

COLLIN COUNTY

**CRIMINAL JUSTICE
COMMUNITY PLAN**

FY2005

Chairperson:

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COLLIN COUNTY FY2005 CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMUNITY PLAN

INTRODUCTION

Collin County is an 886 square mile area with 848 square miles of land and 38 square miles consisting of water. According to the 2000 U.S. Census Bureau, there are 491,675 people, 181,970 households and 132,292 families living in the county. Located north of Dallas, it includes 31 incorporated communities. Collin County is one of the fastest growing counties not only in Texas but in the entire United States as well. While the population has nearly doubled in the last ten years, that number is expected to double yet again by 2015. Although Plano provided much of this growth over the last decade, Frisco, Allen and McKinney are expected to provide the greatest increase in the next few years.

While Plano is nearly built-out, it is still growing but at a slower rate than the other cities. Frisco is projected to be larger than Plano by 2015. Frisco's child population, especially those under the age of ten, has seen an increase far exceeding the general population's numbers. In fact, this growth area alone is ten times the growth of the population in general and this impact will be noticeable. Conversely, because of the current demographics of Plano, Collin County faces an aging populace and the accompanying needs thereof as well in the very near future.

The outlying, rural areas of Collin County are also experiencing dramatic change. This comes not only from the development of the surrounding cities but also from the emergence of large population pockets in the northern and eastern sections of the county. This evolution was unexpected only a few years ago. As in some Collin County cities, the immigration population is on the rise in the rural areas too. The county's current racial makeup is 81% White, 7% Asian, 4% Black or African-American, 4% from other races, less than 1% Native American, less than 1% Pacific Islander and 2% from two or more races. 10% of the population is Hispanic or Latino of any race.

As expected, along with this growth comes an increase in crime in the county. Statistics indicate the number of violent crimes in particular is growing but at a rate faster than population increases would dictate. Although some of this can be attributed to the increased number of inhabitants, other contributing factors include higher than usual unemployment and under-employment of those recently downsized out of or laid off from a job. Because many corporations both large and small are headquartered here, Collin County was very affected by the slump in the telecommunications industry as well as the poor economy in general.

JUVENILE JUSTICE AND DELINQUENCY PREVENTION

PREFACE

Being organized as a sub-committee for the Balance of Region Community Plan Initiative in April 2003, the Juvenile Justice Focus Group was established and set to the task of identifying priority issues for this service population. This plan has been prepared by a diverse group of community-minded individuals from government providers, Non-profit agencies, and citizens representing our community.

The committee was chaired by Christy Owen (Collin County Juvenile Probation Department) and Cathy Barker (Family Services of Plano). The initial meeting in April determined that the group would need to convene semi-monthly in order to meet our original July deadline for the development of priorities and the compilation of supportive data.

In May 2003, a general invitation was sent out into the community requesting participation from community members and agencies in an effort to provide a representative population of individuals to provide feedback on what issues needed to be addressed in working with juveniles. The general consensus was that the community needed to ensure that required resources, that have been proven to provide successful outcomes with juveniles, needed our immediate attention. Over a period of two months, and with good participation from all members, our group was able to identify and provide supportive data for two specific issues.

PROBLEM STATEMENTS

Crime Prevention and Intervention

As the population in Collin County continues to surge, so have reported crimes for juveniles, in general, but also crimes that are more severe and acted out at a younger age. From 2001 to 2003, our county has seen a 15.5% increase in the juvenile population and is projected to increase an additional 22.8% from 2003 to 2006. This gives a total increase of 38.3% growth in the juvenile population for Collin County from 2001 to 2006. With this growth, we have seen a 7% increase in juvenile crimes with the greatest increase in misdemeanors with a total of 47% and the second largest category being felony referrals which make up 24% of all of the juvenile referrals.

Based on the aforementioned statistics, it is imperative that the juvenile justice system expands the existing services to a continuum that includes the appropriate resources to meet the needs of Collin County youth. Partnerships with other systems of service delivery should be expanded in order to establish

the broadest base of services and to insure a synergy with already existing services within the community. In order for the juvenile justice system within Collin County to accommodate the requirements of a large, growing and diverse population of juveniles the following service priorities should be concurred to and funding resources established: prevention, intervention, and remedial and extended care. In order to reduce the number and frequency of referrals the primary goal should be prevention. Additionally, these services should address access to public transportation to programs, required parental involvement in intervention and treatment programs, as well as, services to our multi-cultural communities that address current language barriers.

Recommended prevention programs would include anger management, parenting classes, drug awareness, sex education and pregnancy prevention, suicide education, after-school programs, mentoring and tutoring programs. It is recommended that these programs be accessible to, not only, the major cities (Plano, McKinney, and Frisco), but to rural communities, as well.

Intervention services would consist of alcohol/drug assessments, mental health evaluations, risk/threat assessments, and offender programs for truancy, runaway, minor in possession of tobacco and alcohol and sex offenses. It is recommended that service directories for these programs be consolidated through improved technology.

Treatment services would include inpatient, outpatient, and residential mental health, substance abuse, and sex offender programs. Current programs require a dual-diagnosis in order to be qualified to attend. The goal should be to remove this barrier to treatment.

Juvenile Substance Abuse/ Mental Health

Substance abuse services for Collin County youth are limited or non-existent, particularly in rural areas. Substance abuse puts a huge strain on any county, but with the rapid growth of Collin County, we have an especially large burden. It is estimated that 37% of all youth that enter the Collin County Juvenile Probation Department have substance abuse and/or mental health issues.

Due to this large population of juveniles, our resources are overloaded with families seeking help in this area. The greatest need is in services for early intervention or prevention of substance abuse. This problem seems to be compounded for the youth with substance abuse issues in the rural parts of the county because of the fragmented or lack of services in their areas. The services that are available only reach a small percentage of the current population and are not as effective as possible. Services should be available to all clients regardless of location or income.

Juvenile probation departments for the State of Texas indicated in their Annual Resource Report that out of the 19,432 juveniles who were referred for mental health services in 2001, only 63% were able to access services. The Center for Mental Health Services within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reports that approximately 20% of youth ages 9 to 17 have some “diagnosable disorder” and 9-13% are afflicted with a “serious emotional disturbance, with substantial functional impairment (1999).

Data Sources

- US Census-Collin County 2001-2003
- Collin County Juvenile Probation Office Statistics (2002)
- State of Texas *Annual Resource Report* (2002)
- US Department of Health and Human Services (Center for Mental Health Services) (1999)
- Frisco Police Department (2002)
- Family Services of Plano (2001-2002)

Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Focus Group Participants

Chairs:

| | |
|--------------|-------------------------------|
| Christy Owen | Juvenile Probation Department |
| Cathy Barker | Family Services of Plano |

Participants:

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|------------------|--|
| Chris Sutton | Juvenile Probation Department |
| Joe Scott | Juvenile Probation Department |
| Brenda McDonald | Boys & Girls Club of Collin County |
| Rick Hooker | Plano Independent School District |
| John Lewis | Community Representative |
| Judith Deal | Community Chaplain |
| Tonia Gary | Frisco Police Department |
| Beth Johnson | C.I.T.Y. House |
| Kris Linenberger | C.I.T.Y. House |
| Sabina Stern | Collin County Substance Abuse Program |
| Tammy Mahan | Life Path Systems |
| Sandi Goldbach | Community Representative |
| Cyndi Wheless | Juvenile Referee |
| Linda Britton | Juvenile Referee |
| Mary Scanlon | Collin County District Attorney’s Office |
| Terry Groves | Plano Police Department |
| Vicki Magee | CASA |
| Meredith Shapiro | Volunteer Center of Collin County |
| John Ernst | Collin County Children’s Advocacy Center |

LAW ENFORCEMENT AND JUSTICE SYSTEM

PROBLEM STATEMENTS:

Interoperability / Communications

Radio communications between various law enforcement agencies, and other emergency service providers, are significantly hampered due to the lack of interoperability of the various communications systems utilized throughout the community. In the event of a major event (terrorism, natural disaster, or other emergency) the ability to have coordinated a multi-agency response would be almost impossible. Emergency response agencies in Collin County need additional resources and equipment to effectively communicate between various radio systems and between various agencies. The equipment needed may include, but is not limited to, multiple command vehicles strategically placed throughout the community, enhancements to existing radio systems, and enhancements to the equipment used by individual agencies within Collin County. Currently, the cities of Allen, Frisco, and Plano own and operate one radio system, while the City of McKinney and Collin County operate separate radio systems. In addition, other emergency services including rural fire / EMS departments operate on other radio systems. In total there are more than 1,000 mobile radios and 100 console radios that are utilized on more than 4 radio systems by public safety officials in Collin County. Additionally, public safety officials will need training in the use of the new equipment. Increased radio operability throughout the county will provide for a more timely, coordinated and safer response to emergency situations throughout the Collin County area. This enhanced response will save money, time and more importantly, the lives of emergency workers, public officials, and citizens.

Domestic Preparedness – Homeland Security / Emergency Response – First Responders

Emergency service providers, including law enforcement in Collin County, are tasked with providing a new and increased level of security throughout the community so as to prevent and/or deter acts of terrorism for which equipment and training has not been provided, or is very limited. Additionally, local law enforcement will be the first to respond to disasters that include acts of terrorism, biological/chemical exposures, or natural disasters (floods, tornadoes). Collin County is one of the fastest growing counties in the country and is home to high tech businesses, telecommunications companies, and major retail corporations. Additionally, there are several companies that serve as contractors for the United States Armed Forces, including Raytheon. It is a combination of these factors that makes the Collin County area a prime target for terrorism/bio-terrorism. The identification of potential targets allows law enforcement officials to “target harden” these sites, thus deterring acts of terrorism in and around Collin County.

Collin County officials will also be tasked with developing an evacuation/emergency shelter plan in the event of an emergency. The efficiencies of these plans will save time, have less confusion, and most importantly, save lives.

Additionally, many of these companies use highly toxic chemicals that can be hazardous to the community if improperly used or involved in an industrial accident. Collin County is also considered to be in "tornado alley." This area is prone to natural disasters that include, but are not limited to, tornadoes and floods. The addition of new equipment, training, and multi-jurisdictional cooperation will enhance the Collin County Homeland Security efforts and initial responses by emergency workers.

The issue of domestic preparedness (emergency response/first responders) is new to most public safety agencies and lacks presentable data. It is the consensus of the Law Enforcement Focus Group that this topic is significant and warrants addressing on a countywide basis by law enforcement/prosecuting officials.

Technology

Advances in technology are emerging daily, while the technology and computers used by law enforcement are out-dated and under-powered. Additionally, very few officers are trained in the use of computers and even fewer are trained in the proper technique for handling and investigating computer crimes.

The use of technology (computers) to commit crimes is increasing exponentially with billions of dollars stolen, thousands of identities assumed, and innocent women and children sexually exploited yearly via the internet and by other electronic means. The loss of financial means, identities, and the loss of innocence to a child are devastating to the victims, their families, and society as a whole.

Collin County law enforcement agencies need additional resources and qualified personnel to effectively investigate technology, computer, and child pornography offenses. Qualified personnel would include highly trained, high-technology investigators, first responders (line officers), and criminalistic (computer forensics) personnel. In addition, local law enforcement will need updated/enhanced computer capabilities that include, but are not limited to, desktop computers, laptop computers, MDCs (Mobile Data Computers), servers, updated software (investigative, word processing, internet tracking, crime analysis), and training/consulting fees. With the addition of newer, more powerful computers and up-to-date technology, law enforcement in Collin County will be able to pursue those that use technology to exploit others. Eventually, the creation of a computer forensics laboratory would be created and utilized by law enforcement officials in the Collin County area. The arrest of these types of

criminals will potentially save the residents and businesses of Collin County hundreds of thousands of dollars, hours of time reclaiming their identities/losses, and will make the internet and the communities a safe place for children and adults alike. Additionally, highly trained and specialized prosecutors will be needed in order to successfully prosecute these suspects.

Additionally, the use of technology/computers will assist officers in being more productive. The use of computers in the patrol cars assists law enforcement with the retrieval of important data that can save their life, or the life of a victim. MDCs also allow officers to take and complete reports in the field, reducing the time an officer is on a particular call and increases the amount of time that an officer has to prevent crime and to interact with the community they serve. Time and effort can also be saved with software and databases that are shared throughout the county. A centralized database, and the sharing of criminal intelligence regionally, will allow officers to research criminal activity throughout the county, instead of just their jurisdiction. Increased knowledge/data can provide the missing link to unsolved crime and result in the arrest of suspects who commit crimes in multiple cities. This technology is applicable to both adult and juvenile data/records.

While there are no exact numbers countywide on the number of computers, servers, MDCs, and software needed, it is known that countywide there are approximately 225 MDCs in service in the county and more than 500 desktop computers with a multitude of servers supporting them. The average computer age is more than two years old. Technological advances occur at as such a rapid pace that it cannot be calculated. Law enforcement officials throughout the county concur that it is paramount for law enforcement and prosecutors to stay on the leading edge of technology to deter and fight crime. As technological advances occur, law enforcement will have to continually update its technology.

The increases in computer crimes have prompted the Collin County District Attorney's Office to increase its Specialized Crimes Unit from one prosecutor to five in 2003. The DA's Office began its criminal prosecution in the Specialized Crime Unit in May 2003. At the unit's inception they had 34 pending investigations, 20 pending trials, and 9 new investigations. Many recent studies indicate that Internet crimes/identity theft is the fastest growing crime in America. In response to local victims of computer crimes, many law enforcement agencies in Collin County have increased the number of investigators assigned to investigating computer crimes. Countywide, conservative estimates show that law enforcement has investigated approximately 600 computer related crimes in 2000, 675 in 2001, and nearly 900 in 2002. Estimates indicate that in 2003 more than 1,200 reported cases of crime being committed by computer will occur.

Increased (rapid) Growth / Population

In 1970 Collin County had a population of 66,920 people. Thirty years later the population was estimated at 491,675, an increase of 735%. Collin County and many of the cities within the county have been ranked as one of the fastest growing in the nation. This rapid growth rate has created unique problems for the county and cities within the county to overcome, such as a dramatic increase in construction-related thefts and offenses.

Such rapid growth strains city/county services to the limit. Police and fire services struggle to keep up with the growth rate and the increased calls for service. Cities struggle to increase personnel rapidly enough to meet the increased demand for service. Increasing personnel means having to increase basic equipment needs such as the vehicle fleet, the equipment necessary to operate police cars, and the equipment needed for officers. Items such as radar units, computers, radios, sirens, protective cages, and phones are often neglected items needed for basic patrol cars. Equipment such as ballistic vests, bio/chemical protective clothing, weapons, and radios are in desperate demand by many agencies throughout Collin County. Many cities are forced to operate used equipment that is old, broken, and even dangerous. The average police car is estimated to cost between \$45,000 and \$60,000 dollars, and each officer and cost more than \$3,500 to equip. As the county continues to grow the cost of salaries for law enforcement officers will continue to increase, requiring Collin County law enforcement agencies to remain competitive with other agencies' salaries and benefits.

Additionally, as the county and cities within the county grow, traffic, crime, and the need for emergency services increase. As traffic flow increases, the number of incidents such as accidents, road rage/aggressive driving, driving while intoxicated, and other infractions of the law will increase. Officers must be equipped with the latest equipment in an effort to minimize these incidences. This equipment might include, but is not limited to: radar units, portable breath tests, intoxilizers, laser radar, accident reconstruction equipment, canines, canine equipment and speed trailers.

Personnel must be increased to address these issues and to enforce Texas law. When departments are properly equipped, have the appropriate number of officers to handle the calls for service and are proactive towards crime instead of reactive, the crime rate and accident rate decreases.

As the population continues to increase the amount of cases that law enforcement files with the district attorney has steadily increased. The personnel needed to address these crimes must increase to handle the caseload.

Criminal Cases Filed with the District Attorney

| Year | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| Misdemeanor | 5,327 | 5,749 | 5,619 | 6,037* |
| Felony | 2,306 | 2,709 | 2,894 | 3,462* |

*Projected

Narcotics

The use of illegal narcotics in the county continues to increase causing serious injury or death to users, increased hospitalizations, increased crime rates, and decreased family support. Law enforcement in Collin County lacks the proper resources to adequately address the issue of illegal narcotics, prevent their use, and to enforce state and federal laws. Collin County law enforcement agencies require additional resources, training, and qualified personnel to effectively prevent the manufacture and use of illegal drugs through awareness, education and enforcement of state and federal laws.

In addition to personnel, Collin County law enforcement need the use of up-to-date technology, including but not limited to: the use of body-worn microphones, digital cameras, digital recording devices, computers, laptop computers, software, video equipment, surveillance equipment, radios, canines, canine equipment, and telephones. These additional resources and qualified personnel will increase the effectiveness of a narcotics investigation and will help ensure a successful prosecution.

Investigations can include, but are not limited to: RAVE parties, methamphetamine labs (lab clean-up), street level distribution, reverse stings, and other offenses related to illegal narcotics. Additionally, qualified personnel and equipment will be needed to increase drug awareness through public education and through the media and increase prevention efforts, both in and out of school, in an attempt to limit the amount of people seeking illegal narcotics. The reduction in the use of narcotics in a community increases that community's standard of living and decreases the cost to society in the reduction of the number of people hospitalized, treated for addiction or dead, and the decrease in the number of property/violent crimes associated with drug use and the sale/manufacture of drugs.

According to the Collin County District Attorney's Office, law enforcement continues to increase the number of narcotics related cases filed for prosecution.

Narcotics Cases Filed For Prosecution

| Year | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|---------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Felony Cases | 611 | 793 | 739 | 994* |

*Projected

Domestic Violence / Child Abuse

Family violence and incidents of child abuse continue to increase throughout Collin County as the population continues to rapidly increase. Family violence and child abuse is not bound by race, gender, religion, or socio-economics. Law enforcement in Collin County lacks the proper resources, training, and personnel (including prosecutors and judges) to adequately investigate, pursue, and convict individuals that initiate domestic abuse or abuse of a child.

Studies have proven that domestic violence and child abuse is passed down from generation to generation, that is, an adult abused as a child will most likely abuse his/her child. This theory is also applicable to domestic violence. To break the cycle, law enforcement must have the personnel, training, and equipment necessary to investigate, pursue, arrest, and obtain convictions of individuals that initiate domestic violence or abuse children. The personnel can include, but is not limited to: child abuse investigators, general investigators, domestic violence investigators, patrol officers, emergency medical personnel, and members of the district attorney's office. Resource and equipment needs may include, but are not limited to: digital cameras/video, 35mm cameras, analog video, television, computers, laptops, software, accessory equipment, and tape recorders.

The addition of personnel, training, and equipment/resources will assist officers in responding to calls of domestic violence and child abuse. Additionally, it will assist the investigators assigned to pursue these cases and those individuals charged with obtaining a conviction against those individuals that are involved in domestic violence or abuse a child.

In 2002 law enforcement in Collin County filed more than 970 cases of Domestic Violence. Statistically this number only represents a small number of actual cases of domestic violence that are occurring in and around Collin County. These cases only represent misdemeanor cases that are filed, more violent crimes of domestic violence are generally filed as an Aggravated Assault charge which is a felony.

Training

The number of law enforcement officers in Collin County is rapidly growing. With the increase in the number of officers, the increase in the population, and the wide variety of crimes being committed, the training of officers must be constant, current, and readily available at a reasonable cost. The criminal element never stops learning how to better commit a crime. Advances in technology now allow criminals to research the internet from the comforts of home in search of new and improved ways to produce drugs, commit bank robberies, break in a house, or abduct/seduce a child.

Law Enforcement officers in Collin County not only must educate themselves on the constant changes in the laws, new procedures, and state-mandated training, but also they must also learn how criminals commit their crime. Many times officers will specialize in solving certain crimes such as forgery, property crimes, or crimes against people. However, officers also specialize in anti-terrorism/homeland security, computer forensics, identity theft, and sexual assault.

The cost of training an officer to investigate specialized crime can be astronomical and unreachable to many agencies that need specialized investigative personnel. The ability for several agencies to participate jointly in training events county-wide benefits both the agency and the officer. The agencies are able to share the cost of training between themselves and with the state. Officers are able to be better trained to be prepared to respond to and properly investigate a variety of criminal offenses and calls for service.

Additionally, officers that train together, such as tactical teams, are better equipped to handle multi-jurisdictional emergencies together. Additional training facilities are also needed in Collin County. Presently there is no adequate emergency vehicle operations course in the immediate area to be used by law enforcement, nor is there a firing range exclusively for use by officers at varying times of day. When officers are better prepared to conduct an investigation because they are properly trained, the probability that a suspect will be apprehended and successfully prosecuted increases. Another consideration to training is the reduction of liability that the officers, department, and citizens are subjected to. Training can limit the amount of liability officers are exposed to and the chance that the handling of an incident will result in some form of litigation because it was not properly handled.

Due to the numerous law enforcement and prosecuting personnel in Collin County the ability to accurately determine the amount of training, and associated costs, is impossible. However, it should be noted that all law enforcement and prosecutors are required by statute to attend continuing education classes. In recent year the number of law enforcement training hours required has increased dramatically, and so have the associated costs. It is the opinion of the Collin County Community Plan Committee that the issues regarding the amount and cost of training are important and thus need to be addressed.

School Violence

Littleton, Colorado; Paducah, Kentucky; Pearl, Mississippi; Jonesboro, Arkansas; and Stockton, California all brought forth the need for increased security in schools. All these locations represent cities that have fallen victim to suspects that commit violent and heinous crimes in schools.

Most incidences of school violence involve juvenile suspects that commit violent crimes against other students. The criminal act, or threat of an act, is enough to invoke fear in the hearts and minds of students, parents and administrators. A school should be a safe haven for children to come and learn in a peaceful environment free from murders, rapes, drugs, extortion, theft, assaults, and criminal mischief.

When law enforcement is active in schools through prevention programs, public awareness campaigns and the enforcement of state laws (family codes, education codes, and penal codes) crime is decreased and an environment conducive to learning is established.

Collin County lacks the personnel and resources to adequately staff all public schools, and lacks consistency in prevention programs throughout the various school districts and from city to city. All public schools should be staffed with officers that provide awareness, education, prevention and enforcement of Texas laws in an effort to establish an environment conducive to learning, but also maintain it.

Officers will need resources and materials related to the initiation and continuation of awareness, education and prevention programs. When adequate personnel and resources are dedicated to the children in Collin County the number of criminal offenses that occur in school, along with the associated fear, will decrease and a safe haven for children to learn will be created and maintained.

Estimated School Violence Statistics for Collin County

| Year | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Arrests | 150 | 180 | 180 | 200 |
| Offenses Cleared | 330 | 400 | 525 | 700 |
| Citation | 950 | 1120 | 900 | 1100 |

Environmental Crime

The illegal dumping of trash in Collin County is increasing due to the rapid growth and related construction activity in the area. The cost associated with cleaning illegal dump sites can be overwhelming. Illegal dumpsites can contain a variety of materials from simple paper to caustic and explosive chemicals. These chemicals, many known to be hazardous to our health, may leak in the ground or into the local water supply. Many of the chemicals involved require special clean-up efforts to ensure the safety of the workers and the citizens in the area.

Collin County lacks the personnel, training, and resources to effectively combat the act of illegal dumping. Additional personnel are needed to bring about

awareness in the community, to educate the public and to enforce/successfully prosecute existing illegal dumping laws.

Equipment and other resources such as video cameras, night vision, computers, laptops, and chemical suits are needed for the investigation, successful apprehension and prosecution of those individuals who illegally dump trash and other materials. Illegal dumping has other side effects that include a negative image for the local area affected and encourages others to continue dumping in the same area, thus compounding the issue. The enhanced personnel (law enforcement and prosecutors) and resources will assist in stopping those suspects that illegally dump and ensure that areas that are already contaminated are properly cleaned so as to provide for a safe environment for both people and animals alike.

Data relating to the issue of environmental crimes is difficult to gather. Collin County has vast areas of rural (unincorporated land) and large areas of highly populated cities. Additionally, no one jurisdiction is responsible for the investigation of environmental crimes. Furthermore, no two agencies record/report this information in a manner in which conclusive data/statistics can be determined. However, a correlation has been determined to exist in that there is more illegal dumping in areas where there is open land adjacent to rapidly growing cities. Therefore, it is the opinion of the focus group that Environmental Crimes is a serious issue for residents and law enforcement in Collin County.

Crime / Forensic Laboratory

Property crime, crimes against persons including violent crimes are increasing in frequency as Collin County continues its rapid population increase. The increase in the frequency that crimes are committed has put a strain on both local law enforcement and other organizations such as the Southwest Institute for Forensics Technology that is utilized to process evidence from major crime scenes. The increase in the number of major crimes has produced a significant back log of evidence to be processed. This evidence is crucial to both law enforcement and those individuals charged with prosecuting people suspected of committing violent crimes. The backlog, and associated delay, can result in cases that are not solved and suspects that avoid prosecution.

Collin County lacks the personnel, training, resources, and equipment to establish a Crime/Forensic Lab. The creation of a Collin County Forensics Lab will assist law enforcement throughout the region in processing evidence expediently and identifying suspects via methods such automatic fingerprint identification, thus assisting investigators and prosecutors with the apprehension and successful prosecution of the individuals that commit major, and often times violent crimes in the Collin County region. Initially, a location for such a lab would need to be acquired along with all necessary equipment that would need

to be utilized to efficiently and accurately collect, preserve, and process evidence.

Resources to dispose of hazardous materials and to clean up scenes would have to be implemented. Specially trained Criminalist (Forensics) personnel will need to be hired, along with the implementation of a policy and procedure manual for how the lab would operate. The lab would need to be able to analyze DNA, narcotics, firearms, and process evidence for latent prints, discover and analyze trace evidence from crime scenes, and other essential functions necessary in assisting law enforcement. The creation of a Collin County Forensics Lab would assist law enforcement in the processing of evidence crucial to investigating cases, apprehending criminals and successfully prosecuting criminals, due to the fact that the evidence was collected in a timely manner, processed correctly, and preserved accordingly.

Juvenile Crime

Criminal offenses committed by juveniles, a person less than 17 years of age, are increasing exponentially as the population in Collin County continues to increase rapidly. The majority of people establishing residency in Collin County are between the ages of 25 – 40 years old, and have children. As more and more children move into Collin County the number of crimes they commit increase. Additionally, gangs, once a big city problem, are expanding to less populated areas. Collin County offers juveniles and gangs a new opportunity to commit crimes because the area is new/under development. Currently there are several organized gangs in Collin County that are responsible for a multitude of criminal offenses. Juvenile crime in Collin County has become increasingly more severe. Juvenile crime used to be simple offenses such as criminal mischief and simple theft. Now juvenile crime includes homicide, robbery, aggravated assault, sexual assault, distribution, manufacture and possession of narcotics, and many other serious offenses.

Law Enforcement in Collin County lacks adequate personnel, training, equipment and resources to combat crimes committed by juvenile. Dedicated personnel need to be established to target young offenders and to prevent recidivism. Dedicated personnel may include, but are not limited to: patrol officers, juvenile investigators, probation officers, and other staff dedicated to the investigation, apprehension, successful prosecution, and intervention of young individuals that commit crimes. Equipment such as computers, laptops, servers, shared databases, software, cameras, tape recorders, and other equipment will be necessary to adequately address this issue. Training of all law enforcement officers in Collin County in the recognition of early warning signs, proper techniques for handling juveniles, investigative procedures and intervention techniques, along with other training related to juvenile crime will assist law enforcement in reducing the amount of crimes committed by young individuals.

The addition and implementation of training, equipment and personnel will reduce the number of crimes committed by juveniles in Collin County. The reduction of crimes will result in a higher quality of life in the community, a significant cost savings to tax payers, more productive young members of society, and will possibly save lives.

Collin County Juvenile Referrals (Formal)

| Year | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | 1,285 | 1,472 | 1,326 | 1,350 |

Air Support

The number of incidences in which a helicopter could be utilized to assist law enforcement in Collin County continues to increase as the population continues to increase rapidly. Law enforcement utilizes helicopter/fixed-wing aircraft for a variety of reasons that include, but are not limited to: missing children and adults, fleeing suspects (car and on foot), officer safety, burglary and robbery in progress calls, surveillance, and numerous other types of calls. However, Collin County lacks the personnel, training and resources needed to implement and maintain such a unit. Personnel certified in helicopter operations and as peace officers would need to be hired. Equipment including, but not limited to: a helicopter, night vision, radio, and spotlight would need to be procured, along with an appropriate yearly budget. The addition of a helicopter would assist law enforcement in apprehending fleeing suspects, locating missing children, with crimes in progress, and in preventing crimes. Additionally, the helicopter provides added officer safety at major calls because of the view from the air and use of specialized equipment such as FLIR.

While there is no formal data collected in Collin County in reference to providing Air Support for law enforcement and public safety, it is the opinion of the Collin County Community Plan Focus Group that this issue should be addressed.

Coordinated Prosecution

The Collin County Criminal District Attorney’s Office is solely responsible for the prosecution of rapidly increasing number of crimes committed in Collin County. The technology and computers used by the District Attorney’s Office are outdated and insufficient to process the paperwork and documents associated with these crimes. The District Attorney’s Office lacks desktop computers, laptop computers, color printers, scanners, servers, case management software and recording devices found in modern law enforcement agencies. This lack of technology causes unnecessary delays in the disposition of cases, case backlogs and increases in the jail population. It also prevents prosecutors from effectively presenting their cases in the courtroom, and protecting the rights of victims of crime. The technology and software used by District Attorney’s Office

to communicate with law enforcement agencies are out-dated and/or non-existence.

Law enforcement agencies in Collin County are growing rapidly, and incorporating modern computer and communications technology. It is critical that the District Attorney's Office be able to effectively communicate with these agencies in three major areas. First, the District Attorney's Office needs the capability to receive and file misdemeanor and felony case reports electronically. This would greatly reduce the time and expense in the initial filing process, as well as the transmission of supplemental reports. This would also result in a greater degree of uniformity in the reports received from the agencies. This would also help reduce the jail population, and give prosecutors a far better opportunity to investigate and dispose of their cases in a timely fashion. The District Attorney's Office lacks computers, servers and software to accomplish this goal.

Second, the District Attorney's Office needs the ability to receive, file and track juvenile cases. Presently, no capability exists. As a result, law enforcement agencies cannot effectively track a juvenile's criminal history and involvement with the criminal justice system. This allows offenders to escape proper punishment in some cases. The District Attorney's Office lacks computers, software and servers necessary to accomplish this goal.

Third, the District Attorney's Office needs the ability to electronically summon law enforcement officers to the court settings. This ability would result in fewer court settings, quicker disposition of cases and a reduction in the jail population, as well as a reduction in overtime payments by law enforcement agencies.

Finally, The District Attorney's Office lacks the technology, including hand-held personal devices, to effectively communicate with its own personnel. As crime increases, there is an increasing need for personnel to travel outside the office to contact witnesses, victims and law enforcement officers. It is critical that personnel be able to quickly transmit and share information in these instances.

While there is no formal data collected in Collin County in reference to Coordinated Prosecution, it is the opinion of the Collin County Community Plan Committee that this issue should be addressed.

Community Projects / Crime Prevention

A major objective of law enforcement in Collin County is to reduce the number of criminal offenses that occur in any given jurisdiction. Unfortunately, law enforcement in Collin County lacks the resources to provide adequate time, training, personnel, and equipment to reduce crime.

Many agencies have become “reactive” in the responses to crime and thus officers go from call to call with little or no time devoted to preventative activities. “Proactive” policing allows officers to team with the community, businesses, schools, and other organizations to reduce crime in our community. The reduction of crime can be achieved through, but is not limited to: educational/awareness programs, media (brochures, video, print), crime prevention surveys (residential/business), targeted enforcement (i.e. alcohol and tobacco enforcement), and additional crime prevention personnel.

Crime Prevention Programs may include, but are not limited to the following prevention programs: theft, burglary, robbery, narcotics, sexual assaults, stranger danger, guns/weapons, identity theft, workplace violence, under-age drinking, helmet safety, neighborhood watches, business watches, and safety cities. These programs will require equipment that includes, but is not limited to: computers, laptop computers, “in focus” machines (PowerPoint), software, books, brochures, bicycles, helmets, and posters. The addition of equipment, personnel, and training will assist law enforcement in its objective to reduce crime in Collin County. The reduction of crime has a direct impact on the quality of life of the citizens and a reduction in the cost to society relating to crime.

While there is no formal data collected in Collin County, mainly due to there being no set data collection procedures in many Collin County agencies in reference to Community Relations/Crime Prevention, it is the opinion of the Collin County Community Plan Committee that this issue should be addressed.

Law Enforcement and Justice System Focus Group Participants:

Chair:

Chuck Presley Collin County Sheriff’s Office

Focus Group Participant Agencies:

- Collin County District Attorney’s Office
- Collin County Sheriff’s Office
- Allen Police Department
- McKinney Police Department
- Plano Police Department
- Princeton Police Department
- Frisco Police Department
- Murphy Police Department
- Allen Citizens Police Academy Alumni

VICTIM SERVICES

PREFACE

Collin County is one of the fastest growing counties in Texas and the United States. While the county population has nearly doubled in the last ten years, from 250,000 to 500,000, the county is expected to double again by 2015. While Plano provided much of this growth over the last ten years, Frisco, Allen and McKinney are expected to provide the greatest increase over the next few years. The outlying areas — rural areas — are experiencing dramatic change not only from the growth of the cities, but from the emergence of large population pockets in the northern and eastern areas of the county, unexpected only a few years ago.

While Plano is nearly built-out, it is still growing, but at a slower rate than the other cities. Frisco, however, will grow to be larger than Plano by 2015 and has seen a four fold increase already. Frisco's child population, especially those under ten, have seen an increase far exceeding the general population numbers—*ten times* the growth of the general population. In the rural areas, and in some cities, the immigrant population is on the rise, leading not only to the need for Spanish speaking victim advocates, but a need for Asian, Russian, Indian and other translators and culturally competent victim service providers. Plano will also see an aging of the population requiring additional programs and service to the elderly — anti-victimization primarily.

Along with this growth comes increases in crime, some of it based solely upon the proportionate population increases as related by the Plano Police Department, but a lot of it due to other factors such as higher than expected unemployment rates, currently about 12% in McKinney, for example. Lay-offs of large and small corporations have placed once prosperous individuals into situation of poverty and under-employment, real stressful environments for families according to mental health services organizations. According to the police departments and sheriff's office, violent crime is on the increase, at rates faster than the population increases would dictate.

As progressive and wonderful a place as Collin County is in which to live, there are gaps in services such as a lack of public medical facilities, a lack of affordable services for victims of all stripes, an increase in the number of medically uninsured children and families, and an increase in government cutbacks leading to a search for other sources of support.

So, looking at the changes in the Collin County environment and the services for victims of crime, the focus group identified certain major areas of concern for the next three to five years, areas which must help crime victims.

PROBLEM STATEMENTS

Victim Advocacy

There continue to be quality programs for victim services in Collin County. Yet, the growth in population, increased victimization rates, and the decrease in state and federal funding of local agencies have sapped their limited resources. Trying to keep up, communities and social services are struggling to maintain core services and programs. These communities need encouragement and financial support. The rural areas have traditionally lacked affordable and accessible services, and with the advent of new populations, they will need an exponential increase, not just an arithmetic increase in services.

Sexual assault is underreported, child abuse victims are increasing, numbers of family violence police reports are rising, and mental health cutbacks are affecting those needing these services. Yet, these services are dropping because of the before-mentioned problems. In addition, crime rates and victimization rates will surely increase solely due to the population increase. For example, confirmed child abuse referrals increased 36% from May 2002 to May 2003, yet Child Protective Services (CPS) staff to handle these cases remained the same. This is true from other victim advocacy groups whose numbers are increasing but whose staff remain the same.

Understanding of the problem and provision of financial and people resources by the state, county and municipal governments will maintain existing services and programs while easing the burden advocacy groups face in growing to meet the expected numbers. Advocacy actually saves the county money by helping to break the cycle of victimization and by helping victims access scarce resources in a timely and efficient manner.

Affordable Services

There is a growing number of crime victims unable to access adequate affordable services. The rise in unemployment and under-employed, the increase in immigrant populations in rural and urban areas, and the existing indigent population have driven the need for affordable services to crime victims. The following services have been identified as critical needs for victims and could be accessed if provided at affordable rates:

- Legal services
- Transportation to services
- Counseling (child and adult)
- Outreach
- Education of Judiciary to victim needs
- Alternative residential programs
- Affordable day care

- Transitional housing
- Medical Care
- Mental Health Services
- Substance abuse assistance
- Suicide prevention and family support
- Crisis Intervention
- Sexual assault and family support
- Advocacy within civil and criminal judicial system
- Adequate numbers of foster families for Collin County Children
- Child Abuse medical facility such as the REACH Clinic in Dallas

Providing affordable services to these populations provides a safety net for all, in hopes of helping those who can help themselves return to a productive lifestyle as soon as possible.

Culturally Competent Programs and Translation Services

The county's culturally diverse population continues to diversify, requiring a growing need for culturally competent programs and language services. The traditional Spanish language services will need to be supplemented by the new cultural and language needs of Indians, Russians, Asians and other immigrants. Collin County has not always had such a diverse population base, so it lacks these services. Without these services, victims from these populations will languish in their victimization, alienated, and possibly striking out in ways that do not alleviate the problem.

Coordination of Crime Victim Agencies and Services

Outside of child abuse, there is insufficient coordination among public and private agencies dealing with crime victims although important steps have been taken through the Collin County Council on Family Violence to develop coordinated service protocols among community organizations. The Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner program has also increased cooperative work among medical, law enforcement, and social service providers to deliver services to victims. Often, however, lack of coordination leads to duplication of efforts, decreased efficiency, and the re-victimization of crime victims. Family violence issues, violent crime issues, victim's assistance, and other areas could be served more efficiently through increased coordination of efforts. Using a multi-disciplinary approach helps not only the victims with an efficient system, but it helps streamline other agencies, helping instill trust between the victims and the agencies, and helping bring perpetrators to justice.

Education and Community Awareness

The Collin County community remains unaware of the range of victim services offered, the continued increase in victim service needs, and that services are offered to any citizen who becomes a crime victim. This problem is compounded

by a lack of education on the true crime rates in Collin County. The county is positioned as a safe place to live, which in general it is. Crime has been lower in Collin County than most other counties in the state. The growth, however, has pushed crime rates at proportionately higher rates, especially in the larger cities and in the rural areas in the eastern and northern quadrants of the county.

Intervention and prevention education will help break the cycle of victimization. Greater availability of education will help to reduce suicides, substance abuse, date rape, family and child abuse, sexual assault, elderly abuse and exploitation and all other areas of victimization before it even takes place.

Specialized Education and Courts for the Judicial and Legal System

It is the opinion of a majority of the focus group that victims are not served well by the judicial and legal system in Collin County. These areas lack an adequate understanding of victim needs. They feel that victims in Collin County would be best served through greater education efforts by agencies that interact with the judicial and legal system. They add that specialized courts such as juvenile, family or family violence courts would more adequately address the needs of victims as the courts process the perpetrators.

AVAILABLE DATA SOURCES TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY CONCERNS, GAPS IN SERVICES AND NEEDS OF CRIME VICTIMS (compiled by the Victims Services Focus Group)

- United Way Community Needs Assessment, 2003
- Collin County Children's Advocacy Center, Case Tracking Data Base 1999 to 2003
- Texas Department of Protective & Regulatory Services Data Book, 1997 to 2002
- Texas Crime Analysis, 2001 supporting data report
- 2000 United States Census Demographic Database
- Texas Workforce Commission statistics through 2002
- Texas Council on Family Violence and the Journal of the American Medical Association
- Texas Department of Human Services
- Texas Department of Public Safety
- United States Department of Justice, Office of Victims of Crime
- *Plano Star Courier* and the *Dallas Morning News*
- Municipal statistics: Plano, McKinney, Frisco and Allen
- County Statistics: County Commissioners and the Sheriff's Office
- RAINET (Rape, Abused and Incest Network)
- Realtor statistics on foreclosures
- Hopes Door Annual Statistical Report
- TDPRS Annual Report: CPS and Adult Protective Services

VICTIM SERVICES FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS:

Chair:

John Ernst Collin County Children's Advocacy Center

Focus Group Participant Agencies:

Collin County Children's Advocacy Center
Neighborhood Youth and Family Counseling - Richardson Police Department
The Turning Point
Hope's Door
Sherman/McKinney Family Counseling
CASA of Collin County
Collin County Council on Family Violence
United Way of Metropolitan Dallas and Collin County
Volunteer Center of Collin County
Plano Police Department
Frisco police Department
Child Protective Services and Adult Protective Services—Collin County
Family Services of Plano