

Wharton County Criminal Justice Community Plan 2017-2018



Fall, 2017

Wharton County Criminal Justice Community Plan

What Is a Community Plan?

This plan is formally known as the Wharton 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 each county in Texas have a Criminal Justice Community Plan.

The document that is represented here reflects the efforts of many in Wharton County that are concerned with assuring that any gaps in services that are identified are closed in a way that will both solve the problem and provide as great a benefit to the community as possible. It is with grateful acknowledgement that the names of those involved in the process of developing this plan are listed in the following page(s) under Part II (Community Planning Group).

Though the final draft of this plan was completed in December 20, 2011, this is a work in progress. New criminal justice goals are identified, the Planning Group changes as a result of individual and agency circumstances, and requirements concerning the makeup of the Plan are subject to change from year to year. Thus, Wharton County is interested in keeping up with these changes, and including such 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 Patty D. Shannon, Community Plan Coordinator for Wharton County or to the Criminal Justice Program of the Houston-Galveston Area Council. Contact information is provided within this document.

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

Areas Represented

Incorporated Communities:

Wharton
East Bernard
El Campo

Unincorporated Communities:

Boling	Hungerford
Iago	Louise
Lane City	Danevang
Mackey	Egypt
Magnet	Glen Flora
New Gulf	New Taiton
Pierce	Hillje

School Districts:

Wharton ISD	Boling ISD
East Bernard ISD	Louise ISD
El Campo ISD	

In addition to the school districts noted above, Wharton County is served by two parochial/private schools and Wharton County Junior College with classes offered on the Wharton Campus and at Northside Education Center in El Campo

Brief Description of Wharton County:

Wharton County is located forty-five miles north of the Gulf of Mexico, adjacent to Fort Bend County to the Southwest of Houston. The county is a rural agricultural region of 1094 square mile in the path of growth from the rapidly expanding Houston metroplex. The 2011 US Census estimates place the population at 41,280.

Wharton County's proximity to the Gulf of Mexico and Houston makes it a prime location not only for agriculture and industry but also as a residential location for those working outside Wharton County. Wharton County is predominantly agricultural, with some tourism and industrial business. It has not yet felt the development pressure affecting counties adjacent to Houston, and in fact its population was essentially unchanged from 2000 to 2010. Growth from Houston along the US 59 corridor and the potential for development of Interstate 69 through Wharton County are expected to spur additional growth in the future.

The local unemployment rate has stayed a point or more below the national average during the recession for a workforce estimated at 20,373 persons. However, the 2010 median household income of \$36,980 is nearly \$12,000 below the state average reflecting the fact that 18.9% of families and 24.1% of children are living below poverty level. These figures are not acceptable. While long term stable economic and cultural change takes time, the people of Wharton County are determined to support the changes recommended in this plan in order to improve the lives of all our citizens.

Community Planning Team

Community Plan Coordinator for Wharton County: Patty D. Shannon / Court Coordinator / Wharton County Judge's Office, Assisted by Pat Joyce, Rural Literacy Coalition

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>
Billie Jean Bram, Juvenile Probation	Wharton County Juvenile Probation
Kandace Nasis, Executive Director	Boys & Girls Club of Wharton
Jill Stafford, Executive Director	Boys & Girls Club of El Campo
Cory Braden	Wharton Little League
Jeanette Krenek, JP	JP Precinct One
Cynthia Kubicek, JP	JP Precinct Two
Dennis Korenek, JP	JP Precinct Three
Timmy Drapela, JP	JP Precinct Four
Trey Maffett, County Attorney	County Attorney's Office
Charlotte Jackson, Executive Director	Just Do It Now, Inc.

Victim Services:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Agency</i>
Monica Tucker, Operations Director	Wharton Crisis Center
Karen Heintschel, Executive Assistant	WEDCo
Eugene Davis, Executive Director	Crisis Center
Charlotte Jackson, Executive Director	Just Do It Now, Inc.

Law Enforcement:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Agency</i>
Clint Savino, Chief Deputy	Wharton County Sheriff's Dept.
Shannon Srubar, Sheriff	Wharton County Sheriff's Dept.
Roxane Marek, Director	Wharton County Adult Probation
Terry Lynch, Chief of Police	Wharton Police Department
Terry Stanphill, Chief of Police	El Campo Police Department

Education

<i>Name</i>	<i>Agency</i>
Betty McCrohan, President	Wharton County Junior College
Wade Stidevent, Superintendent	Boling ISD
Tina Herrington, Superintendent	Wharton ISD
Elene Gavedeni, County Librarian	Wharton County Library System
Cindy Kloesel, Voc/Hab	Texana MHMR

Identification of Community Problems General Public Safety Needs and Issues

Through a process of information sharing and statistical data collection, the governmental agencies, school districts, law enforcement agencies and non-profit agencies in Wharton County continue to highlight significant problems faced by children, youth and families.

Research shows a direct correlation between literacy level and criminal behavior. Therefore, a section entitled “Education” has been added to the Wharton County Plan. Literacy goes far beyond being able to read and write. It is a lifelong learning process of understanding and using basic skills across a wide spectrum of knowledge including math, finances, technology, culture, science, health and the workforce. We could even say that knowing how to conduct oneself in a given situation is a form of literacy. All these aspects of “literacy” are necessary for an individual to live a fully functioning productive life.

Statistical data with supporting narrative is provided on the county’s overall educational level and the detrimental effect it has not only on law enforcement, but also employment and overall quality of life. Included are statistics on current educational attainment from pre-kindergarten through adulthood along with solutions planned to address the illustrated needs.

Continued improvement in the communication and cooperation among various agencies must occur when addressing the contributing factors of crime, e.g., poverty, addiction, family violence, child abuse, education, truancy, teen pregnancy, as well as insufficiencies in proactive areas such as crisis management, conflict resolution, effective parenting, and literacy training

In each of the following areas, problems are identified and data is included that supports both the existence and severity of the problems as they are found in Wharton County. Along with discussion of the problems, is the manner in which these problems are being addressed and, strategically, how responses to these community problems could be improved.

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 Wharton 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)

Identified Problem:

Data Collection:

Substance Abuse	Alcohol Usage: Teens consuming alcohol are an ongoing problem in Wharton county. The County’s four (4) Justice of the Peace courts and the two City courts in El Campo and Wharton reported ticketing minors for the following offences:			
	Years	14	15	16
	Minor in Possession	25	22	4
	DUI	13	1	11
<p>There was a total of 231 juvenile cases were referred to the juvenile probation department during the reporting period of September 1, 2015 through August 31, 2016. Of the reported referrals, 20 were for drug offences 15 possession of Marijuana (MB), 2 Delivery of Dangerous Drug (SJF), and 2 Possession of Controlled Substance (SJF). Other offenses that Juveniles were arrested for were Assault of a Public Servant (5), Assault Causes Bodily Injury Family Member (7), Aggravated Assault Date/Family/House/w/weapon (2), Assault Bodily Injury (6), Misdemeanor Theft (5), Felony Theft (1) Burglary of a Habitation (1), Burglary of a Building (6), Theft (5) Burglary of a Motor Vehicle (3), Engaging in Organized Criminal Activity(4) Evading Arrest (2), Terroristic Threat (2) Criminal Trespass(4), Indecency with a Child Exposes (1) Criminal Mischief (1), Resisting Arrest Search or Transportation (5) and Theft of a Firearm (1).</p> <p>For more than two decades, researchers, clinicians and juvenile justice program administrators have been aware of the consistent relationship between alcohol and other drug (AOD) use and juvenile crime. (National Institute of Justice)</p> <p>When young people engage in alcohol and other drug use, they, their families, and their communities usually suffer. In some cases, because of the strong association between substance abuse and delinquency, an increased burden is also placed on the juvenile justice system. Since 1992, the high rate of illicit drug use among youth has been steadily increasing.</p> <p>The use of drugs and alcohol and juvenile delinquency can be directly related as substance abuse indirectly offers motivation for other crimes. All providers working with the juveniles identify substance abuse as a significant issue and agree that the use of drugs and alcohol is for more prevalent than reported. Substantial numbers of juveniles received by the probation department from</p>				

**Substance Abuse
(continued)**

other referrals have reported that they use drugs or alcohol on a regular basis, information supported by a report by the Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring Program (ADAM) data suggesting “that a high proportion of juveniles (likely the majority) processed by the juvenile court have recently used illegal substances.”

Frequently violations of probation for juvenile offenders are for drug use. Drugs and alcohol contribute to a variety of problem areas including juvenile violence, truancy, curfew violations, thefts, and increased sexual activity. An article from the NCJRS states that “people who persistently abuse substances often experience an array of problems, including academic difficulties, health-related problems (including mental health), poor peer relationships, and involvement with the juvenile justice system.”

Drugs and alcohol also added to family impairment by limiting a parent’s ability to properly direct and supervise their children. Drugs and alcohol are commonly being used by parents or other family members in the household. This environment can only increase the chance that the juveniles are going to experiment or continue to use and further increase the chance of juvenile delinquency. The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University released a comprehensive "white paper" documenting some alarming health risks and an epidemic in the making. Specifically, parents who use illegal drugs, abuse alcohol and use tobacco put 50% of the nation's children -- more than 35 million of them -- at increased risk of substance abuse and of physical and mental illness.

Some juveniles are using illegal substances to escape the everyday issues and or problems. They are not being taught coping skills by the family to deal with life issues effectively. The community lacks the resources to appropriately address the serious needs of juveniles and their families. In order to receive in-patient treatment, the family has to seek the services outside the county.

A 2010 CASA report, Criminal Neglect: Substance Abuse, Juvenile Justice and The Children Left Behind, is based on 2000 arrestee and juvenile court data, the most recent available in sufficient detail for this analysis. The report found that juvenile justice systems cost society \$14.4 billion a year just in law enforcement, courts, detention, residential placement, incarceration, substance abuse treatment and federal block grants.

If other costs, such as those for probation, physical and mental health, child welfare and family services, school and victims are included; the price would more than double. A \$5,000 investment in substance abuse treatment and getting other appropriate

services for each juvenile who would otherwise be incarcerated would pay for itself in the first year if only 12 percent stayed in school and remained drug and crime free.

Moreover, the report found, if we could prevent crimes and incarceration of 12 percent of substance-involved adult inmates with juvenile records, we would have 60,480 fewer inmates and 5.9 million fewer crimes, and we would realize \$18 billion in avoided criminal justice and health costs and in employment benefits.

Solutions: Allocate from current funds the \$5,000 suggested above to provide for substance abuse treatment and other needed services for juveniles and their families. Institute the education changes suggested in the next section

Solutions have to be as varied as this problem is complex. Kids who are busy, doing well in school, and have stable home lives are less likely to become involved with drugs. To make a dent in the problem will take years of community commitment and effort. Issues of educational preparation from birth, after school programs to supplement school efforts, better schools, more involvement in extra-curricular activities, breaking barriers to parental involvement in schools, parenting and life skills training for families as well as adult education and training are addressed in the Education Section of the Wharton County Plan. All of these are part of the solution to substance abuse. Local availability for treatment is a serious need for which grant funding will be sought. . Boys & Girls Clubs of El Campo and Boys & Girls Club of Wharton offer a BGCA program SMART Moves. SMART Moves is an evidenced based preventative program that helps youth resist alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Boys & Girls Club of Wharton offers a prevention program called Girl Circle that is sponsored by the Wharton County Juvenile Probation Office. Just Do It Now is a certified to facilitate the D.O.E.P. (Drug Offender’s Education Program) which is required by the legal system. They are the only certified facilitators in Wharton.

Identified Problem:

Data Collection:

<p>Insufficient Mental Health Services</p>	<p>Wharton County Juvenile Probation supervised 83 juveniles. There were 30 juveniles placed on Official Probation and 14 juveniles placed on deferred prosecution during September 1, 2015 through August 31, 2016. 4 juveniles were placed into residential placements from September 1 2015, through August 31, 2016. 83 Juveniles received some form of counseling services from September 1, 2015 through August 31, 2016.</p> <p>Counseling All juveniles placed on probation receive some type of referral to counseling; generally, to one of the following agencies: Texana MHMR, ACE Drug and Alcohol services, STAR, Wharton Psychiatric Services and local licensed professional counselors. These agencies have insufficient capacity to meet the need.</p>
---	---

Many of the youth we encounter have multiple mental health issues including depression, anger, suicide, thought disturbances, as well as traumatic experiences.

Gender
 Wharton County had more referrals of female juveniles than we have in the past. Generally, they have experienced a traumatic experience primarily sexual assault in their past. Assault FV is the most common offense they are arrested for. Many already referred to the local mental health authority TEXANA.

Family Involvement
 The family dynamics are so diverse that they required not only more, but a broader variety of interventions. Programs working with entire family such as basic life skills, parenting management skills and job training are not available to help family's deal with the problems the youth are encountering today. The families need strong, ongoing encouragement and counseling to improve their lives and the lives of their children.

Additionally, many parents do not speak English and this is causing a stumbling block to delivering necessary services. Most families lack the money or transportation to access services outside the county. Transportation is the biggest problem with juveniles and their families being able to make counseling appointments.

Solutions: Public transportation that is available day and night. Funding is needed to provide greater variety of mental health/substance abuse counseling services for juveniles. Priority should be given to the STAR program since it is available locally and is the only one that is without charge which is often the only viable option for underprivileged. All youth on Medicare or with private insurance can be referred to the services who charge for their services but accept these sources of payment. The ACE program offers services at very modest fees. Working with faith based programs that meet state and federal guidelines could add to currently available services.

Identified Problem:

Data Collection:

Crisis Among Hispanic Youth Hispanics make up 38.3% of population. But, for the past two years, Hispanic youth made up nearly two thirds (2/3) of the caseload for Juvenile Probation. During the three previous years the number neared three quarters (3/4) of the caseload as confirmed by the charts below. The report also shows the majority of problems begin in the early teen years.

YEAR 2015-2016	FELONIES		CLASS A&B		Violation Probation		Contempt Magistrate Order		TOTALS		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	T
AF. AM	6	0	12	8	3	0	0	0	12	8	26

CAUCASIAN	1	0	1	1	6	0	0	0	1	1	3
HISPANIC	13	5	23	15	4	5	0	0	23	15	54
TOTALS	20	5	36	24	13	5	0	0	36	24	83

YEAR 2014-2015	FELONIES		CLASS A&B		Violation Probation		Contempt Magistrate Order		TOTALS		
RACE	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	T
AF. AM	12	1	12	4	3	1	1	0	28	6	34
CAUCASIAN	8	2	10	2	2	0	0	0	20	4	24
HISPANIC	23	6	25	11	2	2	0	0	50	19	69
TOTALS	43	9	47	17	7	3	1	0	98	29	127

YEAR 2013-2014	FELONIES		CLASS A&B		Violation Probation		Contempt Magistrate Order		TOTALS		
RACE	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	T
AF. AM.	7	2	11	8	5	0	0	0	23	10	33
CAUCASIAN	12	0	5	1	1	0	0	0	19	1	20
HISPANIC	7	2	18	8	4	2	1	0	30	12	42
TOTALS	26	4	35	17	10	2	1	0	72	23	25

Crisis Among Hispanic Youth (continued)	<p>Parent's dependence on their children to translate and help them with a variety of tasks may cause the children to lack respect for or be embarrassed by their parents. This problem is exacerbated when the children become Americanized while their parents do not. English speaking children can easily deceive their Spanish speaking parents who do not have easy access to information. A breakdown of parental control enhances the chance of delinquent activity.</p> <p>Educationally, Hispanic youth are falling behind and dropping out of school at alarming rates. This is discussed more fully and supported by verifying data in the education section.</p> <p>The juvenile justice problems are precursors for future behavior. A fact confirmed weekly in the arrest reports of local papers. There is a critical need to address this crisis as the Hispanic population growth indicates this to be an increasing and ongoing problem.</p>
<p>Solutions: Study and apply the research that leads to successful remediation. Recognize the connection between educational difficulties and delinquency and link with school efforts and out-of-school programs that work on remediation. Seek mentors and/or tutors to provide one on one support.</p>	

Connect with providers of youth activities to encourage them to take on troubled youth. Be knowledgeable of programs that get the child involved, keep them busy and offer a positive influence including but not limited to sports, 4H, scouts, ROTC, music, art, church, clubs—refer to anything that. Involve the family to whatever degree feasible.

Confront cultural norms that reinforce delinquent behavior and reinforce those that have a positive impact. Do not be afraid to involve the church as priests have tremendous influence over both the children and the parents. Support participation in ESL classes for Spanish speaking parents.

Push the value of education and training for lifetime success. Get the community involved to provide places for work or service. Offer training for those from the community who are helping in any capacity.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

<p>Language Barrier</p>	<p>According to the 2014 Census, Hispanics make up 39.7% of the population in Wharton County and are becoming a larger percentage every year. Census data also reports that in Texas, at least one-in-five residents spoke Spanish at home in 2007.</p> <p>The problem of illegal immigration is a major contributing factor to the ongoing issue of not speaking English. Most immigrant populations are English speakers by the second generation. With the tremendous yearly influx of Hispanic illegal’s crossing our border this never has a chance to happen.</p> <p>Another difficulty is that speaking Spanish is so firmly entrenched in some areas that many immigrants may feel no pressure to learn English. According to a census report in 2003, 44 percent of Hispanics did not speak and read English well enough to perform routine tasks, while in 1992 the percentage was 35 percent. This means the illiteracy rate for Hispanic adults rose during the decade whereas it declined for every other major population group</p> <p>There are not enough bilingual employees to meet the need for translators in every area of law enforcement as well as for those providing counseling and health services.</p>
<p>Solutions: Every effort should be made to hire a translator who could serve the whole county from a fixed location. A phone or video link is a viable option to overcome the language barrier for not only juvenile cases but all law enforcement throughout the county.</p>	

Identified Problem

Data Collection

<p>Lack of Public Transportation</p>	<p>Colorado Valley Transit District provides deviated fixed route service and “demand-responsive” transportation service for Wharton County from 6 am to 6 pm on weekdays. Late night,</p>
---	--

emergency trips and specialized weekend transportation service are not available. Additional route transportation service is needed to adequately address the challenges faced by both individuals and agencies needing transportation.

There is a charge of \$10 round trip when county lines are crossed. For example, if a person needs to come from Colorado County (also served by Colorado Valley Transit) to Wharton County for school, medical or other ongoing needs this fee must be paid each time making the cost prohibitive for regular use by most who would utilize the service.

The U.S. Bureau of the Census profile for year 2000 on vehicles per household had 7.1% of the population with no vehicles; 34.7% with one vehicle and 41.25% with 2 vehicles. Additional to the number of vehicles available per household, the majority of those vehicles are used to commute to and from work and not available to address general public safety needs and issues.

Lack of additional transportation alternatives is a contributing factor in a multitude of problems faced by Wharton County residents. Access to school, the workplace, and service providers (including medical clinics, daycare, after-school programs, and various social service providers) is impeded when an adequate level of service is not an option. Free and subsidized public transportation is needed to address the access needs of residents.

#of juveniles transported:	2,935
#of transportation trips to activities & Services:	6,486
#of transports to school/work:	4,631
#of transports medical/dialysis	10,475

Total number of trips for Wharton County is 30,985 from September 1, 2016 thru August 31, 2017.

Total vehicle miles were 145,322 for FY year

Solutions: Expand the hours and routes of Colorado Valley Transit to include evenings and week-ends. Subsidize the charge for crossing county lines for those who need transportation service to get to jobs or access education or medical services on a regular ongoing basis. Lack of funds and limited resources demonstrate the need for increased funding and continue emphasis in providing solutions for all of the problems identified in order that effective change may occur. Grant funding will be sought to meet these ongoing needs.

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

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

Identified Problem

Data Collection

Domestic Violence	<p>According to the Texas Department of Public Safety, in 2016, there were 437 incidents of Family Violence reported in Wharton County as defined by the Texas Family Code. This is an increase over last year number of 405 and reflects a consistent increase each year with the previous years since 2011 when there were 456 cases reported. Domestic violence remains the leading cause of injury to women in the United States. Approximately three battered women are killed by their partners each day. In Texas during 2016, 146 women were murdered across Texas including at least one person in Wharton County. This is the most since records have been kept. To provide victims an opportunity to pursue a safe and independent lifestyle, shelter, counseling, and legal support services are critical.</p> <p>The Wharton County Crisis Center has been providing shelter and support to victims of family violence and sexual assault in Matagorda and Wharton Counties since 1984. Services offered include a 24-hour crisis hotline, safe house, trained advocates and therapists, protective orders, community awareness education, professional referrals, personal accompaniment, resale shop and support group. The goal of the crisis center is to provide services to victims of domestic violence and/or sexual assault, in an effort to help these victims achieve safety, self-sufficiency and a life free from violence by providing intervention services. Two full time advocates deliver crisis intervention services to victims of domestic violence.</p> <p>According to Dr. Jacqueline Campbell of John's Hopkins University: 1) Only 4% of domestic violence murder victims nationwide had ever availed themselves of domestic violence program services, 2) In 50% of domestic violence related homicides, officers had previously responded to a call on the scene, and 3) the re-assault of domestic violence victims in high danger was reduced 60% if they went into shelter. Other studies say that only 1 in 5 victims ever come forward for help. Thus, the reported numbers are small in comparison to the actual number of domestic violence victims and the potential lethal victimization of unreported victims is high.</p> <p>When confronted with the potential lethality of family violence, many victims are rendered homeless rather than face</p>
--------------------------	--

**Domestic Violence
(continued)**

the dangers associated with remaining in a violent home. Identification of high risk cases is the key to interrupting the cycle of escalating violence. This requires a deliberately coordinated community response by law enforcement, victim advocates, probation, and prosecution. National programs such as the Greater Newburyport Domestic Violence High Risk Case Response Team and the Maryland Network against Domestic Violence Lethality Assessment Program for First Responders provide substantial research, screening tools and protocols to address safety. These programs may offer significant information for Wharton County agencies collaborating services for immediate family safety.

Victims feel they have limited options when faced with abuse. Many factors influence their decision making: fear of further abuse, economic dependence, religious or moral beliefs, losing custody of children, and distrust of the criminal justice system. The Crisis Center works closely with local law enforcement agencies, the District Attorney's Office, local medical providers and other social service providers to provide immediate crisis intervention services to victims of domestic violence. While the need continues to grow, resources are stretched thin. Through the Crisis Center, victims have access to immediate safety, emotional and personal advocacy. The center has recently added an extension in El Campo, offering advocacy services at the Northside Education Center in the afternoon.

Additionally, violence in dating relationships has reached epidemic proportions. Statistics show that 1 in 5 high school students will be in a violent dating relationship before they leave high school and the average age of a rape survivor is 16 to 24. Risk reduction education programs have proven to increase students' knowledge of the issues of dating violence and sexual assault thereby reducing the risks of becoming a victim. Local organizations and school districts are beginning to establish character education/anti-bullying programs. However, these programs are still in the beginning stages.

The Batterer's Intervention Prevention Program (BIPP) is available for judges to use in addressing domestic violence that becomes apparent in their courtrooms; however, the program is often not used due to scarce resources. The program is designed to provide specialized group and individual counseling to hold perpetrators of domestic violence accountable for their behavior and teach them how to make non-abusive choices. The primary focus of any BIPP is to increase victim safety and reduce battering.

**Domestic Violence
(continued)**

Victims of interpersonal violence and abuse require protective orders, divorce decrees, suits to establish custody orders, suits modifying previous custody orders and orders for support. There has been a marked increase in the request for free legal services. Victims must have access to legal advocacy to handle their special needs such as emergency housing, immigration, U-Visa applications, and other civil matters. Collaboration and cooperation among the Wharton County Bar Association, APS, CPS, Wharton County Crisis Center and County Attorney's Office provides pro bono and a variety of other services for clients. Non-lawyer advocacy is provided to address the various other social service needs of these clients. The County Attorney's Office and Crisis Center represent victims who apply for protective orders. Without these services, many crime victims (having no other support) often return to the perpetrator.

Solutions:

- Secure additional resources to support the local BIPP
- Actively initiate efforts to solicit a pool of pro-bono attorneys to assist indigent clients through direct representation, providing general advice or by teaching individuals how to engage in pro-se representation. Also, seek funding for paid legal assistance for cases that require more time than pro-bono attorneys can give.
- Actively initiate efforts to solicit a pool of pro-bono attorneys
- Increase community awareness about the dynamics of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and sexual harassment through education and private/public partnerships
- Strengthen and expand programs that deal with bullying, teen dating violence
- Expansion of support groups, education opportunities, and life skill programs for the abused- both primary and secondary
- Ensure services are adequate to meet the needs of domestic violence victims, including safe shelter, transitional housing, advocacy, case management, counseling, crisis intervention and support services by providing adequate staffing, support
- Collaboration and cooperation between Wharton County Bar Association, APS, CPS, CASA, Wharton County Crisis Center, and County Attorney's Office to provide the variety of legal services required by clients
- Training of advocates, law enforcement and District Attorneys in properly working with domestic violence victims
- Boys & Girls Clubs of El Campo and Boys & Girls Club of Wharton offer #STRONGGIRLS. 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.

Sexual Assault	<p>Sexual assault remains the most underreported felony crime, due to the nature of the crime and the emotional trauma in reporting. In 2016 there were 50 cases of sexual assault reported in Wharton County. This slightly down from the previous year of 40 cases. Over the last six years the numbers reported have ranged from 38 cases in 2011, 26 cases in both 2012 and 2013 and 40 cases in 2014 and 37 cases in 2015.</p> <p>In 2016, Child Protective Services received 86 cases of sexual abuse of children. Seven cases were confirmed.</p> <p>A prevalence study conducted by the Texas Association against Sexual Assault (TAASA) showed that in Texas 20% of women and 5% of men are survivors of sexual assault. In one survey, TAASA reports that 42% of rape victims reported that they had told no one about the assault, only 5% reported to the police. In a survey of college men, 35% anonymously admitted they would commit rape if they knew they could get away with it, and 1 in 5 college women reported being forced to have sexual intercourse.</p> <p>In the state of Texas, sexual assault victims have the following rights: 1) to be treated with dignity and respect; 2) to be reasonably protected from the offender; 3) to be notified of court dates, dispositions and the defendant’s custody status; 4) to appear at public hearings; 5) to consult with the prosecution; and 6) to seek financial reparations for their injuries. Advocacy is critical at each stage of the criminal justice process. Interfacing with law enforcement, advocates demystify the process and engage complainants in vital decision-making. In the aftermath of the trauma, it is not uncommon for victims to experience guilt, anxiety, depression, flashbacks and suicidal ideation.</p> <p>For survivors of sexual assault, counseling, advocacy and accompaniment are essential for healing from the trauma. Studies show that the sooner a victim receives counseling and other support services the faster they recover and return to productive lives as compared to those who did not. The Crime Victim’s Institute reports that 44% of victims are not aware of available services and 49% decide it’s too much trouble to get the services and/or it’s not worth the effort. Many victims never have a chance to find out if the services are beneficial to them, because they never receive them. Victim dissatisfaction may lead victims to be less cooperative to the justice system and, in addition, is detrimental to the victim’s recovery.</p>
-----------------------	--

Solutions:

- Provide more preventative awareness information across all segments of the community of the signs of abusive relationships that lead to sexual assault, and ways to develop healthy, respectful relationships
- Providing educational programs for teens that help youth avoid teen dating violence/sexual assault relationships, and tools to develop healthy relationship skills
- Provide cultural diversity training for teachers that will assist them reaching vulnerable youth
- Continue to foster good relationships among victim advocacy groups, law enforcement, prosecution, APS, CPS and examiners/medical professionals
- Continuum of services for victims that includes counseling, law enforcement, SANE, SART, prosecution and victim advocacy
- Establish SART and SANE program in Wharton County with necessary training and equipment
- Recruit additional victim advocacy staff with necessary training and equipment support

Identified Problem

Data Collection

Lack of Immediate and Consistent Advocacy for Victims of Violent and Non-Violent Crimes

The following violent crimes were reported in Wharton County in 2015, 14 robberies and 114 Assaults in 2014; 2013; 15 robberies, and 131 assaults, 2012; 24 Robberies 24, 132 Assaults; 2011: 23 Robberies, 169 Assaults; 2010 45 Robberies, 122 Assaults; 2009 Robberies 29, and 145 Assaults.

The Children’s Advocacy Center, a program of The Crisis Center, interviewed 38 Wharton children in fiscal 2012-13 who were referred by CPS or law enforcement as having been a victim. Ninety (90) Wharton Children who were victims or siblings of the victim received services as well this past year. Interviewer, advocacy/case management, professional counseling are provided for children who are victims, and their families. Victimization reaches not only the primary victim, but the secondary victims who make up the household. Studies show that children raised in households of domestic violence are far more likely to learn and act out this pattern of behavior as older children, teens, and adults.

Lack of Immediate and Consistent Advocacy for Victims of Violent and

Crime statistics tell only part of the story as they do not show the actual number of victims affected by a single crime, nor do they reflect the scope of the financial and emotional impact personally experienced by the victims and their families of both violent and non-violent crimes. Crime victimization affects all aspects of a person’s life. The impact is immediate, and the effects last a lifetime. Advocacy is vital to the

**Non-Violent Crimes
(continued)**

stabilization, healing and rebuilding of victims' lives and may be needed long after a case may or may not have completed its route through the criminal justice system.

Advocacy for crime victims includes, but is not limited to, those services that are legally mandated to be provided by criminal justice based agencies. Rural areas appear to have less available resources of all types, and the few that exist must cover a wider area and more victims. State law (Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, Chapter 56) requires criminal justice agencies to provide victims with certain information related to the criminal justice process; crime victims' rights; the Texas Crime Victims' Compensation Fund; certain notification if requested by the victims; and contact information for law enforcement, prosecutors' offices and sexual assault programs.

The needs of crime victims, however, far exceed legal mandates. Advocacy is not a one-agency matter, nor is it a one-time task, and most often lasts through many different stages of the justice process. For justice to be served, crime victims must have access to community based advocacy services which aids in healing and rebuilding their lives, but there still remain real and perceived difficulties in accessing and utilizing services. Community based nonprofit organizations provide immediate and long-term advocacy services to crime victims such as crisis intervention; shelter; psychological counseling; medical services; legal services; transportation; emergency financial assistance; information; referrals; justice advocacy; peer grief support; assistance with crime victim compensation; criminal justice & victims' rights information; among other valuable assistance.

In "Victim Assistance: Frontiers and Fundamentals," a publication of the National Organization of Victim Assistance, Marlene Young documents, "...*There is a conviction among practitioners that on-scene intervention, when the victim is in the early stages of distress, may prove to prevent or greatly reduce the crisis symptoms that might otherwise afflict the victims.*"

Through collaboration and a well-coordinated approach, system and community based agencies can build capacity to better serve victims of crime. Priority should be placed on shoring-up existing gaps to strengthen short and long-term victim service delivery. Such efforts will help to ensure that more victims of crime receive the immediate and consistent advocacy they need and deserve, better preventing secondary-victimization by the system.

Solutions:

- The support of groups (such as FFA, 4h, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Boys & Girls Club, Just Do IT Now and others) that provide education/intervention programs for youth and adults that covers healthy relationships, anger management, crisis problem solving and other risk ad version programs
- Developing and strengthening existing enrichment programs to divert troubled youth who have been identified or a part of an at risk group from violent and deviant behavior
- Create more community awareness on prevention of burglaries, theft, ID theft and all other crimes to circumvent victimization and education/information on what to do upon being a victim
- Ensure that organizations that work with victims, such as The Crisis Center with its domestic violence, sexual assault and Children’s Advocacy Center, CASA, CPS, Texana and others have ample resources to continue providing support groups and counseling services for victims of violent crimes
- Educate law enforcement on appropriate response and helpful referral for victims of violent crimes
- Educate victims of violent crime on the availability of funds, and the steps for application in the Crime Victims Compensation program
- Secure additional resources for Crime Victims Compensation Personnel to help administer and work with victims
- Encourage collaboration of law enforcement agencies for Crime Victims Compensation work that will increase the likelihood of having trained personnel available
- Develop a successful SANE program, securing necessary funding for startup and continuing support
- Victim impact panels, where victims have the opportunity of voicing their tragedy and pain before their abuser. This not only allows the victim opportunity of healing, but the perpetrator is able to be directly confronted with the what their crime has caused.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

<p>Child Abuse, Child Sexual Assault, Child Neglect</p> <p>Child Abuse, Child Sexual Assault, Child Neglect (continued)</p>	<p>According to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, in 2016 there were 627 allegations of abuse or neglect in Wharton County which is a significant increase over some of the previous years. Of these, 53 cases were confirmed. The top three types of abuse last year were: neglectful supervision, physical abuse, and sexual abuse. Child abuse/neglect continues to rise in Wharton County. Nationally the Bureau of Justice Statistics continues to report that 1 in 3</p>
--	--

girls and 1 in 5 boys will be victimized by sexual abuse and/or assault by their 18th birthday. These national statistics represent a continued troubling trend of childhood victimization and abuse. The local agencies of child protection (child protection workers, law enforcement, and prosecution) represent the foundation of the multi-disciplinary team approach to child abuse investigations in Wharton County.

Community cost and consequences of sexual abuse of children are significant. A Texas Report concluded that without intervention:

- 50% of children are more likely to run away
- 72% are more likely to become substance abusers
- 54% are more likely to become pregnant as teens
- 90% of convicted murderers were physically abused as children
- 64% are more likely to become child abusers as adults

Child Protective Services (CPS), CASA, Just Do It Now, Children's Advocacy Center of the Crisis Center and law enforcement agencies collaborate to provide services to children who are abused or neglected in Wharton County.

Every year, the state of Texas removes thousands of children from their homes because of abuse and/or neglect. These victimized children are drawn into an overburdened child welfare system that is hard pressed to address their individual needs. Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) trains and supports volunteers to work with these children as they journey toward safe, loving, permanent homes.

- Just Do It Now has a program called "Yes We Can" afterschool program that currently serves 130 children ages 6 to 18 on a regular basis with 79% of those depending on our services several days a week. Most of the children come from poverty stricken and/or involve drug abuse. JDIN provides them educational programs, free meals, activities with love, guidance and a positive environment.
- Just Do It Now is a certified to facilitate the D.O.E.P. (Drug Offender's Education Program) which is required by the legal system. They are the only certified facilitators in Wharton. They also offer free GED and ESL (English as a Second Language) classes twice each week. The Boys and Girls Clubs SMART Moves is an evidence based program that helps youth

	<p>resist alcohol, drugs, premature sexual involvement and gang activity. It provides them with positive adult role models, mentors and peer groups, thereby increasing their self-confidence and sense of belonging. Participation will improve their skills abilities to make tough decisions and how to resist social and peer pressures and how to cope with stress of growing up in these tough and economic times.</p>
--	--

Solutions:

- Establish parenting classes through a variety of community organizations such as CASA, Crisis Center, Boys & Girls Club, Just Do it Now, Northside Education Center, and local faith-based organizations to educate parents in healthy child rearing
- The support of groups (such as FFA, 4H, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Boys & Girls Club, Just Do IT Now, and others) that provide education/intervention programs for youth and adults that covers healthy relationships, anger management, crisis problem solving, anti-bullying, and other risk ad version programs
- Developing and strengthening existing enrichment programs to divert troubled youth who have been identified, or a part of an at-risk group from violent and deviant behavior
- Increase public awareness of the characteristics of child abuse, neglect and sexual assault, along with the appropriate steps to report and deal with this issue
- Secure additional resources to enhance and strengthen programs such as CASA , Children’s Advocacy Center, BIPP, and any others that work with child victims and their caregivers in order to lead to healthy family relating
- Ensure adequate services are available to meet the increasing need for crisis intervention, advocacy, counseling, and support services to victims of child physical abuse, sexual abuse and neglect
- Develop specialized investigative and prosecution units to address the ever-increasing demands for child abuse investigations, treatment of victims, and their non-offending caregivers, and the sanction of perpetrators

Identified Problem

Data Collection

<p>Need for Safe and Affordable Housing</p>	<p>Low cost housing availability is limited in Wharton County. There is one housing authority in the County, El Campo Housing Authority, which reports a waiting list and 10-15 calls a week for rentals. The El Campo Housing Authority is the authorized Section 8 provider for El Campo. Presently they have 24 Section 8 vouchers, with a long waiting list. The city of Wharton has 50 Section 8 vouchers, with a long waiting list.</p>
--	---

<p>Need for Safe and Affordable Housing (continued)</p>	<p>The average rent for a one bedroom apartment is approximately \$530 per month, with two bedrooms running \$588. Three local organizations provide some type of rent or utility assistance on a year-round basis: Blessing Cup in El Campo, Share Center in Wharton and Wharton Community Action Program. The only operating shelter is for domestic violence/sexual assault victims. This shelter is located in Matagorda County, providing for 35 individuals from Wharton and Matagorda Counties. A local organization, Just Do It Now, provides transitional housing for up to 6 men, and is working a life readiness program along with housing for the men. A local church, Saint James Baptist Church, is in the planning stages of a transitional housing program for women. Most important for a violent free life is the availability of safe, decent, affordable housing. All too often, families who seek to escape from a domestic violence situation must also leave their homes to ensure their safety. Those victims of crime are often forced to choose between returning to dangerous situations or homelessness.</p>
--	---

Solutions:

- Ensure adequate funding is available for expansion/completion of transitional housing complexes to provide safe, affordable housing for those affected by violence, or leaving a protective shelter
- Create housing assistance programs that require residents to bear responsibility in some way and meet certain criteria to qualify, such as Habitat for Humanity and other similar programs
- Promote community involvement with organizations such as SHARE and The Blessing Cup, which provide food, clothing, furniture and rent assistance
- Provide assistance in the form of additional funding to expand, remodel, and build long term housing
- Promote community awareness and recruit volunteers to work for programs like Habitat for Humanity and local churches that provide housing for victims

Identified Problem

Data Collection

<p>Strengthening Educational Services that Stop the Abusive Cycle</p>	<p>Children that are abused are 64% more likely to become abusers as adults. In order to stop the abusive cycle, family members need to be educated on support skills that they can use to intervene and get help.</p> <p>The Crisis Center professional counselor provides free counseling for clients of the center. However, there are gaps in reaching the victim population. Victimization reaches not only the primary victim, but the secondary victims who make up the household. Studies show that children raised in</p>
--	--

<p>Strengthening Educational Services that Stop the Abusive Cycle (continued)</p>	<p>households of domestic violence are far more likely to learn and act out this pattern of behavior as older children, teens and adults.</p> <p>There are multiple programs in Wharton County that seek to foster collaboration and communication between abusers and their families. Examples of these programs include, but are not limited to, CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates), SKIP (Supporting Kids of Incarcerated Parents), and STAR (Services To At Risk youth). The mission of CASA is to support and promote court-appointed volunteer advocacy so that every abused or neglected child can be safe, establish permanence, and have the opportunity to thrive. Ultimately, the goal of CASA is that abusive or under-resourced parents would be educated and rehabilitated, so that their families can be reunited. Programs like SKIP and STAR also seek to provide counseling services primarily to abused youth. These programs are also adamant about providing long-term counseling services to the families, and to the abusers. These programs speak to the fact that abuse is a cycle, and in order to stop that cycle, all involved parties must be educated and equipped with skills.</p>
<p><u>Solutions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure basic resources and emergency services for families, especially those that are homebound • Reinforce and expand after school and summer programs to educate children and youth on the abusive cycle, and healthy relating skills • Provide educational, vocational, and economic services to families of victims that encourage financial independence, academic/vocational success, and emotional maturity • Encourage volunteer support of organizations that work with victims and those who are at risk of being victimized • Strengthen programs such as SKIP (Supporting Kids of Incarcerated Parents), CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate), STAR (Services to At Risk Youth) and others that deal with children who are victims or at risk of being victimized. • Provide educational, vocational, and economic services to families of victims that encourage financial independence, academic/vocational success, and emotional maturity. Having a Job/Life Skill Readiness Advocate will increase the likelihood of success, since many victims lack the understanding and emotional strength to become successful. Domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse creates victims who have been beaten up to not be successful, but totally dependent upon another. 	

Identified Problem

Data Collection

<p>Bullying</p> <p>Bullying (continued)</p>	<p>Bullying is a continuing problem in Wharton County and efforts to control it are limited. It is a common experience for many children and adolescents. Surveys indicate that as many as half of all children are bullied at some time during their school years, and at least 10% are bullied on a regular basis.</p> <p>According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychology, bullying behavior can be physical or verbal. Boys tend to use physical intimidation or threats, regardless of the gender of their victims. Bullying by girls is more often verbal, usually with another girl as the target. Bullying has even been reported in online chat rooms, through e-mail and on social networking sites. Social bullying destroys relationships, reputations, and status with peer groups. Humiliation, embarrassment, intimidation, gossip and even graffiti can all be extremely destructive.</p> <p>Children who are bullied experience real suffering that can interfere with their social and emotional development, as well as their school performance. Some victims of bullying have even attempted suicide rather than continue to endure such harassment and punishment.</p> <p>Children and adolescents who bully thrive on controlling or dominating others. They have often been the victims of physical abuse or bullying themselves. Bullies may also be depressed, angry or upset about events at school or at home. Children targeted by bullies also tend to fit a particular profile. Bullies often choose children who are passive, easily intimidated, or have few friends. Victims may also be smaller or younger and have a harder time defending themselves.</p>
<p>Solutions: The Crisis Center (serving Wharton and Matagorda Counties) has developed an excellent program for younger children that is being used on a limited basis at the Boys and Girls Club to help kids deal with bullies and bullying. This program needs to be presented to all elementary schools and after school programs in the county.</p> <p>Boys & Girls Clubs of El Campo and Boys & Girls Club of Wharton’s SMART Moves program helps youth combat bullying and increase knowledge of safe places.</p> <p>Just Do It Now has a program Not on My Block that helps youth address bullying.</p> <p>With all age groups, the no tolerance policy for any physical retaliation, no matter the cause, has made it easy for bullies. A little common sense in applying a no tolerance program would go a long way toward stopping physical issues. All kinds of bullying could be reduced by publicity. Knowing that any bullying in which you participate is going to be made public and include names is a strong deterrent. All who work with children, including schools, programs, parents and peers, must be willing to take some risks to stop a practice that does as much harm to the instigator as it does to the victim.</p>	

El Campo ISD has established a positive character program to combat bullying that builds positive peer and authority figure support for elementary students.

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

Identified Problem

Data Collection

Substance Abuse & Anger Management

Volumes of current research studies definitively link substance abuse to criminal behaviors. Law enforcement and probation professionals identify substance abuse as a significant issue of concern in our society.

In a presentation at the 2009 Sentencing Conference sponsored by the Community Justice Assistance Division of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, DEA Agent Dawn Mathis reported that in the United States, someone is arrested for a violation of drug laws every 17 seconds. In 2007, 1,841,182 arrests were made for drug offenses in the United States. The United States makes up 5% of the world's population but consumes 60% of all drugs.

- The effect of substance abuse on Wharton County can be seen through an examination of probation department statistics. During Fiscal Year 2017 (September 1, 2016 through August 31, 2017), the following information represented the impact on the area: 28% (236 offenders) of all offenders are on probation for DWI/DUI. This represents 14% (36 offenders) of the felons under direct supervision and 41% (79 offenders) of those under supervision for misdemeanors. Of the 121 offenders who are placed on probation for DWI in Wharton County, but live elsewhere, 22% are felons and 78% are misdemeanants.
- 22% (181 offenders) of the offenders are on probation for drug-related offenses. This represents 22% (58 offenders) of the felons under direct supervision and 21% of those under supervision for misdemeanor offenses. Of the 82 offenders who are placed on probation for drug-related offenses in Wharton County, but live elsewhere, 48% are felons and 52% are misdemeanants.
- 47% (214 offenders) of the total population of offenders under direct supervision is being supervised for a substance-abuse related offense (including DWI, DUI, and drug charges). This is a 5% increase from FY15
- This number does NOT represent those offenders who are under supervision for other offenses but have exhibited a substance abuse problem.

Substance Abuse & Anger Management (continued)

Evidence indicates that substance abuse is one of six major criminogenic risk factors which contribute significantly to criminal behavior and involvement in the justice system according to “Tools of the Trade: A guide to incorporating science into practice,” a document produced by the National Institute of Corrections, United States Department of Justice and Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services. “The Effect of Drug Use, Drug Treatment Participation, and Treatment Completion on Probationer Recidivism” by Dr. Beth Huebner and Jennifer Cobbina of the University of Missouri-St. Louis cites the research of Olson and Lurigio in 2000 which indicates that “probationers with a history of drug abuse were twice as likely to violate their probation or have it revoked and 60 percent more likely to be arrested for a new crime while on probation when compared to individuals without a history of drug use (3).”

This is particularly alarming because there are no existing chemical dependency treatment facilities in the county and cognitive-based programs are extremely scarce. County officials rely upon a limited number of private practitioners to assist with substance abuse issues. In accordance with current initiatives of the State of Texas, contacts must be made with the faith-based community in order to assist with providing some of these services.

To further support this, the work of Huebner and Cobbina also indicates the importance of addressing any co-occurring problems that may cause an offender difficulty in completing his or her substance abuse treatment when it is available (16). These problems may include, but are not limited to, medical, mental health, employment, family, or financial. The work of faith-based groups as well as other non-profit organizations may be able to provide some of the wrap-around services that may assist offenders with some of these co-occurring difficulties so that they will cease to become barriers to treatment initiatives. Professional mental health treatment and other related services are very limited in Wharton County.

**Substance Abuse &
Anger Management
(continued)**

<p>Solutions: Based upon the research cited herein, increasing the availability of substance abuse treatment and other related services in Wharton County would enhance the safety of the public by helping current offenders to become pro-social and productive members of society. This would, in turn, reduce the amount of crime being committed, the number of individuals being victimized, and positively impact the quality of life in the county.</p>	

<i>Identified Problem</i>	<i>Data Collection</i>
<p>Worn Out and Out-Dated Equipment</p>	<p>Wharton County is a rural county covering 1100 square miles, with a population of 41,280 people, a figure which is expected to double in the next 10 years. There are three incorporated cities within the county, Wharton, El Campo and East Bernard. Wharton and El Campo have their own police departments but the sheriff's office is responsible for East Bernard, the unincorporated towns and the rest of the county.</p>
<p>Worn Out and Out-Dated Equipment (continued)</p>	<p>Two major rivers flow through the county. The Colorado flows through the City of Wharton and the San Bernard flows through East Bernard. Both Mustang and Tress Palacios Creeks traverse El Campo. Because Wharton County is 75 percent rural and with the four waterways flowing through it, 4-wheel drive high clearance vehicles are needed. They are necessary for flooding events but are also needed in areas of the county and both cities where 2-wheel drive police vehicles are unable to go.</p> <p>Because Highway 59, which runs through the county, is a major corridor used for drug and alien smuggling as well as opening the area to gangs. There is a growing need not only for new equipment, but also for the replacement of equipment that is outdated as well as standard patrol equipment. Also needed are training aids for use of force scenarios and decision making situations.</p> <p>The County Law Enforcement agencies do not have body cameras for documenting evidence and this would be a need in the very near future due to recent national events.</p>
<p>Solutions: Modern law enforcement is technologically based. Therefore, equipment for law enforcement agencies needs funding to meet the most current technology in order for law enforcement to police the community in a safe, effective and efficient manner.</p>	

<i>Identified Problem</i>	<i>Data Collection</i>
---------------------------	------------------------

<p>Insufficient courtroom security and equipment</p>	<p>Wharton County Courts, both Criminal and Civil caseloads are constantly growing in numbers. At this time Wharton County has a total of five (5) courts for which the Sheriff's Office provides security. The county only employs one (1) bailiff for these courts.</p> <p>Wharton County Courts hold proceedings in three (3) different buildings spreading the Court Security staff very thin. With vivid images of courtroom violence throughout the nation by prisoners, prisoner family members or by the victim's family, it is essential to provide necessary staffing, security equipment and training to ensure a safe environment for everyone associated with courtroom operations. If more than one court is in session, the Sheriff's Office has to pull a deputy of jailer from his job to provide security. This causes their division to be short staffed.</p>
<p>Solutions: Coordinate court scheduling to avoid the problem when possible. Identify funding for additional personnel and security equipment.</p>	

Identified Problem

Data Collection

<p>Consistent Enforcement of DWI</p>	<p>The social and financial impact on Wharton County and its citizens resulting from DWI are enormous. In 1999 the national highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimated that the average alcohol-related fatality due to a motor vehicle accident in Texas costs between 1.1 and 3.3 million in monetary costs and \$2.2 million in losses to quality of life. In 2000, Texas motor vehicle crashed costs due to alcohol totaled over \$390 million in legal/court costs, insurance administration and vehicle damage. The estimated cost per injury survivor of an alcohol related crash averaged \$48,000-96,000 in monetary costs and \$48,000 in quality of life losses.</p> <p>NHTSA estimated that alcohol is a factor in 25% of the costs associated with motor vehicle crashes in Texas. In 1999</p>
---	--

	<p>transportation to persons to distant mental health treatment locations unless the person is already in custody on an emergency mental health warrant. Insufficient law enforcement staff, vehicles and transportation funding make booking into and retention in jail rather than mental health treatment alternatives the most rational course of action for law enforcement agencies that encounter a person exhibiting potential mental health impairments. Furthermore, many more incarcerated persons are eligible for diversion for jail to outpatient mental health treatment than current resources can support.</p>
<p>Solutions: Obtain resources including additional deputies, vehicles, and transportation funding for transport, when necessary, of persons to distant inpatient psychiatric facilities for stabilization prior to outpatient treatment.</p> <p>Obtain additional funding for expanded use of contract hospital facilities for short-term stabilization.</p>	

Identified Problem

Data Collection

<p>Need for additional capacity in the Wharton County Jail</p>	<p>Although Wharton County has an excellent jail facility that houses a maximum of 144 prisoners it lacks capacity to meet steadily increasing needs. Since 2009 prisoners have had to be shipped out to other facilities. Currently all prisoners in excess of the 144-bed maximum go to Fort Bend County. The cost for each prisoner is \$48 a day. Further expense is incurred in transporting prisoners initially and then additional times for court dates. These are excessive expenses on the Wharton County tax payers.</p>
<p>Solution: Double the size of the current jail from 144 to 288. Wharton county is expected to double in population over the next ten years. Any initial extra space can be used to house overcrowding in other facilities until the space is needed for local use.</p>	

Identified Problem

Data Collection

<p>Insufficient law enforcement training resources</p>	<p>The Wharton County Sheriff’s Department, El campo Police Department, Wharton Police Department, Texas Department of Public Safety, Texas Parks and Wildlife Game Wardens, Wharton I.S.D. Police and four Constable Offices all serve Wharton County. Currently, Wharton County Junior College trains police recruits through their Basic Police Officer Academy, but is unable to provide continuing education classes for officers. Local agencies are forced to send officers to training facilities in other counties to meet their TCLEOSE required educational needs.</p> <p>Identified Needs:</p>
---	---

A need for local training classes exists for state mandated courses, such as Use of Force, Child Abuse, Arrest/Search/Seizure, Cultural Diversity, Mental Health Officer, Family Violence, Sexual Assault, etc. There is also a need to provide specialized training, such as Communication skills, including report writing, verbal tactics, crisis intervention techniques, and courtroom testimony. This specialized training need helps officers in a majority of daily 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 off-duty officers, combat casualty care for first responders, and low-light shooting skills. This skill set is imperative to prepare officers to fulfill their role as first responders. 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.

Solutions: Identify funding and resources:

- To offer local in-service courses, and to support specialized training in a variety of communications skills, tactical skills and training simulators to enhance judgment and decision-making in high-risk activities.

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

Identified Problem

Data Collection

<p>Failure to Attend/ Truancy</p>	<p>Data: Failure to attend continues to be a major problem for school districts. Statistical Data below shows a varying rate from 2008 through 2010 with the numbers showing a substantial increase in 2011 even though only a partial year is being reported.</p> <p>Failure to Attend cases filed in JP Courts</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td>2008</td> <td>246</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2009</td> <td>117</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2010</td> <td>148</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2011</td> <td>338</td> </tr> </table> <p>According to the Texas Education Code §25.094, a juvenile commits the offense of “Failure to Attend” if the juvenile fails to attend school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On 10 or more days or parts of days within a 6-month period in the same school year; or • On 3 or more days or parts of days within a 4-week period. <p>The problem is made more serious by the fact that excused absences are not counted making it possible for a student to miss a substantial amount of school without the absences being addressed as truancy and remedial action taken.</p> <p>There are no truant officers in Wharton County. Wharton ISD’s police officer handles truancy along with his other duties. In El Campo the city assigns officers to the middle school and high school but their responsibilities do not include truancy. It falls to the school districts, JP courts and the juvenile probation office to address the problem.</p> <p>Cooperative reports from Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program, U.S. Department of Education state that excessive absence signals the beginning of a lifetime of problems for students. They fall academically and many drop out of school. It is also a stepping stone to delinquent and criminal activity.</p> <p>A report compiled by the Los Angeles County Office of Education on factors to juvenile delinquency concluded that chronic absenteeism is the most powerful predictor of delinquent behavior. Several studies have documented the correlation between drug use and truancy. A report from the University of Maryland found that 51 percent of female juvenile detainees not in school at the time of their arrests tested positive drug use. Another study by the U.S. Department of Justice's Drug Use Forecasting (DUF) program reported that more than half</p>	2008	246	2009	117	2010	148	2011	338
2008	246								
2009	117								
2010	148								
2011	338								

**Failure to Attend/
Truancy (continue)**

(53%) of a group of 403 male juvenile arrestees in San Diego, California, tested positive for drug use when taken to juvenile hall. Not surprisingly, those who did not attend school were more likely (67% versus 49%) to test positive for drug use than those who did attend.

Community partners such as law enforcement and courts may support targeted efforts by providing immediate consequences for truancy. However punitive approaches alone are not likely to succeed and must be balanced with supporting services and even alternative educational approaches. Long term solutions come by aggressively intervening when students are young and targeting problems before they become chronic.

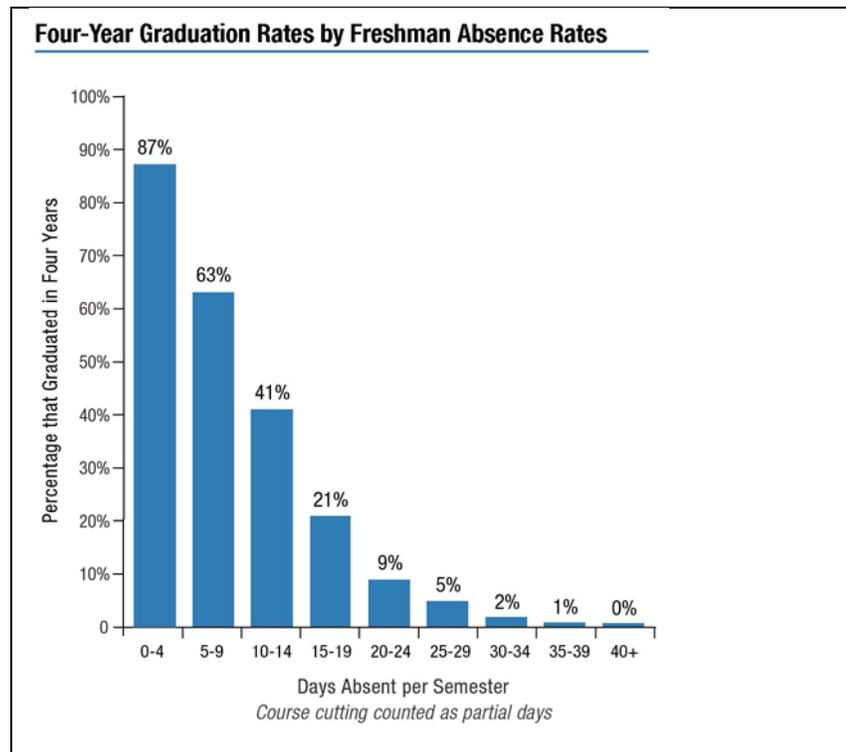


Chart by Allensworth and Easton University of Chicago

The chart above from Allensworth and Easton shows the effect on graduation rates of attendance during the ninth grade. Long term solutions come by aggressively intervening when students are young thereby targeting problems before they become chronic.

The Campaign for Grade-level Reading reports that 1 in 10 kindergartens and first grade students nationwide miss nearly a month of school each year in excused and unexcused absences. Disadvantaged children have limited vocabulary levels and start school behind and stay behind. Most students who fail to read on grade-level at the end of third grade falter in the later grades and often drop out.

**Failure to Attend/
Truancy (continued)**

Information from the statistical report of the Wharton County Juvenile Probation Department shows that most delinquent behavior serious enough to be referred to their department begins in in the teen years.

ALL ALLEDGED DELINQUENT BEHAVIOR 2010-11						
AGE	FELONIES	CLASS A & B	Violation Probation	Contempt Magistrate Order	TOTALS	%
10	0	0	0	0	0	0%
11	0	3	0	0	3	2.6%
12	0	3	0	0	3	2.6%
13	10	7	2	0	19	16.4%
14	4	13	1	0	18	15.5%
15	10	11	10	0	31	26.7%
16	10	19	5	0	34	29.3%
17	0	0	8	0	8	6.9%
TOTALS	34	56	26	0	116	100%

For the past 5 years an average of 57% of those referred were behind or failing behind in school. Since most 17 year olds are treated as adults, these are predominantly youth 16 and below. Truancy is not the only component to academic failure, but it is a significant contributor.

Solutions: Working on chronic absence is a good starting point. Continued cooperation between the school districts and law enforcement has great impact in rural areas where people know each other and the numbers allow for individual attention. However, there must be services available for referral. Parents must be involved and held responsible for their children's school attendance. The Yes, We Can Youth Program run by Just Do It Now is an excellent example of what can be done to keep children in school and out of trouble. This program needs to be duplicated across the County.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

**Drop Out Rates for
Local ISDs**

The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) has worked with TEA for over 20 years researching and publishing an annual Texas Public School Attrition Study. Latest statistics available are for 2009-10 school year. The report's dropout rates are listed below along with data on the number enrolled and the percent of economically disadvantaged youth in each ISD. Graduation rates and the TEA drop out figures, which differ greatly from the IDRA drop-out rate, are included.

**Drop Out Rates for
Local ISDs (continued)**

Wharton County ISDs	# En-rolled	Eco. Disadva	Reported Grad Rate	TEA D.O.	IDRA D.O.
----------------------------	--------------------	---------------------	---------------------------	-----------------	------------------

		ntaged	2010	Rate 2011	Rate 2009*
El Campo	3,477	2,362	89.0%	11%	25%
Wharton	2,167	1,362	82.9%	17.1%	19%
East Bernard	948	341	97.1%	2.9%	5.4%
Louise	497	276	100%	0	0%
Boling	1,014	538	100%	0	32%
Total/Avg	8,103	4,879	93.8%	10.3%	27.1%

**IDRA Drop Out Rate is calculated by subtracting the Freshman enrollment of a class from the Senior class three years later. This attrition formula is used by the TEA in its (Secondary School Completion and Dropouts in Texas Public Schools, for July 2009) Report, page 62.*

The attrition rate for the State of Texas in 2009/2010 was 29%. There continues to be significant and justifiable criticism leveled at TEA for the formula and underlying components used to designate 'leavers' in the system that significantly understate reported attrition rates. Even the IDRA rate ignores the fact that many students leave school prior to entering ninth grade and even some who are enrolled as seniors do not graduate.

The actual drop-out rate for Wharton County is estimated to be near the average for Texas. This is not acceptable. If Wharton County and the State of Texas are to prosper, something must be done to improve our educational outcomes. Students should leave high school prepared for further education or to enter the workforce. On the whole, this is not happening as will be seen in the following sections.

Solutions: The TEA statistics must not be accepted. The real scope of the problem can and should be identified. Children drop out of school for many reasons making any solution to the problem complex. It is seldom that a child from a family that values education leaves school. Increasing the perception of all ethnic groups to see education and lifelong learning as keys not only to financial success but to a full a satisfying life is the task at hand. Some steps in the process of solving the drop out issue are detailed in subsequent sections, but recognition of the problem is the initial requirement.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

Education from Birth through Grade 3

Nationally, there is growing recognition among educators of the importance of children reading at grade level by the end of third grade. This recognition is the result of research over the past 20 years showing the correlation between students’ reading ability at the end of third grade and their subsequent academic success. Most recently, the National Research Council concluded: “Academic success, as defined by high school graduation, can be predicted with reasonable accuracy by knowing someone’s reading skill at the end of 3rd grade. *A person who is not at least a modestly skilled reader by that time is unlikely to graduate from high school.*” Previous sections have documented the link between educational deficiency, delinquency and future criminal behavior.

There are major differences in size, economic level and ethnic makeup of the population of the 5 school districts in the county.

	Black	Hispanic	White	Other	Econ Disad	At Risk
Boling	109	490	398	17	538	355
East Bernard	71	284	587	6	341	267
El Campo	458	2019	958	42	2362	1549
Louise	27	236	228	6	276	143
Wharton	597	1156	386	28	1362	1048

The above differences in size and ethnicity make averaging for the whole county inaccurate but the scores below show where individual school districts stood on test scores for third grade reading and math over the past 10 years. Note the progressive decrease in scores overall during these years, particularly for minorities.

Early Intervention

The most comprehensive strategies for achieving their third grade reading goals look not only Pre-K through Grade3 improvements but also interventions for families and children, birth through age 3. There is no state of federally funded early childhood programs in Wharton County. Programs that work through family literacy programs or that go into the homes of at-risk families to educate them on how to prepare their children for educational success show the most long term success both for the parents and the children.

Entering School

Most at-risk children enter school behind and continue to lose ground each year. Family socioeconomic status is highly correlated to the level of academic growth or decline in the summer months. Census data shows that 18.9% of families and 24.1% of Wharton County children are living below poverty level.

Education from Birth through Third Grade (continued)

Average losses of 2.6 months in Math and at least 2 months in Reading occur during the summer vacation for these at-risk youths. Wharton County children cannot afford the loss. Summer reinforcement can help and is explored in the section on after-school programs. Low-income parents often lack the resources to provide children with sufficient reading materials needed to reinforce important literacy skills. Further children who are English language learners need additional exposure to print material, which may be difficult for children in homes where English is not the native language (Guryan and Kim, 2010).

Solutions: Admit the problem and begin to work together as a community through collective impact to solve it. The schools alone cannot fix what is broken.

The Rural Literacy Coalition serves Wharton, Colorado and Matagorda Counties under a broad-based board chaired by Matagorda County Judge, Nate McDonald. The coalition is using the concept of collective impact to bringing together all aspects of the community including government, schools, agencies and non-profits to make the most out of what is now available as well as to access a variety of grant funding sources.

The Rural Literacy Coalition has targeted the early childhood area and is applying for funding and working to establish a volunteer center. Experienced providers of the highly successful Parents as Teachers program in Colorado County are offering their expertise to get a form of the program operating in Wharton County.

Turning around the juvenile and adult problems encountered by law enforcement starts here! Changes in values are not easily made, but early childhood intervention has proven to be one successful method.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

Education from Fourth through Eighth Grade

For at-risk youth the years from fourth through eighth grade are critical. County statistics show that it is during the early teens that serious delinquency problems manifest. The 2011 referrals to juvenile probation increased from slightly over 2% of the total at age 12 to 16. % at 13 and increase sharply to 28% of total referrals by age 16.

Intervention for those behind at grade 3 is difficult but possible. Continuing to keep on doing the same things with at-risk children is not the answer. After grade 3, instruction in “how to read” ceases and children are expected to use their skills to move on in all subject areas. Therefore, inadequate math skills are further affected by reading deficiencies. Asking teachers to teach reading along with expected subject content puts great stress on classes and impedes progress for those who already have basic reading skills.

Solutions: Ignoring the academic issues that are often the source of behavior problems is no longer an option. If Wharton county is to grow and prosper, the problems of the at-risk youth must become a priority for the entire community. The Boys and Girls Club and Yes We Can are effective in keeping students passing and in school. Boys & Girls Club offer Project Learn, an evidenced based program, that is comprised of educational components. Boys & Girls Club of El Campo provides youth with Summer Brain Gains Program. This program adds hands on, educational activities to help impede summer learning loss.

Mentors and/or tutors can do wonders to encourage those who may not have family able to help academically. Many disturbed youths have little or no family support and respond to caring attention. Peer tutoring should be used as it is great not only for the one receiving help but it does wonders for the one helping. After-school and summer programs must be supported by the whole community with funding and willingness to volunteer.

Respect for fellow students, faculty and administration is key to smooth running schools and workable classrooms.

Parental involvement has proven to be a great asset in some area schools. When parents are called when a problem arises from the time a child first starts school, parents know the teachers and as a rule support them and the school rather than demonstrating an adversarial attitude. This practice should be implemented by all districts at all grade levels. Boys & Girls Club of El Campo offers a BGCA program Junior Staff. Junior Staff teaches youth to develop leadership, responsibility, mentorship, and employable skills. Boys & Girls Club of El Campo and Boys & Girls Club of Wharton offer Passport to Manhood’s curriculum helps character development and is a preventative juvenile delinquency program for boys. The Wharton Club offers the program at the Wharton High School partnering with WISD.

Just Do It Now has a peer to peer mentoring program to help with tutoring. Just Do It Now collaborates with WISD in offering behavior coaching at all school campuses.

<i>Identified Problem</i>	<i>Data Collection</i>
<p>High School Education that Prepares for College or Career</p>	<p>One look at the tenth-grade results on the standardized tests in both reading and math make it clear that most Wharton County schools, for whatever reasons, have not met this need for far too many of their students. It should be noted that by tenth grade, a substantial number of students, particularly those with reading difficulty have dropped out. Remember that poor reading skills affect <u>all</u> coursework and in late middle school and high school math skills also cross course lines.</p> <p>Youth need adequate preparation for post-secondary education to avoid costly remedial courses or the discouragement that comes from failure. Not all students have to go to college. Trade programs that train in saleable skills are no longer available in our schools and need to be reinstated. There is a need for adolescent life skills program that includes understanding and using basic skills across a wide spectrum of knowledge including math, finances, technology, culture, science, health and the workforce.</p>

High School Education that Prepares for College or Career (continued)

Interviews with students reveal that many do not understand the life-long value of staying in school.

It is not just the schools. There are a myriad of problems dealing with adequate educational services for the youth of today. Society as a whole continues to demonstrate a downturn in basic values. No matter the reasons, our youth must find positive role models in our schools and communities and their own families. These must be people of integrity that they can trust. Only by exposure do children learn ethical behavior and moral values. Without role models to help them understand what is right or wrong, our youth are strongly influenced by peer pressure which is the blind leading the blind.

Solutions: Schools need to institute successful models to lift not just scores on tests but the competency of the students they graduate to make use of what they have learned.

Counselors need to be relieved of paperwork in order to again be able to have time to counsel students.

The whole community must come together to show that they value education by offering their own talents and time. This means volunteering to tutor or mentor or train—whatever you have to give, give it.

After-school programs must be supported with volunteer time as well as financial contributions.

Youth life skills curriculum must be made available through schools, after-school programs, literacy providers and churches.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

Expand Availability of After-School programs	El Campo 2014 – 494 2015 - 421					
	After School Program Enrollment	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
	El Campo B & G Club	988	401	731	833	886
	Wharton B. & G Club	637	688	757	797	829
	Yes We Can	193	238	248	359	476
<p>Unsupervised youth are a major factor in juvenile crime. According to crime statistics, juvenile crime rates are highest between the hours of 3:00pm and 6:00pm, after school and before parents get home from work. After school programs have been found to be fairly effective in reducing the risk of criminal and delinquent behavior. There are three after-school and summer programs in Wharton County. Boys & Girls Clubs are located in El Campo and Wharton each are affiliated with the national Boys & Girls Clubs of America. Boys & Girls Club of El Campo opened in 1991. Boys & Girls Club of Wharton opened in 1998. Wharton’s Just Do It Now organization facilitates the Yes We Can Youth</p>						

	<p>Program which opened in the spring of 2009. There are no after-school programs in East Bernard, the unincorporated towns or rural areas.</p> <p>Transportation is an issue for after school programs. Many families, especially those from school districts outside of Wharton and El Campo ISD service areas, do not have the means to provide their child with transportation to or from after school programs.</p>
--	--

Solutions: More after school programs are needed and/or more access is needed to existing programs, particularly in the rural sections of Wharton County. Financial resources are needed for families who cannot afford the cost of existing programs as well as operating support for the organizations as the costs to operate far exceeds the return for membership dues. Expansion of hours and routes of Colorado Valley Transit to include evenings and weekends would also be beneficial in enabling programs to serve more youth. Using school buses for after school transportation should be investigated if funding can be found.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

<p>School Safety and Security</p>	<p>According to the U.S. National Center for Education Statistics, school violence is a serious problem. In 2007, the latest year for which comprehensive data were available, a nationwide survey, conducted biennially by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and involving representative samples of U.S. high school students, found that 5.9% of students carried a weapon (e.g. gun, knife, etc.) on school property during the 30 days antedating the survey. In the 12 months antedating the survey, 7.8% of high school students reported having been threatened or injured with a weapon on school property at least once. In the 12 months antedating the survey, 12.4% of students had been in a physical fight on school property at least once. In the 30 days antedating the survey, 5.5% of students reported that because they did not feel safe, they did not go to school on at least one day.</p> <p>According to the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, in 2009, 10% of high school students reported driving a car or other vehicle during the past 30 days when they had been drinking alcohol. In addition, 28% of students reported riding in a car or other vehicle during the past 30 days driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol.</p>
--	---

Marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug among youth in the United States. In 2012 the National Center on Drug Abuse found that that 17 percent of 10th graders and about 23 percent of 12th graders polled had used marijuana in the past month.

Solutions: Funding for public schools to maintain Safe & Secure Schools programs designed to prevent related problems from further infiltrating Wharton County Public Schools and improve student safety on our school campuses.

Equipping the Library to Support Learning for Lifetime Success

As has been stated earlier in this report, research has shown that a relationship exists between literacy level and criminal behavior. A combination of minimal literacy levels and economic disadvantage compound a problem currently evident in Wharton County. The statistics below clearly illustrate the issue:

US Census Information 2016	Wharton	Texas	Nation
Population 25 or over without a High School Diploma	22.0%	17.7%	13.0%
Percent living at or below poverty level	17.4%	15.6%	12.7%

Language development and literacy skills begin at birth. The Wharton County Library, with locations in Wharton, El Campo, East Bernard, and Louise, offers a variety of services and resources to children, parents and caregivers that support and strengthen these skills. Children who are read to from an early age have a larger vocabulary and better language proficiency. There are age-appropriate reading programs and story times, as well as professionally cultivated literary collections, offered at all locations within the Library System.

With the advent of the electronic age, digital literacy has become a necessity that impacts daily life and economic success. Applying for jobs, filing income tax returns, and registering for government programs are a fraction of the services that are now only available with an internet connection. Without that connection, county residents cannot be competitive in education, workforce, and economic development.

According to the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, public libraries are the only source of public Internet access for approximately 60% of communities. The

Equipping the Library to Support Learning for Lifetime Success (continued)

Wharton County Library is uniquely qualified to bridge this digital divide and deliver services that meet our community's needs. The average number of library visits per year for the last two years (2015-2016) has been 173,549. Among those visits, the average yearly usage of the public access computers was 27,244 sessions.

But, the necessity for these services requires that a library maintains a robust high-speed Internet connection to meet the demand. The United States Federal Communications Commission adopted standard for public library internet speed is 100 megabits/second for libraries serving fewer than 50,000 persons. With the recent installation of an AT&T fiber optic connection, this standard is only met in the Main Branch of the Wharton County Library. The branch libraries in East Bernard and Louise share a T1 line that provides a connection at the speed of 1.5 megabits/second. This slower connection impacts the services offered by the library, creates delays in circulation, delays in reporting, and deters patrons from using the public access computers. The average number of computer usage sessions in East Bernard and Louise were only 4% of the total for the entire Library System; compared to the average library visits which were 16% of the total for the entire system.

Solutions: To research the availability of an internet service provider that can design and implement affordable broadband connectivity that adequately serves the Wharton County Libraries located in the East Bernard and Louise communities.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

Services for Special Needs children

After school and summer school services are needed for special needs school age children. Due to behavior and special needs local day care facilities will not accept these children and parents have not resources if family is not available. Teachers and instructors with specialized training are needed to provide care for these children.

Data for Wharton County Special Needs Students

	Wharton	EB	Boling	EC (inc LISD)	Total
ECI					37
PrK-K	11	3	6	3	23
1st	9	4	4	3	20
2nd	10	4	2	3	17
3rd	12	5	3	3	23
4th	13	12	4	4	33
5th	8	--	5	8	21
6th	12	2	6	1	21

7th	15	4	7	1	27
8th	13	2	8	6	29
9th	14	5	8	2	29
10th	20	7	11	4	42
11th	9	5	11	3	28
12th	20	5	7	4	36
Step II				3	3
Total					311

There are 311 Special Needs Children in the Wharton area who need after school and summer programming. The local day cares are not equipped for special needs children, especially those with behavioral issues. The majority of these families are at or below poverty level so specialized day care would not be affordable even if it were available.

Solutions: Medicaid, CHIPS & Private insurance will now pay for specialized care. With specially trained staff and a Behavior Analyst on site the program will qualify for Behavior Supports care rather than a day care. Texana Center will provide staff with specialized training utilizing a combination of Texana Children’s Center for Autism, Just Do It Now (JDIN) & Wharton ISD (WISD) for after school & summer programs.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

Need for a suitable well-trained workforce

The availability of good jobs is critical to the reduction of crime in Wharton County. A well-trained workforce is critical to having business view the community favorably when considering expansion or relocation. One measure of a well trained workforce is the education level. A second indicator is the poverty level. Wharton County has a problem that is reflected in the statistics below.

U.S. & Wharton County Statistics from US Census Information	Wharton	Texas	Nation
Population over 25 with a High School Diploma	74.6%	79.3%	84.6%
Population over 25 with Bachelor’s Degree or higher	15.7%	25.4%	27.5%
Population percent of change from 2000 – 2010	0.2%	20.6%	9.7%
Percent living at or below poverty level	18.9%	17.3%	14.3%

Wharton County is on Highway 59 and is a prime area for business and industry wanting to expand from Houston. However, many things are involved in economic development including land, community interest, housing, good schools, amenities, access to a

Need for a suitable well-trained workforce (continued)

commercial trade route but without a suitable well-trained workforce little progress can be made.

Texas ranks below the nation in all the listed categories and Wharton County is substantially below the figures for Texas. Improvement starts with facing the facts and deciding what can best be done to improve the situation.

Plans for long term systemic change are documented in previous sections particularly "Education for Birth through Third Grade." However, much can be done to improve the workforce with short term vocational training through the public schools, adult education, Wharton County Junior College and other post-secondary training.

Technical schools and junior colleges are turning out a wide variety of students who have completed certificate programs or job-related associates' degrees in health, behavioral science, technology, business and vocational science. These students are prepared for the workforce and are able to make a living wage. Every student is not college material and many either can't or don't want to seek post-secondary instruction. Introduction to trades at the middle and high school level not only prepares them for the future but contributes to keeping them in school.

Solutions: In order to provide technical training, public schools must reintroduce training students for trades, an area that has been dropped from most curriculums.

Adult Education classes to get the literacy level and GED required for entrance into most jobs or post-secondary training must be made available locally at times, and with guidelines, that make it possible for adults with family and job responsibilities to attend. Bridge classes that move students from ABE/GED level to vocational courses must be expanded.

Available tutoring for those having difficulty helps get individuals over hurdles and prevents the loss of a skilled worker and tuition money.

Seek apprenticeships from local business. Link with Workforce Solutions in every possible area. Provide help in filling out financial aid forms and applying for scholarships.

Resources Available

Included below are resources identified by the Wharton 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>
Wharton Co. Juvenile Probation	Government	Supervises the probation of juvenile offenders
Boys & Girls Club of El Campo	Non-Profit	BGCEC Club offers after school and summer programs.
Boys & Girls Club of Wharton	Non-Profit	BGCW Club offers after school and summer programs.
East Bernard Little League	Non-Profit	East Bernard Little League provides summer activity for youth
El Campo Little League	Non-Profit	El Campo Little League provides summer activity for youth
Just Do It Now	Non-Profit	JDIN offers after school and summer programs
Wharton Little League	Non-Profit	Wharton Little League provides summer activity for youth
Precinct One Justice of the Peace, Jeanette Krenek	Government	Judge Jeanette Krenek, in addition to her other duties as Justice of the Peace, holds court for truancy and A & B misdemeanor charges for youth
Precinct Two Justice of the Peace, Cynthia Kubicek	Government	Judge Cynthia Kubicek, , in addition to her other duties as Justice of the Peace, holds court for truancy and A & B misdemeanor charges for youth
Precinct Three Justice of the Peace, Dennis Korenek	Government	Judge Dennis Korenek, in addition to his other duties as Justice of the Peace, holds court for truancy and A & B misdemeanor charges for youth

Precinct Four Justice of the Peace, Timmy Drapela	Government	Judge Timmy Drapela, in addition to his other duties as Justice of the Peace, holds court for truancy and A & B misdemeanor charges for youth
Wharton County Attorney	Government	The Wharton County Attorney's office prosecute all juvenile cases
Colorado Valley Transit District	Non-Profit	CVT offers transportation at a nominal fee in Wharton County & Colorado Counties with limited service to surrounding areas.
ACE Program	Mental Health	ACE provides substance abuse, youth and family counseling services
Rural Literacy Coalition (formerly Tri-County)	Non-Profit	Unites Matagorda, Colorado and Wharton Counties to connect schools, government, business, non-profits, foundations, faith based, and service agencies to maximize effectiveness through collective impact

Law Enforcement:

<i>Name of Agency</i>	<i>Agency Type</i>	<i>Description</i>
Wharton County Sheriff's Department	Government	The Sheriff's Department provides technical support, patrol coverage, investigative support, communications support, and critical incident Coverage
Wharton Police Department	Government	Wharton Police Department provides municipal police services within Wharton
El Campo Police Department	Government	El Campo Police Department provides municipal police services within El Campo
Community Supervision and Corrections	Government	Community Supervision and Corrections provides adult probation services and a substance abuse/treatment facility for adults.

Victim's Issues

<i>Name of Agency</i>	<i>Agency Type</i>	<i>Description</i>
Crisis Center	Non-Profit	Provides crisis intervention services to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault which includes 24-hour hotline, shelter, professional counseling, transportation, accompaniment to hospitals, courts and law enforcement; assistance with protective orders in Wharton and Matagorda Counties
El Campo CDC	Non-Profit	Promotes Economic Development for the City of El Campo
Broken Chains Ministry	Non-Profit	Broken Chains Ministry is a 12 step Faith Based Alcohol and Substance Abuse and Recovery Ministry in Iago Texas
Just Do It Now, Inc	Non-Profit	Provides after school and summer programs, Alcohol and Substance Abuse Interventions and ABE/GED and Citizenship Programs
Phil Stevenson	Government	State Representative for Wharton County

Education

<i>Name of Agency</i>	<i>Agency Type</i>	<i>Description</i>
Wharton County Junior College	School	WCJC provides post-secondary education and training to area youth
Boling ISD	School	K through 12 public education
Wharton ISD	School	K through 12 public education
El Campo ISD	School	K through 12 public education
East Bernard ISD	School	K through 12 public education
Louise ISD	School	K through 12 public education

Wharton County Library System	Government	Provides Library Services throughout Wharton County
Texana MHMR	Non-Profit	Provides behavioral healthcare and developmental disabilities for adults and children in Wharton County.
Northside Education Center	Non-Profit	NEC provides Workforce Development, Continuing Education, Vocational and GED and ESL Training. NEC also has a public computer lab.
WED Co	Non-Profit	Promotes economic development for the City of Wharton.
Boys and Girls Club of El Campo	Non-Profit	After school and summer youth programs
Boys and Girls Club of Wharton	Non-Profit	After school and summer youth programs
Just Do It Now – Yes We Can Program	Non-Profit	After school and summer youth programs. JDIN also has a computer lab
Rural Literacy Coalition (formerly Tri-County)	Non-Profit	Unites Matagorda, Colorado and Wharton Counties to connect schools, government, business, non-profits, foundations, faith based, and service agencies to maximize effectiveness through collective impact

Interagency Cooperation

In the space below write 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:

In the past there has been relatively good interagency cooperation among the different branches of law enforcement. Law enforcement needs brought them into relationship with substance abuse counseling and mental health services as well as limited work with the school districts. However, there was little contact with the broader scope of non-profit, educational, government service and faith based communities.

In the fall 2009 the County Judges from Wharton, Colorado and Matagorda counties came together to approve a grant to be administered by the Tri-County Coalition for Literacy and Community Services.(Renamed Rural Literacy Coalition) This innovative move has begun a process of integrating the full range of supports available by connecting all service providers.

The current directory of service providers is being updated to include a description of the service as well contact information for over 70 entities. A website with statistical information for all three counties is now available at www.ruralliteracycoalition.org The website also links organizations by providing minutes of coalition meetings and will soon be posting grant notices of available opportunities. Contact has been made with the Houston Galveston Area Council of Governments to increase the access to information and supports available through H-GAC.

Long-Range Plan Development, Monitoring and Evaluation

The Wharton County Community Planning Team works in conjunction with the Rural Literacy Coalition and 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 Wharton 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 Wharton County families struggling with problems described in the plan's focus areas. Efforts are being made by many Wharton 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 urge agencies to provide programming that addresses the outlined focus areas.

Contact Information

Patty D. Shannon, Community Planning Coordinator

309 E. Milam, Ste. 600, Wharton, Texas 77488

Telephone: (979) 532-4612 Fax: (979) 532-1970

Email: patty.shannon@co.wharton.tx.us

Jim Mahood, County Community Planning Liaison from Houston-Galveston Area Council

Telephone: (832)681-2511 Fax: (713)993-2412

Email: james.mahood@h-gac.com

The Wharton County Community Plan is available on-line at www.co.wharton.tx.us