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June 01, 2006

**Report pinpoints funding for needy**
**By DEBORAH CIRCELLI**  
**Staff Writer**

DAYTONA BEACH -- Numbers truly paint a picture.

Community leaders hope a new report released Wednesday showing trends from poverty to child abuse will shed light on where funding is most needed.

The Community Agenda Snapshot report -- the result of a year of meetings with more than 500 people -- is a guide for the area's future planning decisions.

With about 12 percent of people in Volusia County living in poverty and about 8 percent in Flagler, the report shows, for example, how hard it is for people to find affordable housing.

The average hourly pay needed for someone to afford an apartment in Volusia County is \$13.50, 30 percent higher than the actual average hourly pay people receive, the report says.

In Flagler County, it's \$14.21 per hour, 27 percent greater than what workers are paid.

Poverty is just one factor that leaders from various agencies, schools, governments and businesses hope to improve since it puts children at greater risk of failing school and causes people to engage in unhealthy behavior.

Alan Abramowitz, who co-chaired the Community Agenda's steering committee, said the report allows policy makers to make decisions based on hard data instead of anecdotal information.

"It's letting us decide what we are going to use to gauge the quality of life for children in families in our community," said Abramowitz, former local district administrator of the state Department of Children & Families, who still lives in DeLand.

Top priorities in the report, compiled by One Voice for Volusia, a coalition of area agencies, include child abuse, homelessness, elder and disabled abuse, domestic violence and alcohol use in teens.

Sam Willett, president of Bank of America for Volusia, Flagler and Putnam counties and co-chairman of the committee, said the goal is for community leaders to continue meeting and adjust priorities over time. He said people should not just look at the report and forget it.

"I think what it does is bring focus on the issues the community feels are most important," Willett said.

State and local governments may decide, for example, to put more money into substance abuse treatment. The report shows the rate of arrests for drugs/narcotics per 1,000 population has increased from 10.88 in Volusia County in 2000 to 12.63 in 2004. For Flagler, the rate went from 3.20 in 2000 to 5.92 in 2004.

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The report also shows other increases:

- The rate of food stamp applications in Volusia County in 2004 was 114.59 per 1,000 population, compared to 89.65 in 2001. In Flagler County, the rate was 88.42 per 1,000 in 2004, up from 59.35 in 2001.
- The rate of teens ages 10 to 17 having babies in Flagler County has gone from 5.3 per 1,000 population in 2000 to 7.4 in 2004. In Volusia County, the rate was 8.9 in 2000 compared to 9.1 in 2004.

Donations from area agencies, both county governments, the school systems and various businesses paid the \$30,000 cost of the 55-page report.

[deborah.circelli@news-jrnl.com](mailto:deborah.circelli@news-jrnl.com)

#### THE NEEDS

*The Community Agenda provides a snapshot of areas the community needs to improve:* The rate of child abuse was 27.8 per 1,000 in Volusia County in 2004-2005 and 21.3 per 1,000 in Flagler County.

- The rate of domestic violence offenses per 100,000 population in 2004 was 783.4 in Volusia County and 748.3 in Flagler County.
- Youth who reported using any illicit drug or alcohol in the past 30 days in a 2004 state survey was 38.6 percent in Volusia County; 41.2 percent in Flagler County.
- The rate of diabetics hospitalized in 2004 was 24.80 per 1,000 population in Volusia County; 23.25 per 1,000 in Flagler County.
- The three-year rolling rate of suicide in Volusia County was 19.2 per 100,000 from 2002-2004 and 17.2 in Flagler County.
- Middle school students who were absent 21 days or more in 2003-2004 was 11.2 percent in Volusia County and 12.5 percent in Flagler County.
- Elementary students who received free/reduced lunches in 2003-2004 was 51.9 percent in Volusia County and 39 percent in Flagler County.

The full report can be viewed at [www.agendavf.org](http://www.agendavf.org).

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