants, toddlers, half-day kindergartners and others requiring after-school care. The principal grantee for this category is the Family Resource Center, which has received \$230,000 since 1994. This category also includes small grants for child care and early education programs, including early childhood literacy and support for an early childhood laboratory at PSU.
- **Kansas Technology Center (\$250,000):** The Trust has provided \$50,000 per year to support the Kansas Technology Center at PSU. While these are not grants that directly support services to children, youth and families, the Pritchett Trustees have determined that the inception and growth of the KTC will provide both direct and indirect benefits to all residents of the community, including both educational and economic benefits.
- **Education—PSU (\$238,453):** Education programs operated by PSU either in collaboration with school districts or as community education efforts by various PSU departments.
- **Technology—USD #250 (\$206,222):** Computer hardware and software for district-wide

programs and programs within individual school buildings, classrooms, and laboratories.

***Analysis of Pritchett Trust Grantmaking, 1994-1999
by Grants Category and Percentage of Total Grant Dollars***

Grant Category	6-Year Total	%	1994-1998	%	1999	%
Child Care/Early Ed.	267,620	14.2	245,620	16.5	22,000	5.6
KS Technology Center	250,000	13.3	200,000	13.4	50,000	12.7
Education—PSU	238,453	12.7	163,653	11.0	74,800	19.0
Technology—USD 250	206,222	11.0	195,726	13.2	10,496	2.7
Arts, Arts-in-Education	133,195	7.1	115,195	7.7	18,000	4.6
Education—USD 250	127,940	6.8	87,700	5.9	40,240	10.2
Enrichment programs	98,884	5.2	61,825	4.2	37,059	9.4
Technology—parochial	72,955	3.9	61,090	4.1	11,865	3.0
Education—parochial	72,589	3.9	71,589	4.8	1,000	0.3
Domestic Violence	63,000	3.3	63,000	4.2	-0-	-0-
Libraries	58,702	3.1	30,702	2.1	28,000	7.1
Recreation	42,380	2.2	32,000	2.1	10,380	2.6
Technology—other ed.	42,379	2.2	20,000	1.3	22,379	5.7
Safety	37,990	2.0	31,918	2.1	6,072	1.5
Technology—non-ed.	37,860	2.0	27,360	1.8	10,500	2.7
Health	35,600	1.9	32,250	2.1	3,350	0.9
Scouting programs	31,954	1.7	8,000	0.5	23,954	6.1
Play Equipment	23,230	1.2	17,230	1.3	6,000	1.5
Education—other dists.	22,135	1.2	14,000	0.9	8,135	2.1
Parent Ed./Support	21,149	1.1	11,949	0.8	9,200	2.3
TOTALS	\$1,884,237	100%	\$1,490,807	100%	\$393,430	100%

- **Arts, Arts-in-Education (\$133,195):** Grants for artist residency programs, theatrical workshops for children, music programs for Head Start, and several arts programs centered in schools.
- **Education—USD #250 (\$127,940):** Education programs within the Pittsburg school district to enhance reading, writing, and other skills.
- **Enrichment (\$98,884):** This category includes programs and services that are not strictly educational or therapeutic, but which are designed to enrich the lives of children, youth and families and to provide skills or experiences not readily available through schools or other

avenues. These include self-esteem programs, prevention programs targeting specific behaviors, conferences, career programs, education-related mini-grant programs, improvements in the Wilderness Park, and character-development themes.

- **Technology—Parochial Schools (\$72,955):** Grants to St. Mary's/Colgan schools for computer hardware and software and other communications and technology needs.
- **Domestic Violence (\$63,000):** Grants to Safehouse to expand and continue a children's counseling program at the domestic violence shelter.
- **Libraries (\$58,702):** Non-technology grants to libraries for development or improvement of children's programs.
- **Recreation (\$42,380):** Recreation and sports programs at the YMCA, St. Mary's/Colgan, and the PSU summer baseball program.
- **Technology—Districts other than USD #250 (\$42,379):** Technology grants to schools in McCune and Cherokee, and to PSU (other than the Kansas Technology Center).
- **Safety (\$37,990):** Grants to the Red Cross to teach basic first aid, as well as a grant to the Rotary Club to purchase thermal imaging equipment for the Fire Department, and a PSU program to teach conflict resolution skills.
- **Technology—Non-educational (\$37,860):** Technology grants to community organizations, libraries, Mt. Carmel Hospital, and organizations other than schools.
- **Health (\$35,600):** This category includes several grants to the PSU Department of Nursing for health prevention and educational programs, as well as medicines for patients at the free clinic, vision screening, and treatment for children with Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder.
- **Scouting programs (\$31,954):** Girl Scout and Boy Scout programs including grants for equipment, training, renovation of camp facilities, and in-school scouting programs.
- **Play Equipment (\$23,230):** Grants for playground and other recreational and exercise equipment for children.
- **Education—Districts other than USD #250 (\$22,135):** Education programs in public school districts in Girard, McCune, Frontenac, and the Southeast Kansas Educational Foundation.
- **Parent Education and Support (\$21,149):** Grants to the Mother-to-Mother Ministry to provide mentoring and support group services to young mothers.

For the just-concluded 1999 funding cycle, grantmaking priorities have focused on educational programs operated by PSU (19.0%) and USD #250 (10.2%), enrichment programs (9.4%), libraries (7.1%) and scouting programs (6.1%). In the category of child care and early education, the Family Resource Center received a \$22,000 grant for a music and arts program, which was the fourth largest grant awarded in the 1999 cycle. The Kansas Technology Center received another allocation of \$50,000. KTC grants have annually amounted to approximately 13% of Pritchett grant funds over the life of the grantmaking program.

[Graphic omitted]

Section VI

Our Children, Youth, and Families

Analysis and Findings on Current Status of Children, Youth, and Families

Key Issue Areas

To determine the key issue areas for the needs of children, youth and families in Crawford County, the assessment team compiled a list of common topics and issues that are typically raised in discussions about the quality of a community's overall environment for raising happy, healthy, and well-educated children. The team collected data about these topics from existing research and surveys (most of them cited in Section IV of this report) and from direct inquiries to government agencies, schools, and other institutions when adequate or recent information was not available. The team then conducted interviews and focus groups with community leaders, service providers, parents, children, youth, and random individuals throughout the county. The result was a group of key issue areas that surfaced repeatedly from all data sources. These issues were among the first mentioned when discussing the needs of children, youth, and families. These key issue areas include:

- Education
- Health
- Child care and early education
- After-school and weekend organized activities
- Community-wide access to information about services and programs
- Services for "working poor" families
- Increasing ethnic and language diversity

The assessment team explored in detail the assets and liabilities within these seven issue areas through community interviews, focus groups, and research and analysis of available secondary data. A synopsis of each issue area follows with relative information regarding:

- Analysis of issue area's impact on children, youth, and families

- Gaps in services
- Community perspective—key quotes from interview and focus group participants
- Key findings

Education

Analysis

Along with health care, the quality of education in Crawford County is a source of relative satisfaction among almost all participants in the assessment. When asked about the assets in the county for children, youth and families, schools and the state of the educational system was mentioned first by more than three-fourths of the participants. Many discussed several aspects of their positive educational experience, either as parents, students or service providers.

Students perform relatively well on standardized tests, students feel safe at school, and answers to questions such as “How often do you feel that the school work you are assigned is meaningful and important?” are overwhelmingly in the affirmative.

Gaps in Services

However, there are some concerns about specific school issues, some of which are discussed in more depth in other sections of this report. Preschool, for example, and particularly preschool in rural areas, is a significant need identified by many participants, and will be explored in the discussion of child care and early education, later in this section.

The dropout rate—that is, the number of students beginning the ninth grade who do not graduate with their class at the end of the twelfth grade—is approximately 20%. While this rate is not exorbitant, particularly compared with more urban school districts, it is of concern to educators and parents alike. This issue is closely related to the availability of school programs for students who are not classified as “special needs,” but who exhibit behaviors that are disruptive or who exhibit different learning styles, and as such, do not perform as well as other students. A number of participants expressed the opinion that frequently teachers pass students, not because of what they have learned or the fact that they have performed well, but because the teachers don’t want the students in their classes for another term.

Students, while expressing overall satisfaction with school, had a number of specific complaints. One expressed frequently by students participating in this assessment was that while

there is abundant computer equipment in the schools, frequently teachers are not well-equipped to use the technology effectively or teach the students much about it. It is often the case that students know more about computers than their teachers.

Students also expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of substitute teachers, indicating that they frequently knew little or nothing about the subject matter, and were for the most part serving as babysitters.

Community Perspective

“There is a serious gap in services for non-mentally-retarded children who have problems. If you score one point above the IQ established for MR, you get nothing. The lives of children with normal intelligence are being wasted.”

--Foster parent

“Most of the dropouts are 16 years old or older, and because of the availability of jobs right now, many of them take it easy in their studies, lose interest, and decide to make some money.”

--School superintendent

“We have computers in the school, but there are not a lot of teachers who know enough to really help us learn with them. Some of the kids know a lot more about computers than the teachers.”

--Youth focus group participant

“Too many of the technology teachers are illiterate about computers. We just lost a good teacher to another school district. There’s a real shortage of qualified technology teachers.”

--Youth focus group participant

Key Findings

- In general, Crawford County schools get high marks from students, parents, teachers and administrators.
- Schools and students would benefit from increased collaborative relationships with community-based youth counseling organizations in providing tutoring and mentoring for students of

normal intelligence who have behavior or learning problems within the school environment.

- An increased emphasis on technology in-service training for teachers would significantly enhance the ability of teachers to use technology as a learning tool.

Health

Analysis

Very few participants in the assessment expressed dissatisfaction with the health care system in Crawford County. Most had considerable praise for the programs at Mt. Carmel Health Center, and in general for the availability of health services and health care providers. To the extent there was dissatisfaction about health care, it was most commonly expressed as a function of health care coverage, either regarding the lack of coverage for working families without health care benefits or about Medicaid rules for eligibility. Several participants expressed concern over the lack of coverage for dental care and vision care.

HealthWave is a response to welfare reform requirements that recipients move off the welfare rolls within a certain time period. Many recipients of Temporary Assistance to Families (TAF—the successor program in Kansas to Aid to Families with Dependent Children) have become employed and have been removed from the welfare rolls, but in the process have lost their Medicaid benefits and frequently are not in high-paying jobs with family medical benefits. The result has been that many low-income children who were previously covered by Medicaid are not covered by any form of medical insurance. As a response, federal legislation permits states to combine some Medicaid funds and funds from the federal State Children’s Health Insurance Program to provide coverage through a “capitated” managed care plan for children from birth to age 19. This coverage system in Kansas is called HealthWave. HealthWave operates through contracts between the state Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services and a private company acting as the HealthWave fiscal agent and an HMO to administer the managed care program.

Gaps in Service

There are a number of problems with HealthWave, including the requirement that a child be without coverage for six months in his or her primary residence. But in most counties, the problems have centered around identifying those families with children who are eligible for

HealthWave and enrolling them in the program. The enrollment procedure is relatively complicated and many families who are not receiving public assistance either do not know about HealthWave or believe that they are ineligible. This is especially problematic among Spanish-speaking populations. Additionally, there are relatively few health care providers who are willing to accept HealthWave patients, since the payment schedules are significantly lower than prevailing fees.

Key Findings

- There is a need for community outreach, including but not limited to the Hispanic Community in Crawford County, to identify and locate families whose children are eligible for HealthWave, and to assist them in enrolling their children.
- There is a need for advocacy and education for health care providers with the goal of convincing a significant number of providers of the importance of offering their services to children covered by HealthWave.
- While 72% of children reaching the age of two have been fully immunized, there is no data available for children who should complete their full cycle of immunizations at age five.

Child Care and Early Education

Analysis

While there are more than 120 licensed child care providers in Crawford County with the capacity to care for more than 1,400 children, there are officially 210 children on child care waiting lists in the county. The Family Resource Center, the largest program in Crawford County serving 350 children, has a waiting list of 100 children at this writing. The principal barriers to child care for many families are access and affordability. Even though wages in the child care industry are extremely low, care can cost as much as \$150 per week or more for two children, well out of reach for low- and even moderate-income families who are not eligible for child care subsidies. Only 15% of families with children at the Family Resource Center are eligible to receive reimbursement from the Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services, and another 20% receive sliding-scale discounts adjusted for family income. Fewer than half of the children at preschool age in the county who are eligible for Head Start (due to family income levels) are actually enrolled because

of the program's limited capacity.

It is important, insofar as possible, that child care programs for children aged three to five are qualified as preschools as well, and that their function has as much to do with learning as with the custodial aspects of child care. When child care programs serve as preschools, it follows that the care is more expensive because child care workers must be more highly qualified, and must be trained as educators as well as child care providers.

Although most child care providers are licensed to care for infants, some do not accept children under the age of 18 months because infant care is more labor intensive and therefore more costly. Others accept only a limited number of birth to 18 month-olds due to state child care guidelines.

Many family day care providers, those who provide child care in their homes, are not well-trained in operating a business and often are not equipped to handle the stress that in-home child care puts on their own families. Fluctuating enrollments may cause the provider to fall below the financial break-even point. Often, primary- and extended-family child care is often the only child care available in rural areas, and the instability of this type of child care is frequently the reason there is so little child care available outside larger cities.

Quality training is an issue for all child care providers, primarily because it is critical to the quality of care and the safety of the children, but also because it adds to the cost of the programs.

Most nonprofit child care programs, such as the Family Resource Center, operate at a deficit and depend on grants and contributions to make ends meet. Those programs that serve the most needy families and that seek to provide the highest levels of care, will never become self-sufficient through the revenue of sliding-scale fees and SRS subsidies. They will always be dependent on grants and contributions.

Gaps in Service

There is a significant need for child care and preschool services in rural communities. Rural child care is almost nonexistent in Crawford County and families who seek child care almost always have to drive to Pittsburg or Girard, or even to cities in other counties, to find it. For instance, even if a parent lives in McCune and works in Pittsburg, there are waiting lists for most child care programs. Also, even if the parent can find affordable child care in Pittsburg, the commute adds to what amounts to a very long day for the child and additional logistical problems

for the parent.

There is a need for more child care capacity for children under the age of 18 months, with the recognition that this level of care is labor-intensive, requires specialized training, and is therefore more expensive than care for toddlers and older children.

Community Perspective

“Many times day care programs send children home because of behavior problems their staff can’t handle. We should be able to give child care workers special training so they are able to handle children with problems.”

--Director of a children’s program

“Daycare and babysitting needs are inadequately addressed in Crawford County, especially outside Pittsburg or Girard. Restrictions and guidelines for certification is a barrier for many individuals interested in becoming licensed daycare service providers.”

--Mayor of a small Crawford County town

“We need to establish pre-schools and child care for children in rural communities.”

--Counselor in rural elementary school

“There is very little child care and no preschool services in rural areas. Parents have to drive to Pittsburg or Girard for services, if they can find them and afford them. Preschool is especially critical, because children are not entering kindergarten ready to learn.”

--Principal of a rural elementary school

“There’s no day care out here, and we could use it. We have to go to Arma or Pittsburg to find child care.”

--Rural focus group parent

“I have trouble finding day care. There is an abundance of day care in this community, but it’s hard to get in because the day care [center] is only allowed so many kids.”

Key Findings

- Rural child care has not been a priority in Crawford County. There is a need to explore funding sources and options for establishing child care in rural areas at school sites, at free-standing facilities, and in family child care settings.
- Deficit financing will always be a problem for nonprofit child care programs. There is a need to explore alternative ways of stabilizing funding for these programs, such as through endowments or other permanent funding streams that will make up the difference in costs between the programs' revenues and the actual cost of care.
- There is a need to establish a program for training family child care providers that will ensure that family child care is a stable asset of the community. Training should include the development of sound business plans and an understanding of financial management, marketing, procurement of supplies, and efficient management of a home-based business, as well as sound principles for safe and high-quality care of children.
- Insofar as possible, child care programs caring for children under the age of five should provide a level of instruction and learning at the preschool level in order to ensure that children who have been in child care come to kindergarten equipped to learn.

After School and Weekend Activities for Children and Youth

Analysis

It is not just in smaller communities that children and youth complain about having nothing to do. Research on risk factors for substance abuse, delinquency and other self-destructive and anti-social behaviors indicates that most of that behavior occurs during unsupervised hours after school, when parents are working and children are out of school. For younger and older children alike, the choices for after school activities are frequently limited to hanging out at the local mall or coming home to an empty house and watching television. While there are many organized activities for children and youth in most communities, such as sports leagues, most include a specific time slot and require the participation of a parent or other adult to transport the child to and from the

scheduled practice time. Often these activities are scheduled for one or two afternoons per week.

There are very few on-going, freely accessible, supervised activity sites in Crawford County, or in most communities, geared toward the recreational and social interests of school children. Scheduled activities such as sports leagues, YMCA activities and events, music lessons and the like require a conscious family decision to participate, are not available every afternoon of the week, and are not free. Scouting, sports leagues and other organized activities require membership fees and costs for uniforms and equipment, disposable income that is not always available to low- and moderate-income families.

Fewer still are programs that encourage families to participate together. Programs that offer activities and opportunities for the entire family to participate have the potential to encourage the best from families, and could serve as dissemination points for substance abuse prevention programming, and parenting education.

Lack of non-school-hour activities is more acute in rural communities. There are fewer opportunities for *any* activity—no malls, no movie theaters, long distances between friends, and often no playgrounds or athletic facilities to support even a pick-up basketball game.

Gaps in Service

Ideally, there is a need for physical structures and organized, supervised activities geared toward the recreational, social, homework, and developmental needs of children and youth. While the sites for such programs may be school buildings, existing youth agencies or newly-constructed facilities, there is a need for settings where children and teens can gather together, socialize and enjoy each other, and engage in stimulating, even educational activities alone or with each other. In an ideal world, such centers would be equipped with computers that students could use for homework, Internet research and games, as well as a basketball court, Ping-Pong tables, and an array of other opportunities for stimulation and relaxation.

Upwards of 80% of the participants in interviews and focus groups, including adults and some adults without children, indicated that there is a need for programs to engage children and youth in non-school hours. One of the most frequent statements made in response to interview questions and focus group discussions was “Why don’t we have a Boys and Girls Club here?”

In one rural community, the only activity available to teens is playing pool in the back room of the local bar and restaurant. The owners of the bar, a husband and wife, supervise the youths,

make sure there is no alcohol or smoking, and provide snacks for the teens during the afternoons and evenings they spend there. The bar owners are actually functioning as non-paid youth workers. Teens in the focus group reported that some parents objected to “kids hanging out in a bar,” and were seeking a town ordinance prohibiting their gathering at a bar. The owner of the bar told members of the assessment team that if the youths were forced to stop coming to play pool, he would probably close the bar and retire.

When there are rural community center buildings, they are frequently dilapidated and in disrepair. Focus groups of teens and adults were held in the community building in Arcadia, which is little more than one meeting room with a small kitchen and a bathroom, with holes in the wall and water stains across the walls and ceiling. One of the adults estimated he could fix up the building and make it useable for about \$30,000, but he had only been able to raise \$1,000 and had no idea when or where the balance might come from.

It is difficult for teens to participate in activities in the more populated centers because of transportation problems. It is even impossible for some to participate on school sports teams because they have no way to get home after the practices.

Community Perspective

There are not enough supervised activities geared for these kids to keep them from going out partying and drinking. There are plenty of programs for juvenile offenders and those in need of therapy, but normal kids need programs, too.”

--Youth worker

“Lincoln Park could be opened one day or one weekend a month with everything free, including the batting cages, mini-golf, etc. It would encourage families doing activities together. The Pritchett Trust could sponsor it if the city was not willing to donate.”

--Youth worker

“If I had unlimited funds, I would support programs offering good entertainment and activities for young people, and parenting education to teach parents how to learn to do the good things in life, rather than just the easy things.”

--Minister

“I started selling drugs around the age of nine or ten. Maybe it wouldn’t have happened if I had someplace to go. Kids need things to do, like midnight basketball. I love sports.”

--Crawford County jail inmate

“We should renovate or rebuild community buildings in the smaller towns and create activity centers for families to gather together.”

--Mayor of a small Crawford County town

“There’s nowhere in this town anybody can have anything to do. Look at this [community center building]—it’s falling down on us. It was so cold in here one time we couldn’t have our Scout meeting. We had to have the meeting in [the local] bar.”

--Focus group parent, rural community

“What we do here is play pool, but it’s in a bar and some of the parents don’t like that. We don’t drink, but it’s the only place to do anything. If we’re not there, we just walk from one end of town to the other and back, all evening long.”

--Rural teen focus group participant

“Even if you have a computer here, you can’t get access to the internet without making a toll call.”

--Rural teen focus group participant

“Schools do not bus the kids to practice, so lots of rural kids can’t go out for sports because they have no way back and forth.”

--58-year-old mother of four, grandmother of nine

Key Findings

- There are no organized, supervised activity centers Crawford County that permit children and youth to drop in during non-school hours and engage in social and recreational activities. To

the extent that there are after-school activities available for school-age children, they are costly and scheduled at specific times and locations.

- Rural communities are particularly devoid of places and activities to engage school-age children.
- There is a significant transportation barrier that prevents youth living in rural communities from participating in school sports and other activities away from their homes.
- There is an alarming body of self-reported data revealing that Crawford County youth use and experiment with drugs and alcohol at a relatively high rate (see health data in Section IV of this report), and that the numbers of births to teen mothers has increased in recent years. To the extent that such high-risk behaviors are a product of boredom and idle, unsupervised time, organized and supervised activity centers could serve as an important preventive measure.

Access to Information about Programs and Services

Analysis

One of the most prevalent issues identified in the process of this needs assessment is the need for easy access to information about agencies, programs and services that are in place to assist children, youth, and families with problems and solutions to those problems. It seems logical that a central depository of information is essential to any field or business. There are physician's reference bureaus, "find-a-nurse" hot lines, Bar Association referral banks for attorneys, multiple-listing services for real estate agents, and any number of other comprehensive, interactive media and services citizens can utilize to find exactly what they need, including the obvious examples of the Yellow Pages and the World Wide Web. Businesses understand that to succeed, it is critical that potential customers are able to locate their services and products easily. It follows that for programs and services for the benefit of children, youth, and families to achieve the best possible results, there should be a directory, a central resource, or a clearinghouse of information that potential consumers of human services can turn to for help in making their choices in the best interests of their needs.

Gaps in Service

There is no reliable, comprehensive information service or medium in Crawford County for

programs and services for children, youth and families. This is true, not only for families in crisis or teens seeking confidential counseling about problems or single parents seeking affordable child care, but also for service providers. Most of the service providers participating in this assessment indicated that they aren't aware of many programs and services that could be helpful to their clients and they sometimes discover previously unknown resources by accident or happenstance.

There are several out-dated service directories, but none that is current and comprehensive, cross-referenced by need, service, provider, fees, eligibility requirements or any of the other factors that are involved when searching for help. One program director told the assessment team that she is aware of five different efforts to put together directories and does not consider any of them adequate to address the problem of a lack of comprehensive, useful, user-friendly information. The Crawford County Interagency Coalition, a collaboration of more than 40 agencies and providers in support of children and families, is in the process of updating the directory entitled "Crawford County Resources for Your Family," which will be helpful, but static and very soon out of date. One youth worker told the assessment team that every human services directory he has ever seen is obsolete as soon as it is published unless someone with the time and resources has the responsibility for distributing weekly or monthly updates. In any case, service directories are often geared more toward the needs of service providers than those of the consumers.

Community Perspective

"Families really need coordinated and centralized information of services. Often families would like to seek help, but they have no idea what services are out there. We need something like a clearinghouse that would address the issue of awareness of services."

--Child care worker

"There should be a one-stop-shop resource for agencies and the public to find out information about the services they clearly need."

--Law enforcement official

"There should be a central location for the public to gather information regarding all the services that are being offered."

--Pittsburg city official

“Where do you go to find out what services you are eligible for? Most of us have no idea where to start.”

--Single parent focus group participant

“Service providers—not just families or those in need of services—need to know what services are available so they can better serve their clients and their community.”

--Board member, children’s service agency

“There is no consistent way of cataloging services.”

--Board member, children’s service agency

“Families don’t know where to go for help when they need it. They are so deep in trouble that they can’t get out. Society in general looks down on people who do not take care of themselves. Government agencies and social services don’t advertise the services they are providing. That goes for churches, too.”

--42-year-old divorced male

“Agencies should keep people aware about the services they offer. They should provide brochures to the hospitals and other establishments where people with needs can use the information. My friend was 18 when she gave birth to her first child, and she was a single parent. There was no information in the hospital or anywhere else about where she could get some help. She was lost.”

--33-year-old single mother

“Make programs that are offered more publicized, like in commercials. Little organizations need to be advertised, broadcasted. Let it be known that these organizations exist.”

--35-year-old African American single father

“I don’t know how to get help, or when I try, nothing seems to help. There needs to be a place where a person will help people out and follow them through the process of getting help.”

--21-year-old single mother, two children

Key Findings

- Efficient and reliable access to accurate information about services and programs for children, youth, and families is an important component of a comprehensive system of services, and can contribute significantly to the health, safety, and well-being of people in need of help.
- An information system that is dynamic and interactive, maintained and updated on a regular and frequent basis, is the best solution for potential consumers and service providers alike. The format for this service will necessitate the hiring of an employee at least part time, who will either serve as the information clearinghouse personally or who will maintain an electronic database and Web site containing all the information available, updated on a weekly or monthly basis. While a Web-based solution will be very useful for agencies and line staff, not all children, youth and families will have the knowledge or the equipment to access the information on line. A live telephone line will still be required, and the employee should be expected to spend a substantial part of his/her work hours providing information to the public.
- Once established, it will be important that the information clearinghouse be well-publicized throughout all participating agencies and in public places through (for example) brochures, wallet cards with the telephone number and Web address, Yellow Page display ads under Children’s Services, and other media.

Services for “Working Poor” Families

Analysis

As described in Section IV of this report, the rolls of families with children receiving public assistance in Kansas have declined by approximately 50% since the beginning of federally-approved welfare reform measures in 1996. This fact is mirrored in Crawford County. Although there are only 315 families receiving Temporary Assistance to Families (TAF) benefits in the county, there are 1,127 families who are still eligible for and receiving food stamps—an indicator that “off of welfare” does not necessarily mean “out of poverty.” The observation by Kansas Action for Children, in its publication *Welfare Reform in Kansas: Snapshots of Children and Their Families* is worth repeating: “Although Kansas families and children are moving off of, or being denied, cash assistance in record numbers, they are not necessarily gainfully employed, economically stable, or even living above the poverty line. In fact, Kansas may be failing at the very heart of the federal legislation: to increase economic independence and family stability.”

The problem is not exclusive to families trying to make the transition from welfare to self-sufficiency. There has always been a strata of individuals and families who have been employed in low-paying jobs, or who exist on disability benefits unrelated to welfare, and who have been ineligible for welfare support. They may have no medical insurance or other benefits from their employment, live in sub-standard housing or are homeless part of the time, but they are employed for some part of each year. It is also true that a substantial percentage of those who received welfare support in past years did so only intermittently, between jobs or after the death of a breadwinning spouse, until they could pick up the pieces of their lives, find new jobs and return to the ranks of what, for lack of a more descriptive term, we have called the “working poor.” The stereotype of the family of lifelong and intergenerational dependence on welfare is just that—a stereotype, based on some truth but nowhere near the norm.

The “working poor,” or even the “unemployed but ineligible for benefits poor,” find themselves priced out of affordable housing and the services of some programs because they are unemployed or have some level of income that defeats the means-testing some programs require for eligibility. Those who struggle to gain training and employment as they cycle off of welfare find that the benefits drop away too quickly before they can become financially stabilized. Very often Medicaid benefits are terminated, leaving them with no health coverage for themselves or their

children, after which they must wait six months before they are eligible to cover their children through HealthWave. There are interlocking problems of the high cost of child care and employment at low-wage jobs, the cost of medicine without health coverage, the necessity to stay home with a sick child and risk losing one's job.

Gaps in Service

If the Food Stamp and income data are indicative, there are between 2,000 and 3,000 children living in poverty in Crawford County. Shelter organizations and organizations providing basic needs for families who simply don't have the resources to get by report that their caseloads for some months have increased by 100 or more families seeking help, most of whom are new clients for the agencies.

For many families what used to function as a "safety net" is no longer in place, and it is important to realize that for any family in financial crisis, in danger of homelessness or without health coverage, the stress and anxiety can take its toll on the family members, especially children. For the "working poor" families described in this section, the stress is compounded by whatever existing problems contribute to their crises as well as a lack of alternatives. This can and does pose a more serious risk for children, both in short-term and long-term effects.

Community Perspective

"The category of 'in-between' children is growing larger. These are kids from families with low incomes, but not low enough to be categorized as really needy. The income gap is increasing very quickly, and people who fall into this gap are often missed or neglected by service providers."

--Director of a children's program

"Families make too much money for any kind of assistance, but not enough to sufficiently provide for their families. There's no reward for doing the right thing, for getting and holding down a job."

--Juvenile justice system supervisor

"If you make two dollars over their limit, they won't help you." [Speaking of programs that are

means-tested]

--Single parent focus group participant

“I have a co-worker with two children who had to ask HUD for help with housing. After paying first and last months rent, all she could afford was a house where the floor in the bedroom was falling down. Holes were covered up with rugs. The whole place was full of mould, dirt and disrepair.”

--Single parent focus group participant

“There’s not enough financial help. If you’re trying, you don’t get a chance. If you’re not, then you get the help. Once you get on your feet and start to get ahead, they pull something else out from under you.”

--35-year-old single mother

“The State of Kansas laws say that if my fiancé moves down here before our baby is born, I lose my Medicaid. They are trying to put families together that don’t need to be together and they are keeping the families who want to be together apart—like mine.”

--22-year-old single mother, pregnant with her second child

Key Findings

- Welfare reform has reduced the numbers of families receiving cash payments, but for many it has shifted the burden from the state to the nonprofit sector. Emergency relief agencies, shelter and basic needs organizations are experiencing significant increases in their caseloads without an increase in funding.
- There is a significant number of children living below the poverty line in Crawford County, many more than the Temporary Aid to Families (TAF) rolls would indicate, and they are at risk for a variety of problems, including malnutrition, abuse, detachment from friends and school, being left alone unsupervised for long periods of time, and a general lack of comfort and security that contributes to growing healthy and well-adjusted children.

- There is a need for a collaborative effort to examine more closely the needs of the so-called “working poor” in an attempt to work out some long-term systemic solutions to the problems of poverty in the county.

Increasing Ethnic and Language Diversity

Analysis

By various estimates there may be as many as 1,800 or more Mexican immigrants in Crawford County, attracted by jobs in meat-packing and other industries. Most of them speak little or no English and thus feel isolated and intimidated by the dominant culture and the fact that they are not able to communicate effectively or understand communication from English speakers. A delegation of officials and representatives of health and human service agencies recently traveled to Garden City, Kansas (Finney County), where the shift of the meat-packing industry from cities like Kansas City and Chicago has attracted Hispanic immigrants since the early 1980s, to begin to learn from that county’s experience. The delegation included the Chief of Police, representatives of Mr. Carmel Medical Center, adult education, the Crawford County jail, Sugar Creek Packing Company (the primary employer of Hispanic workers in the county), the county Department of Public Health, and representatives of the faith community. The goal of the visit was to gather information in order to plan successful methods for integrating the Hispanic population into the larger community and to foster racial understanding.

Gaps in Services

A primary methodology for avoiding racial tensions is to communicate effectively and bring Hispanic individuals and families into the community through churches, recreation programs, schools, and other community institutions. Effective communication requires language and significant barriers to this are (1) teaching English to Hispanic children so they can learn in an English-speaking school; (2) teaching Spanish to business owners, health care providers, social services agency staff, and others who want to work closely with the immigrant community; and (3) providing translation services as an interim measure, particularly at hospital emergency rooms and other settings where rapid and effective communication is critical.

Participants in this assessment were asked if they had concerns or thoughts about the increasing ethnic diversity of the county, and while some were nervous about the subject, all

expressed thoughts similar to, “I don’t see it as a problem, I see it as a challenge.” No one was willing to go on the record with the opinion that diversity is undesirable. It is possible that the diversity of the student body, faculty and staff at PSU, and the familiarity of seeing and interacting with people of other races and nationalities, has better prepared Crawford County for diversity than in other communities.

During its 1999 grant cycle, the Pritchett Trust made two grant awards to Westside Elementary School. One supports extended learning for students learning English as a second language (ESL) and the other supports the cost of a bilingual staff liaison. These are the first grants aimed at supporting programs to smooth Crawford County’s transition toward a bilingual community.

Community Perspective

“There is a dramatic increase in the Hispanic population in this county, and language can be a barrier to communication. We might need to provide translators, offer English as a second language programs, and maybe teach Spanish to employers.”

--Director of a children’s program

“We don’t have many programs for Hispanics yet. The language barrier makes them not feel welcome in existing programs, and often they don’t know about the programs that might welcome them. There are no fliers in Spanish aimed at recruiting Hispanics to join in existing programs.”

--Juvenile justice worker

“I don’t see cultural diversity as a problem, but rather as a challenge. We should have adequate language education for Hispanic children, and a community center where Hispanic families can gather without intimidation.”

--Pastor

“Hispanic people who come to work here are paid very low wages. They are always in crisis. They feel negative attitudes in the community, and it’s not a healthy environment. We need more basic cultural awareness programs, and programs for non-violent problem-solving. Industries that are bringing people to work here should be held accountable.”

--PSU professor

“There’s a lot of young Mexican kids who don’t know English and they’d like to go to school, but they don’t even try. Many of the older kids get stuck babysitting while their parents work.”

--41-year-old Hispanic laborer

“I know some of the families with unmet needs, but they do not speak English and they don’t know about what kinds of help are out there—even the kids don’t know. There is no information in Spanish.”

*--41-year-old Hispanic housewife,
mother of four children*

Key Findings

- There is a large and growing Hispanic population in Crawford County that is largely non-English speaking and in need of translation services and English as a second language (ESL) classes for both children and adults.
- The successful integration of Hispanic people and their culture into the institutions and activities of Crawford County will enrich both cultures if it is accomplished with mutual respect and understanding.
- Programs should be encouraged that work to move Hispanic children, youth, and families into interaction and communication with individuals, children, youth, and families representing mainstream Crawford County culture, including faith communities, schools, recreational activities, and community celebrations and events.
- It should be a high priority of the schools and the network of human services agencies to assist in preparing Hispanic children and youth to learn in English, and to provide translation and other language-appropriate services to meet the needs of Hispanic children, youth, and families in the interim.

[Graphic omitted]

Section VII

Looking to Our Future

Recommendations for Future Grantmaking by the Pritchett Trust

This section of the report contains recommendations for future grantmaking directions for the Pritchett Trust, based on the findings of the research completed in the research phase of the community needs assessment. In general, it is the opinion of the assessment team that Pritchett grantmaking over the past six years has been thoughtful and forthright, motivated by a desire to meet as many identified needs for the benefit of children, youth, and families as possible without unduly subsidizing projects that could, or ought to be, funded by school systems or other sources of support.

However, deliberately or not, the Trust Committee has made some significant choices cumulatively since 1994. Pritchett Trust has invested more than \$600,000 in technology, and is largely responsible for wiring a substantial portion of USD 250 and the parochial schools. Of that sum, \$250,000 has gone to the Kansas Technology Center, and the Trust Committee is hopeful that this investment will pay off handsomely in benefits to the region, as well as, to the children, youth, and families of Crawford County, and PSU University in future years.

The investment of more than \$267,000 in the Family Resource Center, particularly in the early years when Pritchett grant funds allowed the founders time to plan and think through the nuts and bolts of what they wanted to create, is commendable and the return on that investment has been very impressive. It was not the work of this needs assessment to evaluate or scrutinize any particular program in the community whether funded by Pritchett or not; however, it should be reported that when asked about programs that are meeting needs in the community, nearly every interviewee mentioned the Family Resource Center first, and immediately so.

The following recommendations are intended to inform decision-making about future grantmaking, and to stimulate thought and conversation. It will not be disastrous if none of the recommendations are followed or implemented; indeed, the community is much better off and a better place for children and families because of the Trust's philanthropy over the past six years. The Trust will continue to be a positive force if its practices continue as they are for another six years. However, it is the opinion of the assessment team that, in general, some grantmaking

initiatives targeted at specific issues have the potential for direct positive impact on some of the needs identified in the assessment and for long-term benefit to the county and its citizens. Also, it is our opinion that some larger grants, and perhaps multi-year commitments of funds, will help to stabilize some of the vital programs working to improve the lives of children, youth, and families.

Recommendation 1: Set aside \$50,000 per year for one or two larger grants to be funded over a three-year period.

As the assets of the Trust continue to grow, it will be possible to continue to fund smaller grants proposed by grantees for small and time-limited projects, or for the purchase of equipment and other needs similar to those proposed each year. In addition, the Trust Committee may want to identify a need for community need or systemic change in the way services are provided for children, youth, and families, and make a commitment to that change through multi-year support. An example might be to invest in the successful transition of Crawford County from a relatively homogeneous community to a community of ethnic and cultural diversity by funding intensive language programs for Hispanic high school students or intensive Spanish instruction for human service providers, or even both. Another option might be to provide support for a Spanish language child care program with an ESL component at a preschool level as a pilot project to determine the success of such an approach. Programs such as these can be monitored and evaluated for their success with participants and impact on the community as a whole within three years.

Funding in larger amounts over several years can leverage collaboration and resources from other agencies and create added value to the Pritchett investment. If successful, the evaluation and the methodology can be disseminated to other communities experiencing similar changes.

Recommendation 2: Pilot a rural child care program.

As described in the findings section of this report, there is a well-documented need for child care and preschool services in rural areas away from the county's population centers. Child care providers have told assessment team members that there are some categories of state funds that can be tapped to start up child care programs; if true, it would not be necessary that Pritchett support the entire start-up operation. Estimates are that a 24-child center could operate in a rural area for approximately \$60,000 per year and realize revenues of \$55,000 to \$57,000. Start-up costs for

establishing the physical facility may be \$75,000 to \$80,000, but it is possible that funding partners could be identified and signed on to the project. The center could be incorporated as its own entity or be operated on a “satellite” license by an existing day care provider.

As with Recommendation #1, if successful, the model could prove to be quite helpful to other counties and communities with similar needs.

Recommendation 3: Create a comprehensive, interactive information system on programs and services for children, youth and families throughout the county.

This need was identified and documented quite strongly during the community needs assessment, and as stated in the findings section, the need is as strong among providers of service as it is among seekers of service. The project start-up would be somewhat labor-intensive, but would essentially consist of gathering information and configuring it in an easy-to-use Web-based format and identifying a specific person to coordinate and update the material and disseminate the information on the telephone to inquirers without Web access. It is possible that the information collected for the printed Interagency Coalition directory would form the foundation for the database, with a built-in search capability, additional information on eligibility requirements, links to related services, and application forms that can be downloaded, etc. It is also possible that the Kansas Technology Center could collaborate on establishing the service, thus reducing the cost.

It would be reasonable to support the project for two years with the understanding that participating agencies develop a method to keep the service running through annual dues or fees to be paid by user agencies.

Recommendation 4: Solicit and award a grant to a collaboration of youth organizations to conduct a feasibility study for a free-standing youth center for after-school and weekend activities for teens.

This is another need that was strongly identified by participants in the needs assessment process, and is clearly a community asset with the potential for positive impact on the community.

As is obvious, however, it would be expensive to build and expensive to operate, even with considerable volunteer contributions. For those reasons, we recommend that Pritchett hand the idea back to the community and ask that a task force be developed to figure out if such a project is possible and affordable in the community. Options to consider include (1) convincing the Boys and Girls Clubs to open a franchise in Crawford County, with assistance from the community, not unlike tax increment financing arrangements to attract businesses to an area; (2) the development of a capital campaign coordinated with other organizations who may be competing for capital funds so as not to compete against each other on the same or similar projects; and (3) exploration of the possibility of a funding partnership among several sources, including federal, state and local funds, local businesses, and others.

The planning grant should include funds for a designated part-time staff person and overhead costs for the agency that assumes fiscal responsibility for the grant. The staff capacity is important since agency and program directors have their agencies and programs to run, and are usually not capable of devoting all the time such an effort would require without staff help. Collaborating agencies could be required to provide office space, telephone, office supplies, part-time use of a computer, or other tokens of buy-in to the project.

Recommendation 5: Begin discussions with local businesses about collaborative funding partnerships.

Pritchett and the United Way are the only organized non-governmental grantmaking entities in the county, and United Way does not have flexibility to consider individual grants for specific projects. There are successful and profitable businesses in town that make charitable contributions on an intermittent basis; some may have specific guidelines and priorities, and others may simply contribute to causes or projects that strike them as worthy. It may be helpful to at least discuss Pritchett grantmaking priorities with the officers of those companies responsible for their corporate giving programs to ascertain whether there are commonalities of interest in which they may wish to collaborate. If so, Pritchett might propose that each entity earmark a specific amount of funding, and that both agree to a joint committee to decide on funding priorities and grants, subject to the approval of the controlling authorities of each. Such an arrangement could multiply the impact of funding from each source and target more dollars toward community projects.

Recommendation 6: Set aside funds for a rural grantmaking program

According to the information developed during the needs assessment, small improvements have the potential for large impact on the lives of rural children and youth. For one or two years, it may be instructive to set aside a small portion of grant funds—\$25,000, for example—for projects to be proposed by rural communities. These projects could include such things as providing transportation for teens after football practice, resurfacing a local basketball court, or providing a new roof or bathroom for a local community center. After one or two rounds of grantmaking, the Trust Committee would be able to evaluate the impact of the program and modify it or eliminate it, as appropriate. There is an identified need in rural communities for these type of projects and not much in the way of resources available to local residents.