

# **Georgia Strategic Prevention Framework (GA SPF-SIG)**

## **State Priority: Reduce Underage Drinking/Alcohol- Related Crashes and Fatalities**

### **Early County Community Needs Assessment Report February 2010**

**Submitted to  
Office of Prevention Services and Programs**

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## NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

### I. INTRODUCTION

#### a. Community description

Early County is one of the oldest in the state. Established on December 15, 1818 from land acquired in a treaty with the Creek Indians it was named in honor of Georgia's Governor, Peter Early. One of the largest in Georgia in land area, Early County has 516 square miles and is neighbored by Clay County to the north, Calhoun County to the northeast, Baker County to the east, Miller County to the southeast, Seminole County to the south. The western border is the Chattahoochee River, which is the state line between Georgia and Alabama. Dothan, Alabama is the closest large city to Early County. Early County includes Blakely, Arlington, Damascus and Jakin. Blakely, the county seat, claims the title "Peanut Capital of the World" since Early County is one of the largest producers of peanuts in Georgia. Blakely was established in 1825 and named in honor of United States Naval hero, Captain Johnston Blakely, who was lost at sea in the War of 1812.

Early County is home to several historical landmarks. The Early County Courthouse was erected in 1826 on 25 acres of land donated to the county by Benjamin Collier. This structure served until the present building was constructed in 1906. The current building was renovated in 1992-93. The court square is home to the last remaining wooden Confederate flagpole, which was erected in 1861 from white pine grown in the county.

Coheelee Creek Bridge, also known as the Bridge at McDonalds Ford, is the southernmost authentic covered bridge in the United States. The bridge is located west of Blakely in the Hilton community and was constructed in 1891 by John William Baughman at a total cost of \$490.41. It extends 96 feet across Coheelee Creek and was restored in 1984. It is still in excellent condition.

Kolomoki Mounds State Park is a very important archaeological site as well as recreational area. The park features seven earthen mounds built between 250-950 A.D. by the Swift Creek and Weeden Island Indians. The mounds were used for ceremonial purposes and burial. It is also home to the oldest Great Temple Mound in Georgia. The park offers a rare glimpse inside an excavated mound and has a museum of Indian artifacts.

Currently Early County is stagnant. No new industry, or jobs created in the last 2 decades. The school system, Georgia Pacific paper mill and the local hospital are largest employers. We are 35 miles from the nearest Wal-mart, over 50 miles from family entertainment such as movies and bowling. All we have to do here is high school football, basketball and recreation department sports.

Early County's population is currently just over 12,000. The rural, agricultural county is more than 50 miles from any town with a population of more than 25,000. The area is characterized by high poverty, low adult educational attainment, and poor outcomes for children and families. The poverty rate is 28 percent for all individuals (14.7 percent Georgia), with 41.9 percent of children age 18 and under in poverty. This rate has risen from 38.5% in 2006. The median household income of \$29,114 is significantly lower than the Georgia median income of \$45,564.

Thirty two percent of adults, ages 25 or older, have no high school diploma, compared to 21 percent for state. Eighteen percent of Early County teens ages 16-19 are not in school and not working compared to the state rate of 11 percent.

Georgia has one of the highest teen birth rates (54.1/1,000) for girls ages 15-19 in the nation. The Early County rate (65.9/1,000) is even higher. The teen birth rate for African-American girls

## Early County Needs Assessment

is 85.8/1,000, compared to 56.2/1,000 for white girls. The Early County rate of mothers giving birth to another child before age 20 is 24.1 percent compared to a state rate of 21.3 percent. The STD rate for youth ages 15-19 is 59.5/1,000, nearly twice the Georgia rate of 30.6/1,000.

Early County Dept. of Juvenile Justice reports a 25% increase in youth intakes related to alcohol and drugs over the past year.

The Early County data show a clear pattern of higher than state or national rates for key indicators that lead to child maltreatment, risky behaviors of youth and family poverty.

## II. METHODS

### a. Group responsible for conducting the assessment

Community Ventures, Inc. was selected by the Local Management Entity to assist in preparing the Needs Assessment Report from information gathered by the Early County Coordinator and CLEOW. The assessment was conducted by the team of individuals listed below in order to fulfill requirements for the Georgia Prevention Framework – State Incentive Grant (GA SPF – SIG) awarded to Early County.

#### Needs Assessment Team

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### b. Data collection tools and methods used to conduct the community assessment

The data collection instruments used during the needs assessment reviewed quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitatively, a wide variety of data was analyzed regarding underage possession and consumption of alcohol and included:

Numbers of youth arrested

Arrests by month

Arrests by age, race and gender

Charges

Disposition of Charges (whether juvenile or minor charges)

Retail Establishment Types and Locations

Types of Alcohol Licenses

Whether Compliance checks for underage sales

Methods of purchase or method used to acquire alcohol by youth

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Ads/Positioning of Alcohol for Sales  
Types/Levels of Local Promotion (including consideration of national promotion)  
Alcohol Sponsorship of Community Events  
Consumption Patterns

Quantitatively, data was collected and analyzed from:

Focus Groups – Youth and Adult	Key Informant Interviews
Surveys of representative population	

Surveys were conducted with the following groups:

- Youth, ages 11-20
- Adults 21+

Qualitatively, opinions and perceptions were captured and summarized for inclusion in our sessions with the CLEOW and our Needs Assessment report from the subjective opinions of individuals participating in the youth and adult focus groups, surveys, and key informant interviews.

### **III. CONTEXTUAL RESULTS**

a. Who in your community is most impacted by incidence of arrests among youth due to possession of alcohol products?

i. What male subgroups are impacted most by arrests due to possession of alcohol products?

White Males

ii. What female subgroups are impacted most by arrests due to possession of alcohol products?

White Females