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Report: Down economy reflected in rising abuse, poverty stats

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DAYTONA BEACH -- More local people are living in poverty, more children are homeless and child abuse and domestic violence are on the rise, a new community report states.

Advocates behind the recently released Community Agenda Snapshot for 2009 say the economy played a major role in negatively impacting several statistics.

The report, compiled by officials from numerous area agencies, looks at 43 indicators from poverty to teen drug usage. Some of the data is based on 2008 numbers, but in other cases the most recent numbers were 2007.

In Volusia County, 14.5 percent of people were living in poverty in 2007 compared to 12.8 percent in 2006; in Flagler, 12.8 percent were living in poverty compared to 7.6 percent. The number of children below the poverty level was 22.1 percent in Volusia and 16.2 percent in Flagler.

"I'm not surprised there are indicators moving in the wrong direction because they are closely related to economic issues," said Carrie Garnett Baird, executive director of One Voice for Volusia, which compiled the report. "There is a ripple effect on things like that."

The rate of child abuse per 1,000 children living in Volusia County was 35.8 percent in 2007/2008, up from 27.8. In Flagler, the rate was 23.2, up slightly from 22.1.

Domestic violence was also up. The rate of domestic violence offenses per 100,000 population was 725.8 in Volusia in 2007 compared to 655.1. Flagler was down slightly.

Reggie Williams, local DCF administrator, said most child abuse reports deal with substance abuse and domestic violence and the poor economy is causing a small increase.

"It's much more difficult for people to take care of their families and households and that leads to more frequent disagreements," Williams said.

The report also looked at health indicators, including pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

Sexually transmitted diseases and HIV cases are up in both counties while teen pregnancy is down in Flagler, but up in Volusia.

The rate of sexually transmitted diseases in Volusia in 2007 per 100,000 population was 317 compared to 273.3 the year earlier. In Flagler, the rate was 261.1 compared to 204.1.

Flagler County Health Department Administrator Patrick Johnson, who is co-chairman of the Community Agenda Snapshot, said Volusia and Flagler health departments have provided more testing and services to people, which is why there are more cases. But he said it shows more prevention is needed.

"People are practicing risky behavior and are still getting it, which really shouldn't be happening," Johnson said.

Teens involved in crashes are also on the rise while the number of teens smoking cigarettes is slightly up in Volusia. But teens using illicit drugs and alcohol is down in both counties.

Ray Salazar, president of the United Way of Volusia-Flagler Counties and chairman of the One Voice for Volusia board, said the snapshot gives the community a broad look similar to an indicator on a car dashboard. He hopes the steering committee can start assessing what areas are of most concern in the community and directing funding to those areas.

"(The snapshot) gives us a path or idea of where we need to be going so we can get there together, not just as one or two or three agencies," Salazar said.

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#### **At a Glance:**

*The 2009 Community Agenda Snapshot shows an increase in several items, including:*

- Homeless children in school: In Volusia, 1,979 in 2007/2008, up from 1,884 in 2006/2007. In Flagler, 63 in 2007/2008, up from 17 in 2006/2007.
- Rate of domestic violence offenses per 100,000 population: In 2007 in Volusia, 725.8, up from 655.1 in 2006. In Flagler, 689.3, down from 696.6.
- Rate of child abuse victims with some or verified findings of abuse per 1,000 child population: In Volusia, 35.8 in 2007/2008, up from 27.8. In Flagler, 23.2 up from 22.1.
- HIV cases per 100,000 population: In Volusia in 2007, 16.7, up from 15.4. In Flagler, 8.5, up from 3.3.
- Teen drivers in motor vehicle crashes per 1,000 population: In Volusia, 29.9 in 2007, up from 28.1, and in Flagler, 28.6, up from 21.2.
- Youth cigarette use in past 30 days of being surveyed: In Volusia, 10.2 percent reported use in 2008, up from 9.8 and in Flagler, 12.9 percent reported use, down from 15.2 percent.
- Teenage mothers, ages 10 to 17, per 1,000 population: Rate of 8.2 in 2007 in Volusia compared to 7.9 in 2006. Rate of 4.8 in Flagler in 2007, down from 6.1 in 2006.

*SOURCE: 2009 Community Agenda Snapshot*

#### **More information:**

- [2009 Community Agenda Snapshot Report](#)

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