

INTRODUCTION

THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Today many criminal justice systems operate within constrained budgets and in response to new crime problems. Criminal justice systems also must appease public demand both for less crime and for punishment of offenders. Legal systems have new responsibilities in addressing the needs of victims, and the role of victims also has grown in case processing. Fortunately, we now have evidence from scientific research about effective methods to prevent and respond to crime. When criminal justice systems implement strategies such as specialized drug and truancy courts, informal mediation and diversion programs, valid risk assessment and offender classification instruments, and community-based supervision of offenders, crime control is more effective and less costly than previous strategies that relied primarily on incarceration. Efforts are underway to implement and expand many of these effective strategies in procedures and agencies in which criminal justice is delivered in Dallas County.

Technology is a major thrust in improving criminal justice in Dallas County too. Criminal justice systems in Dallas County currently benefit from technological advances, such as community supervision of offenders via global positioning satellites, and from community supervision strategies with even high-risk offenders. Community supervision enables Dallas County to make more efficient use of per offender expenditures than sole reliance on incarceration. The Dallas County Community Supervision and Corrections Department (CSCD) has both specialized caseloads and special programs. Community supervision includes the following specialized caseloads:

- Spanish speaking offenders (165 per officer)
- MIMR (156 per officer)
- Sex offenders (77 per officer)
- Electronic monitoring (243 per officer)
- SAFPF (aftercare of substance abuse felons, post-release from ID treatment) (87 per officer)
- Substance abuse (aftercare, post-release from Wilmer treatment facility) (193 per officer)

The department also runs the following special programs:

- Wilmer residential treatment facility for substance abuse (386 residents per officer)
- Restitution Center (211 inmates per officer) - eligible inmates are those convicted of felonies who are able to obtain and stay employed, but who are delinquent in their financial obligations to the court. There is a waiting list for this court-ordered program in which inmates receive education, employment skills, and life skills development.
- Day Reporting Center (74 per officer)
- Project Spotlight, an intensive surveillance of felony maximum offenders, both adults and juveniles, who live in one zip code area 75217 (12-20 cases per officer)

- Neighborhood Based Supervision - community supervision program for high-risk and high-need offenders in a very small geographic area (60 cases per officer). The objective of this program is a community approach to problem-solving. This is a new initiative by which CSCD intends to incorporate the principles of the restorative justice model and show success among offenders who typically are incarcerated.

The next developments in technology need to address infrastructure and collaboration across communication systems used by policing agencies, courts, probation, and treatment providers. Other objectives are to improve efficiency in criminal justice, which will involve specialized courts, professional expertise, and a case management approach to service delivery that will facilitate access to offenders, victims, and children, families, and at-risk populations regardless of geographic location, financial status, or language barriers.

Following are descriptions of the identified Justice System issues in Dallas County.

**Justice System Community Plan
Focus Group Participant List
FY 2005 Grant Cycle**

Chairpersons

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NOTE: This list was compiled using focus group sign-in sheets from meetings held in 2002-2003.

RE-ENTRY COURTS

PROBLEM

What is the problem for the community?

Dallas County has an innovative new program (a re-entry court) that has significantly reduced the recidivism rates of severely addicted offenders re-entering the community after completing the institutional phase of the Substance Abuse Felony Punishment (SAFP)¹ program. An evaluation of re-entry court showed the addition of re-entry court to the SAFP program resulted in an 83% reduction in recidivism for Dallas County SAFP program participants. However, current budget constraints are limiting the re-entry court team's ability to continue addressing the multiple needs presented by these severely addicted offenders. Over two-thirds of SAFP participants are repeat offenders with severe addiction problems and a history of repeated failure in treatment. Most SAFP clients are serving probation sentences for felony offenses (e.g., Property Crimes, Assault) that have devastating effects on communities. These crimes rob communities of a sense of security, decrease property values, increase insurance premiums (e.g., homeowners, health, and automobile), and increase the cost of security in neighborhoods. They can also place a considerable burden on community hospitals and police departments and the offender's families. Without the re-entry court program and no other viable options for severely addicted offenders, SAFP participants are likely to continue to have high recidivism and failure rates. Higher recidivism rates ultimately result in more victims in the community.

Why is this a problem for Dallas County?

Currently, the SAFP program is the best option available to Dallas County judges to manage severely addicted offenders. However, research² has shown high failure (40-70%) rates among SAFP clients in recent years, particularly in urban areas, such as Dallas County. The re-entry court program was created in 2001 to address these high failure rates and has shown great success in addressing this problem. Because of current budget constraints, re-entry court staff members can only commit a limited amount of time to the re-entry court program, restricting the number of people that can be served by the program. Without re-entry court, Dallas County is likely to continue to see high failure and recidivism rates among the 800+ clients who participate in the SAFP program each year.

What needs to be done to alleviate this problem?

Last year, approximately 60 SAFP clients participated in re-entry court. With additional staff, the court can increase this number to more than 100 people served each year. Research has consistently shown that specialized courts, like the re-entry court, provide more comprehensive and closer supervision of drug-addicted offenders than other forms of community supervision. This more comprehensive approach has been shown to significantly reduce recidivism and relapse rates of drug offenders.³

Impact for Dallas County

Providing financial support for the addition of a case manager and program coordinator will increase the percentage of SAFP returnees served by re-entry court from 20% to more than

40% each year. Because most of these offenders are repeat offenders, for every successful re-entry court participant, there is likely to be 2+ fewer victims in the community each year.

SUPPORTING STATISTICS

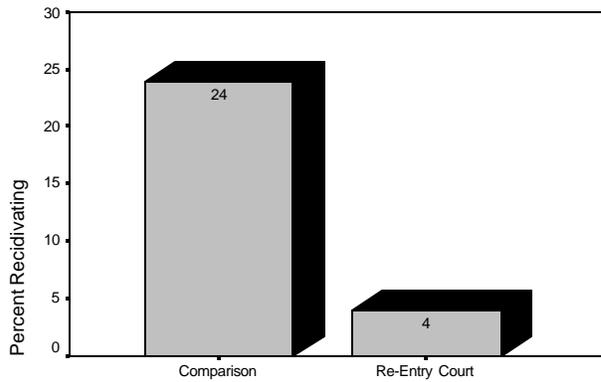
Over 800 offenders in Dallas County participate in some phase of the SAFF program each year. Approximately 250-300 offenders re-enter the community after completing the institutional phase of the SAFF program each year. However, research² has shown from 40-65% of these offenders fail to complete all phases of the program before re-offending. Two-thirds of these offenders were repeat offenders with severe addiction problems when they began the program. Research has consistently shown imprisonment does little to reduce the cycle of drug use and criminal behavior among severely addicted offenders. This is evident in the fact that the majority of severely addicted offenders in prison are repeat offenders.⁴ Dallas County's re-entry court program is one of very few programs nationwide to show promise in stopping the cycle of drug use and criminal behavior of severely addicted offenders. It is among one of the first courts in Texas to directly deal with the most severely addicted offenders.

Drug addiction is associated with higher unemployment rates, higher property crime rates, and higher incidence of family violence that is costly to communities. Criminal Justice Policy Council (CJPC) studies attribute the high failure rates of SAFF participants to gaps in the re-entry and aftercare portions of the program.² Consequently, CJPC was one of the first to recommend that communities, such as Dallas County, use drug courts to bridge this gap and decrease the failure and recidivism rates of SAFF clients. A recent evaluation of the Dallas County re-entry compared the recidivism rates of 50 re-entry court participants randomly selected from a pool of SAFF returnees to a comparable sample of 50 SAFF program participants (comparison group) selected from the same pool of SAFF returnees. Within the first year following re-entry into the community, 4% or 2 re-entry court participants' recidivated compared to 24% or 12 comparison group participants (see Figure 1). These results show the addition of re-entry court to the SAFF program resulted in an 83% reduction in recidivism for Dallas County SAFF program participants. The study showed that 50% of comparison group participants were re-incarcerated in prison (25%) or had absconded (25%) within a year of re-entry into the community (see Figure 2). However, only 9% of re-entry court participants were re-incarcerated (2%) or had absconded (7%) within one year of re-entry into the community (see Figure 3).

With funding to support the addition of a case manager and program coordinator to re-entry court, the re-entry court team will have more time to meet the multiple needs of these clients and will be able to serve twice as many SAFF clients each year. The community, in turn, will have fewer crime victims and increased security. Lower recidivism and failure rates also result in considerably lower costs to the criminal justice system.

DATA CHARTS

Recidivism Rates by Group 1-Year after Re-entry Into the Community

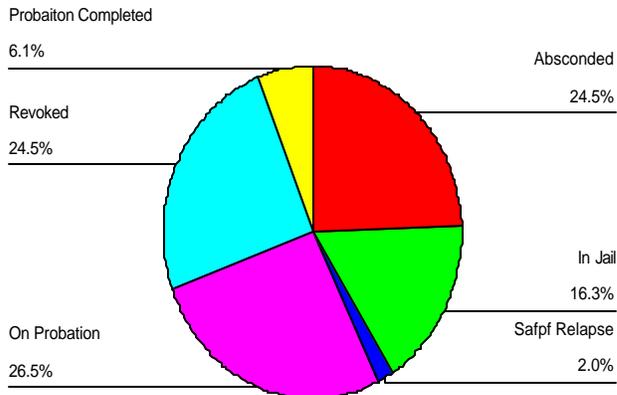


GROUP

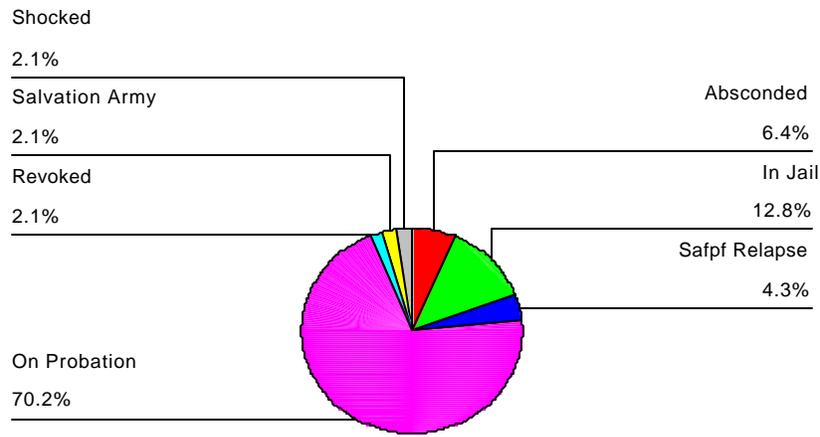
Recidivism = Percent of Participants Re-incarcerated in State Jail or Prison Within 1-Year after Re-entry into the Community

Source: Williams & Kowtun (2003)

Status of Comparison Group Within 1-Year after Re-entry into Community



Status of Re-entry Court Group Within 1-Year after Re-entry into Community



CURRENT SERVICE PROVIDERS

As of 2003, re-entry court has one (1) case manager, one (1) judge, one (1) special defense attorney, one (1) special prosecutor, and some assistance from community supervision administration. Judge Robert Francis started re-entry court in 2001.

GAP IN SERVICE DELIVERY

Currently, re-entry court is the only program designed to bridge the gap between the judicial system and treatment providers for SAFP participants. However, with its current capacity, the court is only able to serve 20% (about 50-60 people) of SAFP returnees each year. Because the program requires comprehensive services and close supervision to succeed, an additional case manager and program coordinator is needed to adequately serve more SAFP clients.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The addition of a case manager and program coordinator will allow re-entry court to serve twice as many SAFP clients each year. The estimated costs of these positions each year is expected to be \$50,000 per position.

EVALUATION AND OUTCOME MEASURES

Research has consistently shown that specialized courts, like the re-entry court, provide more comprehensive and closer supervision of drug-addicted offenders than other forms of community supervision. This more comprehensive approach has been shown to significantly reduce recidivism and relapse rates of drug offenders.

Outcome #1

Objective: Increase the number of SAFFP clients served each year, reduce recidivism and failure rates of re-entry court participants.

Measurement: Evaluation will include a comprehensive study conducted by Dallas County in conjunction with Southern Methodist University. Re-entry court participants will be randomly selected and compared to randomly selected SAFFP clients who do not receive the benefit of re-entry court.

REFERENCES

1. Substance Abuse Felony Punishment Program (SAFFP)
2. Criminal Justice Policy Council (February, 2001). The Substance Abuse Felony Punishment Program: Evaluation and Recommendations
3. Criminal Justice Policy Council (February, 2003). The Second Biennial Report on the Performance of Criminal Justice Rehabilitation Tier Programs
4. Williams, T.A. & Kowtun (2003) Re-entry Court: A Solution for Severely Addicted Offenders. Southern Methodist University and Dallas County CSCD
5. National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (May, 2001). Annual Report.
6. Belenko (1998). Behind Bars: Substance Abuse and America's Prison Population, National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University
7. Belenko, S. (1999). Research on Drug Courts: A Critical Review, 1999 update. National Drug Court Institute Review, II (2): 1-58

COURTS

PROBLEM

What is the problem for Dallas County?

Docket loads in the court systems have increased, and are straining the resources of the courts to their limits. As a result, cases are not being heard in a timely manner. This hurts the system because memories, evidence, and witnesses are all prone to be hurt by the degradation of time. And therefore, justice is not being served for the State, the Victim or the Defendant.

Why is this a problem for Dallas County?

This is threatening to be a hindrance to the proper administration of justice for each person in the justice system. The State, the Victim, and the Defendant have to wait a longer period of time before their case is heard. The backlog grows and cases are not processed in a speedy manner. If Child Abuse Court, Drug Court, and Protective Order Courts are abolished there will be immediate justice ramifications. For Child Abuse Courts there will be difficulty with memory loss in children for child abuse cases, as well as the increased stress in the victim's families. For Drug Court, there will be an increase in drug dealers selling on the streets of our community since failure to have a special court will place these cases on the regular court's docket and will result in significant delays before the case can be presented for disposition. Protective Order Court is the only court of its kind in Dallas as well as Texas. Without this court, all the protective order cases filed by the District Attorney's Office would have to be sent to the Family District Courts. A backlog could mean that we would not be able to set the Protective Order hearings within the statutory deadline of 20 days required by Section 84.002 of the Texas Family Code and it would get dismissed. Finally, for the fiscal year 2004-2005 the state has cut the budget for visiting judges to a pittance. Therefore, the courts will be further delayed by being unable to order visiting judges to cover absences or to handle other matters while the regular court is unable to.

What needs to be done to alleviate this problem?

Additional special courts are needed in Dallas County to help redistribute caseloads and in the meanwhile, visiting judges need to be available for specific types of cases.

Impact for Dallas County

Having these special courts protects children, protects victims of abuse to get protective orders and protects the community from drug dealing.

SUPPORTING STATISTICS

According to Dallas County District Attorney's records, prosecutors in Dallas County accept on average 20,399 new felony cases and 50,190 new misdemeanor cases per year for prosecution. For the courts, that averages to 1,360 new felony cases and 4,562 new misdemeanor cases in their respective court dockets. A court has at most 245 working days a year. A single felony court in Dallas County gets at least 1,360 new cases a year. That means each felony court must dispose of 113 cases per month, 28 per week, 5 per day, or almost one

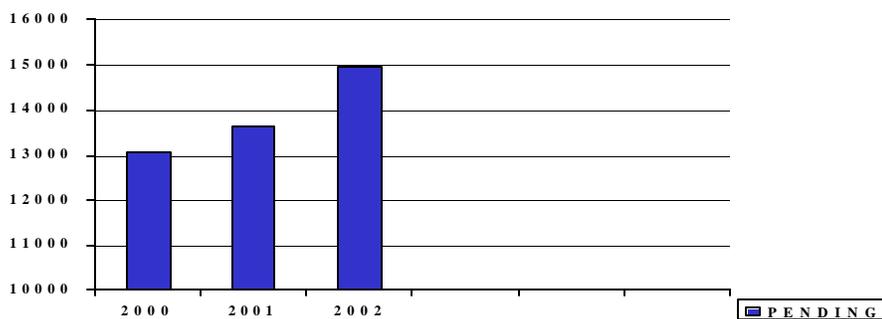
per hour to remain at a constant level. A misdemeanor court must dispose of 380 per month, 95 per week, 19 per day, or almost 3 per hour.

The cost per court is \$100,000 for each Drug Court, Child Abuse Court, and Protective Order Court. Dallas County currently has two Drug Courts, one Child Abuse Court, and one Protective Order Court. There is another judge that sits on the Child Abuse cases to keep the other Child Abuse Court from developing a severe backlog. The cost of that court is \$70,000. Protective Order only operates 4 days a week and therefore can operate at \$85,000.

The current dedicated Protective Order Court is able to set and dispose of approximately 16 Protective Order cases each day. The Family District Courts can set and dispose of no more than 6 cases each day. Section 84.002 of the Texas Family Code requires a Protective Order Hearing within 20 days.

DATA CHARTS

Pending Felony Cases



Source: Dallas County Management Report, Vol. II, Judicial System Workload and Efficiency Measures, 4-2002¹

CURRENT SERVICE PROVIDERS

There are no other agencies representing the Judicial Branch of the State of Texas for hearing cases in Dallas County, Texas.

Currently, there are specialty courts that hear cases from the regularly commissioned district courts to decrease backlog. The three areas of criminal cases that are being dealt with by these specialty courts are Child Abuse Court, Drug Court, and Protective Order Court.

GAPS IN SERVICE DELIVERY

Cases must be heard or disposed of at a very rapid rate. District Courts were able to have visiting judges sit for them in an additional court to hear certain types of cases and decrease the backlog. However, the funding for the visiting judges has been cut 70% by Dallas County

Commissioners. As a result, Child Abuse Court, Drug Court, and Protective Order Court will not be able to exist.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Additional special courts are needed in Dallas County to help redistribute caseloads.

EVALUATION AND OUTCOME MEASURES

Additional special courts are needed in Dallas County to help redistribute caseloads.

Outcome #1

Objective: To create at least one new misdemeanor court and one new felony court with general criminal jurisdiction in Dallas County, Texas.

Measurement: Success will be measured when courts come to fruition.

Outcome #2

Objective: To continue to fund specialized courts such as Child Abuse Court, Drug Court, and Protective Order Courts in Dallas County.

Measurement: Count the number of cases on the courts' dockets, calculate the load and then average the time spent per case.

REFERENCES

1. Dallas County Management Report, Vol. II, *Judicial System Workload and Efficiency Measures*, 4-2002
2. Dallas County Management Report, Vol. II, *Judicial System Workload and Efficiency Measures*, 1-2002.
3. Dallas County District Attorney's Office internal statistics/performance measures for the Office of Budget and Evaluation Report for 2002.

COURT TECHNOLOGY

PROBLEM

What is the problem for Dallas County?

Technology enhancements for computers and networks are needed to more efficiently handle increasing dockets with fewer staff. It is a strain on the justice system to handle the increased case loads being assigned to each court and the increased legal responsibilities imposed by law, which the clerks of the court, judges, prosecutors and defense counsel are required to execute.

Why is this a problem for Dallas County?

By delaying the parties' ability to have their case heard before the court, justice may be infringed or even denied to the defendant, the victim or even the State. The defendant may have to remain in custody until trial. The State may lose witnesses or evidence due to the delay in getting the case before the court.

What needs to be done to alleviate this problem?

To implement strategies to more efficiently move and coordinate the courts' dockets it is suggested that the courts technological infrastructure be upgraded to allow each clerk, coordinator, judge and support staff to have computers that allow for inter-office and intra-office coordination within the court and with other courts to speed coordination of docket activities and for the efficient presentation of evidence in the courtroom. This architecture should also allow for expansion to handle other duties such as digital notice for hearings and other court functions sent to attorneys and other courts and any other efficiency activity that would improve the courts distribution of equal justice.

Impact for Dallas County

This architecture should also allow for expansion to handle other duties such as digital notice for hearings and other court functions sent to attorneys and other courts and any other efficiency activity that would improve the courts distribution of equal justice. This will increase notice efficiency and decrease notice costs, improve trial efficiency and docket counts.

SUPPORTING STATISTICS

There are no statistics because no system exists currently. However, the following commentaries may be of assistance.

Center for Technology and Government, 2003:

"Many of our needs as a society demand that perspectives, information, and other resources be shared across organizational and jurisdictional boundaries. In some cases, agencies or levels of government need to integrate their work processes and information flows into complex joint operations. Increasingly, these organizational networks also involve private businesses or nonprofit organizations. Information technology is an essential part of these initiatives, but it

must be applied in the context of well understood political, organizational, and economic concerns.¹”

Making a Case for Local E-Government

“E-government may be uncharted territory for many in local government, but technology clearly holds potential for improving the operations and outreach of local government. Local and county governments are trying to realize this potential by finding the best way to implement technology.”

CURRENT SERVICE PROVIDERS

Dallas County does not provide this service generally. The Dallas Police Department in conjunction with the Dallas County District Attorney’s Office is in the process of implementing the electronic routing system for their officers. However, at the writing of this document, there has been no information available regarding this process.

GAPS IN SERVICE DELIVERY

Dallas County does not currently provide this service.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Computers would allow for inter-office and intra-office coordination within the court and with other courts to speed coordination of docket activities and for the efficient presentation of evidence in the courtroom.

EVALUATION AND MEASURES

Computers would allow for inter-office and intra-office coordination within the court and with other courts to speed coordination of docket activities and for the efficient presentation of evidence in the courtroom.

Outcome #1

Objective: To create a single model court that has the technological ability to teleconference, computer interface between the court reporter, attorneys, judge, clerks and the Internet, project documents, graphs, and evidence for the jury, and show videos/tapes for the jury.

Measurement: Success of endeavor would be proven upon implementation.

REFERENCES

1. Center for Technology and Government, 2003. Making a Case for Local E-Government, July 2002, Meghan E. Cook, Mark F. LaVigne, Christina M. Pagano, Sharon S. Dawes, and Theresa A. Pardo, “This report is based on real-life experiences of local e-government pioneers throughout New York State and details strategies, funding, barriers, and benefits of their e-government initiatives. It also provides insight and advice for colleagues who are just starting out.”

This resource serves as a communications tool to assist local and county governments trying to use technology to pursue e-government by providing case studies of successful

initiatives. By using this resource local government officials can now approach e-government with greater confidence and understanding.

2. National Institute of Justice, 1997-1998, Electronic Crime Needs Assessment for State and Local Law Enforcement.

PROSECUTORS

PROBLEM

What is the problem for Dallas County?

It is a strain on the state justice system to completely prepare cases due to increased caseloads per staff member. Prosecutors need to have sufficient time to establish all the information necessary to evaluate the victim's position. A prosecutor must also research issues likely to be raised by the defendant and then issue a recommendation to meet the highest standards for the equal administration of justice. Victims get minimal time with the prosecutors handling their cases and feel that they are not heard. Prosecutors do not feel that they are fully prepared to handle their cases in front of a jury or court.

Why is this a problem for Dallas County?

The lack of prosecutors creates a high volume of work and insufficient time to evaluate information from the victim, the defendant and the law enforcement agency in the prosecution of cases. This creates a higher possibility of mistakes occurring and justice not being served.

What needs to be done to alleviate this problem?

There needs to be an increase of 2% every year in the total number of prosecutors to redistribute caseloads and assist the courts in the equal administration of justice. "Floating" misdemeanor and felony prosecutors are needed to fill gaps in service when other misdemeanor or felony prosecutors are out due to illness, injury, vacation, leaves of absence or job slot vacancies. In addition, there is a need for hiring full-time misdemeanor prosecutors to increase the average time per case to 1.5 hours per case and full-time felony prosecutors to increase the average time per case to 10 hours per case.

Impact for Dallas County

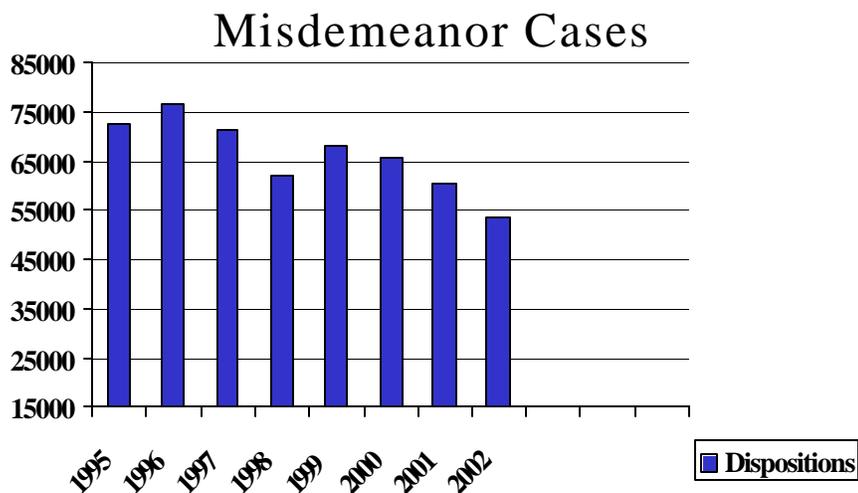
Prosecutors will have more time to review each case so that all aspects of the case can be dealt with before a plea or trial. There would be more time to work with each victim so that they can receive the amount of time that they deserve in knowing what is occurring with their cases. Each case would have time to be reviewed on the facts as well as the law so that fact finders have more information when making up their mind on what to do regarding a case. Cases would be handled with more speed so that cases do not stagnate. Prosecutors would have more time to work with the defense attorneys to make sure that both sides were heard before decisions were made.

SUPPORTING STATISTICS

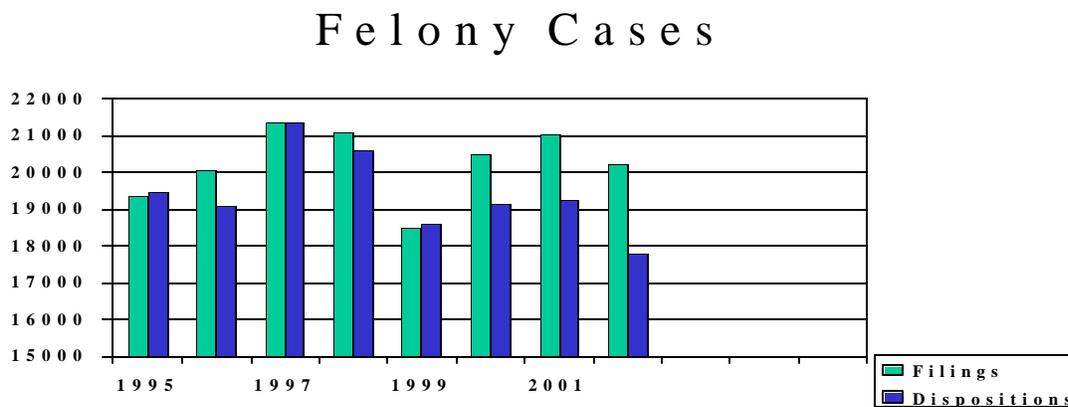
Currently in Dallas County, each misdemeanor prosecutor handles to completion, more than 1,800 Class A or B misdemeanors per year for a total of 50,190 cases. That averages to 150 cases per month, 36 per week, 7 per day, or one every hour for each misdemeanor prosecutor to maintain a constant level docket. Statistically, a misdemeanor prosecutor has only one hour on average, to review a case. However, courts must dispose of three cases per hour to maintain a level docket.

The following graphs clearly show the reduction in the number cases that are being disposed in Misdemeanor courts. This trend is creating a backlog of cases in the Misdemeanor courts.

DATA CHARTS



Source: Dallas County District Attorney's Office 2003¹



Source: Dallas County District Attorney's Office 2003¹

The graph above clearly indicates that the number of cases filed for prosecution exceeded the number of those cases that were disposed of in 6 out of 8 years. This means that there is an increasing backlog of cases in the felony courts.

Felony prosecutors handle on the average 20,399 cases per year. That averages to more than 240 cases per year, 19 cases per month, 5 cases per week or one case per day must be disposed of to maintain a constant level docket. Statistically, this gives the felony prosecutor, at

most, seven hours, on the average, to review a felony level offense. However, the court needs to dispose of one case per hour to maintain a constant level.

CURRENT SERVICE PROVIDERS

There are no other agencies representing the State for prosecuting cases in Dallas County, Texas.

GAPS IN SERVICE DELIVERY

Cases must be prepared and investigated at a very rapid rate. Currently, a misdemeanor prosecutor has only one hour on average, to review a case. However, courts must dispose of three cases per hour to maintain a level docket. Currently, a felony prosecutor has seven hours, on the average, to review a felony level offense. However, the court needs to dispose of one case per hour to maintain a constant level.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Decrease the number of cases a court needs to dispose of in order to maintain a constant level to capture an average amount time a prosecutor has to review a felony case. In addition Dallas County needs to increase the number of prosecutors by 2% every year.

EVALUATION AND OUTCOME MEASURES

Prosecutors will have more time to review each case so that all aspects of the case can be dealt with before a plea or trial. There would be more time to work with each victim so that they can receive the amount of time that they deserve in knowing what is occurring with their cases.

Outcome #1

Objective: Decrease the number of cases a court needs to dispose of in order to maintain a constant level to capture an average amount time a prosecutor has to review a felony case.

Measurement: Monitor the number of prosecutors to the assigned docket load to calculate average time spent per case.

REFERENCES

1. Dallas County District Attorney's Office internal statistics/performance measures for the Office of Budget and Evaluation Report for 2002.
2. Dallas County Management Report, Vol. II, *Judicial System Workload and Efficiency Measures*, 1-2002.
3. Dallas County Management Report, Vol. II, *Judicial System Workload and Efficiency Measures*, 4-2002.

TECHNOLOGY

PROBLEM

What is the problem for Dallas County?

There is a need for technology enhancements within the Justice System: basic computers, Internet access, and inter- and intra-agency links. There is great amount of effort and time put into accessing information from agencies within the justice system that is available on each individual system but is not available throughout the county. The use of limited resources for information slows down the justice system for every agency involved within the criminal justice system.

This technology would allow for case tracking, storage, retrieval, broader agency communication and presentation of evidence to the court or jury. The technology helps to avoid duplication of resources and facilitates the coordination and use of limited resources for the investigation and processing of criminal cases.

Why is this a problem for Dallas County?

The government sector is traditionally lagging in technology enhancements. This problem occurs due to lack of funding and infrastructure as well as the speed of advancements made by technology. It is a problem that the justice system's agencies (court offices, officers, probation personnel and state's attorneys) need to solve in order to increase communications, properly present evidence to the courts and to improve efficiencies to offset the problems of understaffing and case overload conditions.

What needs to be done to alleviate this problem?

The court offices, police departments, probation personnel, and state's attorneys need to be linked via technology to expedite the judicial process, present evidence and to disseminate public information via the Internet.

Impact for Dallas County

This will improve the quantity and quality of the administration of equal justice to all persons in the justice system by speeding up the process. Efficiency will increase and understaffing will be less of a problem if technology is available to aid all agencies in their work. More cases can be handled in a shorter period of time if the agencies are interconnected for better communications and higher efficiency.

SUPPORTING STATISTICS

"Many of our needs as a society demand that perspectives, information, and other resources be shared across organizational and jurisdictional boundaries. In some cases, agencies or levels of government need to integrate their work processes and information flows into complex joint operations. Increasingly, these organizational networks also involve private businesses or nonprofit organizations. Information technology is an essential part of these initiatives, but it

must be applied in the context of well-understood political, organizational, and economic concerns.”¹

Making a Case for Local E-Government

“E-government may be uncharted territory for many in local government, but technology clearly holds potential for improving the operations and outreach of local government. Local and county governments are trying to realize this potential by finding the best way to implement technology.”¹

CURRENT SERVICE PROVIDERS

Dallas County does not provide this service currently.

GAPS IN SERVICE DELIVERY

Dallas County does not provide this service currently.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

To provide technological communications between all agencies within the justice system, provide maintenance of the network and provide public information via the Internet that can be accessed by the public for instance court dates and times.

EVALUATION AND OUTCOME MEASURES

This technology would allow for case tracking, storage, retrieval, broader agency communication and presentation of evidence to the court or jury. The technology helps to avoid duplication of resources and facilitates the coordination and use of limited resources for the investigation and processing of criminal cases.

Outcome #1

Objective: All agencies within the justice system can communicate or retrieve information via technology.

Measurement: Survey the partnering departments regarding their satisfaction with the technology update.

Outcome #2

Objective: The public can access crucial public information regarding their cases from the Internet.

Measurement: Survey the public regarding their opinion of the Internet case information upgrades.

REFERENCES

1. Center for Technology and Government, (2003), Making a Case for Local E-Government, July 2002, Meghan E. Cook, Mark F. LaVigne, Christina M. Pagano, Sharon S. Dawes, and Theresa A. Pardo, “This report is based on real-life experiences

of local e-government pioneers throughout New York State and details strategies, funding, barriers, and benefits of their e-government initiatives. It also provides insight and advice for colleagues who are just starting out. This resource serves as a communications tool to assist local and county governments trying to use technology to pursue e-government by providing case studies of successful initiatives. By using this resource local government officials can now approach e-government with greater confidence and understanding. “

2. National Institute of Justice 1997-1998, Electronic Crime Needs Assessment for State and Local Law Enforcement.

INVESTIGATORS

PROBLEM

What is the problem for Dallas County?

There are an insufficient number of investigators to assist the attorneys in the post-indictment investigative work necessary to meet the highest standards for the equal administration of justice. Witnesses cannot be found in time by the investigators to meet the demands of the court schedule so cases fall between the cracks. Victims do not get interviewed in a timely manner. Facts may not get fleshed out in the manner that is deserved to administer justice.

Why is this a problem for Dallas County?

This involves the rights of the victim, defendant, witness and the State's ability to investigate issues, to interview parties of the litigation and have the complete facts investigated and brought before the court and that need to be addressed during the preparation and prosecution of each defendant's case. A misdemeanor investigator has to handle 3 cases every hour. A felony investigator only has 2 hours and 15 minutes to work on each felony case.

What needs to be done to alleviate this problem?

An increase in the number of staff investigators to assist in case development or post indictment handling of criminal cases would be beneficial. This involves the victim, defendant and witness issues that need to be addressed during the preparation and prosecution of each defendant's case.

Impact for Dallas County

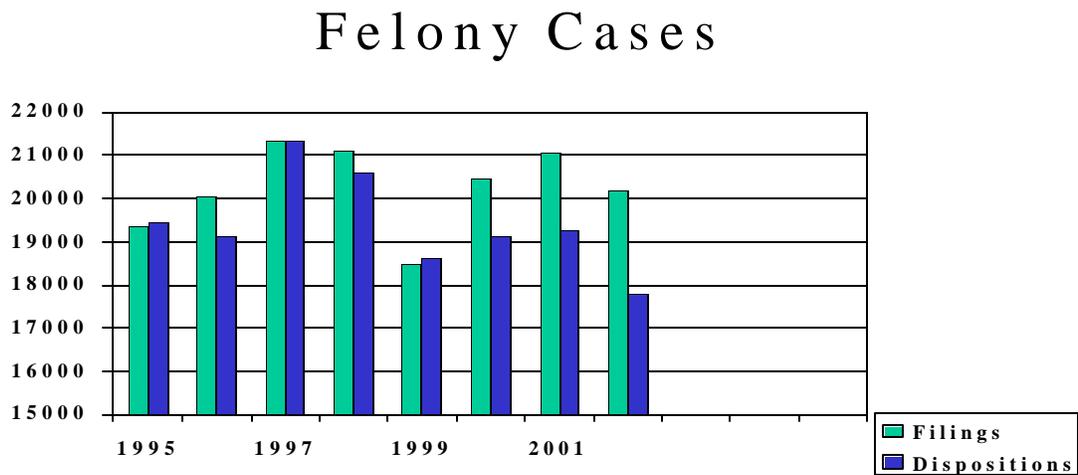
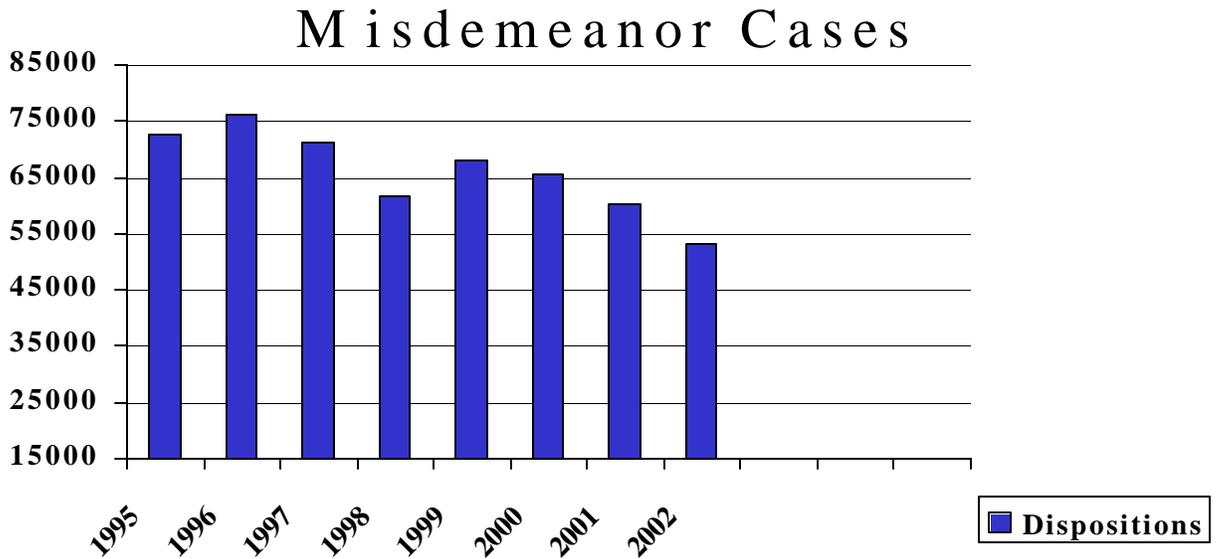
To increase the time spent on each case so it may be properly investigated or prepared for trial or plea. There is additional time for investigators to find necessary witnesses for the success of each case. There would also be time for the follow up on questions or defenses that the defendant may have.

SUPPORTING STATISTICS

Currently, in Dallas County, each misdemeanor investigator handles to completion more than 5,300 Class A or B misdemeanors per year. That averages to 108 cases per week, 21 per day, or 3 every hour.

Felony investigators handle or assist with 20,300 cases. That averages to 563 cases per investigator or 46 cases per month, 11 cases per week, or 3 cases per day. This gives the investigator on average, 2 hours and 15 minutes to work on a felony case.

DATA CHARTS



The graph above clearly indicates that the number of cases filed for prosecution exceeded the number of those cases that were disposed of in 6 out of 8 years. This means that there is an increasing backlog of cases in the felony courts.

Source: Dallas County District Attorney's Office 2003¹

CURRENT SERVICE PROVIDERS

There are no other agencies representing the State for prosecuting cases in Dallas County, Texas.

GAPS IN SERVICE DELIVERY

Cases must be prepared and investigated at a very rapid rate. With only two hours to review the facts and prepare the cases for trial it is unlikely the investigator will have sufficient time to pursue all leads and fully develop the evidence for the State, the victim or to investigate mitigating and exculpatory facts affecting the defendant.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Dallas County needs to increase the number of staff investigators to assist in case development or post indictment handling of criminal cases would be beneficial. This involves the victim, defendant and witness issues that need to be addressed during the preparation and prosecution of each defendant's case.

EVALUATION AND OUTCOME MEASURES

Dallas County needs to increase the number of staff investigators to assist in case development or post indictment handling of criminal cases would be beneficial. This involves the victim, defendant and witness issues that need to be addressed during the preparation and prosecution of each defendant's case.

Outcome #1

Objective: To provide for hiring floating misdemeanor investigators to fill gaps in service when other misdemeanor prosecutors are out due to illness, injury, vacation, leaves of absence or job slot vacancies.

Measurement: By measuring the number of investigators to the assigned docket load to calculate average time spent per case.

Objective #2

Objective: To provide for hiring floating felony investigators to fill gaps in service when other felony prosecutors are out due to illness, injury, vacation, leaves of absence or job slot vacancies.

Measurement: By measuring the number of investigators to the assigned docket load to calculate average time spent per case.

Outcome #3

Objective: To provide for hiring full-time misdemeanor investigators to increase the average time per case to 1.5 hours per case.

Measurement: Monitor the increase in full-time investigator's average time spent per case.

Outcome #4

Objective: To provide for hiring full-time felony investigators to increase the average time per case to 10 hours per case.

Measurement: By measuring the number of investigators to the assigned docket load to calculate average time spent per case.

REFERENCES

1. Dallas County District Attorney's Office internal statistics/performance measures for the Office of Budget and Evaluation Report for 2002.
2. Dallas County Management Report, Vol. II, *Judicial System Workload and Efficiency Measures*, January 2002.
3. Dallas County Management Report, Vol. II, *Judicial System Workload and Efficiency Measures*, April 2002.