

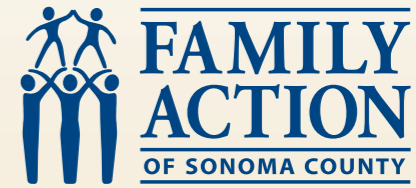
# Report Card '99

Report on: The Status of Children  
in Sonoma County

Age: 0-18 Year: 1999

Parents/Guardians: Citizens of Sonoma County

Overall Grade:  
**C-**



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is made available through the support of:  
**The California Endowment**  
**The Petaluma Health Care District**  
and the **Petaluma Community Health Foundation**

**Family Action of Sonoma County**  
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*Family Action of Sonoma County is a non-partisan coalition of agencies and individuals who work to improve local public policy on children's issues. We are parents and grandparents, professionals from child-serving agencies, child care providers, elected officials, local business leaders, healthcare providers and more.*

*Take Action! Add your voice to the many trying to make Sonoma County a healthy, safe and supportive community for children and families.*

**X** Sonoma County Citizens

Parent Signature

## You can help improve the lives of children in Sonoma County.

- Take action! Fill out the enclosed card to join Family Action or to learn more about Report Card '99.
- Insist that all your elected representatives become strong and fair advocates for children. Tell them to put children's needs first. Write, call or email them about issues that matter to you.
- Urge your employer, congregation, civic groups and others to place a high priority on meeting children's physical and emotional needs.
- Ask employers to establish family-friendly policies such as flex time, job sharing and paid family leave.
- Encourage businesses to help with child care by supporting on-site child care centers, resource and referral programs, and funds to help families pay for care.
- Read to your child and supervise homework. Become actively involved in community schools, monitoring their performance and demanding accountability.
- Ask your church, synagogue or temple to open the building after school for children who need tutoring.

PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE

Family Action of Sonoma County  
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Santa Rosa, CA 95407



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**Sonoma County** is home to about 120,000 children. We all want them to be healthy, safe, nurtured and well-educated. However, many children here struggle to get life's basic necessities. Others face challenges that cross economic lines, including child care availability, teen substance abuse and child abuse.

This Report Card is an effort to discover where our children are doing well and where they are wanting. Family Action of Sonoma County has graded six desired "outcomes" for children and families, which together represent the major elements needed to assure children's well-being. Each of the outcomes is supported by measurable "indicators" that allow us to track data and judge whether our children are achieving the desired outcomes.

By using the Report Card, we can track our children's progress from year to year. With this knowledge we can begin to budget, set policy, and structure our service delivery and educational systems in ways that will achieve positive outcomes—and improve the status of our children.

### Grading Scale

#### Indicators:

- + = generally positive
- ✓ = passable
- = generally negative
- i = insufficient data available

#### Outcomes:

- A = excellent
- B = good
- C = needs improvement
- D = seriously deficient
- F = failing
- I = incomplete

For more information, see the *Report Card '99 Briefing Book*. Order by filling out attached card.

## Overall Grade: C-

### Families Economically Self-Sufficient

GRADE C+

MARK INDICATOR

-	<b>Sustainable Incomes</b> Low- and moderate-income workers in Sonoma County pay between 34-75% of their income for rent, based upon current wage and rental figures. This exceeds federal guidelines, which suggest that no more than 30% of income go toward rent.
+	<b>Free and Reduced Price School Lunches</b> This indicator rates well because the percentage of Sonoma County students certified eligible is significantly lower than the state; 26% of county students receive free or reduced price lunches, compared to 47% statewide. Sadly, this also reveals that 1 in 4 Sonoma County students live in economically troubled families.
+	<b>Child Support</b> In Sonoma County, 48% of the total dollars due for current support in District Attorney-managed cases were collected, well above the average state retrieval rate of 39%. Child support collection is critical to keeping children out of poverty.

### Families with Access to Quality, Affordable Child Care

GRADE D

i	<b>Child Care Quality</b> Other than licensing requirements, there is currently no comprehensive data or system for measuring the quality of child care in Sonoma County.
✓	<b>Child Care Affordability</b> Most parents pay a high proportion of their income for child care. An average family with an infant and toddler spends 1/4 of its income on child care, leaving very little for expenses after housing costs.
-	<b>Child Care Availability</b> There are not enough child care spaces to accommodate the need. It is estimated that approximately 7,400 children have nowhere to go, a full 25% of the total children who need care.

### Children Succeeding in School

GRADE C

✓	<b>Per-pupil Spending</b> Seven of the ten largest districts in the county spend more per pupil than the state average. However, California and our county lag behind the national per-pupil average. California ranks near the bottom (42nd) among the 50 states and Sonoma County ranks 31 among the 58 counties.
✓	<b>Average Class Size</b> The average class size is 26.3 students, just under California's average of 27.4. State financial incentives have encouraged elementary schools to reduce class size in grades K-3 to a maximum of 20 students.
+	<b>Standardized Testing</b> Sonoma County students' (STAR) test scores in reading, math, social studies, science, and language are consistently above state and national averages for 4th and 9th graders.
-	<b>Dropout and Graduation Rates</b> Sonoma County rates compare negatively with state averages. 16% of seniors did not graduate, compared to 11% statewide. In this county 3.1 of every 100 students drop out, compared to 2.9 per 100 statewide.

### Families Healthy and Strong

GRADE B-

MARK INDICATOR

+	<b>Prenatal Care</b> Sonoma County does well with 86% of women receiving prenatal care in their first trimester, compared to 81% in California and 82% nationally.
+	<b>Teen Births</b> Among girls 15-19 years old, 38 of every 1,000 give birth, compared to 57 of every 1,000 statewide.
✓	<b>Childhood Immunizations</b> Only 67% of school children are up-to-date with their immunizations by their 2nd birthday, falling far short of the nationally accepted goal of 90%. These figures are based on data gathered regionally; Sonoma County is part of the Bay Area Region, which includes eight other counties.
i	<b>Access to Healthcare</b> An estimated 19% of California children have no health insurance, compared to 15% nationwide. Although there are no comprehensive figures for Sonoma County, two recent localized surveys provide some insight. One survey found 52% of parents had <u>at least one child without insurance</u> , while another found that 16% of parents reported that their <u>family was without health insurance</u> .

### Children Safe and Protected

GRADE I

✓	<b>Child Abuse</b> There were 5,432 confirmed allegations of child abuse and neglect in Sonoma County in 1998, down 25% since 1996. There were 232 confirmed cases of severe abuse.
i	<b>Domestic Violence</b> The Sonoma County Sheriff's Department reports that 284 children were present during <u>felony</u> domestic violence arrests in 1998. Most other police agencies within the county do not collect this data on a regular basis.
i	<b>Foster Care</b> Data does not exist to measure two aspects of foster care determined to be important to the well-being of most children: the average number of foster care placements per child, and the number of foster care homes needed to make the most appropriate placements.
i	<b>Injuries and Deaths</b> Fifteen Sonoma County children died in 1998 due to injury, suicide or homicide. Hospitalizations for childhood injuries rose slightly to a rate of 3.9 per 1,000 (1997). This indicator lacks meaningful comparison data.

### Youth Choosing Healthy Behaviors

GRADE D

-	<b>Drug and Alcohol Use</b> Sonoma County's rate of 6.4 incidents of drug and alcohol violations per 1,000 students is nearly double California's rate of 3.55 per 1,000. This higher rate could be related to our strong school and police efforts, and zero-tolerance policies. Sonoma County recently ranked 12th in terms of need for drug and alcohol treatment for youth among 58 counties.
✓	<b>Youth Crime</b> Sonoma County's felony arrest rate is equivalent to California's rate of 21 per 1,000. The misdemeanor crime rate (58 per 1,000) is well above California's rate of 38. As with drug and alcohol use, these figures may be affected by enforcement efforts.

✓ Yes, I am interested in improving the lives of children and families in Sonoma County.



Please make checks payable to "Family Action"

- I would like to become a member of Family Action! Your membership will:
  - Help provide a voice to the children of Sonoma County
  - Entitle you to receive Family Action Newsletters and Alerts
- Individual Membership (scholarships available)
  - Member, \$25 donation
  - Sustaining Member, \$50-350
  - Patron Member, \$350 and up
- Organizational Membership (scholarships available)
  - Member, \$50 donation
  - Sustaining Member, \$100-350
  - Patron Member, \$350 and up
- Enclosed is my contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- I would like to receive the Report Card '99 Briefing Book (\$3 donation)
- I would like to receive the following Family Action Publications:
  - "Spending Time for Children: Children and Family Services: Funding for Sonoma Co. FY 1997-98" (\$8 donation)
  - Sonoma Co. Realities: Child Care (also available in Spanish)
  - Sonoma Co. Realities: Wages
- I would like to volunteer my time.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Company/Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_