

KAUFMAN COUNTY

CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMUNITY PLAN

FY2005

Chairperson:

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Terrell ISD
212 W. High St
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Introduction

The Kaufman County Community Plan has been prepared in response to an initiative by the Criminal Justice Division, Office of the Governor (CJD) to insure that justice-related community plans are more comprehensive, more relevant to community needs, and strategically sound. The plan development process utilized input from county and city leadership, agency professionals, and interested citizens who helped identify problems, examine existing resources, and set goals to enhance the services available to citizens of Kaufman County. By prioritizing justice related gaps in services throughout our community, new initiatives and funding opportunities can be more readily identified and resources increased.

Acknowledgement

Bonnie Dockery served as the chairperson for the Kaufman County Community Planning Committee. She is the Coordinator of Counselor Training and Social Services for Terrell Independent School District. Critical to the effectiveness of the planning process was the development of three focus groups which were formed to provide input to the plan. Chairpersons for each focus group devoted countless hours, energy and expertise to assure that each area of focus was well represented and that input was comprehensive and relevant to issues faced by Kaufman County. Focus group members diligently contributed their time, knowledge, and insight to insure the development of a meaningful and comprehensive community plan. Support from the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) was ongoing throughout the process and assured that the planning process followed CJD guidelines and regulations. A grateful thank you to all whose efforts and commitment resulted in the following comprehensive community plan for Kaufman County.

Defining the Community

Kaufman County is a 786 square mile area, located northeast of the D/FW Metroplex. The county population estimate for 2001, which was 75,810, is expected to grow rapidly to reach 80,279 by 2005 and increase to 94,719 by 2010 (Source: NCTCOG, 2003).

Focus Groups:

Victims of Crime: Chaired by: Dennis Grady, Lead Outreach Counselor, Maximus

Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention: Chaired by: Trenis Ramsey,
Juvenile Probation Officer, Kaufman County Juvenile Probation

Law Enforcement & Justice System: Chaired by: Cpl. Ken McKeown, Terrell
Police Department

Problems identified by each focus group are described below in the order of
priority to the community as determined by focus group members.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

1. Kaufman County has inadequate facilities and support services for victims of domestic violence. There is currently only one temporary shelter to serve the entire county (Source: Review of countywide victims services). Since the faith-based shelter opened in January 2003, it has provided temporary shelter to 61 women. With limited resources, the shelter cannot currently provide certain essential services such as family counseling, parenting classes, play therapy, and specialized counseling for issues such as divorce, death, relocation, and financial planning.

There is a need for funding to assure that all victims of domestic violence seeking help will receive all of the services they need to assist with the major transitions facing them after their shelter stay. By providing such services, victims of domestic violence in Kaufman County will be better able to resume productive lives, re-enter the workforce, and reduce the likelihood that they will require assistance in the future.

2. Kaufman County currently has no tracking system for incidence of crimes of domestic violence (Source: Review of countywide services, August 2003). Additionally, no law enforcement in Kaufman County currently has a dedicated Victim of Crime task force to respond to scene of crime calls nor a Domestic Violence Unit that is committed to reducing family crime and domestic violence (Source: Review of countywide services). These gaps in victims services result in inconsistent handling of offenders and ineffective use of resources to combat the incidence of domestic violence in the county. Also lacking in Kaufman County is a dedicated family violence felony court with specialized and properly trained prosecutors, judges, and court personnel (Source: Review of countywide services, August 2003). Funding is needed for the establishment of a domestic violence tracking system and a task force and family violence felony court dedicated to reducing family crime and domestic violence in Kaufman County. The addition of such victims services will result in a more streamlined process, which in turn will result in more consistent and effective handling of offenders, increased measure of justice for victims of family violence, more effective use of resources and an increase in dispositions.
3. Kaufman County lacks non-residential support services for victims of domestic violence. According to data collected by the Texas Department of Human Services, between the years 1998 and 2000, 59.22% of victims sought outreach services instead of seeking temporary residence in domestic violence shelters. There are currently no specialized counseling groups for victims and their children available in Kaufman County, despite the fact that group counseling has been demonstrated to be the most effective intervention model for such victims of domestic violence. These

services need to be established in Kaufman County to meet the specific geographic, ethnic, and social circumstances of all victims and their children. Such services will increase the likelihood that victims will not return to violent partner relationships, thereby reducing their future need for repeated emergency services and financial aid.

4. Kaufman County lacks a Victims Services Unit to provide counseling, support, resource referrals, and legal as well as personal advocacy for victims of crimes. (Source: Review of countywide services, August 2003). Studies show that victims of crime who have used victim advocacy services report more satisfactory “healing”, both physically and emotionally. Currently, Kaufman has no victims advocate program (Source: Department of Protective & Regulatory Services, Kaufman). There is a need to fund a Victims Services Unit, which would include Domestic Violence Counselors, a Victims Services Coordinator, and Supervisor to provide and coordinate the services needed by victims of domestic violence. Additionally, qualified legal advocates are needed to ensure that the emotional and practical needs and safety of the victim are met. Such services will ultimately increase victims’ safety and offender accountability in cases of domestic violence in Kaufman County.
5. Kaufman County social service agencies lack resources and bilingual personnel to handle its growing ethnic population. According to the U.S. Census data, the percentage of the non-English speaking population of Kaufman County has doubled between the years 1990-2000 (Source: U.S. Census, 1990, 2000). Despite this growing segment of the population, Kaufman County Child Protective Services currently employs only one bilingual caseworker (Source: Kaufman County Department of Protective & Regulatory Services, August 2003). Studies show that to be effective, providers of victim advocacy services need to offer culturally sensitive programs that will increase the utilization of such services. There is a need for resources to develop programs and multi-lingual outreach services for non-English speaking victims of crime. By better serving this typically underserved segment of our population, there will be an overall increase in the timely and effective utilization of victims services, resulting in a decrease in the need for future intervention and governmental support to victims.
6. Kaufman County lacks affordable and accessible housing for victims of domestic violence. The length of time a resident may live at the shelter in Kaufman County is determined on a case-by-case basis, but to date, has not exceeded 4 months (Source: Genesis Shelter, Kaufman, 2003). It is very difficult for victims to overcome the many obstacles they face within that short amount of time. Emergency as well as transitional and long term housing tops the list. Kaufman County lacks affordable housing for victims of domestic violence. The average low-income 2 bedroom-2 bath

apartment rents in Kaufman County for approximately \$550 per month and the wait to access Section 8 housing is 18 months (Source: Department of Housing, 2003). The average income for a survivor leaving an abusive environment is less than \$10,000 per year. Funding is needed to establish transitional housing for victims after their shelter stay. If victims of abuse are provided safe, adequate low-cost housing, they will more quickly experience life stability that will result in their returning quicker to the work force, and decrease the likelihood that they will require assistance in the future.

7. Kaufman County has inadequate low or no cost legal aid for victims of crime. Legal Aid of North Central Texas currently provides 20 hours per week of legal services to assist low-income residents of Kaufman County (Source: Legal Aid of North Texas, 2003). According to Legal Aid, they have experienced a significant increase in Kaufman County cases from 125 in 2001 to 350 cases in 2002. There is a need to fund affordable legal assistance for victims of crime. By providing victims with affordable legal aid, cases will be expedited more quickly, victims will be able to achieve a sense of “closure” regarding their crime experience, and thus will be able to more quickly resume productive lives.
8. Kaufman County has no job training facility to help victims of domestic violence secure employment that could enable them to support their families (Source: Review of available community resources). This lack of job training keeps most victims in minimum wage jobs, therefore they continue to rely on government assistance to provide for their families. Scholarships/financial aid specifically for domestic violence victims who pursue vocational training or certification programs should be made available. Funding is also needed to victims to augment low paying salaries until they complete such programs. Trained career/job counselors are needed to work with domestic violence victims to assist them in pursuing vocational training and job opportunities. One factor impacting whether victims return to abusive relationships is their lack of skills or education. With such limited job qualifications, higher paying positions are typically not available, therefore, they struggle to maintain financial independence. By providing vocational training, victims will more readily qualify for stable jobs which will allow them to be the sole financial support for themselves and their children, thereby reducing the number of domestic abuse victims requiring government aid.
9. Kaufman County lacks an effective public awareness campaign regarding advocacy services for victims of crime (Source: Review of countywide services, august 2003). Studies show that the general public is not knowledgeable about the range and availability of victim advocacy services in their community. People of all ages, ethnicity, and income levels are vulnerable to becoming victims of crimes. There is also a need

for outreach services to specialized populations such as the elderly and persons with disabilities so that when crime occurs, victims, their families, and others are aware of the available advocacy services available in Kaufman County. The impact of an increased public awareness about domestic violence and the addition services targeted to specialized populations, the incidence of domestic violence in our community should decrease.

JUVENILE JUSTICE

1. There has been an overall increase in drug related crime in Kaufman County which is also reflected in the increase in the arrest rate for drug abuse violations by juveniles. There has been a 16% increase in total alcohol related deaths between the years 2000 and 2001 and a 20% increase in total drug related deaths during the same time period (Source: Texas Commission on Alcohol & Drug Addiction, TCADA 2003). Additionally, there has been a 50% increase in marijuana trafficking in the county between the years 1999 to 2001 (Source: TCADA 2003). There has been a 13% increase in the number of arrests of juveniles ages 10-17 in Kaufman County for drug abuse violations from 1999 to 2000 (Source: FBI Arrest Statistics 2001). Additionally, public school referred drug related offenses have increased dramatically. There were 19 drug related offenses referred to Kaufman County Juvenile Probation between 2000 – 2001 compared to 36 offenses referred between 2002 and August 2003 (Source: Kaufman County Juvenile Probation). There is clearly a need for increased drug prevention and intervention programs to target this high risk population as well as a need for school based programs to address the increase in drug related offense in the school setting. Such programs will provide substance abuse education and intervention to youth in Kaufman County, resulting in a countywide reduction in juvenile drug related offenses.

2. As the juvenile population in Kaufman County has risen, so has the percentage of total crimes committed by youth aged 10-17. Between years 2000 and 2003, the population of juveniles residing in Kaufman County has risen from 20,827 to 21, 238 (Source: Texas Council on Drug & Alcohol Addiction/ Population Projections, 2003). The percent of total crimes committed in the county by juveniles has risen dramatically by 24% between years 1998 and 2001 (source: FBI Arrest Statistics/ 2001). This trend toward increasing crimes committed by juveniles is also reflected in the number of assaults referred to juvenile authorities occurring on public school campuses. There has been a 50% increase of such violent incidents in schools throughout the county between 2001 and August 2003 (Source: Kaufman County Juvenile Probation Assault Report, 2003). There is clearly a need for innovative community and school based programs to address the significant rise in juvenile crime in Kaufman County. By providing programs and services to youth with a history of violence, as well as to families with children at risk for delinquency, Kaufman County will experience a decrease in juvenile crime and a decrease in violent incidents on school campuses.

3. In Kaufman County, 25% of adults and adolescents lack a high school diploma, resulting in that segment of the population having fewer

employment opportunities, and increasing the likelihood that they will require public assistance (Source: U.S. Census Bureau/Social Characteristics 2000). Additionally, the percentage of the non-English speaking population has doubled in the county between the years 1990-2000 (Source: U.S. Census, 1990, 2000). Currently, 15% of the population is limited English proficient (Source: U.S. Census, 2000). These population characteristics illustrate a significant need for additional adult basic education and literacy programs to increase the number of high school graduates in the county, as well as “English as a Second Language” programs to reduce language barriers in the segment of the population who are limited English proficient. By reducing the county school drop out rate and by providing educational programs to positively impact the lives of non-English speaking residents, Kaufman County will experience an increase in the employed population of our community, which will result in a decrease in the percentage of those requiring long term public assistance.

4. Kaufman County lacks adequate public transportation to accommodate youth and families who could benefit from participating in community activities, parenting classes, and after school programs. Currently, only one transportation system serves the county. The charge for travel one-way within a single city is \$1.00 and must be pre-scheduled 24 hours in advance. Travel outside of city limits or between communities in Kaufman County is charged at \$4.00 each way. Should youth need to attend programs or access social services outside of their home community, single round trip transportation will cost \$8.00, an amount prohibitive for many families (Source: Kaufman Area Rapid Transit, August 2003). Funding is needed to provide affordable public transportation so that community activities, programs, and social services are more accessible for at risk youth and families. By increasing accessibility to these important preventive interventions, the incidence of truancy and juvenile crimes committed during non-school times will be reduced. The resulting impact on Kaufman County can be an overall decrease in juvenile crime.
5. Of the 9,016 youth aged 10-17 in Kaufman County, 6.6% are teenage mothers compared to the state average of 5.7%. (Source: Texas Department of Health 2000). It is also notable that 53% of grandparents in Kaufman County are the primary caretaker for their grandchildren (Source: U.S. Census/Social Characteristics, 2000). This indicates the need to develop community programs for youth to include sex education and teaching parenting skills. By providing these services, Kaufman County will experience a decrease in teen parenthood and a decline in teen parents requiring public assistance.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

1. The population of Kaufman County increased by 23% between the years 1990 and 2000 and census projections indicate that there will be an additional growth of 45% by the year 2015 (Source: U.S. Census). The fast population growth has resulted in an increase in drug and alcohol related criminal activity in Kaufman County, where there has been a 16% increase in alcohol related deaths between the years 2000 & 2001 and a 20% increase in drug related deaths during the same time period (Source: Texas Commission on Alcohol & Drugs, 2003 TCADA). Additionally, there has been a 50% increase in arrests in the county for marijuana trafficking between the years 1999 - 2001 (Source: TCADA 2003). Although these increases indicate an alarming trend of increasing drug and alcohol related offenses in Kaufman County, according to law enforcement officials, the total number of law enforcement personnel throughout the county employed to apprehend, investigate, and prosecute such criminals (approximately 120) has not increased proportionately. Additionally, law enforcement personnel report that specialized training has not been made available to officers to increase their effectiveness in addressing these changing influences impacting criminal activity in Kaufman County. There is a need for additional funding to hire, train, and equip law enforcement officers to combat this growing drug demand and resulting criminal activity. Additionally, there is a need for funding for specialized and dedicated staff to educate the public and increase community awareness about drug activity in the county. The impact of such interventions would likely reduce demand for illegal drugs, reduce drug related criminal offenses, and increase apprehension, and prosecution of drug offenders.
2. According to law enforcement personnel, Kaufman County is experiencing a steady increase in cyber crimes such as child pornography, credit card fraud, and identity theft. Funding is needed for specialized training for cyber crime investigation to enhance expertise of law enforcement personnel and increase the number of crimes solved as well as to expedite the prosecution process.
3. A telephone inquiry of law enforcement agencies in Kaufman County confirms that there is no integrated county database to facilitate information and efforts among law enforcement agencies. This has resulted in slowed apprehension and prosecution efforts by jurisdictions throughout the county. It is not uncommon for criminals to commit multiple acts of crime that spread across multiple jurisdictions of Kaufman County. Currently, investigators working on a crime do not readily have information available regarding similar crimes committed within the jurisdiction. There is a need for an integrated system which could greatly improve

apprehension and prosecution efforts of “cyber criminals”, and reduce the incidence of such crimes.

4. According to law enforcement officials throughout the county, there is a lack of innovative, specialized training of law enforcement officers to address such issues as officer safety, first responders to critical incidents, child abuse and domestic violence investigation. Funding is needed to develop and provide such trainings throughout Kaufman County. By providing additional training, officers will be equipped to respond to, investigate, and prosecute criminals more efficiently and effectively, thereby reducing overall criminal activity in Kaufman County.