

Calvert County State of the Child: 2000

Prepared for the

Calvert County Local Management Board

by

Gordon Scott Bonham, Ph.D.

Bonham Research

2316 Wineberry Terrace

Baltimore, Maryland 21209

(410) 601-0111

Fax: (410) 367-2376

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Executive Summary

The Calvert County Local Management Board commissioned this report to provide a background for planning how best to serve children and their families. It documents indicators of child and family well-being and community resources to provide a baseline for evaluating programs in the future. Calvert County was home to 1.5% of Maryland's population in 2000 and is expected to constitute 2.1% of Maryland's population in 2020. The following are key findings in the three areas which the Local Management Board chose for its initial focus.

Children Enter School Ready to Learn

- The 5,154 children less than five in 2000 are expected to increase 54% by 2020
- The mothers of 90% of the county's babies received first trimester prenatal care and about one-fifth are involved in Health Start
- 32 babies in 1998 (3.4%) had mothers under 18 years of age, transforming 7 of every 1,000 girls 10-17 years old into mothers, a proportion which increased slightly over the decade
- 54 babies in 1998 weighed under 2,500 grams. Although only 6% of all babies, percent of low birth weight generally increased over the decade
- Fewer than 8 babies die each year, with an infant death rate that has been declining over the decade and is lower than the rate for the rest of the state
- Licensed child care capacity grew from 44 per 100 children 0-4 in 1992 to 65 per 100 preschoolers in 1999
- 1,300 children were enrolled in nursery school or preschool in 1999, about two-thirds of children 3-4 years old

Children Safe in their Communities and Schools

- 3 children per 1,000 were found to be abused or neglected in 1998, down from 5 per 1,000 in 1994. This could reflect fewer children being abused and neglected, or it could reflect the large reduction in the number of investigations, a trend that would result in no investigations after four more years if it continued
- About 4 children died in each of the past five years due to injury, for an injury death rate about the same as in the rest of Maryland and half of what it was in the first five years of the decade; one-third of the deaths were homicide or suicides
- About 5% of high school students in 1999 dropped out of school, doubled the percent in 1991; however, fewer than 5% of enrolled students miss 21 or days of school in a year
- 40% of high school seniors reported binge drinking in the past month and 3% used heroin
- Legal and illegal substance use was higher in the county than the state as a whole, after generally increasing over the decade and starting earlier in children's lives
- Police made 6 violent offense and 35 serious nonviolent offense arrests in 1998 for every 1,000 juveniles 15-17 years old, rates about the same as for the rest of Maryland and substantially higher than eight years earlier

Communities Which Support Family Life

- 45-46% of third and fifth grade students in 1998 read at a satisfactory level, almost double the percent in 1993, but only 36% of eighth graders
- Library programs increased between 1997 and 2000, and careful targeting might stem the decline in reading between grades five and eight
- Countywide fall sports programs had commutative average daily attendance of 2,650 children, and district fall after school programs had commutative attendance of about 2,000 children
- 200 to 350 adults participate in literacy programs, and enrollment in credit-free community college courses has increased over the past four years
- The median sale price of homes increased from \$121,350 in 1994 to \$154,900 in 1999, from about \$5,000 below the Maryland average to about \$12,000 above the Maryland average
- The county has five owners for every renter, but one-fourth of both pay 35% or more of the household income for housing
- 13 out of every 1,000 households, and 8 out of every 1,000 people, stayed in homeless shelters in 1999, fewer than the peak in 1994, but possibly reflecting a long term increase in homelessness