

Matagorda County Criminal Justice Community Plan



2017-2018

December 18, 2017 Revision

Matagorda County Criminal Justice Community Plan

What Is a Community Plan?

This plan is formally known as the Matagorda County Criminal Justice Community Plan, the purpose of which is to identify gaps in services regarding criminal justice issues. The Criminal Justice Division of the Governor's Office (CJD) requires that Criminal Justice Community Plans be developed and maintained by counties and regions throughout Texas.

The document that is represented here reflects the efforts of many in Matagorda County that are concerned with assuring that any gaps in services are closed, thus making our communities safer places in which to live and work. It is with grateful acknowledgement that the names of those involved in the process of developing this Plan are listed in the section entitled Community Planning Team.

Though the final draft of this Plan was completed in December of 2016, this is a work in progress. New criminal justice goals are identified, the Planning Group changes as a result of individual and agency circumstances. Also requirements concerning the makeup of the Plan are subject to change from year to year. Thus, Matagorda County is interested in keeping up with these changes, and including them in updates that will be posted from time to time.

If you are reading this Plan and have not been involved in its development, you are invited to join in this ongoing effort. Any questions you may have can be addressed to either Shelby Storts, Community Plan Coordinator for Matagorda County, or to a Criminal Justice Program staff member of the (COG). Contact information is provided at the end of this document.

The Matagorda County Commissioners Court supports the concept of community planning by providing staff support and resources for development and implementation of the Matagorda County Criminal Justice Community Plan. Additionally, the Commissioners Court supports grant applications from county departments as well as community organizations that address gaps in services identified in this Community Plan.

Areas Represented

Incorporated Communities:

Bay City Palacios

Unincorporated Communities:

Van Vleck	Blessing	Wadsworth	Cedar Lane	Sargent
Ashwood	Matagorda	Midfield	Collegeport	Markham
Pledger	Cedar Lake	El Maton	Sugar Valley	

School Districts:

Bay City Independent School District	Matagorda Independent School District
Palacios Independent School District	Van Vleck Independent School District
Tidehaven Independent School District	

Brief description and history of Matagorda County:

History: Matagorda County, created in 1836 is rich in history and tradition. It was an early home of the Karankawa Indians and landing place of La Salle in 1685. It began its existence as a Spanish province, and was settled in 1822-1836 by colonists of Stephen F. Austin. It is one of the original 23 counties and is part of Stephen F. Austin’s original grant. It contained Texas’ third largest town at the time of the Battle of the Alamo, and was one of the few Civil War battle sites in Texas.

Matagorda was the county seat from 1837-1894, but the county seat was moved to Bay City in 1894. In the early days Matagorda County was on a key route between settlements. The Colorado River was a major obstacle for early travelers, and many used Cayce’s Ferry. During Texas’ republic days, a garrison of 30-40 men was stationed in Matagorda County near the ferry.

The citizens of Matagorda County have contributed greatly to the development of Texas culture – (1) the pioneer woman teacher, Mary S. Wightman Helms, (2) an early newspaper, “The Matagorda Bulletin”, as well as (3) the first Episcopal Church.

Description: The County is located between Galveston and Corpus Christi, along the Gulf Coast, and enjoys a diversity of geography from its wide expanse of prairies to the many creeks, rivers, lakes, bays and the Gulf of Mexico. Birders have a wealth of places to choose from especially with the 34 acre Matagorda County Birding Nature Center along the Colorado River, 1.7 miles west of Bay City on Texas 35. In addition, Mad Island Marsh Preserve and Wildlife Management Area boasts the highest species of birds in the Audubon Christmas Bird Count of any location in the entire United States. Matagorda County offers some of the finest saltwater fishing on the entire Gulf Coast, and its bays are filled with red fish, flounder, trout, crab and shrimp. The Lower Colorado River Authority has developed Matagorda Bay Nature Park, a 1,600 acre park and preserve at the mouth of the Colorado River on the Matagorda Peninsula. The park provides nature education, recreation and nature tourism opportunities for visitors. Matagorda County is home to the South Texas Nuclear Plant, Celanese, and LyondellBasell. Tenaris Bay City is in the process of building a new state of the art seamless pipe manufacturing facility. Matagorda County has strong agricultural ties in the production of cotton and rice; and, aquaculture has also grown with the production of crawfish, catfish, redfish, and shrimp.

The County is a political subdivision of the State of Texas. The elected Commissioners Court is the governing body of the County which is comprised of the County Judge and four County Commissioners. Commissioners serve four-year staggered terms, two members elected every two years. The County Judge is elected at large to serve a four-year term. The Commissioners Court has certain powers granted to it by the state legislature. Its duties include approval of the budget, determination of the tax rates, approval of contracts, calling elections, issuance of bonds, and the appointment of certain county officials.

During 2010 Judge McDonald and his counterparts in Colorado and Wharton Counties recognized that shrinking budgets, increased needs for social services, increasing rates of high school dropouts, lack of college completion and the high levels of low adult literacy were compounding to impact the justice system and increase high poverty levels in the region. The Judges collaborated to support the creation of the Tri-County Coalition for Literacy and Community Services and successfully applied for a Renewing Our Communities Grant from the OneStar Foundation out of the Governor's Office.

Demographics: Matagorda County is a rural area with a population of 36,702 according to 2014 figures. There were 13,894 households, with 9,675 being family led homes, 3,078 were married couples, 7,470 married couples with children, 1,858 had a female householder with no husband present, and 759 had a male householder with no wife present. Of the 13,894 households, 3,670 were persons living alone, and the average family size was 3.25 individuals.

In the county, the population was dispersed among age groups as follows: with 26% under the age of 18, 9% are from 18 to 24, 23% from 25 to 44, 28% from 45 to 64, and 14% who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 38 years, and there were only 24 more males than females. Nearly 21.4% of the total population was living in poverty, including 32.7% of persons under age 18. According to the Texas Workforce Commission, the unemployment rate for Matagorda County in April 2015 was 6.3%, and the state average was 4.2%.

Ethnic Make-up: Caucasian 45.7%
 Hispanic 38.7%
 African American 10.6%
 American Indian 1.3%
 Asian 2.2%
 Multi-Racial and Other 1.5%

Community Planning Team

Community Plan Coordinator for Matagorda County: Shelby Storts/ Executive Secretary to County Judge/ Matagorda County

In developing this Community Plan, members of the team were divided into several focus groups for the purpose of narrowing the scope of research and data that are incorporated into the Plan. Some members may serve in multiple capacities/categories.

Juvenile Services:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Agency</i>
Jill Hearne	Boys and Girls Club of Palacios
Roshandra Garls	Gulf Winds RTC
Alicia Lathon	Gulf Winds RTC
Di Ann Sneed	Matagorda County United Way

Victim Services:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Agency</i>
Sandra Tobias	MEHOP
Barbara Priesmeyer	MEHOP
Cory McCray	MEHOP

Law Enforcement:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Agency</i>
Steven Reis	Matagorda County District Attorney
Lindsey Deshotels	Matagorda County District Attorney
Robert Lister	Bay City Police Department

Transportation:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Agency</i>
Toddie Garcia	MEHOP
Irene Bishop	Bay City Chamber of Commerce
Nate McDonald	Matagorda County Judge

Interoperability:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Agency</i>
Doug Mathes	Matagorda county Emergency Management

Mental Health:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Agency</i>
Sondra Tobias	MEHOP
Barbara Priesmeyer	MEHOP
Cory McCray	MEHOP
Di Ann Sneed	Matagorda County United Way
Roshandra Earls	Gulf Winds RTC
Alicia Lathon	Gulf Winds RTC

Education:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Agency</i>
Susan Phillips	Matagorda Independent School District
Jill Hearne	Boys & Girls Club of Palacios
Alicia Lathon	Gulf winds RTC
Di Ann Sneed	Matagorda County United Way

Identification of Community Problems

General Public Safety Needs and Issues

Matagorda County is a diverse rural community that is experiencing issues that are usually associated with large metropolitan areas. Poverty and unemployment are high in Matagorda County, which has been proven to increase crime. When crime increases, demands for victims services, law enforcement, and juvenile services increase. The community faces a higher unemployment and poverty rate than the statewide averages according to the 2010 Census Information: 23.7% of Matagorda County's population under 18 lives in poverty according to Census Bureau. The many accompanying issues in Matagorda County include increasing high school dropout rates, unemployment, substance abuse, juvenile crime, poor transportation developments, poverty levels, homeless minors, and the need for funding in all areas of the community. Literacy is the foundational tool for individual prosperity and community economic self-sufficiency and is the root cause for high levels of poverty and associated criminal justice issues. 26% of adults in Bay City over the age of 25 do not have a high school diploma. Additional resources are needed to address these issues. The community must address the needs for psychiatric care for underinsured and long term psychiatric placement, affordable legal services, affordable housing, utility and rental assistance, increased access to health care for the uninsured and underinsured, transportation, crime prevention programs, community awareness programs, bi-lingual services, child and teen programs, child day care, community education, professional education, crisis intervention services, substance abuse and expansion of job training and skill building programs.

Matagorda County United Way plays an important role facilitating and supporting services to Matagorda and Wharton Counties. It was organized to develop the financial and community resources needed to meet the human service needs of the community and to deploy United Way financial support to maximize the resources available to agencies aimed at the most urgent needs of the community. Matagorda County United Way is making progress in meeting increased needs of the community, but will continue to see an increasing demand from agencies due to the Welfare to Work reform. More responsibility is being placed on local communities to meet special community needs due to less control and dollars available from the State. Consequently, the community will rely more heavily on all the county non-profit agencies for support in these many areas!

The Boys & Girls Club of Bay City and Matagorda County and the Boys & Girls Club of Palacios are proving that it is essential that children receive the best chance possible to live a healthy and productive life. The underserved youth have the chance to participate in and enjoy physical activities and the thrill of competition all the while increasing their capacity to engage in positive behaviors that nurture their own well-being, set personal goals and live successfully as self-sufficient adults. This is a safe and positive alternative to the city streets for many youth, but there are many more youth that are on the waiting list. The club is open during the hours that young people are most likely to engage in negative behavior, from 3-7 p.m.

In each of the areas on the following pages, problems are identified and data is included that supports both the existence and severity of gaps as they are found in Matagorda County. Below the description and data are a discussion of the problems, the manner in which the problems are being addressed, and strategically how responses to these community problems could be improved.

Juvenile Issues (listed in order of priority, greatest need first)

Priority #1	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Poverty:</p> <p>Juveniles who lack the basics of food, shelter, and support services.</p>	<p>In the 2016-2017 school year, children classified as homeless under the <i>No Child Left Behind Act</i> were: Bay City ISD (55), Palacios ISD (3), Tidehaven ISD (9), Matagorda ISD (0) and Van Vleck ISD (16). However the children classified as in Poverty in 2008 were (27%), in 2009 were (29%), in 2010 (28.4%), and in 2011 (29.5%) as per kidscount.org. In the 2012 Census 30.4% of the population with children under 18 years of age had income below the poverty level, and 36.2% of the population received food stamps/SNAP benefits as per kidscount.org.</p> <p>The school districts in Matagorda County show their economically disadvantaged students as 69.4% for Bay City ISD, 65.5% for Palacios ISD, 51.3% for Van Vleck ISD, 66% for Tidehaven ISD, and 52.3% for Matagorda ISD. (2016-2017)</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>Solutions: Poverty so often creates an environment when juveniles are left to themselves, because a parent is working. Opportunities are lacking to become involved in healthy group activities, due to lack of time and influence by the parent. This vacuum is filled with anger, despair, and lack of motivation, low expectations, and gang involvement. Solutions include connecting the at risk juvenile to structured environments, such as after school/summer programs that create healthy boundaries, expectations, and goals. These structured environments, such as Boys & Girls Club of Bay City/Matagorda County and Boys & Girls Club of Palacios which also include organized sporting activities and organizations, give the juvenile the opportunity of experiencing healthy life styles, and a positive exposure to wholesome alternatives. Government and Community services are not always accessed, due to a lack of time and availability of services. Even when services are accessed, there is so often a lack of adequacy. In Bay City and Palacios local groups and churches provide hot meals (these are only once or twice a week) and food pantries. Schools provide meals through the Federal programs of Free and Reduced Lunch, including breakfast. Golden Crescent Food Bank is in the early stages of starting the Backpack Program, which provides lunches for students on the weekends. This program though is not county wide, but ISD and school specific. Having an accessible Texas Benefits Bank will help in providing the opportunity that all eligible families are able to apply for Government services, thus help the family as a whole to begin to financially stabilize. Schools districts, such as Bay City ISD, provide mentoring opportunities for youth, however, there is a need for volunteers.</p>	

Priority #2

Problem Identified

Data

Education:

Students attending public/private schools who complete and earn a high school diploma or GED

The Graduation rates and Drop Out Rates for all School Districts in the county are as follows:

Bay City Independent School District:

Graduation Rate in 2016 – 91.8%
 Drop Out Rate 7th & 8th Graders 2015-16 – 0%
 Drop Out Rate 9th thru 12th Graders in 2015-16 – 2.0%
 The percentage of economically disadvantaged is 69.4% for 2016-17.

Palacios Independent School District:

Graduation Rate in 2016 – 88.3%
 Drop Out Rate 7th & 8th Graders in 2015-16 – 0%
 Drop Out Rate 9th thru 12th Graders in 2015-16 – 1.3%
 The percentage of economically disadvantaged is 65.5% for 2016-17.

Van Vleck Independent School District:

Graduation Rate in 2016 – 98.5%
 Drop Out Rate 7th & 8th Graders in 2015-16 – 0%
 Drop Out Rate 9th thru 12th Graders in 2015-16 – 0%
 The percentage of economically disadvantaged is 51.3% for 2016-17.

Tidehaven Independent School District:

Graduation Rate in 2016 – 90.6%
 Drop Out Rate 7th & 8th Graders in 2015-16 – 0%
 Drop Out Rate 9th thru 12th Graders in 2015-16 – 1.5%
 The percentage of economically disadvantaged is 66% for 2016-17.

Matagorda Independent School District:

Drop Out Rate 7th & 8th Graders in 2015-16 – 0%
 Does not have a High School, their students transfer to Bay City Independent School District after 8th grade
 The percentage of economically disadvantaged is 52.3% for 2016-17.

In 2013-14 year, Juvenile Courts in Matagorda County saw 180 youth for failure to attend school, and 185 parents who were contributing to non-attendance.

Potential Response to Problem

Solutions: Reconnecting students, who have dropped out of school or who are at risk of dropping out, with either community or school based programs, will better prepare juveniles for adulthood and the workforce. Groups such as **E4E2** all target teens who have dropped out of school, assisting the teen in re-engaging in school, pursuing a GED, or pursuing vocational training with the local junior college.

For those students who are still in school, but are experiencing serious academic and behavioral issues, having an appointed advocate who understands the educational system to walk with them, will help keep students in school, and achieve success. At risk students, and their families, many times do not understand how to work through the educational system in order to achieve success. The school system has several programs and opportunities that will help the student succeed, however, not knowing or understanding the system and the availability of these opportunities will keep students and families from requesting and accessing these resources. Having an appointed advocate, who understands opportunities and responsibilities of each party, will increase the likelihood of students staying in schools, and becoming successful. Several community groups provide after school and summer tutoring and enrichment services that will increase the likelihood of success for the teen as well. **Boys and Girls Clubs** provide after school tutoring and supervised activities. **Boys & Girls Club of Palacios** and the Boys & Girls Club of Bay City/Matagorda County offer Project Learn, an evidence based program that is comprised of hands on educational components that reinforce the knowledge and skills youth learn in school. Power Hour and Summer Brain Gains are BGCA Project Learn programs.

Priority #3

Problem Identified

Data

Family Life:

Building and bonding of the nuclear family of the Juvenile.

From 2007 – 2012 **Child Protective Services** have run confirmed victims per 1000, and the corresponding state average for that year are as follows:

2007

Allegations (322) Confirmed (7.7%) State Average (11.2%)

2008

Allegations (342) Confirmed (8.5%) State Average (11.0%)

2009

Allegations (321) Confirmed (6.9%) State Average (10.5%)

2010

Allegations (334) Confirmed (5.2%) State Average (10.2%)

2011

Allegations (364) Confirmed (7.8%) State Average (9.9%)

2012

Allegations (303) Confirmed (9.6%) State Average (9.1%)

2014

Allegations (386) Confirmed (18.1%)

2015

Allegations (407) Confirmed (10.3%)

CPS Foster Care Placements for September 2012 are 19 children in Foster Care in county, 18 children placed out of the county, with 94.7% of children placed out of Matagorda County.

Potential Response to Problem

Solutions: Research shows that the establishment of a loving caring relationship between parents, teachers, and the child helps to create a supportive environment. Issues addressed that will positively impact family life, and juvenile success are positive peer involvement (through programs such as **Boys and Girls Clubs**, the **HUB**, church youth groups, organized sports activities, **Boy**

and Girl Scouts, 4H, FFA, and others), exposure to career paths (through job shadowing, school based programs such as **DECA**, quality of life exposure (family activities – examples of existing opportunities are: Family Fun Day – **Matagorda County Agrilife**, **DADS** – Dad’s day out – Palacios, social skill education (such as Parenting classes, Parenting Academy – Palacios), Life skill education – financial, and job readiness. In today’s internet age, on line curriculum is available that will teach basic social and decision making skills that will help establish life competency abilities. These do cost though. Counseling is often needed, three organizations provide this service free or at reduced costs for those who qualify, **MEHOP**, **Boys & Girls Club of Bay City/Matagorda County partners with YFCS for free on site counseling services**, and **Matagorda County Women’s Crisis Center**. **Boys & Girls Club of Palacios** partners with **Youth & Family Counseling Services** who also provide free counseling. By providing these opportunities to parents and juvenile teens alike, the juveniles will experience healthy life style experiences and knowledge, along with stronger role modeling influence, which will create a higher likelihood of success in life. Juveniles who are high risk do not normally come from a supportive environment. These youth also do not normally participate in programs and activities that build a resiliency of success. Thus, there is the need to target this high risk group. Parenting services are needed. **MEHOP** is providing some parenting services, as is **ADAPT** through Juvenile Probation. **Bay City Municipal Court and JP1 & 2** are using Able Success Academy program for 15 areas of need for families.

Priority #4	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Substance Abuse & Chemical Dependency:</p> <p>Dependency upon a controlled substance by a juvenile.</p>	<p>Texas Juvenile Justice Department reports that of the state-wide juveniles referred to the system, 34% have some type of chemical dependency or issue in the December 2015 annual report to the governor and legislative budget board.</p> <p>Juvenile Courts in Matagorda County reported 37 cases seen from September – August 2015 were drug/alcohol related.</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>Solutions: Being able to accurately assess a juvenile’s substance abuse issue is an ongoing challenge. Thus, having a comprehensive risk and needs assessment tool will help screen and refer juveniles to the correct forms of assistance. Many of these juveniles lack positive peer influence mentoring through organized activities and groups, some of which are listed under Family Life, which will go a long way toward the prevention of substance abuse. It is important to bring awareness of the dangers of this destructive behavior through education to juveniles. Groups, such as BACODA, MADD – through victim impact panels, Crisis Center through its Relationship/Bullying program, DARE in Tidehaven ISD, Bay City/Matagorda County Boys and Girls Club and Boys & Girls Club of Palacios through its Smart Moves/Passport to Manhood Programs, and others serve an important function in building healthy juveniles. SMART Moves is an evidence based program helps youth develop critical thinking skills to resist alcohol, drugs, premature sexual involvement and gang activity. Passport to Manhood curriculum helps character development and is a preventative juvenile delinquency program for boys. Counseling is available through MEHOP, Bay City/Matagorda County Boys and Girls Club, Matagorda County Women’s Crisis Center to those who qualify, however, the counseling is with Licensed Professional Counselors and Psychologists, not Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselors.</p>	

Priority #5

Problem Identified

Data

Health Issues:

Physical and mental health concerns that will result in a physically healthy and able juvenile.

43.6% of eligible children in Matagorda County were involved in early and periodic screening, diagnostic and treatment under Medicaid for children in 2013, as per MEHOP.

Various chronic disease (diabetes, hypertension, hyperlipidemia and COPD) are prevalent at rates equal or exceeding state averages for Matagorda County as per MEHOP.

Children receiving Free/Reduced Lunches were 72% in 2008-09, 71.7% in 2009-10, 75.6% in 2010-11, and 80% in 2013-14.

Children receiving WIC were 43.4% in 2008, 42.9% in 2009, and 50.7% in 2010, 49.4% in 2011, 47.3% in 2012, 36.3% in 2013.

Children receiving supplemental Nutrition Assistance were 26.6% in 2008, 31.8% in 2009, and 33.4% in 2010, 38.8% in 2011, 36.2% in 2012, 33.5% in 2013.

Also births to teens ages 13-19 out of all live births, were 20.2% in 2006, 17.3% in 2007, and 17.9% in 2008, 14.5% in 2009, 16.0% in 2010, 14.7% in 2011, 15.1% in 2012, 12.3% in 2013. Births to single teens ages 13-19 out of all live births, were 16.0% in 2006, 12.9% in 2007, and 15.1% in 2008, 12.8% in 2009, 13.4% in 2010, 13.7% in 2011, 13.9% in 2012. Previous stats are as per kidscount.org.

Potential Response to Problem

Solutions: Not accessing primary preventive health care and participating in risky behavior are the two key issues that are surrounding juveniles in Matagorda County. These are characteristics of communities with significant poverty rates. The principal provider of health care to this population group is **MEHOP**, a FQHC provider. Programs that address these two areas of concern are needed. Juveniles do not understand the need or how to access the health care system. Education and basic case management are needed to assist juveniles in using the health care system. Preventive health care is one of education, outreach, and impact upon the groups that are least likely to access health care. Programs that identify risky behavior and the outcomes of this behavior are important as well. These programs, while having a health related cause/outcome, also overlap into the social and criminal sides of life due to the nature of the risky behavior, such as active sexual conduct and drug abuse. **MEHOP** and **Boys and Girls Club** provide low cost or free counseling for youth and families who are facing these issues. The **Bay City/Matagorda County Boys and Girls Club** and **Boys & Girls Club of Palacios** offer Triple Play Program to improve youth's knowledge of healthy habits, good nutrition, physical fitness, and strengthen interpersonal skills.

Priority #6

Problem Identified

Data

Juvenile Crime:

Conduct by juveniles that is subject to legal action.

Juvenile crime referrals to the Matagorda County Juvenile Probation Department:

2011-12 was 215 2012-13 was 147 2013-14 was 117
 2014-15 was 151 2015-16 was 86

Burglary/theft, assault, and criminal mischief are the most common offenses for the 2015-2016 year.

From September 2014 – August 2015 Juvenile Municipal Court Cases: (offenses are ranked in order of highest to lowest) parent contribution to nonattendance (26), failure to attend school (28), transportation (61), driving under the influence of alcohol (0), non-driving alcohol (31), tobacco (20), violation of daytime curfew (9), all other non-traffic fine (19).

Potential Response to Problem

Solutions: The **Matagorda County Probation Department** has several programs to help juveniles redirect their choices away from criminal or negative behaviors including Anger Management and Substance Abuse counseling (Stewart Counseling), Parenting Classes and Boys Group/Girls Group/Individual Counseling (Brazoria County Counseling Center). Mentoring and Family Services (Y.A.P.), Mental Health Assessments/Crisis Intervention, Electronic Monitoring (Satellite Tracking of People, LLC), online Community Service Education (Youth Live Choices), and Behavioral Health/Sex Offender Treatment Services (Karen Hubbard). The Department also has contracts with placement providers around the state for juveniles that require more intensive services outside the home environment. Juveniles are assigned to these placement providers by court order.

There are a great number of programs offered to teens in Matagorda County. These include athletic programs such as youth baseball, softball, soccer and football programs and others throughout the county. There are other non-profit organizations in the county that provide services and programs to teens including area church programs, **Boys & Girls Club of Bay City/Matagorda County, Boys & Girls Club of Palacios, Matagorda County Fair and Livestock Association**, several 4-H organizations, scouting organizations and others. Barriers to broader youth participation include lack of outreach programs, financial barriers, parental encouragement and support, volunteer shortages, and lack of transportation.

Absences and truancy are handled in Bay City Independent School District at the campus level with various positive incentives, home visits, and referrals to Saturday School to make up instructional time missed. Parents are notified of absences daily through automated call/text system; "School Messenger". Additionally, written communication is sent through the mail after consistent pattern of absences occur.

Victim Issues (listed in order of priority, greatest need first)

Priority #1	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Domestic Violence:</p> <p>Domestic violence, also known as domestic abuse, spousal abuse, battering, family violence, and intimate partner violence (IPV), has been broadly defined violence, so defined; it has many forms including physical aggression (hitting, kicking, biting, shoving, restraining, slapping, throwing objects), or threats thereof; sexual abuse; emotional abuse; both controlling and/or domineering; intimidation; stalking; passive abuse (e.g. neglect); and economic deprivation.</p>	<p>In 2014-2015 the Crisis Center reports helping over 320 victims, primary and secondary of Domestic Violence in Matagorda County. In 2015, law enforcement reported 370 cases of domestic violence. (Tx Dept. of Public Safety, 2015)</p> <p>The Crisis Center is the only provider of emergency shelter and crisis intervention services for domestic violence victims in Matagorda County.</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>Solutions: The Matagorda County Women’s Crisis Center has been providing services to domestic violence victims since 1984. In addition, the Crisis Center has provided an Outreach Program in Wharton County since 1992. The Crisis Center works closely with local law enforcement agencies, the District Attorney’s office, County Attorney’s office, local medical providers, United Way and other social service providers to provide immediate crisis intervention services to victims of domestic violence in both counties.</p> <p>Domestic violence continues to be a major problem in our rural area, with not enough qualified advocates available. There is a critical need for victims of domestic violence to be able to access services that will provide immediate safety, emotional support, and personal advocacy after a crime crisis event. While the Crisis Center provides a wide range of services for victims, <i>such as twenty-four hour hotline, emergency shelter, peer support, crisis counseling, professional counseling and safety planning: emergency legal advocacy – including screening and applying for protective orders, support groups, transportation to shelter, accompaniment to law enforcement, courts, and hospitals by advocates, and information and assistance with Crime Victim Compensation;</i> victims do not always avail themselves of these resources, and appropriate referrals for services by law enforcement does not always take place. The need is for stronger training, collaboration, and the strengthening of services.</p> <p>Domestic violence is not exclusively an adult issue. Children are victims as well, both emotionally and physically. The Crisis Center has started a Children’s Advocacy Center to deal with child victims and the Boys and Girls Club of Bay City/Matagorda County offers free after school programming and onsite counseling for Crisis Center and CASA youth. .KIDS (Kids in Distress) provides referrals for counseling for children who are victims, but there is a need for qualified personnel to deal with child victims.</p>	

Boys & Girls Clubs of Palacios offer SMART Girls and Net SMART. The program's goals are to improve girl's knowledge of internet safety and level of self-esteem while reduce vulnerability to traffickers and abuse relationships. **Boys & Girls Club of Bay City/Matagorda County** partner with the **Junior Service League** to provide Smart Girls which is a small-group health, fitness, prevention/education and self-esteem enhancement program for girls

The **Matagorda County Women's Crisis Center** has partnered in establishing and providing space for a Children's Advocacy Center in Matagorda County. Now children who are victims of sexual assault and domestic violence will be cared for and counseled in Matagorda and Wharton Counties, instead of being taken out of the area for assistance.

Domestic violence is a learned, taught behavior that begins in the home and neighborhood. Presently the Matagorda County Women's Crisis Center prevention program seeks to address bullying, decision making, and teen dating violence through its school and after school programs. These traits develop in an atmosphere where respect, responsibility, and consequences are lacking. The need is for services that will provide the education and mentoring for youth. While several programs do exist, such as **Boys and Girls Clubs** and the prevention program at the **Crisis Center**, not enough youth are being reached.

Priority #2	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
Sexual Assault	<p>In 2014 Matagorda County law enforcement agencies reported 13 cases of rape. In 2014 Matagorda County law enforcement agencies reported 33 cases of sexual assault. Law enforcement agencies are reporting that sexual assault of adults and children has become a major problem.</p> <p>During the 2014-2015 year the Matagorda County Women's Crisis Center assisted 137 cases of sexual assault for both Matagorda and Wharton Counties. In 2012 some 75 cases of reported sexual abuse were made to CPS for Matagorda County</p> <p>Births to teens ages 13-19 out of all live births, were 20.2% in 2006, 17.3% in 2007, 17.9% in 2008, 14.5% in 2009, 16.0% in 2010, 14.7% in 2011, 15.1% in 2012. 12.3% in 2013. Births to single teens ages 13-19 out of all live births, were 16.0% in 2006, 12.9% in 2007, 15.1% in 2008, 12.8% in 2009, 13.4% in 2010, 13.7% in 2011, 13.9% in 2012. Previous stats are as per kidscount.org.</p> <p>Teenage pregnancy is linked to several risk factors. Being poor, living in a single-parent household, child abuse, and risky behaviors such as drug abuse and early or unprotected sex are all predictors of whether a teenager will become pregnant (Kirby 1997; Dillard).</p>

Potential Response to Problem

Solutions: The Matagorda County Women’s Crisis Center provides immediate crisis intervention with medical accompaniment for all sexual assault victims. In addition, services include the *24 hour hotline, emergency shelter, peer support, licensed professional counseling, legal advocacy and accompaniment to all legal proceedings and medical exams, case management, and many more services.* From the response, most victims do not report, but many seek services.

The Matagorda County Women’s Crisis Center has started a **Children’s Advocacy Center** for child victims of crime, or a witness to a crime in 2012. Statistics show that greater than 75% of the child victims served by Children Advocacy Center are victims of some type of sexual assault. These services assist the child, family, prosecution, CPS, and law enforcement in determining the true facts of the incident, individual/family advocacy, and emotion/psychological healing for the victims.

Kids in Distress (KIDS), an organization of long standing, provides emotional/psychological support for children who are victims of crime by paying for professional counseling.

An active collaboration between governmental and nonprofit organizations is needed in order to strengthen the services for victims. Presently there is not a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner’s program available within Matagorda County. Both adults and children are taken out of the county for a physical exam. While two organizations deal with child victims of sexual assault, adequate support of services is a continual need. In addition, professional counselors are in short supply.

Boys & Girls Clubs of Palacios offers BGCA program SMART Girls and Net SMART are incorporated in GIRL Strong. SMART Girls teaches girls how to develop healthy relationships. Net SMART teaches safe internet practices.

Teen sexual assault is a serious issue. The need is for education/mentoring for high risk youth. In addition, developing children who have a strong, healthy self-understanding of themselves is necessary if the rise is ever to be stopped. The **Matagorda County Women’s Crisis Center prevention program** seeks to instill a healthy self-awareness that will directly combat bullying, child sexual assault, and teen pressure for sexual behavior.

Priority #3	
<i>Identified Problem</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Lack of low cost/free Legal service:</p> <p>Basic Legal counsel for Divorce, child custody, tenant issues, wills, etc.</p>	<p>There is a need for pro bono assistance and resources to help with legal issues.</p> <p>In a United Way County-wide Needs Assessment Survey, 33% of respondents stated that lack of affordable legal services was a problem in Matagorda County. Currently, basic low-cost services must be obtained in Brazoria County on a limited basis. The Crisis Center reports that 85% of family violence victims are in need of legal assistance.</p>

Potential Response to Problem

Matagorda County is part of **Lone Star Legal Aid** catchment area. **Lone Star Legal Aid** comes once a month to provide a divorce clinic. **Matagorda County Woman’s Crisis Center** contracts with an attorney for services on a half time basis to assist with indigent domestic violence cases. At the same time the attorney is working with the **Matagorda Bar Association** to provide free legal clinics and pro bono assistance for indigent individuals. Over the last two years at least one pro bono clinic has been held each year.

Child custody cases, which require much time and effort, are common with domestic violence and child abuse victims. The need is for a combination of pro bono work and secure funding for an attorney for victim services.

Priority #4

Problem Identified

Data

Lack of Counseling and Medical Services:

Health care (or healthcare) is the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of disease, illness, injury, and other physical and mental impairments in humans. Health care is delivered by practitioners in medicine, chiropractic, dentistry, nursing, pharmacy, allied health, and other care providers. It refers to the work done in providing primary care, secondary care and tertiary care, as well as in public health.

The United States Census Bureau shows that in 2010 **19.2%** of residents in Matagorda County were in poverty and that **27.0%** of the residents under the age of 18 were in poverty. The unemployment rate in Matagorda County was **7.0%**, and was higher than the state’s average unemployment rate of **4.4%** according to the September 2015 Texas Workforce Commission website. According to the Crisis Center, **95%** of their clients live at or below the poverty rate, without insurance, and unable to obtain quality medical care or professional counseling.

Potential Response to Problem

Solutions: The **Matagorda County Women’s Crisis Center’s** professional counselor works with clients who are sexual assault, domestic violence, and child abuse victims. Counseling is needed because of the trauma associated with sexual assault, domestic violence, and child abuse. The Crisis Center is the only agency in Matagorda County that provides this service free of charge to all these groups. Presently one counselor covers two counties. Sexual assault victims that have special medical needs such as HIV must go to Galveston or Houston for treatment, counseling, information and referrals. Children who are sexually assaulted must travel out of county for examination. Domestic violence victims receiving emergency room or private doctor prescriptions often do not have the funds needed to obtain their medications. Agencies and other service providers are unwilling to assist with paying for pain medications. Bay City Police has a crime

victim's liaison who does an excellent job in working with victims of crime in Bay City. However, this position has suffered due to funding cuts.

MEHOP, a Federally Qualified Community Health Center (FQHC), provides healthcare services to Matagorda County and surrounding areas. **MEHOP** accepts all patients regardless of whether they are insured or uninsured. Services from **MEHOP** include not only medical, but also counseling.

Kids in Distress Services (KIDS), provides funding for psychological counseling for the victims of child abuse. Resources are limited with increased demand by child victims.

Boys & Girls Club of Bay City/Matagorda County and the Boys & Girls Club of Palacios partners with **Youth & Family Counseling Services** an onsite service that provides free counseling to parents of its members and to the general public.

Priority #5	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Need for safe affordable housing and/or funds to assist with utility and rental assistance:</p> <p>Public housing was established to provide decent and safe rental housing for eligible low-income families, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Public housing comes in all sizes and types, from scattered single family houses to high rise apartments for elderly families.</p>	<p>Matagorda County has two emergency shelters: (1) for victims of domestic violence/sexual assault, with a capacity of 35 beds, and (2) for general homeless, both single and families, with a capacity of 20 beds. There is no designated transitional housing available for victims. Section 8 vouchers for permanent housing are issued by The Bay City Housing Authority. Presently there are 247 Section 8 vouchers, with a waiting list. The housing authority reports that 40-50 requests are made weekly for housing.</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>Solutions: The Crisis Center has provided emergency shelter and services to victims of family violence and sexual assault in Matagorda County since 1984. However, many victims are not emotionally or financially ready for independence within the time allowed for emergency shelter. Many return to the abuser because of this reason. The need is for transitional and permanent housing for victims. With the growth of industry recently in the county, affordable housing for low income clients has become almost nonexistent. Some victims live a life of abuse, and need a permanent, sheltered environment in order to live without abuse.</p> <p>Substance abuse is a large factor in the abuse of adults and children. Presently the only facility within Matagorda County is Gulf Winds, which works with preteen and teen males. Currently Region 6 licensing is prevented, due to saturation in the Housing area. If this assistance could be provided, Gulf Winds could hold 16 males.</p>	

Priority #6	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Day Care Assistance:</p> <p>Supervision of and care for children or disabled adults that is provided during the day by a person or organization:</p>	<p>According to the Crisis Center, Over 90% of Crisis Center shelter clients lack funds to obtain quality day care for their children. Average cost for day care is \$400.00 per child monthly. The cost of day care is continuously rising, at a time of high unemployment rates.</p>
<p><i>Potential Response to Problem</i></p> <p>Solutions: Victims of domestic violence have minimum paying jobs with very little funds to find quality day-care for their children. Funding is needed to assist with child care. Rainbow Land Day Care, a 501©(3) organization in Palacios, provides day care with fees on a sliding scale to allow low income individuals and families the opportunity to work and go to school at a lower cost. Funding is needed to assist with lower cost day care throughout the county.</p>	

Priority #7	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Lack of transportation:</p> <p>Without public transportation, victims have difficulty finding transportation to appear in court proceedings or take care of everyday tasks</p>	<p>Public transportation is limited in Matagorda County. R-Transit provides transportation primarily to Medicare recipients and the elderly. Appointments must be made 24-72 hours in advance. Crime victims that lack transportation have had their access to service providers, social services, medical care, courts, the workplace, daycare and schools restricted due to lack of public transportation. Victims of domestic violence are often forced to leave their homes and possessions behind when they leave their abusive relationships. In a community wide need assessment through focus group community planning: Every area of focus including victim issues identified transportation as a serious issue.</p>
<p><i>Potential Response to Problem</i></p> <p>Solutions: Development of Logistical Transportation Plan: Sustainable transport systems make a positive contribution to the environmental, social and economic sustainability of the communities they serve. Transport systems exist to provide social and economic connections, and people quickly take up the opportunities offered by increased mobility. The advantages of increased mobility need to be weighed against the environmental, social and economic costs that transport systems pose.</p>	

Priority #8	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Lack of Job Skills or Job Training</p>	<p>According to the Texas Workforce Commission as of September 2015, the unemployment rate for Matagorda County was 7.0% and the state average was 4.4%. Individuals below the poverty rate in the 2010 Census are 19.2%, while the state average is 17.9%.</p> <p>Approximately 75% of Crisis Center family violence victims lack the job skills that are necessary to find meaningful work.</p> <p>There are limited employment opportunities for undereducated adults. Technical schools and/or job training facilities are not available in Matagorda County and referrals must be made outside of the county.</p>
<p><i>Potential Response to Problem</i></p>	
<p>Solutions: Adult/Youth Literacy and Workforce Skill Development assist with limited English skills, learning differences or individuals that are reading below the 8th grade reading level. The Adult Learning Center provides preparation for GED testing. E4E2 works with youth in securing a GED. The need is for support while victims are in preparation for testing. A job skills/life skills readiness person could be the advocate/mentor in preparing victims for education and job training. Boys & Girls Club of Palacios and Boys & Girls Club of Bay City/Matagorda County offers a BGCA program Junior Staff. Junior Staff teaches youth to develop leadership, responsibility, mentorship, and employable skills. Boys & Girls Club of Bay City/Matagorda County offers Career Launch, a program for teens allowing them to explore possible vocations, make sound educational decisions and find success in the world of work. Victims lack the understanding to navigate the system, as well as the internal energy to see the process through. This is a characteristic of individuals who have been emotionally, physically, financially, educationally, socially, and sometimes sexually beaten down and threatened. Individuals do not have day care available, or are not able to choose preparation over minimum wage jobs. While Junior College level classes are offered within the county, most victims are unaware, unwilling, or unable to reach this level. Greater outreach by the Junior College, and support services for part time and full time students is needed.</p>	

Priority #9	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Batterer Intervention Programs:</p> <p>Batterers are a separate category of violent offenders requiring specialized intervention. Jail and fines are not enough; programs are</p>	<p>Batterers ordered by the court to attend a state designed program. There is one state designated program, ADEPT.</p>

<p>needed to focus on ending the violence and abuse and on the batterer's capacity to change. Anger management classes do not work because they avoid fixing the responsibility on the batterer and imply that the victim is to blame.</p>	
<p><i>Potential Response to Problem</i></p>	
<p>Solutions: ADEPT has started a Batter Intervention Programs in Matagorda County.</p>	

<p>Priority #10</p>	
<p><i>Problem Identified</i></p>	<p><i>Data</i></p>
<p>Insufficient bilingual services for crime victims:</p> <p>Having or expressed in two languages (a bilingual document) (an officially bilingual nation)</p>	<p>According to the United States Census in 2010, the Hispanic community makes up 38.3% of the population in Matagorda County. This is a 7% increase from the previous year. Spanish speaking only individuals are under-served, and have a difficult time assessing services due to language, distance and cultural barriers.</p>
<p><i>Potential Response to Problem</i></p>	
<p>Solutions: Adult/Youth Literacy and Workforce Skill Development assist with limited English skills, learning differences or individuals that are reading below the 8th grade reading level.</p> <p>While different agencies seek to hire bilingual speaking staff, qualified, trained bilingual individuals are in short supply. Each agency that works with victims, Matagorda County Women's Crisis Center, Kids in Distress, CASA, Bay City Police Department, and others, each have a bilingual staff or referral sources. The need is for active training of qualified individuals, and the ability to attract and retain such individuals.</p> <p>E4E2, a local nonprofit whose mission is to make work and college ready youth who drop out of high school, and seeks to serve all drop outs, whether it is those whose language is English or some other.</p> <p>Matagorda County United Way Helpline is a local helpline that gives answers to important questions. The staff has the training, experience and understanding to listen and give the health and social service needs information for proper information and referrals. The resource database contains files on federal, state, and non-profit resources for human services for Matagorda, Wharton and Colorado County and beyond. The Helpline is a bilingual service.</p>	

Priority #11	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
Equipment and furniture needs for victims advocates/shelter:	<p>The need for updated computers, furniture, laptops, copiers, security cameras, DVRs, fax machines, filing cabinets, telephone systems, training aids shredders, shelter furnishings of commercial kitchen appliances, dining room, bedroom, and living room furniture are an ongoing challenge due to nature of victim's services.</p> <p>Technology is ever changing, with equipment life span being 3 – 5 years. Furniture and appliances in shelters have about the same life span, due to continual use and abuse by clients.</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>Solutions: Victim service organizations, such as CASA, KIDS, Matagorda County Crisis Center, and others must have the basic tools in order to effectively provide services and reporting requirements with local, state, and federal agencies. Funding is needed to update and replace obsolete equipment and furnishings.</p>	

Priority #12	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
Lack of trained volunteers for child victims of abuse/neglect	<p>In 2015 CPS reports that there were 42 confirmed cases of child abuse/neglect in Matagorda County. CPS also reports that there is a lack of qualified foster homes for these children within Matagorda County. CPS also reports that in October of 2012, 95% of the children placed in foster care were placed outside the county due to a lack of qualified foster homes within the county. As of the last report in 2015 this has not changed.</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>Solutions: CPS is the qualifier of foster care homes for children of abuse/neglect. The need is for more approved homes within the county. The primary advocate for these children is CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate). This organization provides the monitoring and advocacy for these children. The need is for more trained volunteers to advocate for the needs of abused/neglected child victims.</p>	

Education Issues (listed in order of priority, greatest need first)

Priority #1	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>High School Drop Out Rate:</p> <p>A Student who withdraws before completing a course of instruction.</p>	<p>Bay City's graduation rate for 2016 was 91.8% and the dropout rate for 2015-2016 was 2.0%. The highest dropout rate was White at 2.3%. (2015-2016 is the most current data you can get for graduation and dropouts.)</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>Solutions: Offer Communities in Schools to school districts to provide and to coordinate student assistance services at the school campus in order to best meet the physical and emotional needs of at-risk students and to empower these students to remain in school.</p> <p>Bay City High School provides Credit Recovery program for students at risk of dropping out.</p> <p>Bay City Independent School District provides evening adult literacy classes to acquire English and Spanish.</p> <p>Provide the National Fatherhood Initiative to the community to engage fathers, build capacity to serve fathers with customized strategies to improve their fatherhood skills which positively benefits our at-risk children.</p> <p>Extended Day Program that provides students in grades six thru eight, an after school program that gives them a safe place to go and join in extracurricular activities. The creation of mentor programs throughout all Matagorda County school districts is a priority. A mentor is an experienced person who acts as a role model and a guide to others who are learning. The purpose of mentoring is for one person to pass along the knowledge he or she has gained from experience, to another person who is traveling down the same path. In this capacity, the mentor becomes an advisor, coach, advocate, role model, and trusted friend to his or her protégé. The Bay City Independent School District has a mentor program in each of their schools, but needs more mentors. Bay City ISD also offers tutoring programs in community churches and Impact Center.</p> <p>Motivational Speakers: These speakers educate at risk students to prevent high school drop outs by helping them make the right decisions in life. One of the most talked about topics in such assemblies pertains to drug abuse and child rebellion. Using a unique approach to bridge the gap between adults and youth, these speakers aim to discuss different issues with young people.</p> <p>Development of Logistical Transportation Plan: Sustainable transport systems make a positive contribution to the environmental, social and economic sustainability of the communities they serve. Transport systems exist to provide social and economic connections, and people quickly take up the opportunities offered by increased mobility. The advantages of increased mobility need to be weighed against the environmental, social and economic costs that transport systems pose.</p> <p>Several programs support youth who have dropped out including Literacy Volunteers of America, Empowerment for Exceeding Together (E4E2), Wharton County Junior College Adult Education Program, and Palacios High School Adult and ESL programs. The Rural Literacy Coalition continuously explores state and federal funding opportunities to address this issue.</p>	
Priority #2	

<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Health Literacy:</p> <p>Health literacy is the ability to understand health information and to use that information to make good decisions about health and medical care. Health information can overwhelm even people with advanced literacy skills. About one third of the adult population in the United States has limited health literacy.</p>	<p>Bay City Independent School District's economically disadvantaged students for 2016-2017 was 69.4% for grades Pre-K thru 12. These individuals lack proper health care and proper health care literacy.</p> <p>This means that over half of the population of Bay City, has no access to health care information for deterrence of health risk related behavior such as obesity and AIDS.</p> <p>Matagorda Independent School District's economically disadvantaged students for 2016-2017 was 52.3% for grades Pre-K thru 8th grade.</p> <p>Palacios Independent School District's economically disadvantaged students for 2016-2017 was 65.5% for grades Pre-K thru 12th grade.</p>
<p><i>Potential Response to Problem</i></p>	
<p>Solutions: MEHOP and Matagorda Regional Health Center and Palacios Community Medical Center are dedicated to providing quality and compassionate healthcare to our community through wellness events. The three medical entities have programs providing diabetes education.</p> <p>AIDS Coalition does anonymous HIV testing (free), prevention counseling, health education/risk reduction, HIV Prevention education, case management for HIV/AIDS, clothing assistance, financial education/emergency assistance, housing assistance, medication assistance program, transportation, volunteer services. Spanish speaking staffs are available.</p> <p>Friends of Elder Citizens, Inc. (FOEC) is a 501©(3) private non-profit organization formed in 1979 and incorporated in 1981, administered by a Board of Directors elected by the open membership. Public Board Meetings are held the third Thursday of every month at the Palacios Senior Center. FOEC offers Group and Individual Activities (both recreational and educational), Health and Safety Education and hot Nutritional Meals to persons 60 years of age and older. FOEC operates programs to meet the needs of senior citizens in Matagorda and Jackson Counties for Nutrition, Transportation, Recreation and Socialization.</p> <p>R-Transit provides transportation primarily to Medicare recipients and the elderly. Appointments must be made 24-72 hours in advance. In a community wide need assessment 2002 survey done by United Way, 36% of respondents reported lack of transportation as being a major problem.</p> <p>The Texas State Department of Health Services is partnering closely with the Rural Literacy Coalition to help in the development of countywide health literacy activities.</p> <p>School Health Advisory Committee (SHAC) is a group of individuals representing segments of the community, appointed by the school district to serve at the district level, to provide advice to the district on coordinated school health programming and its impact on student health and learning. The SHAC will assist the district in ensuring that local community values are reflected in the district's health education instruction.</p>	

Priority #3

Problem Identified

Data

Teenage Pregnancy:

Definition: Pregnancy by a female, age 13 to 19, which is understood to occur in a girl who hasn't completed her core education – secondary school – has few or no marketable skills, is financially dependent upon her parents and/or continues to live at home and is possibly mentally immature.

According to the 2010 Census, the state average of children 18 and below living at or below 200% of the poverty level is 49.97%, while in Matagorda County that percent is 61.53%. Making the county significantly higher than the state.

Teen birth rates were obtained from the National Vital Statistics System (NVSS) at the National Center for Health Statistics, part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The last Community Plan reported 3.1% of the populated female adolescents experiencing teenage pregnancy. 2009 Texas data for Matagorda County shows a pregnancy rate of 5.0%

Potential Response to Problem

Solutions: Bay City Independent School District, Palacios Independent School District, Matagorda Independent School District, Van Vleck Independent School District, and Tidehaven Independent School District require assistance with availability of more well-rounded sexual education programs, and need to include more than one tool to help arm our young people against unwanted pregnancies and the spread of venereal diseases.

MEHOP is a Federally Qualified Community Health Center (FQHC) providing healthcare services to Matagorda County and surrounding areas. MEHOP has expressed interest in hosting Health and Sex Education classes, and they accept all patients regardless of whether they are insured or uninsured.

Boys & Girls Club of Bay City/Matagorda County offer prevention programs such as Smart Girls and Smart Moves, a decision making and critical thinking program, as well as, a how to avoid/resist premature sexual activity.

The Pregnancy, Education and Parenting Program (PEP) is a drop-out prevention program designed to aid students who are pregnant or parenting, to remain in school, even during difficult circumstances. PEP offers a variety of services enabling students and their families to utilize remaining in school as a viable option. This program has been in existence since 1989 and has allowed many students to not only complete high school, but also to move on to post high school education and training.

A full time **Community Learning Hub** is active in Palacios. **Young Life** is a group of mentors who offer support to young mothers with skills needed as well as free childcare. . **Women's Pregnancy Center (WPC)** provides all services free of charge. Identification of pregnancies and provides proof of pregnancy documentation. Peer-counseling services: information about pregnancy and pregnancy options (parenting, abortion, adoption), post-abortion counseling and education, sexual health education. Referral information: assistance in obtaining prenatal medical services and finding other community resources and agencies. Parenting Education Program: information about raising a healthy family, prenatal education, childbirth classes, nutrition during pregnancy, smoking and drug use during pregnancy, parenting infants through raising adults, setting boundaries and goals for self and family. WPC provides a mentor opportunity for young mothers. Life Skills: money management, home management, interview & job skills, and sexual avoidance. Participants in the parenting program may earn vouchers which can be used to purchase baby care items in the boutique onsite. WPC does not offer, recommend or refer for abortions or abortifacients.

Priority #4	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Lack of Availability of Resources and/or Updated Technology:</p> <p>Technology touches almost every part of our lives, our communities, and our homes. Yet most schools lag far behind when it comes to integrating technology into classroom learning. Many are just beginning to explore the true potential tech offers for teaching and learning. Properly used, technology will help students acquire the skills they need to survive in a complex, highly technological knowledge-based economy.</p>	<p>With a high Hispanic population there is only \$81 per student for Bilingual/ESL learning technology and assistance in Bay City, Texas.</p> <p>There is only \$223 allotted per student for much needed student support services such as tutoring, college prep and other accelerated interests for High School students in Bay City, Texas.</p> <p>Effective tech integration must happen across the curriculum in ways that research shows deepen and enhance the learning process. In particular, it must support four key components of learning: active engagement, participation in groups, frequent interaction and feedback, and connection to real-world experts. Effective technology integration is achieved when the use of technology is routine and transparent, and when technology supports curricular goals.</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>Solutions: Adult/Youth Literacy and Workforce Skill Development assist with limited English skills, learning differences or individuals that are reading below the 8th grade reading level. Their goal is to identify students in middle school, out of school youth and adults, and collaborate with existing services to ensure they are prepared for meaningful employment and living wage careers.</p> <p>Matagorda County United Way's main focus areas include education, income and health.</p>	

Priority #5	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Financing for GED and Vocational programs:</p> <p>General Educational Development (or GED) tests are a group of five subject tests which, when passed, certify that the taker has American or Canadian high school-level academic skills. The GED is also referred to as a General Education Diploma, General Equivalency Diploma, and Graduate Equivalency Degree.</p>	<p>According to CLR search national demographics on Bay City, in 2010, 2,603 people were recorded in Bay City alone, over the age of 25 without the completion of a High School Diploma. This means that 25% of this age group does not have a High School education. Due to the dropout rate, there are many individuals seeking assistance to obtain a GED.</p> <p>There are no agencies that help students pay for the actual test, and the cost for the test is \$135.00.</p> <p>Students seeking vocational training are usually routed to outside municipal areas requiring assistance for transportation.</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>Solutions: One of the main focus areas of the Palacios HUB, under the direction of the Rural Literacy Coalition, will be to strengthen delivery of GED Test support and Vocational programs in Matagorda County.</p> <p>The Rural Literacy Coalition is working closely with HGAC to increase services in the area, and explore increased vocational opportunities, entrepreneurial job development, pre-bridge and bridge programs and new growth sector development including eco-tourism especially highlighting the national birding status of the region.</p> <p>The focus of Matagorda County United Way is identifying and resolving pressing community issues, as well as making measurable changes in communities through partnerships with schools, government agencies, businesses, organized labor, financial institutions, community development corporations, voluntary and neighborhood associations, the faith community, and others. The issues United Way offices focus on are determined locally because of the diversity of the communities served.</p> <p>Matagorda County needs funds to assist GED testing applicants. The charge for GED testing is \$135.00 and all GED testing is done outside Matagorda County which requires transportation assistance.</p> <p>Adult/Youth Literacy and Workforce Skill Development programs assist with limited English skills, learning differences of individuals that are reading below the 8th grade reading level. Their goal is to support pregnant teens to complete their education.</p>	

Priority #6

Problem Identified

Data

Lack of Pre-K thru 8th Grade Fine Arts / and after-school programs:

After-school hours are times when juvenile crime hits its peak, but through attentive adult supervision, quality after-school programs, we can protect our children. As this report shows, in communities with comprehensive programs, children are less likely to commit crimes or to be victimized.

Teaching through the arts helps students experience concepts rather than simply discussing or reading them. This approach is consistent with educational theories that highlight the importance of using multiple learning styles or intelligences.

The fine arts also provide learners with non-academic benefits such as promoting self-esteem, motivation, aesthetic awareness, cultural exposure, creativity, improved emotional expression, as well as social harmony and appreciation of diversity. These are the very fibers of the fabric known as our American culture.

Potential Response to Problem

Solutions: The Boy Scouts of America provide a program for young people that builds character, trains them in the responsibilities of participating citizenship, and develops personal fitness.

Boys and Girls Club of Bay City/Matagorda County has just finished five years of operation, and there has been a need to expand with a waiting list from the beginning. They have proven the difference being made by after-school programs, but need more funding in order to touch more young people. **Palacios Boys and Girls Club** opened in 2001 and is also offering after school programs, and also need more funding. After-school programs also can help to improve the academic performance of participating children. For many children, their reading and math scores have improved in large part because after-school programs allow them to focus attention on areas in which they are having difficulties. Many programs connect learning to more relaxed and enriching activities, thereby improving academic performance as well. **Boys & Girls Club of Bay City/Matagorda County** offers several programs focused on the Arts such as, Music Makers, a National Photography Program and partners with the Art League of Bay City in a sketch and paint program.

First Book provides new books to children in need, addressing one of the most important factors affecting literacy – access to books. An innovative leader in social enterprise, each year, First Book distributes millions for free and low-cost books to disadvantaged children and the programs that serve them. First Book – Matagorda County provides new books to children through eligible community organizations like preschools, day cares, after-school programs, and tutoring/mentoring programs. This literacy program services 80% or more of children from low-income households. The children take home and keep the books that they receive.

The Palacios Library provides an after school tutorial program making computers available to students in Palacios and Blessing to work on school related projects. Many of these students do not have access to computers at home.

Rainbow Land Day Care, Palacios, Texas utilizes educational curriculum for children ages 1-4, preparing children for entrance into kindergarten.

Head Start programs in school districts throughout the county provide education for children ages 3 & 4, giving them a “head start” for entering kindergarten.

Matagorda United Methodist Church has a latchkey program that has been in effect for several years in Matagorda, Texas. It is maintained and operated by members of the church. A school bus drops them off at the church from school, and the church members provide a snack and help with their homework. They have computers with educational activities available as well. It is a free program, operating only thru an annual fundraiser and donations.

Need an **Extended Day Program** that would provide students in grades 6 thru 8 an after school program that gives them a safe place to go and join in extracurricular activities that include a variety of fine arts.

Priority #7

<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Education and Training for First Responders concerning people with mental health issues and other developmental disabilities.</p>	<p>The incidence of mental health and developmental disabilities occurs often throughout the population nationwide, 25% of adults reported some form of mental illness. It is further estimated by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) that 50% of adults will have an instance of mental illness at least once during their lifetime. Many mental health disorders are accompanied by symptoms of impaired understanding and difficulty with communication. Depression is the most common type of mental illness, affecting more than 26% of the U. S. adult population (Kessler RC, Chiu WT, Demier O, Walters EE. Prevalence, severity, and comorbidity of 12 month DSM-IV disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication. Arch Gen Psychiatry 2005;62:617-627) It has further been estimated that by the year 2020, depression will be the second leading cause of disability throughout the world, trailing only ischemic heart disease. With the suicide rates in Matagorda County currently at 10.93 deaths per 100,000 people according to data from 1999-2013 taken by the CDC.</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>Solutions: Specific training for first responders to understand the characteristics of mental illness is needed as well as access to a crisis line with a mental health specialist who can assist first responders and the community with critical situations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for first responders can be provided through local agencies such as Texana, Matagorda County Educational Services, and the Matagorda County Interagency Community Resource Coordination Group for Families • Prevent-educate.org has an Autism Awareness Training for Texas Firefighters, Paramedics, EMTs, Police Officers and other First Responders. • The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration has tip sheets and toolkits for dealing with Mental Illness at low or no cost. www.samhsa.gov 	

Law Enforcement Issues (listed in order of priority, greatest need first)

Priority #1	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Outdated and Worn-Out Equipment</p>	<p>Matagorda County Sheriff's Office received over 6900 calls for service (that are logged in the system) in a 10 month period. There are four Law Enforcement agencies within our jurisdiction (Palacios PD, Bay City PD, Tide Haven ISD PD and Bay City ISD PD). These other agencies do not handle calls out of their jurisdiction leaving the (4) four Deputies on shift to handle all the calls for Matagorda County. The dispatcher will receive a call for service and log the information in the computer, but the ability to see the information is removed once the information is saved. The current program used in dispatch is not a CAD system and does not allow dispatchers to keep up with deputies. Should an issue arise, dispatch has to log the information on a piece of paper to keep up with the location and information of the citizens needs as well as where the officer is. The lack of a CAD system is a grave risk to the patrolmen.</p> <p>Commonly identified equipment needs include body armor, computer aid-dispatch, radar units, In-car camera, surveillance equipment, forensic equipment, training aids and equipment, radios, photography equipment, specialized SRT negotiations equipment, K-9 equipment, standard patrol equipment and vehicles.</p>
<p><i>Potential Response to Problem</i></p>	
<p>Solutions: Modern law enforcement is technologically based. Therefore, law enforcement agencies needs to be funded to meet the most current technology in order for law enforcement to police the community in a safe, effective and efficient manner. Vehicles with high millage and excessive wear and tear provide a great risk to the officer and civilians that are in need of emergency assistance and replacement of the vehicles is a must.</p>	

Priority #2	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Law Enforcement Recruitment and Hiring Efforts to Attract and Hire Qualified Personnel for Matagorda County</p>	<p>Matagorda County has 4 local agencies that employ law enforcement officers and support staff. Each of these agencies compete with each other, as well as the agencies in the Greater Houston area, Brazoria County, Jackson County and various state and federal agencies, for applicants who possess the educational requirements and character that will enable them to pass the background investigation, criminal history check, drug test, physical fitness, and any other tests required by these agencies and be able to be hired. After being hired, these same agencies struggle at times to retain good employees and not lose them to other agencies that have better pay, signing bonuses, benefits, training opportunities, assignments, etc.</p>

	<p>Reasons for turnover included promotions, demotions, retirements, termination, and resignations for family, disciplinary, and new opportunities at other agencies or in the private sector that were where the employee wanted to be located. Excluding disciplinary resignations, and those for an unknown reason, the leading reasons for leaving an agency had to do with higher wages, personal reasons, such as changing to a preferred location, or tending to ill family members.</p> <p>Only one agency offered a hiring bonus, and stated that it was effective in hiring good, experienced employees, who were then encouraged to stay through high pay, great fringe benefits, and good agency leadership. Agencies that did not have a hiring bonus cited fair treatment, opportunity for advancement, job satisfaction, opportunity for employee input, training opportunities, competitive pay, adequate recognition, pride in the organization and coworkers, good supervision and agency leadership, adequate equipment, and employees who wanted to reside in the area for personal reasons as ways to retain personnel.</p> <p>When considering what programs should be implemented if money was available, its recognized step pay tied to years of service, increased vacation based on years of service, education incentives, take-home vehicles, opportunities for more self-initiated programs by the officers, adjusting pay scales to be more competitive, and developing an integrated approach to recruit and retain employees since employees come to and stay with organizations for various reasons.</p>
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<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>Solutions: Identify funding sources to assist Matagorda County law enforcement efforts to attract, hire, and retain competent and capable staff; to develop programs for teenagers and young adults that can deter them from making bad decisions with regard to drugs or criminal activity that will preclude their future employment in law enforcement; recruitment of youth through Law Enforcement Explorer Posts that can help provide a pool of local applicants who want to make their professional life in the field of law enforcement within Matagorda County; creating working environments within agencies that meet the needs of employees and contribute to retention.</p>	

Priority #3	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Insufficient Law Enforcement Training Resources</p>	<p>The Matagorda County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) is not a provider of law enforcement training and therefore must seek, at the mercy of other agencies, mandatory training as required by law.</p> <p>MCSO needs a Training Agreement to provide annual training for peace officers, judges, prosecutors, probation officers, and other criminal justice practitioners.</p> <p>Each agency has similar problems with insufficient training resources, including MCSO. Training classes that are being purchased from a</p>

	<p>contractual source or from an academy, such as mandatory classes and breaching courses for patrol officers, as well as basic and in-service courses needed by a growing number of officers in various agencies as new officers. Discussions of training needs have confirmed that the training courses noted above are still needed. However, there are also other topics needed by law enforcement officers in the county.</p> <p>Communication skills, including report writing, verbal tactics, crisis intervention techniques, and courtroom testimony were identified as skills needed by officers in a majority of daily situations. Additionally, communicating with the growing Spanish-speaking population is a continual problem. Hearing and speech impaired individuals present another challenge for communications in routine and emergency situations. Yet, very little quality, cost-effective training is available on this topic. Another topic set included tactical training for patrol officers, such as active-shooter intervention, tactics for off-duty officers, barricaded high-threat offenders, combat casualty care for first responders, and low-light shooting skills. This skill set is imperative to prepare officers to fulfill their role in homeland security as first on the scene. A third training need identified was the need for judgment and decision making in high-risk activities, such as firearms use and driving. Firearms and driving simulators are offered in the marketplace; however, the expense makes them too costly for many agencies to purchase on their own. Moreover, trained operators and instructors are needed to ensure a positive learning experience.</p>
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Potential Response to Problem

Solutions: To support specialized training in a variety of communications skills, tactical skills for patrol officers, and training simulators to enhance judgment and decision-making in high-risk activities.

Priority #4	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Speed Limit Control</p>	<p>It is well known that the speed of a vehicle is the main determining factor for the appropriate following distance, reaction distance, and braking distance. Speed is also the primary determinant of the kinetic energy of a vehicle upon impact with another vehicle or object, and it is that energy that causes the forces that destroy vehicles and kill or maim the occupants. Peripheral vision diminishes as speed increases, reducing situational awareness. The county roadways include state highways, an interstate highway, farm-to-market roads, city streets, and county roads. Construction is almost always present somewhere within the county.</p> <p>Some roads were not built for the speeds common today, while newer roadways in such good condition provide a real temptation to drive over the speed limit. Traffic volume hampers efforts to safely enforce speed laws, at times allowing motorists to drive 20 to 30 miles over the speed</p>

	<p>limit without worry of being held accountable. All law enforcement agencies in Matagorda County have worked to bolster enforcement. While effective in some respects compliance rates on most roadways remain very low.</p>
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Potential Response to Problem

Solutions: Enforcement of traffic laws has a deterrent effect upon the motoring public. Efforts must be made to safely increase enforcement efforts and visibility, especially during periods of high traffic volume. Engineering solutions must also be sought in areas that have a history of crashes due to speed, and efforts must be made to reduce traffic congestion that then causes people to feel as if they must drive too fast to arrive on time. Effective education programs for the general public and traffic violators must be developed and implemented to change poor driving behavior, especially for the 15-24 year old age group who were involved in over 44% of the speed-related crashes, although they comprise less than 15% of the population. New methods, techniques, supplies, and equipment that can improve casualty care treatment and transportation to reduce mortality in crashes should be pursued. Patrol units with radar detection equipment will act as a deterrent to speeders and with an increase in patrol vehicles on the roadway will create more visibility of law enforcement presence and cause a self caution mode in the driver to monitor their speed and reduces the fatality risk of accidents.

Priority #5	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Preparation for Civil Disobedience Situations</p>	<p>Civil disobedience is the active refusal to obey certain laws, demands and commands of a government, or of an occupying power. It is one of the primary methods of nonviolent resistance, but can easily manifest itself into a dangerous situation. Managing crowds is one of the most important task law enforcement performs. Law enforcement agencies must be prepared to respond appropriately to a civil disobedience situation to insure the safety of all involved, as well as the rights of all involved. There has been assorted techniques and tools used by modern law enforcement to quell civil disturbances over the years, but a properly equipped force is a common denominator for any chance of success. Properly equipping and training a law enforcement response group is expensive. After any significant civil disturbance in which large-scale property damage, loss of life, or both occur, law enforcement agencies are held accountable. Clearly, law enforcement needs contemporary tools to help control these types of situations. The community as a whole and law enforcement will benefit by having available, properly equipped, trained and effective law enforcement to disperse crowds and/or make arrests during civil disobedience incidents. Contemporary assessments show that Matagorda County, Texas has areas of concern throughout the jurisdiction. Various state, national and world companies are located within Matagorda County that could attract controversial attention should a situation arise.</p>

Potential Response to Problem

Solutions: To improve officer training and safety to reduce the risk of injury not only to the officers involved, but others as well by utilizing a safer alternative to conventional weapons in controlling dangerous or combative situations.

To seek funding sources that would provide equipment and improve the effectiveness of units that have been trained to respond to civil disobedience situations with the purchase of new and/or replacement equipment.

Priority #6

Problem Identified

Data

Lack of Resources to Provide an Organized Approach to the Management of Traumatic Stress Reactions Experienced by Matagorda County First Responders

According to the 2010 “**Crime in Texas**” report compiled by the Texas Department of Public Safety, the death or assault of a law enforcement officer seriously impacts the feeling of security in society. As the possibility of being assaulted may discourage persons from considering law enforcement careers, attacks on police officers reduce their ability to combat crime. As such, violence towards police equals violence towards society.

While line-of-duty deaths and assaults resulting in serious and debilitating injuries are at the forefront of psychological stressors for first responders, critical incidents such as child death scenes, multiple fatality accidents, and the casualties encountered during natural and/or manmade disasters are equally stressful and oftentimes have a compounding negative effect on the psyche of the responders, be they law enforcement, fire, or emergency medical staff.

Jeffrey Mitchell, PhD, has defined a critical incident as, “Any situation faced by personnel that causes them to experience unusually strong emotional reactions which have the potential to interfere with their ability to function either at the scene or later. All that is necessary is that the incident, regardless of the type, generates unusually strong feelings in the personnel.” A critical incident has also been described as any event which overwhelms the capacities of a person to psychologically cope with the incident. At present, there are more than **15** first responder agencies in Matagorda County, inclusive of fire, emergency medical, and law enforcement services. These agencies employ hundreds of full-time and volunteer staff members, all of whom are engaged in critical incident response on a daily basis. While individual agencies may offer employee assistance programs to some degree, there is no cohesive county-wide program to address traumatic stress involving first responders and/or a plan to provide critical incident stress management for large scale traumatic events and disasters.

Potential Response to Problem

Solutions: Emergency Response agencies in Matagorda County would benefit from the development of a county-wide Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Team, responsible for providing debriefings following critical incidents to any agency requesting assistance. The focus of this service is to minimize the harmful effects of job stress, particularly in crisis or emergency situations. The highest priorities of the team are to maintain confidentiality and to respect the feelings of the individuals involved. It is not the function of the team to replace on-going professional counseling, but to provide immediate crisis intervention. Through the CISM process, the team provides personnel a tool to potentially alleviate stress related symptoms. The second purpose of the CISM Team is to provide education regarding critical incident stress to all personnel.

Solutions to this issue are less about funding and more about facilitation and a commitment of personnel during critical incidents. However, identification and training of qualified staff dedicated to CISM Team response will place a burden on participating agencies in terms of commitment of time, costs of training, and costs of coverage of duties while identified staff is engaged in training activities. Additionally, participating agencies will have the responsibility of providing salary and benefits to staff members committed to the CISM Team and deployed during an approved activation which may require a response outside of the immediate jurisdiction of the participating agency.

The funding stream dedicated to CISM Team formation available to all participating agencies on a “per participant” basis could serve to eliminate some of the initial hesitation on the part of Matagorda County law enforcement agencies to commit qualified staff to the initiative. Matagorda County may elect to follow a proven model of response whereby Texas CISM Network resources are used exclusively. However, for the sake of expediency and to fully realize the benefit of pre-incident educational efforts, Matagorda County would best be served by engaging the Texas Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Network in a partnership whereby local first responders are professionally trained to provide crisis intervention and pre-event education. Additionally, these Matagorda County team members could be utilized in regional disaster responses as part of the full Texas CISM Network.

The **Texas CISM Network** was established in 1992 to assist emergency service personnel, including dispatchers, who have experienced a critical incident such as line of duty death, death of a child, multiple casualty/fatality scenes and natural or human caused disasters. Network teams are made up of first responders, selected members of the clergy, mental health professionals, and community members who are trained to the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF) CISM standards. Network teams provide supportive crisis intervention services and traumatic stress management education to emergency response personnel, disaster workers, and other public safety personnel. The focus is to minimize the harmful effect of job stress and accelerate the recovery of those personnel who have been traumatized in these situations. The services provided are therapeutic in nature but are not therapy and do not replace professional counseling, therapy, or employee assistance programs. Through the Network, Texas Disaster Behavioral Health Services (BDHS) is able to provide an organized approach to the management of traumatic stress reactions for persons who have been exposed to, or who are showing signs of acute traumatic stress experienced in the line of duty.

Priority #7	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
Mental Health and Mental Health Transports	There is 1 certified Mental Health Officer for Matagorda County Sheriff's Office, 3 at Bay City Police Department, and Palacios Police Dept. does not have any. The Sheriff's Office answered approximately 745 calls for service involving mental health in 2016, and transported numerous patients to mental health facilities. The Bay City Police Dept. answered approximately 300 calls for mental health and Palacios Police Dept. responded to approximately 30 calls that necessitated transport of a patient to a Mental Health Facility. Mental Health escalates yearly and the burden is continually placed on Law Enforcement by the Legislators without resources. Mental Health transportation is one of the leading causes of the depletion of the agencies overtime budgets. Each agency is forced to use manpower from all divisions of their departments, as well as the wear on department equipment.
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
Solutions: Something has to be done about Mental Health transports, which takes 6 man hours to transport to the Houston area or 10 to 12 hours for facilities beyond. This is a major drain on each individual agencies man power. There needs to be at least 2 certified mental health officers and 2 mental health transport officers although there should respectfully be more trained with respect to the size of the County.	

Priority #8	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
Infrastructure improvements and the addition of cameras	<p>The Palacios Police Dept. is located in the Matagorda Annex Building in Palacios. It was the old City Hall before it was used as a County Annex Building. It is an aging structure and has no cameras. The holding cell is antiquated and cannot be used for anything but short term holding and it does not have any cameras. In fact, there are no cameras in the entire Annex building.</p> <p>The Bay City Police Department currently has 40% of their office filled with evidence, so they are checking into a new building, or moving the evidence out of the Police Department Building and revamping the office space.</p> <p>Matagorda County Sheriff's Office is also looking into ways to improve the jail and office usage. The County Jail is antiquated and 33% of the jail cells are not open to housing inmates due to the infrastructure issues.</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
Solutions: Any repair to an infrastructure can be extremely costly. Since Matagorda County Sheriff's Office - Detention center is the only jail in the county to house inmates; it is imperative that Matagorda County Sheriff's Office seeks financial grant assistance to build a new jail. With the age of the Matagorda County Courthouse and the structure issues, it would be cost effective to build a Criminal Justice Center that will house the Sheriff's Office, Detention Center, District Attorney's office and	

Matagorda County Courts. By combining the different departments it will limit the amount of time a transport officer is needed and allow the extra time to be spent by jailers working in the jail. With the current transport procedures (due to lack of holdings) the jail is sometimes short on staff to provide for transport to and from the courthouse. Patrol is often used to transport inmates, but this has caused delays due to call volume. There is currently one holding cell at the courthouse for inmates being transported to the court and it is reserved for male inmates. Single problematic inmates must be separated from their prospective victims. Overflow inmates are housed in a regular room that is not appropriate for containment. Lack of female holding cells makes it problematic to hold female and male inmates at the same time, even when ordered by the Court. By law Attorneys are awarded private conversations with their client including moments before actually going in to the court room, but with the space already at max capacity we're not capable of housing the inmates at the court house pending the Judge calling them in. If a fight should break out in the current cell, it is dangerous for officers to enter the current cell as it is entered in the shallow end and expands longer. Inmates not involved in the altercation have nowhere to be placed should blood be present from the altercation which exposes them to the blood borne pathogens. Palacios Police Department does not have the financial ability to replace or remodel their building, but they are seeking financial assistance to, at a minimum, purchase a camera system.

Priority #9	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
Drug and Human Smuggling	<p>Matagorda County has 63 miles of coastline and approximately 200 miles of inland waterways. This along with State Highway 35, that links the drug Cartels and the violent drug gangs and the Houston Galveston areas to the Texas Rio Grande Valley, the largest illegal drug importation and Human trafficking area, from Mexico to America. Matagorda County Law Enforcement consists of the Sheriff's Office, Bay City Police Dept., Palacios Police Dept., the Independent School Districts Police, Constables, Texas Highway Patrol and Parks and Wildlife Officers. Approximately 76,000 calls for service are answered by the Sheriff's Office, Bay City Police Dept. and the Palacios Police Dept. in a year. These calls are taken care of by 36 sworn county officers, 37 sworn Bay City Police Dept. officers, and 15 sworn Palacios Police Dept. officers.</p> <p>The County is positioned so that the county is in the middle, east and west between Galveston and Corpus Christi, and south between Houston and Victoria, falling into jurisdictional boundaries of the Houston offices of both Federal and State Law enforcement entities. Therefore there is no full time Law Enforcement assistance from the State or Federal Officers. Any assistance comes from a request leading to a case by protocol. There are no supplemental resources provided to county law enforcement.</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>Solutions: The local law enforcement agencies are doing the best they can with the officers they have available, but they need supplemental resources from the state and federal governments in order to protect Matagorda County, as well as, the Southern District of Texas. With the borders being easy to cross in vehicles now, due to the massive amount of traffic coming and going, it is easy for human and drug smugglers to transport their cargo. If Matagorda County could obtain and operate and License</p>	

Plate Reader (LPR) we would have better resources to stop vehicles crossing the border multiple times and preform checks. The LPR will also serve as a tool to potentially capture “Most wanted” and prevent further crimes

Priority #10	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
Port and Inland Water Security	<p>Matagorda County is located at the middle of the Texas Gulf Coast with approximately 62 miles of coastline and approximately 200 miles of inland waters. Along with the East and West Matagorda Bays, Turtle Bay. Colorado River, Tres-Palacios River, the Intercostal Waterway and the Eastern Matagorda Island, there are hundreds of miles of unimproved county roads in the Southern part of Matagorda County that are excellent clandestine landing strips. The City of Palacios has the Port of Palacios that consist of 4 turning basins with numerous fish houses and docking ports that virtually have no security.</p> <p>The Port of Palacios is virtually wide open to smuggling, illegal immigration and Terrorist movements, and the closet Coast Guard stations are in Port O'Connor and Freeport.</p> <p>The Port of Palacios is operated and controlled by the Matagorda County Navigation District, and they do not have any Law Enforcement personnel or security systems in place.</p> <p>The Matagorda Island has houses and a landing strip that has the length and capability of use by a medium twin engine aircraft.</p> <p>There are approximately 40,000 residents of Matagorda County and approximately 20 Law Enforcement Officers on duty daily, with approximately 14 officers at night. This is a ratio of 1 Law Enforcement Officer for every 2,500 residents.</p> <p>This leaves the water ways, Ports and isolated areas unprotected.</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>Solutions: There is a great need for resources, in order to add officers to patrol the ports and waterways specifically. This will allow for special attention to the small back roads that are usually not patrolled.</p>	

Mental Health Issues (listed in order of priority, greatest need first)

Priority #1	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Lack of Counseling and Mental Health Services.</p>	<p>The United States Census Bureau shows that in 2015, 20.5% of residents in Matagorda County were in poverty, and 30.9% of the residents in this county under the age of 18 are in poverty. The unemployment rate for Matagorda County, according to the Texas Workforce Commission, was 7.4% in 2016. According to the Crisis Center, 95% of their clients live at or below the poverty rate, without insurance, and unable to obtain professional counseling or psychiatric care services.</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>Solutions: The Matagorda County Women’s Crisis Center’s professional counselor works with client who are sexual assault, domestic violence, and child abuse victims. Counseling is needed because of the trauma associated with sexual assault, domestic violence, and child abuse. The Crisis Center is the only agency in Matagorda County that provides this service free of charge to all of these groups. Presently one counselor covers two counties. Sexual assault victims that have special medical needs, such as HIV, must go to Galveston or Houston for treatment, counseling, information, and referrals. Children who are sexually assaulted much travel out of county for examination.</p> <p>MEHOP, Matagorda Episcopal Health Outreach Program, a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), provides behavioral healthcare services to Matagorda County and surrounding areas. MEHOP accepts all patients regardless of whether they are insured or uninsured; MEHOP accepts most private insurances, Medicaid, Medicare, and offers a sliding fee scale for self-pay patients. MEHOP’s behavioral health department provides counseling and psychiatry services for children, adolescents, and adults; they also provide some psychological testing.</p> <p>Mint Counseling Center provides counseling for children and adolescents.</p> <p>Kids in Distress Services (KIDS) provides funding for psychological counseling for the victims of child abuse. Resources are limited with the increased demand of child victims.</p> <p>Boys & Girls Club of Bay City/Matagorda County and the Boys & Girls Club of Palacios partners with Youth and Family Counseling Services, an onsite service that provides free counseling to parents of its members and to the general public.</p>	

Priority #2	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
No Inpatient Mental Health Treatment Centers/Hospitals within the Area & Lack of Transportation	The United States Census Bureau shows that in 2015, 20.5% of residents in Matagorda County were in poverty, and 30.9% of the residents in this county under the age of 18 are in poverty. The unemployment rate for Matagorda County, according to the Texas Workforce Commission, was 7.4% in 2016. According to the Crisis Center, 95% of their clients live at or below the poverty rate, without insurance, and unable to obtain professional counseling or psychiatric care services.
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
Solutions: Texana (the local MHMR) is able to assess patients identified, either by self-referral or by an immediate care provider, and should it be deemed necessary by the crisis response assessment care team, the patient may be transported by a Matagorda County Sherriff's deputy to Texana's inpatient facility located in Rosenberg.	

Priority #3	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
Substance Abuse and Chemical Dependency	<p>Matagorda County does not house a LCDC (Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor).</p> <p>The National Survey on Drug Use and Health reported that 5% of adolescents (ages 12-17), 16.3% of young adults (ages 18-25), and over 14 million adults over the age of 25, 15% being elderly, struggled with substance abuse in 2014.</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>Solutions: BACODA (Bay Area Council on Drugs and Alcohol) offers services that include assessment, counseling, support, education, and presentations. MADD (through victim impact panels), Crisis Center (through relationship/bullying program), DARE (in Tidehaven ISD), and the Boys and Girls Club of Bay City/Matagorda County and Boys and Girls Club of Palacios (through is Smart Moves/Passport to Manhood programs) serve an important function in building healthy juveniles educated in substance abuse to aid in preventing substance abuse in adolescence and adulthood.</p> <p>MEHOP, Boys & Girls Club of Bay City/Matagorda County, and Matagorda County Women's Crisis Center offer counseling to those who qualify, however, the counseling is with a Licensed Professional Counselor or Clinical Psychologist, not a Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor.</p>	

Transportation Issues (listed in order of priority, greatest need first)

Priority #1	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Transportation needs to be done on a larger level than just Matagorda County, there needs to be a Regional Plan</p>	<p>There is a need for funding for bike safety, adding additional lanes on State Highways and markings for city streets.</p> <p>There is a need for funding a study on how to connect Matagorda County, Port of Bay City, and the flow of goods and services to I-69 and State Highway 36A</p> <p>There is a need for funding and a study done on how to handle high truck traffic during construction of Phillips 66, Conoco, and Tenaris.</p> <p>There is a need for funding and a study on handling over 900 trucks a day in early 2017 with full production of Tenaris a pipe manufacturing plant.</p> <p>There is a need for funding and a study to eliminate hazardous materials from the downtown area in Bay City.</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>Solutions: As the Focus Group came together to talk about this, they decided that this needed to be a joint effort, so the Matagorda County Regional Plan is a joint effort between Matagorda County, the City of Bay City, the City of Palacios, the Bay City Community Development Corporation, the Matagorda County Economic Development Corporation and the Bay City Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture to develop a common vision and strategic framework to help Matagorda County’s Transportation portion of the Matagorda County Community Plan to successfully manage the significant growth projected for the region. Micropolitan Planning Organization for Matagorda County is developing a long range land use and transportation plan for local communities. In recognition of the need for a more holistic, strategic approach to regional planning, the Matagorda County MPO was created as a way to develop locally-conceived plans that identify local transportation goals and define projects and implementation strategies to achieve these goals. A key component of our approach is the recognition that transportation systems, land use, and economic development are strongly linked and therefore need to be integrated into an overall plan. Priority projects that are identified through the planning efforts will be incorporated into the Transportation part of the Matagorda County Community Plan.</p> <p>Matagorda County is 90 miles southwest of the City of Houston and Harris County and is 40 miles due south of Richmond/Rosenberg in Fort Bend County. The primary study area for this project focuses around Wharton, Fort Bend and Brazoria County, as these counties are along the north and east side of Matagorda County.</p> <p>Effective transportation facilities are integral to community growth and a key component to a community’s economic success. Matagorda County is truly fortunate to be experiencing an outflow of explosive industrial development and there appears to be more on the way. The main points are growth, economic development and quality of life.</p> <p>The enhancement of highway corridors should serve to connect and simplify our lives, but effecting change without a cohesive plan can actually divide the communities and impede mobility. Economic planning continues through the efforts of the active membership of chamber of commerce’s and the MCEDC.</p> <p>Though our efforts of planning for economic growth and expansion, we wanted to protect and accentuate the rich history and natural beauty that brought Austin’s Old 300: the first settlers to Texas and develop new neighborhoods with the characteristics that will allow value to be maintained in a sustainable manner. To support each of the stakeholder jurisdictions in implementing the strategies and projects developed in this plan.</p>	

Resources Available

Included below are resources identified by the Matagorda County Community Planning Team that are available to provide services that could potentially help in closing criminal justice gaps:

Juvenile Justice:

<i>Name of Agency</i>	<i>Agency Type</i>	<i>Description</i>
Bay City Independent School District		School
Matagorda Independent School District		School
Palacios Independent School District		School
Tidehaven Independent School District		School
Van Vleck Independent School District		School
Matagorda County D.A.'s Office	Prosecution	Prosecutes Juvenile Cases
Juvenile Probation Department		Supervises the probation of juvenile offenders. Supervises Motivation Day/ALERT Program
Children's Protective Services	Investigation	Investigates reports of abuse and neglect of children, provides services to help youth in foster care, places children in foster care.
Matagorda County CASA	Non-Profit	Provides Court Appointed Special Advocates for abused and neglected children involved in the courts. Provides referral information, awareness programs, and crime victims' compensation help and information.
Kids in Distress Services (KIDS)	Non-Profit	
Boys and Girls Club of Bay City/ Matagorda County	Non-Profit	Boys & Girls Club is a community-based organization that provides young people with a fun, safe, and constructive environment when they are not at home or school. Boys & Girls Club offers programs and services designed to build character and strengthen life skills. Neighborhood-centered, Clubs provide programming in specialized areas, including character development, educational enhancement and career exploration. Clubs are staffed by paid, trained youth development professionals. Through a system of informal guidance, Club staff form strong bonds with young people and help them make smart choices in life. For many Club members, Club staff are the most influential positive adult role models in their lives.

Boys & Girls Club of Palacios

Non-Profit

After School and Summer Program for youth ages six to eighteen.

Law Enforcement:

Name of Agency

Agency Type

Description

Matagorda County Sheriff’s Office

Law Enforcement

Provides information to victims regarding the investigation of their case and assistance with Crime Victim Compensation.

Bay City Police Department

Law Enforcement

Provides information to victims regarding the investigation of their case and assistance with Crime Victim Compensation.

Palacios Police Department

Law Enforcement

Provides information to victims regarding the investigation of their case and assistance with Crime Victim Compensation.

Matagorda County Crime Stoppers

Law Enforcement/Citizen Program

Provides case incentives to witnesses to come forward and report crimes

Matagorda County District Attorney’s Office

Prosecution

Provides victims with information, referrals, assistance with Crime Victim Compensation and court notification.

Victim Services:

Name of Agency

Agency Type

Description

Matagorda County Women’s Crisis Center

Non-Profit agency for Domestic violence and sexual Assault victims

Provides crisis intervention services to victim’s of domestic violence and sexual assault which includes 24-hour hotline, shelter, professional counseling, and transportation, accompaniment to hospitals, courts and law enforcement, assistance with protective orders.

United Way of Matagorda County

Non-Profit

Provides community resources and referrals to other agencies that assist citizens in need.

Community Resource Coordination Group for Families (CRCGS)	Non-Profit	Coordinates community resources to assist citizens in need.
Child Protective Services	Investigation	Investigates reports of abuse and neglect of children, and contracts with others to provide clients with specialized services.
Matagorda County District Attorney's Office	Prosecution	Provides victims with information, referrals, assistance with Crime Victim Compensation and court notification.
Matagorda County Crime Stoppers	Crime Victim Group	Support Group for crime victims to share thoughts and feelings on individual experiences and ideas for purpose of assisting other victims.
Matagorda County CASA	Non-Profit	Provides trained child advocates who act as Guardians Ad Litem for abused and neglected children. Provides community awareness and educational programs as well as referral information.

Health / Medical / Substance Abuse

<i>Name of Agency</i>	<i>Agency Type</i>	<i>Description</i>
Bay Area Council on Drugs and Alcohol	Non-Profit	Provides assessments and referrals to those with substance abuse issues.
Matagorda Episcopal Health Outreach Program (MEHOP)	Non-Profit	Mission is “to improve the health status of clients by providing quality primary healthcare services and spiritual care to people in the communities it serves regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, or the ability to pay”. MEHOP began in 1998 through a vision of three Episcopal churches in Matagorda County who identified a medical need for the underserved rural population. In June 1999, MEHOP broadened its scope and opened a permanent fixed site facility in Bay City.

Prevention / Intervention:

Name of Agency

Matagorda County Women’s Crisis
Center

Agency Type

Non-Profit

Description

Provides shelter and crisis intervention services to domestic violence and sexual assault victims. The center also provides community awareness programs and educational programs to the community.

Matagorda County CASA

Non-Profit

Provides trained community volunteers who speak for the best interest of abused and neglected children in court. Provides educational and awareness programs, and referral/information on area resources

Texana Mental Health

Interagency Cooperation

The following is a description of how the various resources listed in the previous pages could cooperatively work together to accomplish the goal of closing identified gaps in services:

The Matagorda County Women’s Crisis Center has cooperative working agreements with all area law enforcement agencies, district attorney’s office, Child Protective Services and local hospitals as well with other social service providers to insure that victims will receive the best possible crisis services available. The Crisis Center is continuing its efforts to coordinate a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) in an effort to provide effective services to sexual assault victims; this is being done in a two-county wide area. Additionally, the center coordinates all community resources for domestic violence and sexual assault victims through its hotline, offices and outreach office as well as providing shelter. The Matagorda County Women’s Crisis Center is working hard to reduce the incidents of sexual assault and domestic violence in our community through crisis intervention services, advocacy, community awareness, professional trainings and community involvement.

Matagorda County CASA has cooperative working agreements with law enforcement, County Attorney, District Judge, and Children’s Protective Services to ensure that child victims receive appropriate services, proper legal representation, ultimately leading to placement in safe, nurturing, permanent homes. CASA acts as a liaison among these agencies advocating for the best interest of abused and neglected children, ensuring that child victims’ cases progress in a timely manner reduction the amount of time a child must stay in the State’s custody. In addition, CASA provides information and referrals, community awareness programs, educational materials, and free advocacy training to community volunteers. Law enforcement, the County and District Attorneys, CASA, and Children’s Protective Services could further enhance services to child victims by formulating and agreeing to a plan that would allow child abuse cases and criminal cases to progress smoothly without further victimizing the children.

Fort Bend Regional Council on Substance Abuse is a potential partner to provide Substance Abuse Treatment Services.

Long-Range Plan Development, Monitoring and Evaluation

The Matagorda County Community Planning Team works in conjunction with other planning groups in the county to ensure a regular exchange of ideas. Individuals active in the planning process generally serve on many of these committees and share mutual concerns.

The Matagorda County Community Planning Team strives to meet periodically to review the Plan and make necessary additions and deletions. At least one formal meeting of the entire group is held each fall, but agency and community representatives typically submit suggestions and changes via telephone and e-mail throughout the year to the Community Planning Coordinator.

Drafts and annual updates of the Community Plan are circulated by e-mail with requests for comments, changes, etc. Wherever possible e-mail is used to reduce the need for meetings, printing, postage, etc.

It is the intent of the Community Planning Group to improve outcomes for Matagorda County families struggling with problems described in the Plan's focus areas. Efforts are being made by many Matagorda County agencies and organizations to address problems with local funds as well as grant funds from multiple state and federal sources. To the extent that these funds are available, the Community Planning Team will continue to encourage agencies to provide programming that addresses the outlined focus areas.

Contact Information

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This Plan is available on-line at the following URL address:

www.co.matagorda.tx.us