

# **PARKER COUNTY**

# **CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMUNITY PLAN**

## **FY2005**

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# **WEATHERFORD/PARKER COUNTY CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMUNITY PLAN**

*(July 31, 2003; Revised September 9, 2003*

*Revised, October 14, 2003*

## **Introduction**

The 2004-2005 Weatherford/Parker County Criminal Justice Plan has been prepared in response to the request of the Criminal Justice Division of the Governor's Office that communities come together to identify needs within the community and to develop plans to address those needs. The goal is to insure that local problems are addressed through a coordinated effort of resources and that the available resources are directed at priority problems. The plan has been developed through the collaborative efforts of a broad spectrum of government service providers, non-profit service providers, public and higher education staff, citizens within the community and crime victims.

The plan has been prepared under the leadership of Weatherford Independent School District with assistance from the Parker County Criminal District Attorney's Office, the Parker County Attorney's Office, Weatherford Police Department, Parker County Adult and Juvenile Probation Offices, and Parker County Sheriff's Office.

We anticipate that the planning process with the expertise and input of members of the planning groups will lead to the development of programs and resources to improve the system, provide optimal services, and improve the quality of life for the individuals receiving benefits from these resources.

## **2003-2005 Planning Process**

The planning process conducted during 2002-03 included the use of a Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Task Force with subcommittees, a homeless service provider coalition, and a CJD Community Planning Committee. Meetings were held from November, 2002 through August, 2003 with the various groups to create a comprehensive plan to meet the identified needs in the community.

## **Composition of the Planning Group**

Each of the subgroups is composed of diverse representation from education, health, mental health, drug and alcohol abuse, law enforcement, criminal justice, child welfare, victims' services, children's services, family services, courts, non-profit organizations,

government, business and community members, parents and students. A list of participants is attached.

### **Acknowledgment**

The members of the planning groups are gratefully thanked for their hard work and diligence in completing assigned tasks. Each member offered unique insight and expertise in the planning process, ensuring that the plan is representative of the problems Parker County is encountering and reflects critical needs that must be addressed.

### **Defining the Community**

Parker County is a 910 square mile area, located 26 miles west of Fort Worth on IH 20. It includes the communities of Aledo, Annetta, Weatherford, Springtown, Hudson Oaks, Willow Park, Reno, Brock, Peaster, Poolville, Garner, and Millsap. It has experienced tremendous growth from 33,888 in 1970 to 98,450 in 2003. According to United States Census data, the population of Parker County is growing at a rate of approximately 4% with some areas of the county at almost 8%. The population is experiencing growth in ethnic diversity and in the need for human services.

### **Problem Statements**

#### **Victim Services**

1. Domestic and family violence incidents continue to be a major concern throughout Parker County.

Resources have not been expanded to keep pace with the increased need for additional law enforcement officers, additional emergency housing and support services such as counseling, legal assistance, education and training, and transitional housing support. Resources are needed to provide additional law enforcement personnel to reduce response time for calls for domestic violence and to increase the service capacity for victims of abuse and violence as well as prevention and intervention programs for perpetrators.

Increasing resources would encourage more victims to seek assistance in leaving an abusive situation and would offer extended services to assist victims in becoming independent. Prevention and intervention for perpetrators would reduce the number of repeat offenders.

2. Cases of sexual assault and date rape are increasing, particularly with youth.

The lack of adequate resources to meet the service needs of victims of sexual assault, such as counseling, advocacy, etc., has resulted in a victim base that has limited access to essential support services. Lack of a comprehensive program for children who are victims of sexual assault and other types of abuse has resulted in limited access to support services for these victims of violence.

### **Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement**

1. The number of offenders in the area is increasing.

The lack of adequate resources for tracking sex offenders in the area continues to cause concern as there is no central tracking network that provides information on offenders who arrive from out-of-state and law enforcement staff is insufficient to verify the location of residence on a consistent basis. Additional law enforcement personnel are needed to give higher priority to documentation of the residential location of known sex-offenders.

More frequent documentation and reporting of offenders' locations will reduce the opportunity for unreported moves that allow offenders to reside in areas near schools and in neighborhoods with large concentrations of children.

2. An increasing rate of drug and alcohol related offenses include the manufacture of methamphetamines and distribution and use of marijuana, cocaine, ecstasy, and other drugs by adults.

Increasing numbers of adults have been critically injured or killed in drug and alcohol related accidents or they have caused others to be injured or killed because of their own drug impaired driving ability.

Resources and trained personnel to conduct prevention and intervention training, crisis counseling are needed to create a community culture that does not accept or support disregard for the law and behavior that is dangerous to the health and safety of our community. An effective, comprehensive drug prevention, intervention and enforcement program would result in a more healthy and safe community for all residents.

### **Juvenile Justice/Delinquency Prevention**

1. An increasing rate of drug and alcohol related offenses includes the manufacture of methamphetamines and distribution and use of marijuana, cocaine, ecstasy, and other drugs by youth and adults, as well as increased use by students on campus, particularly with misuse of prescription drugs.

Increasing numbers of our youth and young adults have been critically injured or killed in drug and alcohol related accidents or they have caused others to be injured or killed because of their own drug impaired driving ability.

Resources and trained personnel in the schools to conduct prevention and intervention training, crisis counseling, and parent involvement activities are needed to create a community culture that does not accept or support disregard for the law and behavior that is dangerous to the health and safety of our youth and the community. An effective, comprehensive drug prevention, intervention and enforcement program would result in a more healthy and safe community for all residents.

2. An Increase in youth crimes, anti-social behavior, and trancies has occurred throughout the county as the population has grown and changed to a much more diverse population in the area. Gangs have been established in the schools and increasing numbers of "wannabes" are being seen regularly.

Types of youth crime are becoming more aggressive with assaults, robbery, and theft, as well as vandalism which has created extensive damage to public and private property. There has also been an increase in the number of drug related offenses on secondary campuses, particularly in the distribution and use of prescription drugs.

Resources are needed to provide additional school resources officers in each county school district, behavioral alternative education programs based on prevention and intervention, family intervention and counseling programs, and required intervention programs for youth and parents in truancy and substance related offenses. A focus on intervention and counseling and support services for youth and their families will result in improved attendance and behavior through on-going student and family support to address the issues causing the inappropriate behavior rather than merely punishing the behavior.

3. The number of homeless youth and families is increasing at an alarming rate. The number of unaccompanied youth has risen dramatically in the last three years.

There is a lack of temporary/emergency shelter for both youth and adults and virtually no transitional shelter available in Parker County.

Resources are needed to establish a homeless shelter to meet the growing need for those who are in homeless situations as a result of economic and/or crisis situations in the family. Additional resources are needed to provide education and workforce training, life skills and financial management training, counseling and employment referral services and transportation. With the assistance available

through a shelter with continuum of care services, individuals and families would be able to move to an income assistance program or would be independent and self-supporting within twelve to eighteen months.

4. The number of teen pregnancies continues to increase with greater numbers occurring at 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade levels (ages 12-14). Services are available to assist students once they are pregnant, but only minimal prevention education is available.

Resources are needed to provide an extensive awareness and prevention program in all areas of the county. Education and training of young expectant mothers is needed to prepare them for the birth of their child and in child care and child development. Follow-up and continued support is needed to prevent a later pregnancy before a young mother completes her own education. Expected outcomes are a reduction in the number of teen pregnancies, improved health and safety of young mothers and their babies, and a reduction in the number of repeat pregnancies of teen mothers.

### **Ethnic and Cultural Diversity**

1. The increasing ethnic and cultural diversity of Parker County has created communication barriers and racial conflicts in both schools and communities.

Verbal and physical conflicts have produced a threatening environment for students and community residents who find themselves in areas susceptible to the conflicts.

Resources are needed to conduct awareness and training sessions on diversity and school and community activities to celebrate diversity. Greater understanding and awareness of culturally diverse groups would bring a higher level of tolerance and acceptance of others. With greater understanding comes improved communication and decreased conflict.

## **Participants in the Community Planning Process**

Alecia Durham	Weatherford Police Department
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Ben Whiteman	Director of Security, Weatherford ISD
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Carolyn Gildow	Ikard Elementary, Weatherford ISD
Catherine Tietjen	Freedom House
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Don Schnebly	District Attorney Office
Donna Allen	Homeless Program Coordinator (Project HOPE) WISD
Donna Schoonover	Weatherford ISD
Doug Jefferson	Weatherford College
Duane Johnson	NCTCOG
Gary Wood	North Side Baptist Church
Greg Lance	SRO, Weatherford ISD
Gwen Ward	Tison Junior High, Weatherford ISD
James Ward	Student, Hall Junior High
Jane Westbrook	Grants Administration, Weatherford ISD
Janice Byrd	MHMR
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Jennifer Holcomb	Weatherford ISD
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Margaret Jackson	Weatherford ISD
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Mark Riley	Parker County Judge
Mary Lou Curry	Freedom House
Melanie Blakely	WHS, Weatherford ISD
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