

# Strategic Benchmarks

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## Benchmarks Guide Multnomah County's Strategic Planning and Budget Decisions

Businesses use benchmarks to evaluate commercial or manufacturing performance. But for government and non-profit organizations, benchmarks are more commonly used as quality-of-life goals in the community with concrete, measurable targets. Multnomah County uses benchmarks to focus its long-term planning and to build partnerships with individuals and organizations with similar goals. Benchmarks provide specific targets for the quality-of-life desired by the community and provide a framework for focusing the resources and performance of the County to foster these conditions. The following web site contains a more detailed history of the use of Benchmarks in Multnomah County: <http://www.multnomah.lib.or.us/cc/bev/bmintro.html>

Beginning in FY 1998, Multnomah County focused its planning on three Long-Term Benchmarks:

- Increase School Success
- Reduce Crime
- Reduce the Number of Children in Living in Poverty

The three Long-Term Benchmarks continue to be our focus in FY 2001.

While financial conditions during the last three fiscal years have allowed some additional investments to achieve the benchmarks, the situation is different for FY 2001. Financial constraints facing the County challenge our ability to maintain existing programs at their current level. Only very limited additional investments in benchmarks are possible.

Our existing investments in benchmarks have served us well. We are making progress in two of the three Long-Term Benchmarks--increasing school success, and reducing crime.

- The School Attendance Initiative was "brought to scale" during FY 2000. The initiative targeted children in grades K-9 in 130 schools east of the Willamette River--72 schools in the Portland Public School District and 58 schools in the six east county school districts. The first year evaluation showed that 4,651 students were referred to the program. Average attendance for the students for which complete data was available increased from 73% of the time to 83% of the time following referral to and intervention by the program.
- The SUN initiative (Schools Uniting Neighborhoods) is gaining momentum. SUN schools are a collaborative effort of cities, the State, school districts, and Multnomah County to integrate quality education with health, social services, recreational activities, and community involvement. Eight schools were funded during FY 2000. Implementation and evaluation is progressing and we are receiving national recognition.
- The crime rate in Multnomah County is dropping. Reported index offenses (8 crimes used for national comparison purposes) are now at levels not seen since the early 1970's.

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*The County's poverty rate has not been reduced during a decade of prosperity.*

The situation is not so promising with the County's goal of reducing the number of children in poverty. Throughout the 1990's, a decade of prosperity, the overall poverty rate (adults plus children) in the County has varied between 13-14%. The decade began and ended with the child poverty rate at 16-17%, after climbing to a 21.9% peak in 1993. Recent studies by the Oregon Food Bank showed that in the past year the Oregon Food Bank served one in eight people in Oregon and Clark County, Washington. The semi-annual One Night Shelter Count shows there were 38% more known homeless families in 1998 than in 1993. Although welfare rolls have dropped, it is clear that many of our citizens are struggling to make ends meet. During FY 2001 the County will spend \$316 million dollars on programs that primarily serve the poor--about 32% of the total budget. While this provides an important safety net, ensuring at least a minimum level of health and social services, poverty remains an intractable problem.

*Over half of the County's budget is targeted toward achieving the three Long-Term Benchmarks.*

During FY 2001 54% of the County's total budget is targeted toward achieving these three benchmarks. This 54% of the total budget includes 69% of the County's general fund—the portion of revenues primarily from local property taxes. There is more discretion as to where General Fund can be spent. The portion of the County's budget that is not General Fund includes significant amounts of pass-through funds from State or Federal sources. Most of these funds are dedicated to specific purposes, so there is less local choice in services that can be offered.

The portion of the County budget that is not targeted toward the three Long-Term Benchmarks supports an important array of other essential public services. These include disease control, restaurant inspection, animal control, roads and bridges, elections, and library services to adults. (Library services to children are considered part of Increasing School Success.) Also included are support services needed to keep the County functioning, such as computer and financial systems.

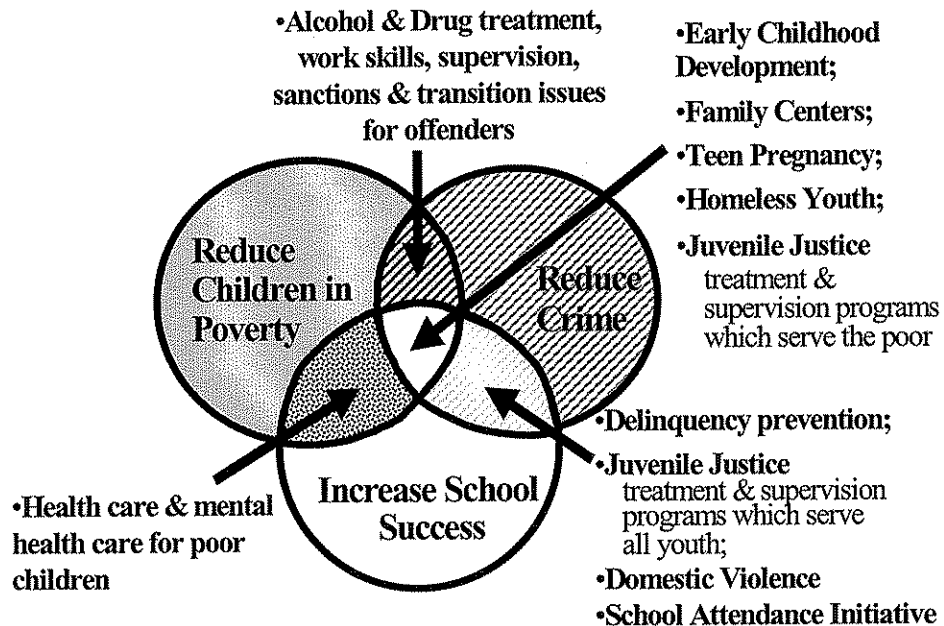
*The three Long-Term Benchmarks are interrelated.*

The three Long-Term Benchmarks for investment in the future of Multnomah County are interrelated. For example, early childhood development programs, which include adequate pre-natal care and coaching in parenting skills, not only help a child to succeed in school but also increase that child's long term chances to succeed in life and avoid poverty; early childhood development programs may also help prevent criminal involvement. Programs that help achieve more than one benchmark are potential high leverage points.

# Strategic Benchmarks

Potential High  
Leverage  
Programs for  
Achieving  
Benchmarks

## Overlap— Potential High Leverage Points



2000-2001  
Investments in  
Strategic  
Benchmarks

The FY2000-2001 Budget makes significant new or increased investments in the three Long Term Benchmark areas:

### Benchmark to Reduce Crime

- Eighty jail beds for local use (\$3.5 million General Fund)
- Probation officers to monitor very dangerous offenders returning to the community (\$310,000 non-General Fund)
- An in-depth analysis of jail bed usage (\$112,000 General Fund)
- Community Justice offender transition employment services (\$100,000 General Fund)
- Housing support for people leaving Hooper Detox in our mentor program (\$100,000 General Fund)

### Benchmark to Reduce Children in Poverty

- Contribution to the new Oregon Food Bank facility (\$50,000 General Fund)
- Russian Oregon Social Services programs (\$67,000 General Fund)
- Living Wage Review Board (\$60,000 General Fund)

### Benchmark to Increase School Success

- Core funding for all SUN school sites (\$100,000 General Fund)
- NW library branch lease (\$893,000 Library Levy)
- A juvenile counselor assigned to an east county public high school. (\$50,000 General Fund)

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- Gresham Barlow School District mental health services in conjunction with Legacy (\$34,000 General Fund)
- Expansion of Early Childhood (\$400,000 General Fund and \$250,000 from Community Justice state funds)

## **Other significant investments:**

- Aging Services Senior Center in Gresham (\$15,625 General Fund)
- East and Mid County Family Centers (\$45,601 General Fund)
- Family support services to young adult Developmental Disabled clients (\$40,000 General Fund)
- Employee benefits increased to include contraceptives and durable medical goods coverage (\$132,000 from Risk Fund)

The Chair has proposed an additional long-term benchmark goal.

## **Proposed Benchmark to Increase Access to Health and Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment Services**

Adequate physical and behavioral health care is critical to achieving all three of the County's Long-Term Benchmarks. The poor cannot achieve self-sufficiency if they are physically ill, mentally ill, or abusing alcohol and drugs. Children cannot learn if they are physically or mentally ill. And access to substance abuse treatment is critical to help break the criminal cycle.

Because health care access is so critical to achieving the County's Long-Term Benchmarks Chair Stein has proposed to the Board that they add an additional long-term benchmark goal related to "**Access to Quality Health and Mental Health and Substance Abuse Treatment Services.**" This includes services for children, adults, families, and the elderly. Each of these populations has specific needs that must be addressed as the foundation for their success and quality of life. This proposal is in recognition of changing County priorities and decisions made by the Board.

- Multnomah County recently received a Robert Wood Johnson grant to research how we can achieve universal access to health care for Multnomah County residents.
- Providing access to quality mental health services is a particularly vital piece of this puzzle--and an area where there is a tremendous need for improvement as outlined by the recent report of the Mental Health Task Force. The Board has approved an additional \$800,000 to address crucial needs such as supported housing, additional case management, expanded mental health services for children, and the creation of a Design Team which will create an improved mental health system.

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- Increasing numbers of Hepatitis C cases has prompted the County to develop comprehensive prevention strategies. The Board has approved \$250,000 that will hopefully be supplemented by a federal grant.

## Increase School Success

Multnomah County is using three core strategies to increase school success: 1) collaborative work with families and the community; 2) early childhood development; and 3) building youth assets needed for success. Each of these strategies is based on national research findings and best practices. By following these strategies Multnomah County has received much recent attention in national movements to increase educational success. The three strategies are common across the following programs that Multnomah County funds.

### Increasing School Success

**Early childhood development**

**Youth investment programs**

**Library programs for children**

**Delinquency prevention**

**Health care for children**

**Mental health care for children**


**Juvenile Justice programs**

**School Attendance Initiative**

**Caring Community**

**Domestic violence programs**

**Take the Time Campaign (youth asset survey, mini-grants and collaboration grants)**



#### Increase School Success

\$87 million total funds;  
\$38 million general fund;  
15% of the General Fund

*Multnomah County plays a leadership and implementation role in five collaborative initiatives to increase educational success.*

Collaborative work with community leaders and families in the development, implementation and evaluation of our programs is a key strategy. This strategy has been documented in the recent Educational Success Benchmark Audit (Kathryn Nichols, 2000) which profiled five major collaborative initiatives in Multnomah County working for educational success. Along with other partners and funders, Multnomah County is currently a major or primary funder for all five. These five initiatives and their host organization are:

- Take the Time--Multnomah Commission on Children, Families and Community;
- Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN)--Multnomah County Department of Community and Family Services;

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- Caring Community--The Leaders Roundtable;
- School Attendance Initiative (SAI)--Multnomah County Department of Community Justice;
- School-based Health Clinics--Multnomah County Health Department

*School success requires more involvement from families, community and coordinated action by the many agencies involved with students.*

Increased family and community involvement is a major theme in each initiative. Take the Time, for example, has supported over 200 grass roots projects which involve parents, school staff, community members and youths. SUN school principals, only in their first year of implementation, have reported increased levels of parental participation at school activities. Family involvement is also a key strategy of the School Attendance Initiative.

In addition to directly involving families and community leadership, Multnomah County also invests in improving the linkages between community partners and social service agencies. Last year's external evaluation of the Caring Community showed success in this type of engagement, although more work is needed to engage parents and other sectors who need to be more involved in promoting school success.

*Early childhood development is crucial to future educational success.*

A second strategy in Multnomah County's investment in school success is a focus on early childhood development. National research has repeatedly demonstrated the importance of both prenatal care and a child's first few years of development in providing a foundation for future success. Along with other agencies in the community, County programs support young children in a variety of ways:

- Prenatal, postpartum and well baby care through the Health Dept.;
- WIC nutrition for women and children through the Health Dept.;
- Teen parenting programs;
- General assistance for families with children with developmental delays as well as children's mental health services through the Department of Community and Family Services;
- Early literacy services and youth outreach through the Department of Library Services.

*Kids need a variety of assets to become strong and resilient for future success.*

Research has found that young people need about 30 or more assets to have a good chance of success in their lives. Multnomah County children have on average only 19 assets as found in a 1998 survey by the Commission on Children, Families and Community. We invest in building assets and reducing risks for all of Multnomah County's children as well as targeting smaller groups of those at higher risk.

For example, the majority of Multnomah County kids have library cards and in FY 2001 about 27% are expected to use them. Also, we have recently started exploring the possibility with other partners ways to develop a School to Career program to be hosted at Multnomah County offices. This program will help build youth assets for future self-sufficiency.

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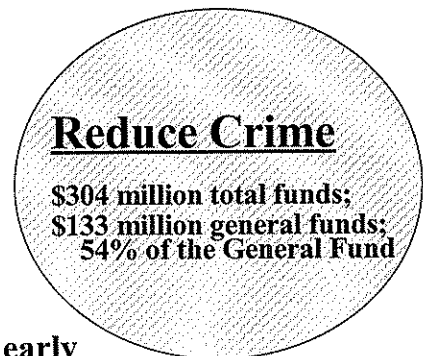
## Reduce Crime

Multnomah County operates the District Attorney's Office, the Sheriff's Office, and the Department of Community Justice which supervises both adult and juvenile offenders. Cities are responsible for most of the policing, with the exception of enforcement responsibility that the Sheriff has for unincorporated areas. The Sheriff operates the County jails that serve all police departments in Multnomah County. Other county functions that can be considered public safety are abuse investigations for the elderly and disabled and alcohol and drug treatment services to which criminal justice offenders are referred. The Local Public Safety Coordinating Council coordinates this system of law enforcement. During FY 2001 Multnomah County will spend about \$304 million on this public safety system, approximately 31% of the total budget.

## Reducing Crime

*Multnomah County invests heavily in public safety.*

**District Attorney  
Dept. of Community Justice  
Sheriff's Office  
Protective services functions  
Most County provided alcohol & drug treatment  
Domestic violence programs  
Prevention programs including early childhood development & youth intervention programs**



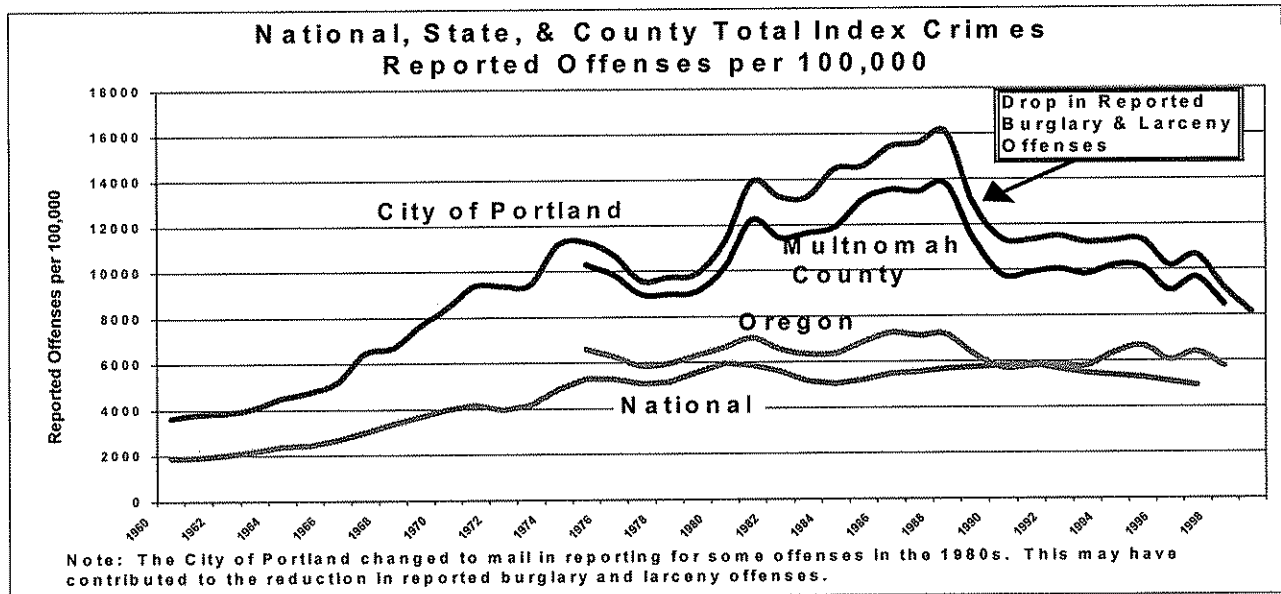
*Multnomah County's Reported Index Crime Rate is now comparable to the early 1970's.*

When comparing crime rates across localities 'index crimes' are used. Index crimes are four violent crimes (murder, rape, robbery, & aggravated assault) and four property crimes (burglary, larceny, motor-vehicle theft, & arson) that are defined similarly in all jurisdictions. Crime can be measured several ways, either as the victimization rate--as determined from surveys of the public--, as the number of offenses reported to the police, or as actual arrests. In general the number of victimizations is greater than the number of reported offenses, which are greater than the actual number of arrests. Crime can also be reported as either a total number, or divided by County population to produce a crime rate.

*Our crime rate is higher than State or national averages because we are an urban area.*

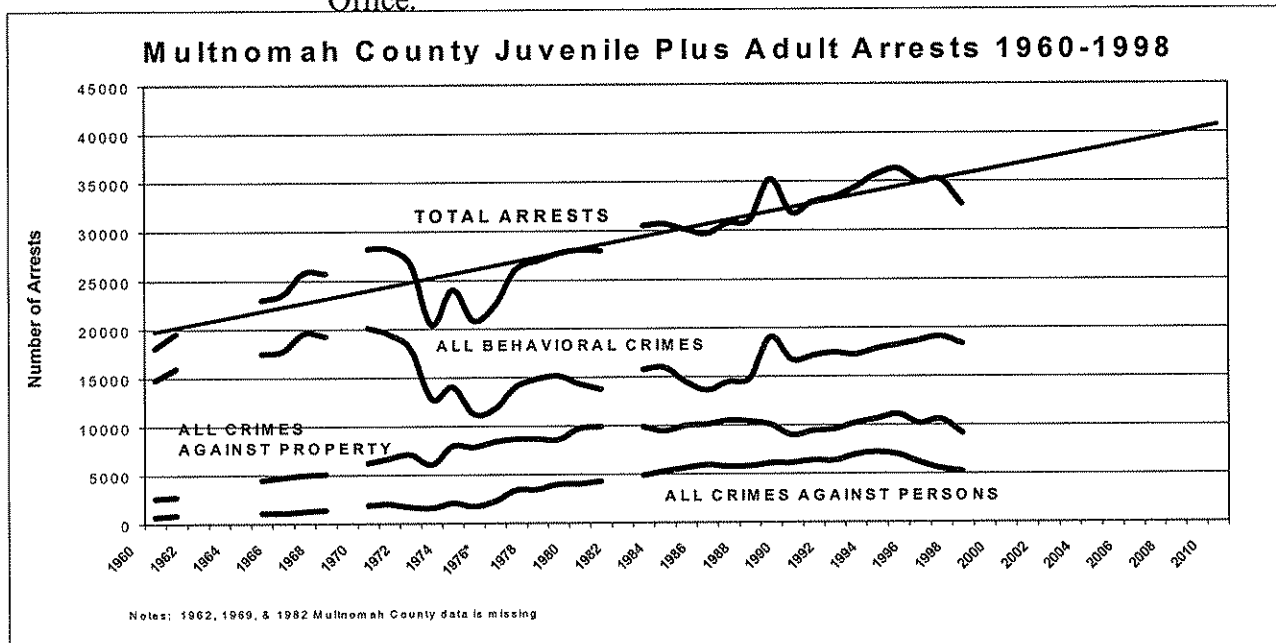
The following graph shows the trend in the *locally reported index crime offense rate* since 1960. The graph shows that the reported index crime offense rate is now comparable to the early 1970s. The Multnomah County index crime offense rate is decreasing faster than the State or national averages, which is a positive sign that local criminal justice practices are effective.

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*Index crime rates are not a good indicator of total criminal justice workload.*

Arrests for index crimes accounted for only 26% of total arrests in 1998, so they are not a good indicator of total criminal justice workload. Total arrests for all types of crime are important for budgeting as they drive workload for prosecutors, courts, jails, and community supervision. Multnomah County trends for all arrests beginning in 1960 are shown in the following graph. The number of arrests is not converted to a rate (divided by County population) so the graph shows the effect of population growth. Arrests are broken into three categories: Person to Person crimes; Property crimes; and Behavioral crimes. Behavioral crimes includes offenses such as drug laws, driving under the influence, liquor laws, disorderly conduct, runaway juveniles, curfew violations, etc. There are gaps in the graph for years when all local jurisdictions did not report data to the State LEDS (Law Enforcement Data System) Office.





# Strategic Benchmarks

*Rising County population and behavioral crime arrests have been increasing criminal justice workload.*

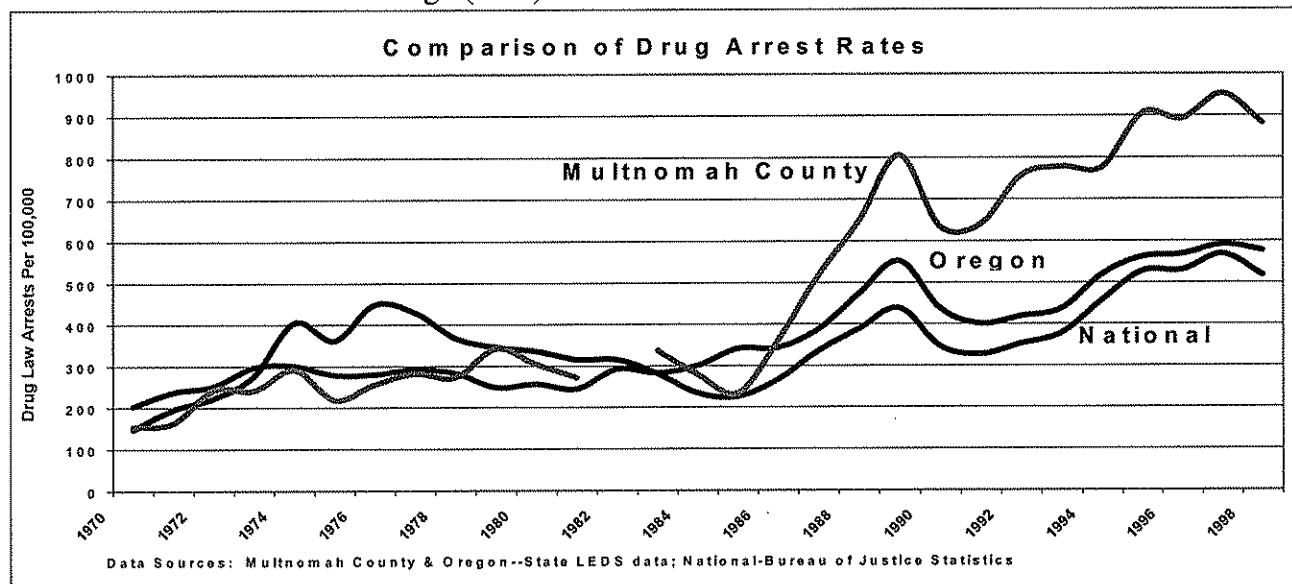
During the 1990's arrests for Person to Person crimes and Property crimes have dropped. However, arrests for Behavioral crimes, none of which are counted in the index crime rate, show no sustained downward trend. Total arrests do show a recent drop. But it is unclear how long this drop will continue, or whether total arrests will continue to climb with population growth. Despite the recent slowdown in the number of arrests, demand for jail space continues to grow. 'Matrix releases' (releases of the least dangerous inmates due to overcrowding before they finish their sentences or reach a courtroom) briefly resumed in March 2000. There had been no matrix releases since July 1998.

*The voters in May 1996 passed a Public Safety Bond to build more public safety facilities.*

In May 1996, Multnomah County voters passed a bond, which among other things provided funding to build facilities to improve public safety. The Board of Commissioners has authorized the Sheriff to use these bond proceeds for planning and construction of the Wapato Jail (225 beds) and a co-located 300 bed Alcohol and Drug Treatment Center. However, the bond pays for construction of the new facility, not for ongoing operation. Securing ongoing operational funds, either through a levy that would need to be submitted to the voters, or by tradeoffs from lesser funding of other county programs, is a future challenge.

*Drug arrests are driving Multnomah County's increase in behavioral crime.*

Drug arrests are clearly driving the increase in Behavioral crime arrests. Multnomah County's drug arrest rate was similar to State and national levels until the mid 1980's. In the late 1980's the Multnomah County rate shot up, along with a state and national surge. After a brief respite in the early 1990's all three trends increased again and have exceeded their 1980's high point. Multnomah County's drug arrest rate has continued to outpace State and national levels. Urine testing at the time of arrest shows 72% of males and 74% of females in Multnomah County are positive for drugs. We have the highest rate of female arrestees testing positive for opiates (25%) of any city with comparable data except Chicago (27%).



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These trends raise important public policy issues. Rising County population and a continued high rate of drug arrests inevitably increase demand for jail space. Jail space is expensive. Growth in funds needed to operate more jails may exceed the growth in revenue available under the property tax cap. And spending more money on jails means that funds available to local government cannot be spent on other pressing public needs. It will be a difficult public policy question over the next decade how to balance these conflicting demands on a limited resource.

*Alcohol and drug treatment is a cost-effective strategy.*

Alcohol and drug treatment for criminal offenders works and is cost-effective. This has been established by 30 years of national clinical trials as well as local data. Data prepared for the State Office of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs show that each dollar invested in alcohol and drug treatment saves:

**\$1.43** Criminal Justice costs

**\$ .22** Public Assistance costs

**\$1.58** Victim costs (medical care, repairs of damaged property, lost time from work)

**\$2.37** Theft costs (value of property stolen)

**\$5.60** **TOTAL SAVINGS PER \$1.00**

Multnomah County has established and evaluated effective drug diversion programs such as STOP. Other programs have been devised for repeated convictions for driving under the influence (DISP) and for offenders who are in jail and need assessment and referral to appropriate treatment (IJIP). During FY 2000 the County funded a 70-bed secure alcohol and drug treatment program--InterChange--for high or medium risk male offenders. The Board of Commissioners has co-located a proposed expansion of InterChange from 70 to 300 beds at the site of the new Wapato Jail (under construction).

*Multnomah County is applying the best criminal justice practices combined with careful evaluation*

It has been repeatedly shown that the risk of re-offense can be successfully predicted. In 1997, the Multnomah County Department of Community Justice launched an ambitious effort to fundamentally alter the manner in which probation and parole supervision is provided to convicted felony offenders who have been placed in the community. Supervision resources were concentrated on high and medium risk offenders, decreasing their caseload size from about 75 to 55-60. Lower risk offenders were assigned to Centralized Team Supervision. The National Council on Crime and Delinquency conducted an evaluation of the first phase of this re-design. This initial evaluation showed that "the caseload restructuring has indeed accomplished its objective; that is, to focus the Department's resources on the highest risk offenders, while providing minimal supervision to low-risk offenders, without

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compromising public safety." (Multnomah County Adult Community Justice Supervision Redesign Program Final Report, November 1, 1999, page 35).

Through similar application of national best practices Multnomah County is implementing a wide variety of successful and innovative approaches to criminal justice. These approaches include drug courts, community courts, various types of diversion programs, a range of alcohol and drug treatment, and specialized programs for women, gang-associated youth, and persons with mental illness. It is our belief that careful application and evaluation of the best criminal justice practices can reduce criminal cycling and best assure public safety. This criminal justice approach coupled with long-term prevention through healthy births and responsible parenting offers the most rational and cost-effective social policy for achieving a healthy community.

*Better criminal justice information systems are being developed.*

Public Safety Bond funds have been used to design a Decision Support System (DSS-Justice) which allows offenders to be tracked across different agencies from police to the courts, jails, and community supervision. It is the County's hope that DSS-Justice can be used by the Courts to sentence offenders to sanctions and programs which are most likely to reduce their future criminal behavior. DSS-Justice also has the potential to allow all local public safety agencies to evaluate the impact of their policies and programs and make more effective use of criminal justice resources. During FY 2001 funds are being allocated to help DSS-Justice realize this potential. The focus will be on developing management reports that can provide the information needed to slow down the rate of growth for more jail cells and to increase the public safety impact of existing resources. The funds will pay for a consultant with considerable national expertise to ensure that Multnomah County is using DSS-Justice to optimally manage criminal justice resources.

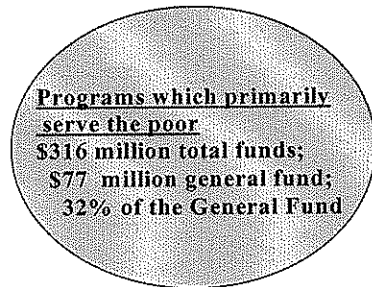
# Strategic Benchmarks

## Reduce the Number of Children in Poverty

*Despite substantial County expenditure, the rate of child poverty has increased since 1969.*

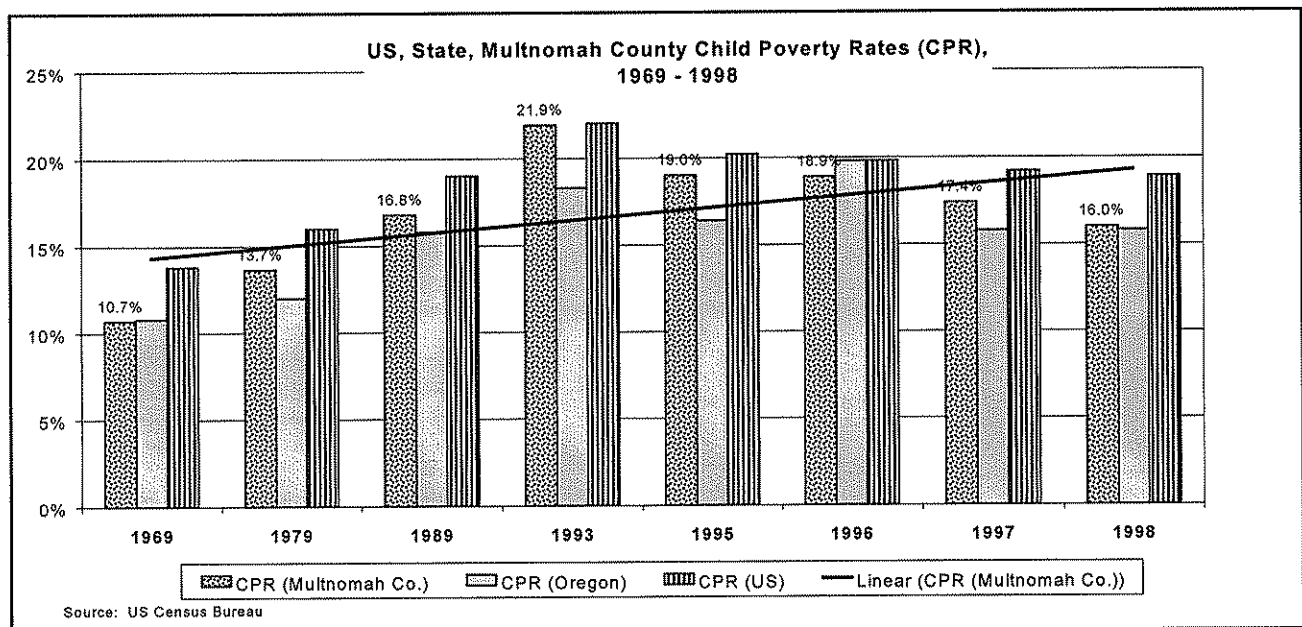
Multnomah County provides a range of "safety net" programs that primarily serve persons who earn less than the federal poverty level. Some of these programs are targeted specifically toward the poor, such as federally funded home weatherization. Other programs, such as alcohol and drug treatment, are not means tested but de facto serve those who cannot afford to pay for such services out of their limited income.

### Reducing Child Poverty



Family Centers  
 Community Action programs  
 Mental health  
 Most County provided alcohol & drug treatment  
 Developmental Disability Services  
 Aging & Disability Services  
 Health care  
 Teen pregnancy  
 Programs which supervise criminal justice offenders & teach job skills  
 Strategic Investment Program-- workforce development

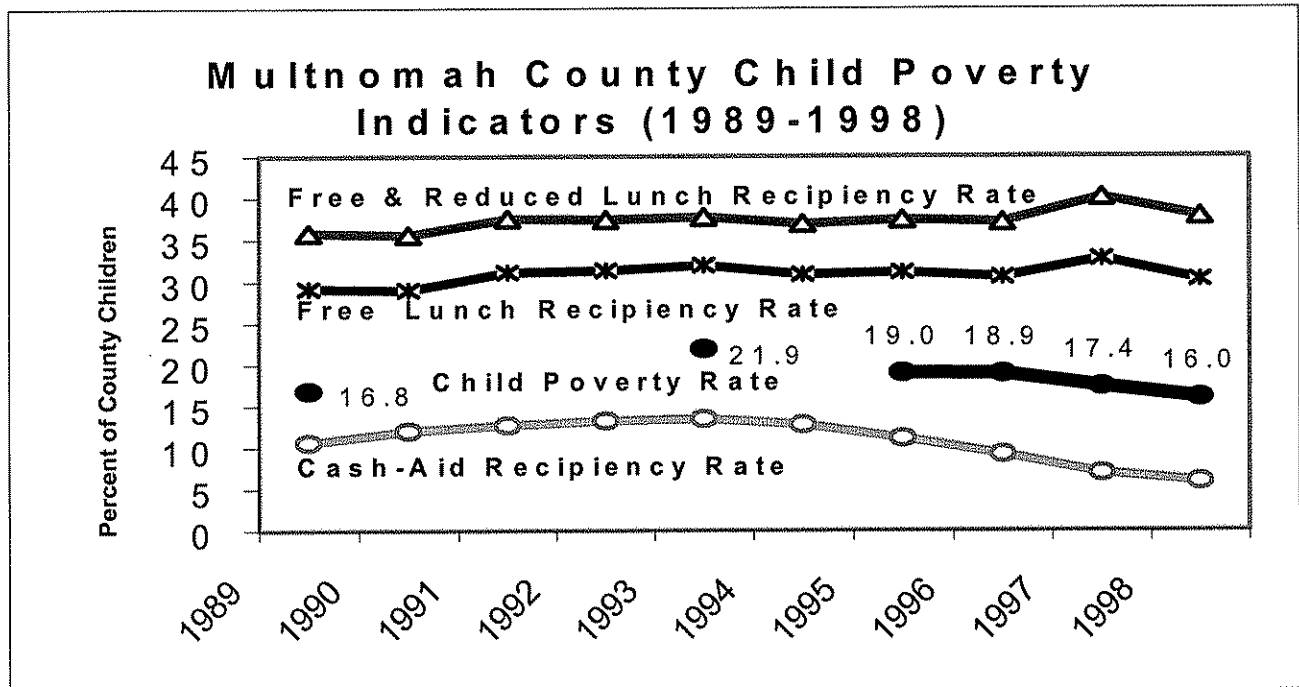
While the rate of child poverty has been dropping since 1993 (21.9% to 16.0%) there has been an increase in child poverty overall since 1969 (10.7% to 16%). This 30-year Multnomah County trend parallels state and national trends. These trends are the average for the entire population; for specific subsets of the population (e.g. different racial groups, different family groupings) the trends may be different.



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*Different measures of child poverty show different trends.*

There are many factors affecting these trends but the driver behind child poverty is adult poverty. The Center for the Future of Poverty reports that 42% of children's poverty spells began with reductions in the earnings of an adult household member, 26% began at birth, and 12% began with the loss of a parent. Poor children belong to poor households, and it is the earnings of the adults in these households that make the household poor. Declining welfare roles have been held up as an indicator that poverty is declining. Others have argued that persons removed from the welfare rolls struggle in low-wage jobs that do not meet basic needs, especially in Multnomah County's increasingly expensive housing market. The graph below compares several indicators of poverty in Multnomah County. Despite declines in the cash-aid reciprocity rate and child poverty rate, children eligible for free or reduced lunches have not shown a comparable decline. This data cautions against too early a declaration of progress in reducing childhood poverty.



A survey of national research on reducing adult poverty concluded that there are two major strategies to reduce poverty:

*Reduce poverty by building self-sufficiency.*

**Strategy 1: Increase the level of education, training, skills, and other 'human capital' assets of those at the bottom of the capability distribution.**

This strategy has been shown to be successful in over 20 national programs that provide linked, coordinated resources and assistance to people who are poor. Linking *amelioration* resources and services (e.g. low cost health care; child care assistance) with *self-sufficiency* resources and services (e.g. improved education, job readiness training) has helped families in these 20 proven programs.

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*Better coordination of services to the poor can increase their overall effectiveness in reducing poverty.*

Multnomah County's role, for the most part, has been to provide amelioration services for poor families. Other governmental agencies provide self-sufficiency programs like education, vocational rehabilitation and employment. Better coordination and linking of this range of programs available to the poor will increase their overall effectiveness in reducing poverty. A good example of improved service coordination is this budget's proposal for more housing support for people leaving Hooper Detox center. Independent evaluation of that program, which primarily serves late stage, chronic addicts and alcoholics, shows that the successful completion rate of persons in outpatient alcohol and drug treatment soars from 25.6% to 76.8% when alcohol and drug free housing is provided. It is clear that both alcohol and drug free housing and outpatient services provided in a coordinated manner better achieve the goal of sobriety than either service operating alone. Even a traditional amelioration organization (e.g. distributing free food) such as a Food Bank now helps clients with self-sufficiency skills (e.g. healthy cooking classes). Multiplying examples such as these has the potential of substantially increasing the effectiveness of the County's anti-poverty efforts.

It is clear, however, that some families do not have, and may never have, the ability to maintain enough income to keep their children out of poverty. For these families national research points to a second strategy to reduce child poverty.

*Reduce poverty by helping families earn more with the self-sufficiency skills they already have.*

***Strategy 2: Help families earn more from work through living-wage policies, low-income tax credits and other wage supports.***

Multnomah County has demonstrated its commitment to this strategy through its work to promote and enact living wage jobs. Provision of living wage jobs is a key requirement negotiated into contracts between the County and high technology enterprises in the Strategic Investment Program (SIP). We are presently researching the fiscal impact of requiring living wages for our human and social service jobs that the County contracts to private providers. We have already instituted the requirement for living wage jobs into smaller contracts in other areas such as janitorial services. Another way this strategy is being pursued in Multnomah County is in the creation of Individual Development Accounts. These are matched savings accounts for families with low income intended for self-sufficiency purposes such as further education or starting a business.

*Child poverty can mean educational failure and increased risk of adult poverty.*

Regardless of how many children are considered to be poor in Multnomah County, the consequences can be generational. Research shows that the likelihood of graduation for a particular student can be predicted by three variables: whether the child can read at grade level in 3rd grade; whether the child has repeated a grade and whether the child lives in poverty. These three warning signals can predict with about 80% accuracy if a child will dropout, which is in turn a good predictor for adult poverty (Educational Success Benchmark Audit, Nichols, 2000).