

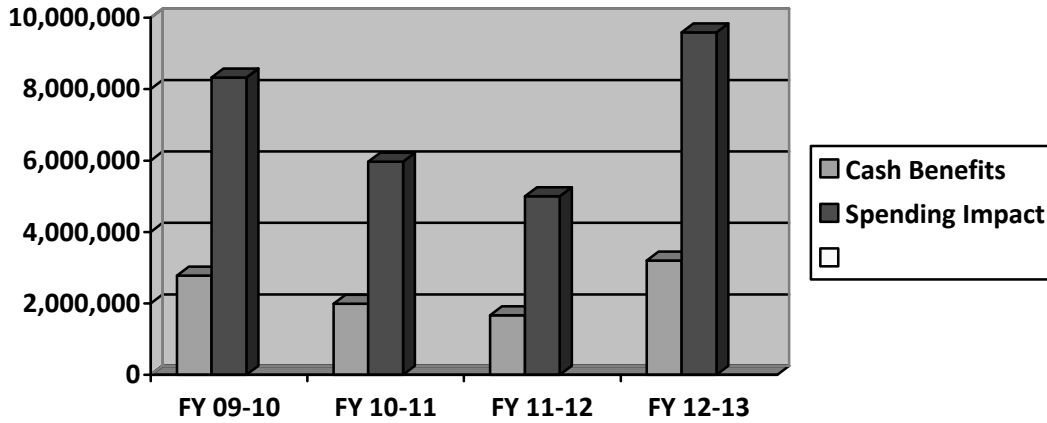
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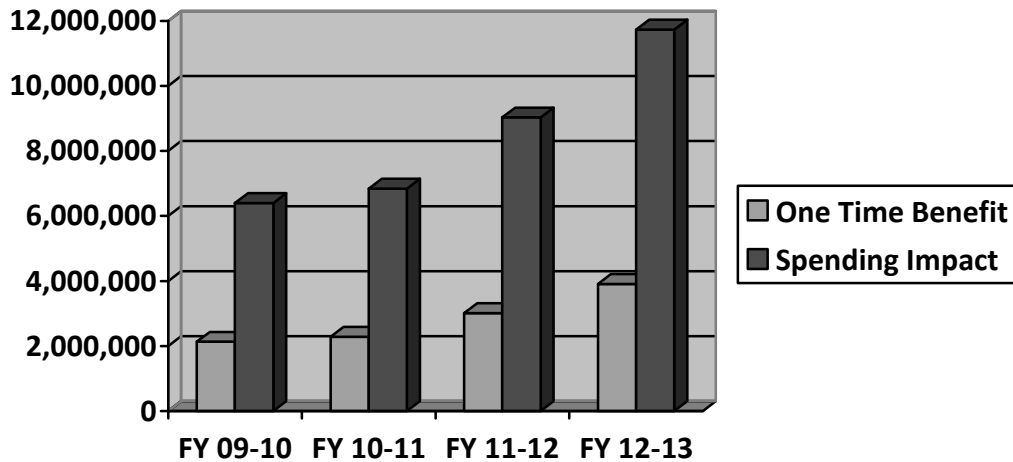


TULARE COUNTY GRAND JURY REPORT 2014-2015

8. Veterans assisted by this office were awarded a total of \$4,141,553 in benefits, including retroactive benefits.
9. Historical Summary of Benefits – Continuing Cash Benefits and Spending Impact in Tulare County in dollars



10. Historical Summary of Benefits – Veterans One Time Benefits and Spending Impact in Tulare County in dollars



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11. The annual Veterans Opportunity Day is April 22, 2015, and will be held at the Tulare Memorial Building in Tulare. A wide variety of activities, benefits and opportunities will be available that day for all veterans in Tulare County.
12. TCVSO has an Outreach Program – bus wraps and bill boards to the rural areas, making contact with approximately 18,000 veterans in Tulare County by a Veterans Service Officer:
 - a. Monthly Porterville visits
 - b. Visalia Senior Center
 - c. A 60 ft. bill board in Ducor
 - d. North Valley bus wraps: one side in English and the back in Spanish
13. New advertising campaign “IF YOU SERVED – YOU EARNED” being shown at theaters and on television commercials for veterans to check with their local Veterans Service Office to see if they qualify for benefits.
14. Veterans Court was created as an alternative sentencing program for combat veterans who have committed a crime, with no criminal record prior to combat. It serves our veterans, many who suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), substance abuse, or psychological problems stemming from active service. In order to benefit from Veterans Court, the Veteran must plead guilty, participate in 18 months of mentoring and mental health programs, pay any fines, and attend monthly meetings. There have been 16 graduates since they started the program in April 2010 and not one has relapsed. Three are to graduate in March 2015. There is a Judge presiding over Veterans Court. The Veterans Court Program is a collaboration between agencies which include:
 - a. Tulare County District Attorney
 - b. Tulare County Probation Department
 - c. Tulare County Superior Court
 - d. Tulare County Veterans Service Office (TCVSO)
 - e. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
 - f. Central California Health Care System
 - g. Veterans Counseling Clinic
 - h. Law Enforcement Agencies throughout Tulare County
15. At this time, the TCVSO does not have enough space to meet the needs of the veterans. The building is currently owned by Am-Vets and there are no other available spaces that could accommodate TCVSO.
16. At this time, when a veteran requests water, a Veterans Service Officer will utilize a disposable cup to retrieve the drinking water from the restroom sink faucet.

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FINDINGS:

- F1. Private offices are crucial for the interview process of the veterans.
- F2. The Tulare County Veterans Medical Clinic has also overgrown its current location in Tulare and is searching for new facilities.
- F3. It is the goal of the TCVSO to relocate within close proximity of the Tulare County Veterans Medical Clinic. According to the TCVSO, these two veterans facilities need to remain in close proximity.
- F4. TCVSO facility is for the exclusive use of veterans with its own entrance and exits.
- F5. Benefits to all veterans are available, but a portion of the veterans are unaware of what they are entitled to.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- R1. Drinking fountain or water dispenser to be provided for the clients visiting the TCVSO.
- R2. Once the relocation of the Medical Clinic is determined, a search for a new TCVSO facility shall be in close proximity with private offices for counseling.

REQUIRED RESPONSES:

- 1. Director, Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency

Disclaimer

Grand Jury reports are based on documentary evidence and the testimony of sworn or admonished witnesses, not on conjecture or opinion. However, the Grand Jury is precluded by law from disclosing such evidence except upon specific approval of the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court, or another judge appointed by the Presiding Judge (Penal Code Section 911, 924.1 (a) and 929). Similarly, the Grand Jury is precluded by law from disclosing the identity of witnesses except upon an order of the court for narrowly defined purposes (Penal Code Section 924.2 and 929).

TEEN PREGNANCY EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

BACKGROUND:

Teen pregnancy is an issue which concerns many Americans. In the United States, there were 305,388 babies born to mothers aged 15 years to 19 years old for the year 2013. Certain medical problems, for example, pregnancy-induced high blood pressure and preeclampsia (a dangerous medical condition that combines high blood pressure with excess protein in the urine) tend to occur more frequently with teen births than with women in their 20's or 30's. Teen mothers are also more likely to give birth prematurely and have babies with low birth weight, both of which increases the baby's risk of health and developmental problems. Teen mothers are also more likely to suffer from postpartum depression than women who have given birth in their 20's and 30's.

Issues more likely to plague teen mothers include social, educational, and financial. The loss of education also has an effect on wage potential of the women later in life. The cost to pregnant teens is high over an extended period of time. The overall cost to the California taxpayer is estimated to be over one billion dollars annually.

REASON FOR INVESTIGATION:

Teen pregnancy is a significant issue with serious impacts to the community. Tulare County has consistently been in the top three counties in the State for high teen pregnancy rates. It is for this reason the 2014-2015 Tulare County Grand Jury decided to investigate various public agencies within the County in regards to teen pregnancy programs.

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION:

The Grand Jury reviewed the following aspects of teen pregnancy: assistance available for pregnant teens, effectiveness of teen pregnancy programs, teen pregnancy impact on school attendance and educational programming, and pregnancy prevention.

The Grand Jury reviewed numerous documents provided by local agencies, newspapers and other media sources, and via internet websites. These documents provided statistics, program details, resources, and other relevant information. Staff members from different branches of the Tulare County Health and Human Services Agency were interviewed. Representatives from the Tulare County Office of Education were also interviewed. Members of the Grand Jury visited various middle and high schools within Tulare County, interviewing staff and reviewing various educational materials.

FACTS:

1. Nationally, half of teenage mothers will not graduate high school. According to information from the U.S. Census Bureau, high school graduates annually earn \$10,386 more than those who drop out of school. Finding a job is harder for high school dropouts, with a nearly four percent (4%) higher unemployment rate as of September 2012.

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2. Approximately two percent (2%) of women who have a baby before age 18 will obtain a college degree by age 30.
3. The San Joaquin Valley region has the highest teen pregnancy rates (15-19 years of age) in California with Tulare, Kings, and Kern Counties consistently fluctuating between first, second, and third place.
4. Tulare County had the second-highest teen pregnancy rate in the State of California during 2013, with 64 births per 1,000 female population 15-19 years of age.
5. Tulare County's teen pregnancy rate has been steadily dropping with the rest of California over the last several years. Statewide, teen pregnancy rates have dropped approximately in half over the last 20 years.
6. The pregnancy rate for 18-19 year old teens (adults) in Tulare County is significantly higher than the state average. The rate for the 15-17 years age range (minors) is closer to the state average (see chart).

