

NAVARRO COUNTY

CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMUNITY PLAN

FY2005

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Introduction

The 2005 Criminal Justice Plan for Navarro County has been prepared in response to the Criminal Justice Division's requirement for communities coming together to identify needs, as well as problems in their communities, and develop a plan to address those needs. This convergence of community organizations and departments is to share information, identify resources, and attempt to solve major problems that face them as a whole. The goal is to ensure that local problems are addressed through a coordinated effort of resources and that the available resources are directed at priority problems. This plan has been developed by a broad spectrum of government service providers, non-profit service providers, and citizens within the Navarro County community.

The core group of members met over the course of three months and discussed the ideal situation, the problems, barriers, goals and objectives, available resources, and strategies to meet the community needs and fill in the gaps and services. We anticipate that the planning process and the expertise and input of the members of the planning groups will lead to the development of programs and resources that will improve the system, provide optimal services, and improve the quality of life for the individuals receiving benefits from these resources.

The Community Planning Group was co-chaired by Connie Mayfield, Justice of the Peace, and Melanie Hyder, Chief Juvenile Probation Officer in Navarro County. Other members were Dan Williams, Navarro College Police Academy, Lowell Thompson, City of Corsicana Municipal Judge, Kristen Maupin, Child Advocates of Navarro County, and Cindy Griggs, Navarro County Health Department. Information compiled represents a broad area of governmental agencies with notable input from non-profit service providers.

Planning Process

This year the Navarro County planning group announced the initial Community Plan meeting in order to attract a variety of community representatives. Three focus groups were formed at the first meeting: Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement, Victim Services, and Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention including teen pregnancy.

The chair and co-chairs each directed a focus group. Each focus group identified needs, developed a list of problem statements, compiled data to verify the problems, identified resources available in the community, and recommended the types of programs and services that should be provided in the community. The number of times a focus group met varied with some communication occurring via e-mail.

JUVENILE JUSTICE AND DELINQUENCY PREVENTION FOCUS GROUP

Navarro County has identified several problem areas that reflect population with regard to Juvenile Justice issues. Juvenile Crime/Referrals involve more than just the child and the child's family, but also the community. The Juvenile Justice System and all that work alongside it must actively seek to reach at-risk children and provide services for this group along with children already in the system at one phase or another.

Navarro County in the past two years has experienced an increase in juvenile population from 4,000 in 2002 to 4,200 in 2003. This has definitely impacted referrals to the local Juvenile Justice agencies, including local law enforcement. Navarro County has experienced a 5% increase in youth within the age range of juvenile jurisdiction of the juvenile court system. A trend that is being seen is that families from the Ellis-Dallas county area are moving to the outskirts in a more rural setting. These youth moving into the area seem to have a more extensive delinquent sophistication and exposure to gang involvement.

With these increases in juvenile age population comes additional referrals to the Juvenile Justice System which includes local law enforcement agencies, local prosecution offices, juvenile services, and the courts, including Justice of the Peace Courts, Municipal Courts, Juvenile and District Courts. Recent trends indicate that total delinquent referrals (felony and misdemeanors A & B) have decreased from 236 in 2001 to 167 in 2002. However, even with decreases the statistics show that drug-related offenses have increased by 12% from 2001 to 2002 and Municipal/JP Courts transfer cases have increased by 25% from 2001 to 2002. Therefore, even though overall referrals from the above stated time period have decreased, Municipal/JP Court referrals and drug-related offenses have steadily increased.

Juvenile offenders typically have problems within their families and schools. In Navarro County (information provided by U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000) children that live in single parent families is 7.1%. Children that are at or below the poverty level are 13.9% in Navarro County. Further, Navarro County Justice of the Peace Courts indicate that they process 307 cases for failure to attend school each year. Our Municipal Courts process 494 cases a year which are referred for disorderly conduct, tobacco offenses, and assaults. Children that receive special education services in Navarro County are 15.6%. Children that have dropped out of school in Navarro County is 0.6%. Although these elements are not sure indicators of future delinquency, they all present factors that must be considered.

Problems identified are representative of the increasing juvenile population in community, schools, and family structures. Problems include but are not limited to:

- Lack of appropriate accountability for offenders at all levels of the system;
- Lack of consequences for offenders at all levels of the system;
- Lack of adequate supervision from the parents;
- Lack of adequate supervision for children with a court disposition;
- Lack of coordination of efforts between agencies and organizations to serve at-risk youth;
- Lack of programs for at risk youth;
- Lack of faith based programs;
- Lack of programs specific to the needs of parents, children, and officials; and
- Lack of quality training for law enforcement officials.

Programs to address these issues are a must for the positive well-being of our youth and our communities. Programs to address these issues include:

- Parenting program for parents and a skills/education program for the adolescents;
- Truancy program to address the failures to attend school, cases referred and to look at a community service officer to manage community service hours ordered by the court. This individual could case manage the truancy cases and sanctions through the Justice Courts;
- Quality training and education to be developed for law enforcement officials to be better informed concerning juvenile process;
- To establish a substance abuse drug/alcohol education program to address adolescents that are abusing substances as well as youth being referred for drug-related offenses.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT FOCUS GROUP

The law enforcement community of Navarro County is comprised of five municipal police departments, one sheriff's office, four constable's offices, one prosecuting attorney's office, and one highway patrol office. These agencies provide a wide range of services to the public and deal with a variety of issues including but not limited to the following: child abuse, domestic violence, crimes against persons, property crimes, juvenile crime, substance abuse, mental health/mental retardation, victims of crime, sex offenders, incarceration of adult offenders and response to disasters and acts of terrorism. All law enforcement agencies within Navarro County work very well with one another. However, they could all become more effective if all the agencies were connected through the advanced forms of technology that are available.

Domestic Violence / Child Abuse

Family violence and incidents of child abuse continue to increase throughout Navarro County as the population increases. Family violence and child abuse is not bound by race, gender, religion, or socio-economics. Law enforcement in Navarro 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 passed down from generation to generation, in that 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 needed may include, but is not limited to: digital cameras/video, 35 mm 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. From October 1, 2002 through July 25, 2003, there were 62 cases of child abuse that the Navarro County Children's Advocacy Center handled. According to the Texas Department of Public Safety Family Violence statistics for 2002, Navarro County recorded 365 family violence incidents.

Training

The number of law enforcement officers in Navarro County has increased by 15% since 1999 according to the Texas Department of Public Safety figures. 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. Population increased from 39,926 (1990 Census) to 45,124 (2000 Census). This represents a 13% increase.

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 better ways to produce drugs, commit bank robberies, break in a house, or abduct/seduce a child. Law Enforcement officers in Navarro County must also educate themselves not only on the constant changes in the laws, new procedures, and state mandated training, but 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 jointly participate in training events countywide 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 better trained, and 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 Navarro County. Presently there is not an adequate emergency vehicle operations course in the immediate area to be used by law enforcement. 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.

Narcotics

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

personnel to effectively prevent the manufacturing and use of illegal drugs through awareness, education and enforcement of state and federal laws. In addition to personnel, Navarro 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 (methamphetamine 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 crime associated with drug use and the selling/manufacturing of drugs. The Navarro County Sheriff Department reported 98 narcotic cases filed in 2001 (NCSO Report). Corsicana Police Department reported 124 narcotic cases filed from January 1, 2002 to September 30, 2002 (Corsicana PD - UCR).

Interoperability / Communications

Radio communications between various law enforcement agencies, and other emergency service providers, are significantly hampered due to the inoperability 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 difficult. Emergency response agencies in Navarro 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 Navarro 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 Navarro County area. This enhanced response will save money, time and more importantly, the lives of emergency workers, public officials, and citizens.

The Navarro County Sheriff's Department radio system was originally installed in 1972. However, there have been numerous upgrades of the system throughout

the years. The most recent upgrades occurred about five years ago. All law enforcement agencies in the county are able to communicate with one another, the main problem exists when one of these agencies needs to communicate with adjacent counties or state agencies. The Corsicana Police Department has two radio consoles. One is about three years old and the other is about 15 years old. They are unable to communicate with agencies outside of Navarro County or with state law enforcement agencies.

Domestic Preparedness - Homeland Security

Emergency service providers, including law enforcement in Navarro County, are tasked with providing a new and increased level of security throughout the community so as to prevent and/or deter any act of terrorism for which equipment and training has not been provided, or is very limited. The addition of new equipment, training, and multi-jurisdictional cooperation will enhance the Navarro County Homeland Security efforts. The identification of potential targets allows law enforcement officials to “target harden” these sites, thus deterring acts of terrorism in and around Navarro County. Navarro 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.

The Navarro County Office of Emergency Management, in conjunction with several other lead agencies in the county, have been proactively working to establish and direct a comprehensive emergency management program that covers all areas of preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation to a multitude of different emergencies and disasters. The Office of Emergency Management also is the lead agency in the county for the direction of Homeland Security efforts. Officials involved with emergency management and domestic preparedness are qualified and are actively training and exercising these skills.

The Navarro County Emergency Management Coordinator is currently a Texas Certified Emergency Manager and holds a PDS certification through FEMA. He serves as an active member on several associations involving emergency management, has over 700 hours of related training, chairman of the Navarro county LEPC, and enrolled in the MPA/EM program at Jacksonville State University. Since January of 2000, the Office of Emergency Management has successfully implemented a State of Texas approved Emergency Operations Plan that meets all standards and is considered at the advanced level of preparedness. This plan covers all incorporated jurisdictions as well as all unincorporated areas throughout Navarro County. In 2001, an all hazards analysis was completed to identify hazards present throughout the county, including detailed commodity flow studies. We are currently in the process of updating the hazard analysis, and completed a capability assessment for all agencies throughout the county. Navarro County Office of Emergency Management/Homeland Security Agency will continue to be a proactive

participant in all programs related to emergency management and domestic preparedness, and strive to assist others in times of need.

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. The loss of financial means, identities, and innocence to a child are devastating to the victims, their families, and society as a whole. Navarro 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 desk top computers, lap top computers, MDCs (Mobile Data Computers), servers, updated software (investigative, word processing, internet tracking), and training/consulting fees. With the addition of newer, more powerful computers and up-to-date technology, law enforcement in Navarro County will be able to pursue those that use technology to exploit others.

The arrest of these types of criminals will potentially save the residents and businesses of Navarro 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. 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. The ability to take and complete reports in the field can lessen 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. Corsicana Police Department is the only agency in the county that has MDC's in the vehicles. They currently have 33 units. No other law enforcement agency in the county has access to MDC's. 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

Juvenile Crime

Criminal offenses committed by juveniles, a person less than 17 years of age, are increasing rapidly as the population in Navarro County continues to increase rapidly. The majority of people establishing residency in Navarro County are between the ages of 25-44 years old, and have children. As more and more children move in Navarro County the number of crimes they commit increase. Additionally, gangs, once a big city problem, are expanding to less populated areas. Navarro 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 Navarro County that are responsible for a multitude of criminal offenses. Juvenile crime in Navarro 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, manufacturing and possession of narcotics, and many other serious offenses.

Law Enforcement in Navarro County lacks adequate personnel, training, equipment and resources to combat crimes committed by juveniles. 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 personnel 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 Navarro County and 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 Navarro 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. From January 1, 2002 to September 30, 2002, the Corsicana Police Department handled 238 juveniles. During 2001, the Navarro County Sheriff Department had 199 calls for service relating to juveniles.

VICTIMS OF CRIME FOCUS GROUP

Advocacy

Navarro County has experienced an 18% growth in population since 1990 and an approximate 15% increase in crime over the past 4 years. Navarro County lacks an adequate number of victim advocates and advocacy programs to provide optimal services to victims of crime.

Our community's existing advocacy programs and social services are struggling to maintain core services and programs while responding to the increase of victims in need. These victim programs and agencies need financial support to provide consistent and adequate services to all victims of crime. Ultimately, victim advocates and advocacy programs can alleviate expenses incurred by our county by helping victims access scarce resources in a timely and efficient manner. The assistance and intervention provided by these agencies can break the cycle of victimization.

In many cases the first, and often only, opportunity victims of crime have to receive any type of services is through their interaction with law enforcement. As a result, there is a need for law enforcement agencies to have a sufficient number of trained victim advocates who are designated to deliver only victim services. Law mandates that every law enforcement agency, District and County Attorney's Office, and Community Supervision and Corrections Departments have a victim services liaison. Unfortunately, in rural areas like Navarro County, the victim liaison is an active duty law enforcement officer or agency staff member with multiple job responsibilities in addition to the role of victim services. There is a strong need for these positions to be staffed full time with the primary role of providing services to all victims of crime throughout the judicial system.

The general public is not knowledgeable about the range and availability of victim advocacy services in the community. People of all ages, ethnicity, and income levels are vulnerable to becoming a victim of crime. In addition to victims and their families, our entire community needs to be aware of the resources available to help them not only through all stages of the judicial system but with the healing process after such an event has occurred. Increasing public awareness will empower victims and citizens to move forward and past their victimization and, as a result, strengthening overall community well being.

Child Abuse and Neglect

According to Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (TDPRS) statistics, Navarro County's child population has increased from 11,637 in 2000 to 12,293 in 2002. The number of calls alleging child abuse or neglect increased from 406 in 2001 to 491 in 2002. In 2002, there were 345 investigations of child

abuse and neglect in Navarro County. Of these cases, 112 were confirmed victims of abuse and/or neglect and 134 children were removed from their homes. The resources available to manage these cases and guide families to an eventual resolution are scarce. The existing caseworkers and investigators from various agencies are overwhelmed with new and on-going cases, making it virtually impossible to manage their cases without some assistance.

Law enforcement agencies in Navarro County reported 33 incidents of physical and/or sexual abuse of children for 2002 and the Navarro County District Attorney presented 25 such cases to the grand jury. As of July 2003, the Navarro County Sheriff's Office has experienced over a 50% increase in crimes involving children, with the number of investigations at 23. Since they began providing on-site services to children in April of 2003, the local children's advocacy center has averaged 12 children per month who have been referred by law enforcement or Child Protective Services for initial services. All of these children are involved in cases of sexual and/or physical abuse either as an alleged victim or a witness. Based on the poor economy indicators and child abuse awareness programs, the organization anticipates it will provide initial services to an average of 15 children per month by the end of 2003 and 20 children per month in 2004.

A service organization in Navarro County implemented a volunteer-based Guardian ad Litem program in March 2003. These volunteers assist our existing agencies with children who have been placed into the custody of the State as a result of abuse and/or neglect. They monitor visitations, aid in transportation, and gather information for the court. These specially trained volunteers assist in expediting placement in a potentially permanent home or by establishing these children in relative or kinship placement, removing them from the foster care system.

According to the Texas Kids Count Project, 113 children in Navarro County were placed in foster care during 2002. As of July 2003, 16 of the 18 volunteers currently trained through the local program are working on 17 cases involving 28 children. It is projected that by the end of 2003, there will be 30 trained Guardian ad Litem volunteers serving 60 children. The estimates for 2004 are even higher with the organization anticipating the need for 50 trained volunteers to serve 100 children.

The caseload and immediate needs of these children far exceed the number of volunteers and programs available at this time. Our community is faced with a great need for resources to expand these programs and work with other agencies to address the unique needs of these children and their families.

Family Violence

According to the Navarro County Sheriff's Department, there is only one designated domestic violence shelter in Navarro County. This shelter not only provides services to victims of domestic violence, but also to impoverished families and families in crisis. The organization received over 100 referrals in 2002, but the Texas Department of Public Safety reported 365 incidents of domestic violence for Navarro County during that same time period. Based on this information, our community has an obvious need for resources to increase services from this type of program and provide assistance to victims of domestic violence. There is also a need for affordable and local training for staff and volunteers that work with victims of domestic violence.

Navarro County needs additional resources and personnel who provide free and low cost legal assistance to victims of domestic violence. The needs include civil attorneys with non-profit agencies who provide free and low cost legal services, advocates, and support staff. Providing victims with affordable legal assistance as recommended will improve victims' ability to safely and permanently leave abusive situations.

Counseling/Therapy Services

Our community has a great need for therapy services for crime victims and their families. Currently there are only two agencies in Navarro County who provide mental health services to uninsured or under insured individuals. These agencies are overwhelmed by the number of individuals in need of services. There are other non-profit organizations that strive to meet the need for therapy services by enlisting clinicians either on a volunteer basis or at a reduced rate. Unfortunately, these professionals are limited as to the number of clients to whom they can provide services. The services currently available in Navarro County are so limited that statistical information is not readily available as to the number of mental health referrals to non-profit organizations.

Legal Services

An overwhelming number of crime victims in Navarro County need access to free and low-cost legal services. Many of these victims need civil legal assistance in the form of protective orders, final divorce decrees, and/or representation in custody issues. There is currently only one agency available in Navarro County that provides assistance in obtaining such legal services. Unfortunately, this same organization is also involved with aiding individuals and families with other needs as well. Of the 100 referrals it averages each month, approximately 15% are victims of domestic violence. There is currently only one staff member to assist these clients and provide assistance with locating affordable legal services.

Non-English Speaking Services

According to data from the US Census Bureau, the Hispanic population in Navarro County has grown from 7.2% to 15.8% since 1990. This increase requires a growing need for culturally competent programs and language services for our Spanish speaking population. There is also a need for Spanish speaking staff and volunteers to provide programs and public awareness in our Hispanic community. Without these services, victims from this population will feel alienated and suffer further from their victimization.

Collection of Statistical Data

The community planning and grantwriting process both place emphasis on statistical data to support a particular need or gap in service. Currently the data collection for grants and identifying community need is left to individuals on an as-needed basis. The current system does not help facilitate a cataloging of data that would streamline community planning and the grant writing process. The problem is that many of the organizations in our community are collecting the same information individually, unaware of the need for the same organization by other groups. The other problem in this area is that some organizations are not collecting data at all. This uncollected data would be invaluable to the community as a whole to assist in assessing and dealing with current community planning and needs (i.e. formulating problem statements for a community plan).