

**UNIDOS PODEMOS  
BROWNSVILLE  
COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY  
FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES**



**Five Year Strategic Plan  
June 15, 1999**

Submitted By  
Brownsville Comprehensive Strategy Team

Comprehensive Strategy Support Staff  
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# **SECTION ONE**

## **BROWNSVILLE COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT REPORT**

**June 15, 1999**

### **PART I - INTRODUCTION**

#### **Community Description**

Brownsville is Texas' southmost international seaport and the largest city in the Rio Grande Valley. The city is located at the southmost tip of Texas, along the U.S. border with Mexico, adjacent to its Mexican sister city of Matamoros, Tamaulipas. Brownville's population is quickly approaching 140,000; Matamoros has a population in excess of 750,000. The Brownsville Independent School District (BISD) is the fifteenth largest school district in the State of Texas. It serves a population of over 40, 000 students.

As the seat of Cameron County, it is the sixth fastest growing manufacturing area in the United States. Brownsville's proximity to Mexico has proven a major asset to industry and manufacturing. NAFTA has consolidated the city's role as a gateway for US/Mexico commerce. Merchandise exports have exploded by 88% since the NAFTA agreement was signed in late 1993. Matamoros maquiladoras have added 15,000 jobs over the same period, a phenomenal growth rate of 8.3% a year. Brownsville/Matamoros is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest border employment center. El Paso/Ciudad Juarez and San Diego/Tijuana are first and second.

Despite these positive factors, research has identified a number of community risk factors that are negatively impacting the quality of life. Brownsville's proximity to the Mexican border and the high level of poverty poses serious problems to the community in terms of drug trafficking, alien smuggling, substance abuse, entry of illegal drugs, homicide, aggravated assault and domestic violence. In 1995, Brownsville was identified by the Texas Legislature as one of the 11 zip codes in the state with the highest rate of juvenile crime. Statistics showed that local youth were increasingly becoming involved in robbery, theft, truancy,

weapons violations, drug offenses and other crimes. The Brownsville Police Department and the Cameron County Sheriff's Department reported an increase in problems dealing with juvenile substance abuse (up 49%) and crime (up 33%). Although there has been a coordination of local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies and community members to address these behaviors, risk factors remain a disturbing problem in the community. A complete discussion of these factors can be found in the Data Collection and Analysis Workgroup Report. A quick overview of some of these factors are:

- This region ranks at the bottom of almost every socio-economic indicator.
- 50% of the population lives below the poverty level.
- The average educational attainment is 7<sup>th</sup> grade.
- Brownsville has an extremely young population; the median age is 25.5 years, well below the state and national averages. 63% of the population is below 34 years of age. 38% of the population is under 18 years of age.
- Unemployment is twice the state and national level.
- In comparison to other schools in the state of Texas, the BISD school population is approximately:
  - 88% economically disadvantaged versus 48% at the state level
  - 49% limited English proficiency versus 13% at the state level
  - 97% Hispanic versus 38% at the state level
- In 1997-1998, Brownsville students reported higher levels of cocaine and downers use than students nationally.
- Runaway reports have increased sharply.
- Cameron County has a higher rate of teen pregnancies than the state.
- The percent of increase in juvenile arrests (i.e., robbery, aggravated assaults, drunkenness, disorderly conduct, truancy and vandalism) in Brownsville is significantly higher than the state.
- The Cameron County divorce rate has doubled since 1996.
- The number of adults modeling problem behaviors have shown a 32% percentage increase in terms of adult drug offenses in the County.

Although many resources exist in the community that address these problems, gaps in services and unserved youth, adults and families remain.

### **Evolution of Comprehensive Strategy**

During the last decade, the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas has experienced an upswing in juvenile crime and violence. Illicit drugs continue to enter from Mexico through the Rio Grande Valley cities of McAllen and Brownsville, as well as small cities and towns along the Texas-Mexico Border. In Valley schools, the youth have armed themselves with weapons. “Zero Tolerance” initiatives were enacted for drugs and weapons on Brownsville school campuses and a school police force came into existence. At the state level, the rising incidents of juvenile delinquency and the need to reform the juvenile justice system led the State of Texas to meet with the Justice Department’s Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), in 1995, to seek an integrated, comprehensive approach to address these problems.

Among the new programs the Texas Legislature created and funded through Protective and Regulatory Services to combat juvenile crime was the Community Youth Development (CYD) Program. Funds were distributed to 11 neighborhoods around the state that had the highest number of juvenile violent arrests and referrals. The goal of the project was for residents, working under the direction of a local steering committee, to develop programs to alleviate family and community conditions that led to juvenile crime. This program opened new avenues for Brownsville and 10 other Texas cities to receive state and federal funds in order to deliver services to at-risk children.

Since 1995, the Brownsville Community Youth Development (BCYD) Program has completed much of the groundwork for developing a community-based network of social service and government agencies dedicated to support families and to enhance the positive development of Brownsville youth. This program has been recognized at the state and national level for the creation and successful implementation of prevention and intervention programs over the last several years.

In March 1997, the past program success of BCYD led Brownsville to look for support and guidance from experts in the field to continue and expand their efforts in preventing and intervening in juvenile delinquency. During this time, five states were selected by the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to pilot their *Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offenders*. The Department of Justice selected Brownsville as one of five CYD Texas sites to receive technical assistance and training from consultants with the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) and Developmental Research and Programs, Inc. (DRP) to implement OJJDP's new national framework for juvenile delinquency prevention and intervention.

In 1997, NCCD and DRP conducted site visits to begin the planning and training process for Comprehensive Strategy. There were two groups that participated in the Comprehensive Strategy Work Plan as per OJJDP guidelines. The first group was the **Key Leaders Group**. This group was responsible for working collaboratively to mobilize support, champion effort, redirect and provide access to key resources, and endorse the work of the planning team. The NCCD and DRP provided training, outlining the goals and objectives of Comprehensive Strategy for more than 75 key leaders. Following the key leader buy-in, the consultants conducted a two-day training for the second planning group called the **Community Planning Team (CPT)**. During this training, individuals, agencies and organizations made a full commitment to join and participated both as initial planners and long term members in the Brownsville Comprehensive Strategy Team. The CPT Team was made up of representatives of key leaders, community members, social service agencies, law enforcement and others.

The CPT conducted the risk and needs assessment; established prevention, intervention and sanction priorities; identified service gaps; identified/adopted best practices; coordinated agency/department policies when needed; supported and developed policies and procedures that institutionalize the seamless service continuum; and developed long range outcome based strategies. The CPT formed six workgroups to deal specifically with planning issues.

## **The Six Community Planning Team Workgroups and a Summary of Their Functions:**

**Resource Assessment:** Conducts an inventory of Brownsville city programs/services along the prevention-graduated sanctions continuum and locates service gaps along that continuum.

**Data Collection/Analysis:** Collects and organizes data on the national risk factors to form a baseline community profile. From this profile, Brownsville can prioritize five risk factors. Also, this team will provide data for policy planning, as well as evaluation of the success of the Comprehensive Strategy in Brownsville.

**Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation:** Integrates all the issues and recommendations provided by Data Collection & Analysis, Resource Assessment, Structured Decision Making and Legislative/Policy/Systems Workgroups. Based on recommendations and issues identified by these groups, the Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Workgroup will develop a cohesive five year Comprehensive Strategy plan and report.

**Legislative, Policy, and Systems Issues:** Reviews and assesses current laws and policies to make legislative/policy recommendations.

**Objective Decision Making:** Identifies and assesses decision points during the Comprehensive Strategy process to make recommendations for further study and refinement of the current system.

**OutReach/Communication/**

**Media:** Develops a plan to solicit community involvement in Comprehensive Strategy efforts and utilizes the media to support the initiative.

Throughout the year the team chairs and co-chairs of these six committees have worked with BCYD staff to structure the implementation process. These individuals have met periodically to assess tasks completed, provide feedback for outreach and structure training and community meetings. It was agreed that the team chairpersons and co-chairpersons would be invited to become the Steering Committee that would drive the development of the Five Year Comprehensive Strategy Report. However, selection of priority strategies for implementation and development of a final report need to be completed by the Steering Committee. The planning process for Comprehensive Strategy followed the following timeline:

**Timeline**

- March 24, 1997      Brownsville applied for Technical Assistance from OJJDP to support preparation of a Comprehensive Strategy.
  
- Sept. 18, 1997      Comprehensive Strategy Community meeting held at Cameron County Courthouse to inform community members, key leaders and agencies of the grant award for technical assistance.
  
- July 28, 1998      Key Leaders were convened by the Project Coordinator of BCYD and representatives from consultant firms, DRP and NCCD, for a Comprehensive Strategy orientation and Key Leader buy-in and training session.
  
- Nov. 9-10, 1998      The planning committee structure was created and a nucleus of members were assigned to each of the community planning teams. Work began on the identification of the risk factors and assessment report.

- Jan. 27-28, 1999      The Comprehensive Strategy Task Force selected and ratified five risk factors for Brownsville.
- May 18-19, 1999      A two-day session of the entire membership was held to develop a five year action and implementation strategy for Brownsville. Presentation of the Brownsville Assessment Report to the OJJDP.
- June 15, 1999      Completed the development of the plan and began implementation of the five year action plan to reduce juvenile delinquency. Five year plan due to the Governor's Office.

**Impact to Date**

In Brownsville, the Comprehensive Strategy approach to juvenile delinquency has:

- Mobilized the service community and many concerned citizens to support a comprehensive approach that draws on all sectors of the community for participation.
- Focused the community attention on indicator data and created consensus on research-based risks.
- Provided a neutral and supported environment to ask difficult questions about our juvenile justice services and laws.
- Encouraged discussion of eliminating duplication and service overlaps.
- Promoted a community-wide paradigm shift, placing the needs of the youth above systems needs.
- Promoted an outcome-based approach to program design.
- Helped the community develop a common belief system on which all social services can be connected.
- Encouraged discussions on a system-wide allocation strategy.

**Other Initiatives**

As Comprehensive Strategy and CYD embraced Brownsville, a multitude of other federal, state and local initiatives that would impact this plan were being undertaken. On November 17, 1998, key community leaders from education, law enforcement, social services and government agencies countywide met as a Community Planning Group to consider and prioritize many crime-related issues. The Planning Group included the following members:

Harlingen Police Department CASA of Cameron & Willacy County Precinct 5 Constable's Office Communities in School Cameron County Juvenile Probation Cameron County District Attorney's Office Brownsville Police Department San Benito Police Department	La Feria Police Department Brownsville Independent School District Family Crisis Center Harlingen Independent School District Brownsville Community Youth Development Program Port Isabel Police Department Cameron County Drug Enforcement Task Force
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These members met four times in 1998 to review and discuss the need for revisions to the 1999 Cameron County Criminal Justice Community Plan. The Plan was approved by the Cameron County Commissioner's Court. The committee prioritized crimes into "High" or "Medium" priority. The Brownsville Comprehensive Strategy, CST, and the 1999 Criminal Justice Community Plan are in agreement as to "High" and "Medium" priorities for crime related issues.

The DEA has focused resources and attention on the southwest border during the past two years and are working closely with the FBI, the U.S. Attorney's Office, the Criminal Division in the Department of Justice, the Border Patrol, the U.S. Customs Service and state and local authorities under the mantle of the Southwest Border Initiative. By combining the resources of a number of departments and law enforcement agencies, this multi-agency enforcement effort is simultaneously targeting the drug trafficking organizations on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico Border. This initiative has forged a formal alliance between many federal and state law enforcement agencies in the area. Below is a list of some of these agencies that continue to work together to meet the challenge on the border:



<b>State and Federal Law Enforcement Agencies Working Together in Brownsville</b>	
Brownsville Police Department	U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms
Brownsville Independent School District Security Police Department	U.S. Coast Guard
Cameron County District Attorney	U.S. Customs
	U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency
Cameron County Sheriff's Office	U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation
Cameron County Juvenile Probation Department	U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service
Texas Department of Public Safety	U.S. Internal Revenue Service (Drugs/CID)
Texas National Guard	U.S. Marshal's Office
University of Texas at Brownsville	U.S. Attorney's Office
Southmost College Security	U.S. Border Patrol

Other initiatives with extensive partnerships include **Operation Weed and Seed** which is a U.S. Justice Department initiative to coordinate efforts of local, state and federal law enforcement agencies and in neighborhood restoration. Funding is managed by Brownsville Independent School District.

**Shared Vision**

Brownsville's Comprehensive Strategy Plan was developed with input from diverse sources that contributed experience, professional expertise, national, state, and local statistics and many creative ideas and methodologies. Our strategic plan proposes an integrated system approach with an expectation of sustained and measured results. This plan was based on a shared vision that all of Brownsville's youth can develop into caring, educated, and responsible family and community members. In order to achieve this vision, the Comprehensive Strategy Team's prime goal is to represent a unified community effort and stay focused on strengthening the community and families to develop healthy, responsible youth through prevention, intervention, and appropriate graduated sanctions.

## **Mission and Guiding Principles**

Brownsville's blueprint for community action and collaboration was based on the same guiding principles endorsed by the OJJDP Comprehensive Strategy framework. This community-focused, research-based approach incorporated two components: targeting prevention efforts for youth at-risk of engaging in delinquency and crime, and improving the juvenile justice system's response to delinquent offenders through a system of graduated sanctions and treatment alternatives. Together, delinquency prevention programs, early intervention, and graduated sanctions provide a "continuum of care" to prevent and interrupt the progression of delinquent and criminal behavior (OJJDP, 1997). The Brownsville Comprehensive Strategy is guided by the following 5 principles supported by the OJJDP:

1. Strengthen the family role to instill moral principles and provide guidance and support of children.
2. Support core social institutions (schools, religious organizations, youth service agencies, and community organizations) in their role of developing capable, mature, and responsible youth.
3. Recognize that delinquency prevention is the most cost effective approach in combating youth crime.
4. Intervene immediately and effectively when delinquent behavior first occurs and ensure that appropriate sanctions for misconduct are delivered in a timely fashion.
5. Identify and control the small group of serious, violent, and chronic offenders through a range of graduated sanctions, including placement in secure facilities.

## **Risk Factors and Social Development Theory**

The Brownsville Comprehensive Strategy is based on a "risk-focused" prevention model, which makes it possible to examine communities for known risk factors associated with youth violence. These risk factors exist at the individual, family, school, peer and community level. OJJDP identified 19 risk factors that research suggests contribute to adolescent problem behaviors (e.g., substance abuse, delinquency, teen pregnancy, school dropout and violence) and 8 protective factors that buffer a child against their development. Program approaches

that reduce risk factors while enhancing protective factors are likely to provide the strongest form of prevention.

Protective factors are part of OJJDP's Social Development Strategy (SDS). The concept proposes that healthy beliefs and clear standards for behavior modeled within family, school and community directly encourage healthy adaptive behaviors in children. The goal of SDS is to develop healthy, positive behaviors for young people. In order to develop healthy behaviors, young people must be immersed in environments that consistently communicate healthy beliefs and clear standards for behavior. The Brownsville Comprehensive Strategy has based its research framework on the Social Development Theory under the operating model of "Communities That Care," developed by Developmental Research and Programs, Inc. in Seattle, Washington.

<p><b>The National Risk Factors:</b></p> <p><i>Community Risk Factors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability of drugs</li> <li>• Availability of firearms</li> <li>• Media portrayals of violence</li> <li>• Transition and mobility</li> <li>• Extreme economic deprivation</li> <li>• Community laws, norms favorable towards drug use, firearms and crimes</li> <li>• Low neighborhood attachment and community disorganization</li> </ul>	<p><i>School Risk Factors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early and persistent antisocial behavior</li> <li>• Academic failure beginning in late elementary school</li> <li>• Lack of commitment to school</li> </ul>
<p><i>Family Factors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family history of problem behavior</li> <li>• Family management problems</li> <li>• Family conflict</li> <li>• Favorable parental attitude and involvement in problem behavior</li> </ul>	<p><i>Individual/Peer Risk Factors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alienation and rebelliousness</li> <li>• Friends who engage in problem behavior</li> <li>• Favorable attitudes toward problem behaviors</li> <li>• Early Initiation of problem behaviors</li> </ul>
<p><b>The National Protective Factors:</b></p> <p><i>Inherent in the Individual</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Female gender</li> <li>• High intelligence</li> <li>• Resilient temperament</li> <li>• Positive social orientation</li> </ul>	<p><i>Inherent in Social Bonding</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bonds with positive, prosocial family members</li> <li>• Bonds with positive, prosocial friends</li> <li>• Bonds with positive, prosocial adults outside of family</li> </ul>

## **PART II - PLANNING TEAM ACTIVITIES**

### **Data Collection and Analysis Workgroup**

<b>Membership</b>	Roberta Dahl, Ph.D., Chair, Resource Development Institute Susan Ritter, Ph.D., Co-Chair, UTB/TSC Sherry McCullough, Ph.D. UTB/TSC Margie Mancias, PH.D. UTB/TSC Carlos Cuellar, Boys and Girls Club Ron Haghighi, Texas Juvenile Probation Commission Eddie Valent, BISD Hilda Garcia, Cameron County Housing Jose Lopez, UTB/TSC Police Department NorAnn Flores, BISD Police Department Amanda Lopez, Juvenile Probation Department Bebe Crooks, UTB/TSC Alberto Villarreal, Upward Bound Charlie Koonce, Recovery Center for Drug Treatment Abel Morales, Valley Homeless Coalition Steve Womack, SUNGLO Home Health
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#### **Tasks**

- Identify data sources and problems
- Collect/organize data needed for baseline community profile
- Collect risk factors indicator data
- Collect problem behavior indicator data
- Review/analyze collected data and identify priorities

#### **Process**

Comprehensive Strategy planners thoroughly reviewed risk data for the city of Brownsville. It is critical during the planning process to identify trends, shifts and significant increases in data related not just to at-risk behavior but also to specific juvenile crime information. This assignment was the function of the CS Data Collection and Analysis Workgroup (DW). The purpose of the DW was to collect local, state and national data on the 19 risk factors as outlined by the OJJDP, analyze important trends and prepare a community needs assessment report. This report would be reviewed by the Brownsville CPT members and allowed them to prioritize the risk factors based on the report. Each DW member was assigned several of the 19 specific risk indicators for data collection. Data collection focused on data for the years

1993 to 1997. The members attempted to collect as complete a set of data as possible. However, several problems limited the data collection on all 19 indicators over the targeted year:

1. The first problem was that data defined by OJJDJ as risk factors were not collected by most agencies at the city level. Sometimes only county data was available. Thus, county data was used instead of city data for some comparisons.
2. The second problem was that some data indicators could not be found within a reasonable search time. For example, after a 4 week time frame, the DW was unable to find sources for data concerning firearms ownership or sales, media portrayals of violence, or elementary students with behavioral disorder or attention deficit disorder. These indicators were eliminated from the process.
3. The third problem encountered was indicators could not be compared across the same time frame. Therefore, the baseline differed across indicators. For example, some indicators could be tracked from 1993 to 1997. Other indicators had data only for the years of 1995 to 1997. Several indicators could not be compared over time at all. Indicators having data for only one year were compared using state or national data as the baseline.
4. The fourth problem encountered was that some collected data showed no significant trend either up or down over time or a significant difference between national or state data. This data was eliminated based on the censuses of the DW.

The DW compiled available and significant data into a short report for the review of CPT members. CPT members prioritized the factors by rank. Each member was given five votes and asked to distribute votes among the factors. Members' votes for each factor were counted and factors were prioritized based on the number of votes. This process resulted in five priority areas of focus:

## **Recommendations of Five Priority Risk Factors for Brownsville**

- **Extreme Economic and Social Deprivation**
- **Availability of Drugs**
- **Family Management Problems**
- **Family Conflict**
- **Lack of Commitment to School**

The next section provides an overview of the data found for the highest ranking risk factors.

### **Local Risk Factors**

#### **Prioritized Risk Factor 1: Extreme Economic and Social Deprivation**

Experts perceive a direct correlation between poverty, unemployment, family breakdown, poor academic performance and anti-social behavior. Research demonstrates that children residing in decaying neighborhoods characterized by extreme poverty, inferior living conditions and high unemployment are more likely to develop problems with delinquency, teenage pregnancy and drop out of school. They are also more likely to engage in violent behavior toward others during adolescence and adulthood. Children who live in these neighborhoods are more likely to have behavioral or adjustment problems early in life and are at much greater risk for substance abuse problems. Reports of child abuse and neglect are 4-5 times more common in families living in poverty.

Brownsville clearly demonstrates some of the most serious economic conditions in the nation or state. This region ranks at the bottom of almost every socio-economic indicator:

- In Brownsville, the percentage of all persons living in poverty (68%) is over three times the national percentage (18%) and almost twice as high as the state percentage (39%).
- 50% of all children in Cameron County live in poverty. The percentage of children living in poverty is 30% over national statistics (20%).
- Over 80% of Brownsville public school children qualify for the reduced/free lunch subsidies compared to only 44% in the state and 26% in the nation. These percentages have remained relatively stable since the early 70s.
- Unemployment in the city and county has historically been higher than the state unemployment. In 1998, unemployment in Brownsville (12.6%) remains almost three

times that of Texas (4.6%) and the United States as a whole. In 1990, per capita income for the nation was \$19,142. For Texas, it was only \$17,310 and for Brownsville it was \$7,125.

Regardless of economic cycles, there has been a steady growth in population in the county over the last 10 years. At last estimate (U.S. Census Bureau, 1990), Cameron County's population stands at 260,120, a 24% increase over the 1984 census. Approximately 87% of Brownsville's population is Hispanic of which 38% are under 18 years of age.

Furthermore, this community has been impacted by high levels of impoverished immigration from Mexico, which has intensified the competition for jobs, social services and affordable housing. Many recent immigrants reside in unregulated rural subdivisions called "colonias" or "barrios" which exist as pockets in various areas of the city and throughout the county. Research suggests that in the over 300 colonias that exist in Cameron County, youth have a high probability of school drop out and involvement with drugs and gangs (TCADA, 1996). Most colonia residents have electricity, but no indoor plumbing or sewage facilities. Consider the following profile of colonia residents compiled by the Texas Department of Human Services (1996):

- 86% are high school drop-outs
- 43% cannot speak or read English
- 47% are unemployed
- 58% receive food stamps
- 72% have no health insurance

In conclusion, improvements in economic conditions nationally and statewide have not had a significant impact on children living within Cameron County and Brownsville. These data provide evidence that Brownsville has a disproportionate number of its citizens, families and children living in conditions of economic deprivation. Furthermore, the majority of Brownsville's key leaders and their representatives surveyed during the 1998 Comprehensive Strategy (CST) orientation meeting cited economic issues, including unemployment, the lack

of job training and parental stress caused by financial hardship, as the highest priority when dealing with the causes of juvenile delinquency.

## **Prioritized Risk Factor 2: Availability of Drugs**

### **Geographic Location**

There are several at-risk factors unique to the border area's population. The proximity of the Mexican border presents a serious problem in the fight against gangs and drug abuse. Drug trafficking across the Texas-Mexico border is extensive. Researchers estimate that 70% of all drugs smuggled into the U.S. comes across the border. A recent report by the Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (TCADA, 1998) found that illicit drugs continue to enter from Mexico through cities such as El Paso, Laredo, McAllen and Brownsville, as well as small cities and towns along the Texas-Mexico Border. Seaports such as Port Isabel in Cameron County are used to import heroin, cocaine and hashish via commercial cargo vessels. Valley highways provide a means of moving drugs from Mexico to the north, east and west. Several years ago, El Paso was the major entry point for drug trafficking on the border. According to several sources (Lucker, 1998; Herrick, 1997), drug trafficking in the lower Rio Grande Valley is increasingly becoming the major entry point, eclipsing El Paso.

It is feared that these large quantities of drugs will increase the drug availability on the streets and result in higher rates of use for border residents. Although most illegal drugs crossing the border do not remain here but continue to destinations elsewhere in the United States, some of the contraband does remain in the border area, sometimes as a payment to local residents who assist in trafficking (De Salvo, 1997). Undoubtedly, an environment of heavy drug trafficking and easy availability of drugs just across the border may contribute to a climate in which drug use is normalized (Lucker, 1998). However, the precise relationship between the presence of trafficking in an area and the availability of drugs for personal use has not been well documented in the research (TCADA, 1996).

Another factor contributing to the availability of drugs is the sale of prescription medicines over the counter and their ease of entry into the United States. A major problem cited by



TCADA (Maxwell, 1998) is that Mexican pharmacies sell controlled substances to U.S. citizens who declare these drugs and legally bring a 90-day supply into the state. Mexico's lack of regulations on prescription drugs permits easy acquisition of substances from pharmacies. Because the border is easily crossed and prescription drugs are available without medical consultation, a casual attitude exists on taking drugs with a written prescription. A recent study conducted by Yarritu (1997) found evidence of a state of fluid drug movement across the border, noting that the two bridges that link Matamoros to Brownsville accommodate a flourishing drug and alcohol business. Yarritu's research indicates a high likelihood that drug patterns and problems on one side of the border will spread to the other side of the border, especially in cities of close proximity to one another.

Drug trafficking is also associated with increased violent crimes in border areas, including the Lower Rio Grande Valley (TCADA, 1996). According to DEA Congressional Testimony in 1996:

Within the past decade, drug traffickers shifted their major operations from South Florida, which had become the epicenter of drug interdiction activities during the 1980's to Mexico. The problems experienced along the border are directly attributable to Mexico's major traffickers joining with Columbian organizations. The southwest border has become the focal point for drug trafficking into the United States. Murders, crime and violence have become a reality in most communities in the southwest and the vast majority of these crimes are drug related.

State and local crime statistics suggest that local juvenile arrest rates have continued to increase as the state rate decreases. For example, between 1993 to 1997:

- The Brownsville juvenile aggravated assault arrest rate increased by 56% for Brownsville Police Department and by 58% for Brownsville Independent School District Police Department. In contrast, the rate of juvenile arrests for aggravated assaults at the state level decreased by 16%.
- The Brownsville juvenile burglary arrest rate increased by 33% for Brownsville P.D. In contrast, the rate of juvenile arrests for burglary at the state level decreased by 9%.

- The Brownsville juvenile robbery arrest rate increased by 21% for Brownsville Police Department. In contrast, the rate of juvenile arrests for robbery at the state level decreased by 29%.

On a similar note, most Brownsville residents perceive drug trafficking to be a problem in the community and they frequently link these activities to crime and violence in their community (TCADA, 1996):

- 95% of Brownsville residents believed there was a lot of drug trafficking in the city
- 95% believed that the drug trade in this area is associated with the violence and crime.

Over the past two years, the DEA, FBI, U.S. Attorney's Office, the Criminal Division in the Department of Justice, the Border Patrol, the U.S. Customs and state and local authorities under the mantle of the Southwest Border Initiative have begun to focus resources and attention on this problem.

### **Availability of Drug Use in Brownsville Schools**

Availability of drugs is, at times, measured by rates of use. Across the state youth are using and abusing substances at earlier ages than in the past (Commission on Substance Abuse Among America's Adolescents, 1997). Likewise, drug usage is a disturbing problem in Brownsville Independent School District. For example local statistics indicate:

- Fifty-seven percent of BISD expulsions in 1997-1998 were substance abuse related. The most frequently cited drug use was for marijuana, cocaine and roche pills.
- A 1998 BISD study of 833 high, at-risk secondary school students (i.e., students who were retained one year, suspended, failed TAAS, or had been involved with the juvenile justice system) reported that 60% of the sample were in need of substance abuse intervention services.
- Over the past few years the Brownsville juvenile arrest rate for drug abuse increased 49% for combined statistics for BISD police and Brownsville P.D. In contrast, the rate of juvenile arrest for drug abuse is up 97%.
- Over the past few years the Brownsville juvenile arrest rate for drunkenness increased 50% for combined statistics for BISD police and Brownsville P.D. In contrast, the rate of juvenile arrest for drunkenness is up only 36%.

## **Marijuana Use**

Limited evidence suggests that Valley youth may have greater access to marijuana than do students nationwide. A recent survey (Black, 1997) found a sample of Brownsville Middle School students were 11% more likely to report marijuana was "fairly easy" or "very easy to get" than were students nationwide (Brownsville 65% vs. National 54%). Data from the Texas Commission of Alcohol and Drug Abuse validates the availability of this drug throughout Texas. A recent study (Maxwell, 1998) indicates that the availability of marijuana in Texas remains high, with multi-ton seizures commonplace. The proportion of Texas adolescents being admitted for a primary problem with marijuana continues to increase. It now comprises 72% of the adolescents admitted to publicly funded treatment in 1998, as compared to 35% in 1987.

## **Cocaine Use**

TCADA (1998) recently reported that cocaine in south Texas was readily available at the wholesale and retail levels due to the proximity with the Mexican border. The Commission found that cocaine use by Texas youth is up 5% since 1995. Likewise, the 1998 Texas Secondary School Survey found lifetime and past month use of powder cocaine and/or crack was higher than at any time since the Texas School Survey began in 1998. There is evidence that Valley youth are more likely to use and have access to cocaine than other students in the state or across the nation. Results from local drug surveys (Black, 1997; Texas A&M, 1998) suggested that:

- Brownsville 8<sup>th</sup> graders were 21% more likely than students nationwide to report that cocaine was "fairly easy" or "very easy" to obtain.
- Over one third of Brownsville secondary students indicated that powdered cocaine was easily accessible to them compared to 25% of students statewide.
- Brownsville 9<sup>th</sup> graders' use of cocaine was 6% over state percentages and 10% over national percentage for lifetime usage.
- Brownsville 10<sup>th</sup> graders' use of cocaine was 5% over state percentages and 10% over national percentage for lifetime use.

## **Downers**

Recent research indicates that depressants are a growing problem for Texas youth because of their importation from Mexico. Rohypnol treatment admissions to TCADA-funded youth programs are increasing statewide. Eighty-four percent of the youth being admitted for treatment for Rohypnol are Hispanic with an average age of 15 years. Similar problems are occurring at a local level. A recent school district survey (Texas A&M, 1998) indicated:

- About a quarter of BISD secondary students believed that downers are easily accessible to them, rates 4% higher than those indicated by students statewide.
- The percent of Brownsville students using Rohypnol was over the state percentage. Use was especially high for Brownsville 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders in comparison to state percentages:
  - 7<sup>th</sup> graders' use of Rohypnol was 4% over the state percentages for lifetime use
  - 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> graders' use of Rohypnol was 6% over the state percentages for lifetime use

In conclusion, these data support the hypothesis that drugs are more readily available to Brownsville youth than to youth statewide or nationwide. This availability is due, at least in part, to Brownsville's proximity to the Mexican border.

1. Black, Gordon. (1997). Drug and Alcohol Survey. University of Colorado.
2. De Salvo, J. (1997). Patterns and trends of drug abuse in El Paso, Texas. In Current Trends in Substance Use: Texas 1997. (Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse), 77-82.
3. Herrick, T. (1997, August 12). Drug Traffic Surge in South Texas. Houston Chronicle.
4. Lucker, G. William. (1998). Patterns and trends of drug abuse in El Paso, Texas. In Current Trends in Substance Abuse Use, Texas 1997. (Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse), 96-101.
5. Maxwell, Jane. (1998, December). Substance Abuse Trends in Texas: Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse.
6. TCADA. (1996). 1996 Survey of Substance Use on the Texas-Mexico Border and in Colonias.

7. Texas A&M, 1998 Drug Survey.
8. Yarritu, Gilberto. (1997). Drug abuse patterns and trends in Matamoros, Tamaulipas. In Proceedings of the Border Epidemiology Work Group on Drug Abuse, August 1997. (Rockville, MD. National Institute on Drug Abuse). 33-36.

Because of the high incidence of poverty and minority related problems, such as unemployment, transience, sociological deprivation, all Brownsville youth are at particular risk for becoming even more involved in gangs that engage in illicit drug-related activities. The following research and statistics provides limited support that crime, gang involvement and violence may be growing in the state, county and city.

### **Gang and Drug Connection in Texas**

According to the Texas Attorney General, the number of gangs appears to be on the rise in most Texas cities. In 1998, the State of Texas was second in the nation for reported gang activity. The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (1999) reports that Texas prison gangs are a growing menace outside prison walls. Adult gangs such as the Mexican Mafia, Texas Syndicate, HPL, TM and SDF recruit youth from street gangs for illegal activities. In addition, Texas border cities have an additional problem with Mexican Drug Gangs. Recent research indicate that (Williamson, 1997):

- In Houston, officials report that local teenage gangs go from mischief to felonies largely as a result of their involvement with Mexican drug trafficking gangs.
- In San Antonio, Mexican traffickers seeking lookouts and drivers are recruiting from local juvenile gangs.
- The parents are the weakest link in the whole chain because they are usually working two jobs and they simply don't know what's going on.
- Even with local and federal law enforcement task forces monitoring the connection between street gangs with cartel connections, intelligence is limited. Members are tight lipped for fear of retaliation from the cartel on their families.
- The Mexican drug gangs are training Texas local street gangs to run street operations more like businesses and less like the turf obsessed packs in the past.

The Mexican gangs' influence is not confined to local juvenile street gangs. The drug traffickers are intimidating ranchers and terrorizing Texas communities. Kay Bailey Hutchinson (Reuter Information System, 1996) reported in San Antonio that Mexican drug gangs are running Rio Grande ranchers off their land near the U.S. Mexican border in order to move drugs easier to the U.S. These ranchers are so frightened that they are selling their land in many cases to buyers fronting for drug gangs who use the ranches to get a foothold in the U.S. Hutchinson said the heavily armed drug gangs equipped with assault rifles, night vision equipment, and their own intelligence network, have outmanned, outgunned and outplanned the U.S. Border Patrol, Customs Service, and the DEA at strategic points on the US border of Texas. The traffickers are beginning to have a profound effect on middle class Mexican-American communities in cities around the U.S. For example, in San Diego, the Mexican drug gangs have invaded the middle and upper middle class youth. The gangs have begun recruiting U.S. graduates from the best private schools. These are young, aggressive graduates of Mexican heritage who speak English without a trace of accent and blend effortlessly into the culture of both countries. In Mexico, they are labeled "narco-juniors." These children belong to families that don't need money--they are the children of parents with businesses, living in good houses.

### **Gangs in Texas**

Gang problems are well recognized throughout the local community. In 1999, the Cameron County Commissioners Court reported that local gang activities were on the rise. According to the Criminal Justice Committee on Youth and Criminal Activity in 1995, there were estimated to be approximately 20-40 active juvenile gangs in Cameron County with membership as high as 2,500. At the present time, Cameron County Juvenile Probation has identified 20 active gangs in Brownsville. At least nine of the largest gangs (Muralla, La Coma, La 421, La Villa Verde, La Parra, Las Prietas, Cameron Park, China, La Loma) have been identified as serious problems on school campuses. According to the Texas Youth Commission in 1998, 50% of all youth incarcerated from Cameron County within their facility have been identified as belonging to a juvenile gang. It should be noted that only 1% to 2% of the county's referrals are committed to the Texas Youth Commission. Thus, the number of youth involved in juvenile gangs is much higher. Gang members are consistently

using younger students to stand watch, pass drugs, serve as runners or carry weapons in order to avoid detection.

Sometimes gang involvement is measured by gang related crimes such as vandalism and graffiti. The Brownsville Police report that juvenile vandalism has increased by 35% from 1993 to 1997. In comparison, state arrests have decreased by 9%. During the 1997 school year it was estimated that over \$250,000 of Brownsville School tax dollars were dedicated to materials and labor for vandalism. This amounted to 10% of the maintenance budget for the year.

Over the years, school district personnel have reported the existence of gangs on their campuses. A 1994 "Needs Assessment of Campus Crime" conducted by Brownsville Independent School District in cooperation with the Criminal Justice Committee on Youth and Criminal Activity revealed that the majority of BISD staff members reported the existence of gangs on their campus (81%). Over one third of the staff reported other staff members had been approached by concerned parents (35%) or students (44%) about personal safety issues due to gang problems. More recently, the BISD Police reported no students correlated with an identified gang profile in 1995 and 1996 but in 1997, 126 youth were identified as fitting the gang profile. Likewise, a recent School District survey (Texas A&M, 1997) reported:

- 47% of Brownsville's 8<sup>th</sup> graders reported some or most of their friends belonged to a gang or wanted to join a gang
- Over one third of Brownsville students reported their friends brought a weapon to school:
  - 38% of the 8<sup>th</sup> graders
  - 41% of the 10<sup>th</sup> graders
  - 36% of the 12<sup>th</sup> graders
- On the average, Brownsville students were 24% more likely to know someone carrying a weapon to school than other students nationwide.

One fear expressed by federal officials is that Valley cities would follow the lead of Houston or San Antonio, and local gangs would be used to support organized drug trafficking gangs'

illegal activities. At this time, there is no statistical or quantitative evidence to support this belief. There have been only two juvenile gang members in Cameron County who admit to being recruited by major drug trafficking gangs. However, preventive measures may be warranted if trends in other Texas cities are a forewarning to Brownsville. Joint activities between street gangs and Mexican drug traffickers documented in other Texas cities may be likely due to the proximity to Mexican cartels. One of the major organized drug gangs, The Gulf Coast, is based in Matamoros, Tamaulipas directly across the border from Brownsville.

1. DEA Congressional Testimony. (1996). Congressional Hearings Intelligence and Security.
2. Mexican Drug Gangs Terrorize Texas Ranchers, Senator Hutchinson Calls for Greater Military Role. (1996). Texas.
3. Williamson, Michael. (1997). Border Traffic the Drug Trade from Mexico. Washington Post.
4. Texas A&M. (1997). Texas Substance Abuse Survey.

### **Prioritized Risk Factors 3 and 4: Family Management Problems and Family Conflict**

There is evidence that youth who become involved in gangs and drugs come from families in which there is poor discipline (e.g., overly strict or overly permissive, poor supervision, and lack of parent-child communication). The lack of parental involvement has been cited by school personnel as one of the biggest problems they face in motivating students to stay in school. Many Valley youth come from dysfunctional families where physical and emotional abuse are common. Local data indicates that over the past few years the Valley has seen an increase in:

- **Child Abuse and Neglect**

- From 1993 to 1997 a 10% increase in confirmed child abuse and neglect cases was reported in Cameron County as compared to a decline of 8.7% at the state level



- **Runaways**
  - From 1993 to 1997 a 42% increase in the problem of runaways was reported by Brownsville Police Department; likewise, state data shows a large increase of 66%.
- **Single Parent Families and Family Conflict**
  - From 1996 to 1998 the number of divorces filed have doubled in Cameron County District Court compared to a decrease of 2% at the state level.
  - The percentage of abortions in Cameron county (8.6) is significantly lower in comparison to the state percentage (21.7). One explanation for these statistics is that more Valley youth are choosing to stay with the child.
- **Teen pregnancies**
  - From 1995 to 1997 a 12% increase in the rate of teen pregnancies in Cameron County compared to a decrease of 2% at the state level.

Teen pregnancy has become such an important social issue for Brownsville that in 1990 the school district opened Lincoln Park, a school for teen parenting/pregnant students. Lincoln Park averages 130 parenting or pregnant students at any given time. Enrollment has almost tripled since 1990 (88 students to 234 students).

Likewise, a composite of Brownsville youth served by Jovenes Unidos Drug Treatment Program showed that frequently these youth come from impoverished, single parent environments that lack positive role models. Youths have often been abused and have failed to internalize societal norms. Listed below is a composite of these Brownsville youths in drug treatment at Jovenes Unidos:

- 13% suspended from school
- 50% failing school
- 30% unemployed families
- 65% report marijuana as their primary drug
- average age of first use is 15 years of age
- 46% have been arrested
- 61% have parents with substance abuse problems
- 77% come from single parent homes

These data indicate the growing problem of family management in the community. Especially troubling is the fact that the community's rate of child abuse and neglect continues to exceed the average in the state. The Cameron County 1999 Criminal Justice Community Plan approved by the Cameron County Commissioners Court on November 17, 1998, considered domestic violence, such as spouse and child abuse, to be a high priority in need of new programs and funding. This community planning group reported a high incidence of spouse abuse in Cameron County (1,601 victims). Domestic violence reports have been increasing throughout the state. From 1993 to 1996, domestic violence reports increased 14.5% in Texas.

Adult literacy is a major problem in the Valley. Although Hispanic parents may place a great value upon education, many Valley parents lack the experience and knowledge to guide their children through school. Data suggest a greater proportion of Brownsville residents function at a lower literacy level than that of the state or nation. Over one-third of the residents of Brownsville (32%) have less than a 9<sup>th</sup> grade education. Almost 50% have less than 12 years of school compared to 28% in the State and 18% in the nation. In comparison to 1993, significantly more adults in 1997 are modeling problem behavior to youth. For example, adult drug arrests have increased both in the state (up 48%) and county (up 32%) over the last four years. Note that arrests due to the possession of drugs significantly increased in the county (up 23%) and the state (up 14%) from 1996 to 1997.

#### **Prioritized Risk Factor 5: Lack of Commitment to School**

Truancy appears to be declining in the state and increasing at the local level. From 1995 to 1997, truancy reports declined 22.3% in Texas. In contrast, truancy has become a major concern in Brownsville schools. Daily, students who should be attending school are venturing across the border. Students designate "skip days" and circulate flyers encouraging students to skip school by enticing them with the reduced price of alcohol and the solicitation of "free sex" in Matamoros, Mexico. The number of arrests for truancy has increased by 600% (86 to 733) since the formation of the Brownsville Independent School District Police Force in 1995. The Cameron County 1999 Criminal Justice Community Plan written by a county-wide

committee of persons working in education, law enforcement, social services and government agencies and approved by the Cameron County Commissioners Court assigned a high priority to setting up programs to address truancy and dropout. Furthermore, the lower than state percentage for completion of high school indicates less commitment to school than elsewhere in the state. Only 51% of persons age 25 years and older are high school graduates compared to 72% in the state and 82% in the nation. Furthermore, the longitudinal dropout rate, defined as the percent of high school freshman enrolled in 1993/1994 who didn't graduate in 1997, was 57.5% compared to 43.1% in the state.

1. Black, Gordan. (1997). Drug and Alcohol Survey. University of Colorado.
2. De Salvo, J. (1997). Patterns and trends of drug abuse in El Paso, Texas. In Current Trends in Substance Use: Texas 1997. (Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse), 77-82.
3. Herrick, T. (1997, August 12). Drug traffic surge in South Texas. Houston Chronicle.
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5. Maxwell, Jane. (1998, December). Substance Abuse Trends in Texas: (Texas Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse).
6. TCADA. (1996). 1996 Survey of Substance Use on the Texas-Mexico Border and in Colonias.
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8. Vindell, Tony, (1999), Eastern Study: Valley's per capita income Lowest in the nation. Brownsville Herald Newspaper.
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**Comprehensive Strategy**  
**"Not Just Another Program"**

**Resource Assessment Workgroup**

**Membership**

Rose M. Gomez, Chair, Juvenile Probation  
Rosa O. Salinas, Co-Chair, Juvenile Probation  
Mary Pat Ziolkowski, BISD Homeless  
Rosa M. Raya, Good Neighbor Settlement House  
Eduardo Montiel, Friendship of Women  
Glenda Reiff, Campus Care  
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Erica De La Garza, Valley Coalition for the Homeless  
Linda Mendez, Valley Coalition for the Homeless  
Patricia Rodriguez, Valley Coalition for the Homeless  
Monica Salinas, Buckner Children and Family Services  
Delma Sanchez, Brownsville Community Health Center  
University of Texas at Brownsville-Criminal Justice Club  
University of Texas at Brownsville Intern Students

**Tasks**

The city of Brownsville has been selected as one of the few sites in Texas that will initiate a comprehensive approach in identifying gaps in services and strengthening existing initiatives. The community plan is research based and will build and unify the efforts of all service and program providers. According to the technical assistance team from Developmental Research and Programs and National Council on Crime and Delinquency, "it is not just another program." The program intended to integrate the full spectrum of prevention and juvenile justice efforts; therefore, keeping that in mind, our main tasks were to:

- Conduct inventory of program/services along continuum, consistent with priorities
- Conduct inventory of programs/services along graduated sanctions continuum
- Assess effectiveness of identified programs addressing risk factors
- Identify gaps along continuum

## **Process**

The process for the Resource Assessment Workgroup began with an original team consisting of 8 members. The members of the workgroup met on two separate occasions on December 1998, over a "working lunch" to discuss the information gathered and were asked to recruit new members.

On January 1999, our workgroup membership doubled in size while attending training held by DRP. According to DRP and NCCD trainers, our workgroup was ahead compared to other sites, but they did suggest including a graduated sanctions continuum.

Using several comprehensive assessments of existing resources, from prevention through graduated sanctions and aftercare, the Resource Assessment Workgroup identified needs and gaps in the continuum. The data collection process for the Resource Assessment Workgroup included youth service, agency manuals/directories, surveys and personal interviews with service providers. The University of Texas Criminal Justice Club and Correction students volunteered to collect survey data. The CJ Club focused on possible services available for youth/families in the faith community and elderly programs. The committee members reviewed the information and determined which resources correlated with priority risk factors (Extreme Economic Deprivation, Family Management, Family History, Availability of Drugs and Lack of Commitment to School.) A master resource inventory list was created and revised to update agency information (i.e., telephone numbers, personnel). The workgroup also established a classification system for identifying programs as Prevention, Intervention, Immediate Sanctions. Research indicated that only a few programs were research based and family driven. Very few programs were developed with the feedback from youth or families. There was a consensus among workgroup members that new programs should involve family and youth in the development and evaluation process. The Resource Workgroup made a visual presentation to the community. Approximately one hundred programs were identified and classified by their function.

The Resource Workgroup used a structured decision making approach to develop a consensus of those services and gaps deemed most critical to the Comprehensive Strategy

implementation. These critical needs and gaps were categorized into one of the following areas:

**Program:** Needs and gaps identified in this category represent specific program services.

**Geographic:** Certain areas of town lack specific resources that are available to serve residents in other parts of the city.

**Concrete Support Services:** There is a recognition that additional support services must be available for primary treatment to be effective (i.e., childcare, transportation and housing).

### **Barriers**

Throughout the process, the Resource Assessment Workgroup encountered several barriers. Interagency communication posed a problem. Some agencies had changed personnel, telephone numbers and agency name. It became a routine to update the inventory list. Turf issues were also stumbling blocks for some workgroup members. Several local organizations were reluctant to share any information about their agency. Another barrier was the commitment of workgroup members. Time restraints and job responsibilities were a priority for many members; however, it was difficult to obtain surveys from their own organization. The workgroup size diminished once again when it came to assessing the programs and placing them on the matrix. When survey information was not present, educated guesses had to be made based on personal knowledge of services. Workgroup members recognized that in order to begin the process of being family driven and solution focused, the community would need training for all youth and family services. Some members of the community may be reluctant to use this innovative approach and may resist change. Another barrier noted that needs serious attention is community acceptance of drug and alcohol use and of drug dealing in the Rio Grande Valley.

### **Gaps in Services**

In assessing the data for the Resource Assessment Workgroup, there was a determination of the following gaps in services. The breakdown for each risk factor is as follows:

### **Extreme Economic Deprivation**

- The need for vocational training and employment programs is great in this community. These programs would help address populations exposed to multiple risk factors, such as academic failure, lack of commitment to school and extreme economic deprivation.
- Health care programs are needed for residents who are not eligible for government assistance or private insurance.
- Awareness and Infancy Programs are not sufficient in our community.
- Transportation problems and hours of services are a stumbling block for youth and families.
- Literacy training for adults is needed. Due to the proximity to the Mexican border, a large proportion of the population is not literate in Spanish or English.

### **Family Management and Family History**

- We need to empower families to become involved in problem solving process.
- Parent training needs to include programs that support parenting from birth through adolescence, including behavior management, skill and stress management training, developing school commitment as well as home visitations with support services.
- We also identified the lack of family therapy. We believe that families could be motivated to make enduring changes in negative family behavior patterns if services were available.
- There are no programs that deal with the adolescent transition into adulthood, including gender roles, relationships, sexuality, parenting, marriage, rites of passage and other social issues.
- We need programs to empower women/girls.
- A local emergency shelter is needed for youth/families in crisis. They need a designated area where they can receive immediate support services.
- Family-based early childhood programs are insufficient in this community. We need programs to teach mothers about the value of educational play, the problem-solving techniques in child rearing, and skills for family reading among others.

### **Availability of Drugs**

- We lack substance abuse/prevention and treatment programs for youth and families.
- Rites of passage program are needed to help the children relate to their culture and help build on their personal strengths.
- We need some type of regulations and/or laws to help prevent underage youth from crossing the border to drink.
- We need evaluation of programs that address substance abuse/prevention and treatment for adolescents.

### **Lack of Commitment to School**

- We need programs to prepare parents to get involved in their children's education.
- Truancy programs are needed to offer support services for youth and families.
- We need services that encourage students to stay in school and pursue an academic or vocational education.
- We should expand programs to preschoolers, such as reading readiness and self-control, to improve skills in order to reduce academic failure in their future.

### **Application to all Sanction Levels**

- In every graduated sanction we need to provide aftercare programs that provide high levels of structure and treatment services. These services will provide the opportunity for children/parents to learn and practice effective management skills together.
- We need to address the low-income salary and high turnover rate of law enforcement personnel.

### **Graduated Sanctions**

- Immediate Sanctions within the community for first-time, nonviolent offenders
  1. We need more support services in the prevention component to educate and empower the youth/family.
  2. Parents need to be held accountable for their children's negative behavior.
  3. In order for social service providers and law enforcement agents to make a proper referral, the community needs education about the existing services.



4. A specialized prevention unit is needed to provide quick and immediate services for the youth/family.
- Intermediate Sanctions for more serious offenders
    1. Due to an increase of referrals within the Intermediate Sanction, additional personnel is needed. Youth referred require intense supervision and intervention support services. There is not enough personnel to address the high number of referrals.
    2. The Courts need to hold the parent accountable for the non-compliant who are under the Courts' supervision.
    3. We need to decrease the overwhelming amount of paperwork required by the Courts so that Juvenile Probation Officers can better supervise the probationers.
    4. We need to expedite the process of each case in order to provide immediate consequence.
  - Secure care programs for the most violent offenders
    1. During the child's placement, the family needs to be involved in the therapeutic process.
    2. The youth/family need to be informed of the procedures and consequences of the Secure Care program prior to placement.
    3. There is a need for immediate consequence that will include structured setting, discipline, counseling, education to help the youth in the rehabilitation process (i.e., positive peer culture).

### **Five Year Plan Recommendations**

1. We should provide ongoing resource assessment and networking as well as awareness and training on being family driven and solution focused.
2. Due to limitations of transportation, wrap-around services should be considered whereby youth/families have a one-stop facility to provide all the major services needed (i.e., welfare, healthcare, law enforcement, counseling).
3. Cross systems and evaluation of programs should be considered. Performance outcome measures were difficult to obtain since surveys did not include their basic degree of effectiveness.

## **Outreach, Communication and Media Workgroup**

### **Membership**

Lorelly Rodriguez, Chair, Youthbuild Brownsville Program  
Lynn Black, Co-Chair, BISD-Guidance and Counseling  
Jim Odabashian, The Vineyard Church  
Carlos A. Gomez, Live Now Ministries  
Sharon Williams, BISD-Health Services  
Melvin Newland, Central Christian Church  
Charles Koonce, Recovery Center  
Terry Lienvanos, Planned Parenthood  
Laura Osowski, Tip of Texas Family Outreach  
Roberta Dahl, BISD

### **Tasks**

- Engaging key leaders and stakeholders in the comprehensive strategy process.
- Recruiting and training new members.
- Selling the task of Unidos Podemos/United We Can to the greater community.
- Educating and updating key leaders, stakeholders, and the public.
- Working with the other workgroups to prepare and disseminate all press releases, draft and final documents, and other communications with the public.

### **Vision Statement**

Another task of the OCM Team was to develop a vision statement, a name, and a logo for the Comprehensive Strategy Team as a whole. The vision statement was produced with the aid of the OCM Team and chairs and members of other workgroups. The OCM Team collected and developed suggestions for names, and as of May 4, 1999, the name "Juntos Podemos/Together We Can" was adopted. It was later found that the name "Juntos Podemos" was already being used by another organization in Texas. On August 28, 1999, the name was officially changed, by the Steering Committee, to "Unidos Podemos, Inc., – Brownsville Comprehensive Strategy for Youth and Families." Next, either a logo contest will be held, or a local advertising company will be asked to donate time and talent to develop a logo. Brownsville's Comprehensive Strategy Plan is based on a shared vision that Brownsville youth will have the opportunity to develop into caring, healthy, and responsible family and community members through prevention, intervention, and appropriate graduated sanctions.

**Overview/Process**

The Outreach/Communication/Media Team (OCM) created a plan to bring community organizations, parents, and youth together, and work collaboratively to spread the message and mission of Unidos Podemos. This plan includes organized community events and a communications strategy for maximizing media coverage. In order to arrive at a plan of action, the workgroup has met approximately twice a month. Also, any issues expressed by the chair/co-chair committee have been taken into consideration. Finally, telephone conversations with Sylvia Martinez, Chair for the OCM workgroup in Corpus Christi, and reviewing the Corpus Christi grant, also provided further assistance for a Brownsville OCM focus.

**Recommendations**

The OCM plans to have periodic panel discussions with local officials and other community leaders, and to have a question and answer session based on issues of concern, such as juvenile delinquency and ways to overcome some of our problems as a community. This will allow the committee the opportunity to obtain a memorandum of understanding with local officials in order to ensure their support of any programs under the auspices of the Comprehensive Strategies banner.

The key to spreading the message of Unidos Podemos will be to tap into existing resources and focus on their population. Presentation/Meetings can be held for clients of Tip of Texas Family Outreach, Su Clinica Familiar, Cameron Park's Centro Cultural, among others. Another population that will be targeted as a means of providing information is the parents or guardians of adjudicated youth, parents or guardians of youth who are in alternative centers, parents or guardians of youth who have a high truancy record or who require disciplinary action by the school system on a continuous basis.

There are some neighborhoods which can be considered "At-Risk." These are neighborhoods that have limited means of communication with existing resources due to lack of transportation or language barriers. These neighborhoods are also suffering the most crime as a result of juvenile delinquency. A periodical "Hit The Pavement Day" will be organized in

order to reach this population. A team made up of community organizations, parents, and youth will target a neighborhood and distribute flyers. These flyers will contain information about an upcoming presentation in their area, will state the topics to be discussed, and will include contact people or organizations along with their telephone numbers so that people can phone if they have questions or need information pertaining to a topic highlighted on the flyer. The Team would also inform people, door to door, about Unidos Podemos and how the people can assist or obtain assistance.

Also, the OCM Team will collaborate and participate in health and community fairs and parent night at the schools to promote strengthening the family, reducing risk factors, creating healthy beliefs and clear standards.

### **Recruitment**

The OCM Team accepts the responsibility of recruiting and training new members to serve on the committees to diminish any existing gaps of representation. An invitation will be extended to:

1. People in the community who are either Americorps or VISTA volunteers
2. People who already have the responsibility of doing outreach
3. Media persons
4. Health care professionals such as doctors, nurses, and others, who are witnesses to youth who are shot, stabbed, and/or beaten by other youth. Doctors can also share further information as to how many young people come in who have overdosed on drugs and alcohol, or who have attempted or committed suicide. Perhaps they could give insight as to how to reduce the risk factors that lead children and young people to self defeating behaviors.
5. Mental health care professionals, such as psychiatrists, psychologists, counselors.

### **Parent and Youth Involvement**

Parents and youths are an important population to include within Unidos Podemos. This population is the front line people who are battling with all of the dangers of negative influences, elements, and behaviors. Young people, children, and their parents can provide

Unidos Podemos with the issues that are concerning them, and can provide ideas about how to combat the risk factors which are serving as barriers to a child growing into a functioning and well adjusted adult.

A cross section of parents from the community will be enlisted to form a sub-committee to help with program planning, fundraising, and other activities. It is imperative that the youth of Brownsville are involved in the Unidos Podemos efforts. The OCM Team provides an appropriate forum for youth participation. A Youth Forum drawn from all of the schools should be organized. This forum would have input on programming and implementation of any projects developed. Additional participation from youth would come from the Department of Juvenile Justice, Junior Leadership Brownsville, Youthbuild, and Upward Bound, among others.

Also, positive young adults who were once helped by the juvenile justice system would be available to facilitate a young people's committee, and also be available to talk with the media. Youth participants would also assist and participate in the "Hit The Pavement Day," and during organized health/information fairs. The youth would be recruited through the Juvenile Probation Office, Youthbuild Brownsville Program, and young people who belong to or have graduated from organizations within those organizations belonging to the Unidos Podemos movement.

## **Media**

The following is a summary of several planned media events:

1. The proposed program on Channel 21, the Brownsville Independent School District's educational channel, would focus on the research, planning, and ongoing efforts of the people involved in the Unidos Podemos workgroups.
2. The Brownsville Herald will be contacted to run a feature article on the purpose, scope, and potential of Unidos Podemos.
3. Local radio stations, including but not limited to Spanish-speaking stations, will be asked to invite Unidos Podemos workgroup and youth participants to appear on talk shows.

4. Unidos Podemos should develop a resource pool of community professional, youth, and young adults who can speak on various aspects of juvenile delinquency/justice and are comfortable speaking to the media. Mentors, those who already have experience in speaking with media, and who are well informed about juvenile delinquency, would be recruited to help train the media team.
5. A newsbreaking team would be made available to the media when news stories break that involve juvenile delinquency/justice issues.
6. A web-page would be developed so that the general public would have access to the developments and effort of Brownsville's Unidos Podemos. The public would also have the opportunity to comment or ask questions, with the goal of capturing the interest and an opportunity for growth.

### **Newsletter**

The OCM Team plans to tap into an already existing newsletter and provide this publication with articles, editorials, and information. The Brownsville Herald's Community Plus could print any write-ups or articles provided by Brownsville's Unidos Podemos or could include pamphlets with "Unidos Podemos" information.

The goal of the OCM Team is to develop two quarterly newsletters. The first would focus on information beneficial to the members of Unidos Podemos, which includes social service providers, law enforcement, clergy, and local government, among others.

The second newsletter would be geared toward the community, including parents and youth. Students could take an active role in writing articles, perhaps through their journalism programs. The newsletter could feature success stories and also provide information on resources that are available to youth and their families.

**Barriers**

Several factors have surfaced as barriers for our workgroup in arriving at a workplan. The first barrier was the attrition in membership. This resulted in a large amount of work being done by a small group of people. Another barrier was that the time spent on planning meetings, dispersing information, and making contacts put a strain on members' other commitments. However, the OCM Team believes that the end result will be beneficial to our community as well as our jobs, due to the fact that most of the our occupations directly involve providing services for youth.

**Technical Assistance Needs**

As dedicated as the OCM Team has been, guidance from technical advisors is greatly needed. This is a new experience for our group members, and for the first few months we were meeting often, but we were not accomplishing our goals. There was a feeling of being lost and unsure as to what our task was, and further clarification would have been very helpful at that point. Now we do have set goals in place, and now we need support and feedback from technical advisors so that we steer in the right direction.

## **Legislative/Policy/Systems Issues Workgroup**

### **Membership**

Randy Givens, Resource Development Institute-Chairperson  
Jimmy Haynes, BISD - Co-Chair  
Alberto Garcia, Cameron County Sheriff's Office  
Margaret Gorman, Adult Probation  
Luis S. Lopez, U.S. Federal Probation Officer  
Minnie Lucio, South Texas Vo-Tech  
Beto Medrano, teacher, Hanna High School  
Jackie Morales, Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council  
Esther S. Perez, Brownsville PD Criminal Investigations Dept.  
David Rodriguez, Office of Judge Janet Leal  
Billye Turner, Silver Haired Legislature  
Blanca S. Vela, Cameron County Children's Advocacy Center  
David Villarreal, Department of Human Services

### **Tasks**

- Review/assess current laws, policies, and procedures; make recommendations.
- Examine current agencies/systems operations.
- Educate the Community Planning Team on effectiveness of improved system interfacing.
- Explore streamlining techniques through systems coordination; identify policies for implementation and enforcement.
- Examine referral, case management, and service delivery systems.
- Identify obstacles in development of client tracking, case flow, and integrated case management systems.
- Examine current information management and sharing systems; identify obstacles to developing a MIS that supports client tracking, case management, and service delivery.

### **Process**

The Legislative/Policy/Systems issues team met several times during the preparation of the Comprehensive Strategy. They also participated in the Community Planning Team meetings and helped select priorities and develop recommendations for action. Since the Texas Legislature meets only every other year, there was not time to fully analyze and develop legislation for consideration by the legislature this year. To start the process of legislative change, the committee obtained a listing of all bills affecting Juvenile Justice, which are being



considered by this session of the legislature. A survey determined which of these current bills should receive special attention by our legislators. Furthermore, other workgroups identified legislative areas and gaps in services that may indicate the need for future legislative change. The Legislative/Policy/Systems Issues workgroup will continue to review gaps in services, systems, and related issues. Through that review, the workgroup will identify the need for additional policy changes and systems improvements and/or legislative changes.

The Legislative/Policy/Systems Issues workgroup worked with juvenile service agencies to obtain flow charts documenting handling of juvenile justice cases, and related information within key agencies in our community, and related gaps in services. This information was distributed to the CPT. Other workgroups used this information in their analyses of community needs and in preparing their portions of the Community Assessment report. Many of the identified gaps focused on increased funding or personnel. There were also problems in information flow. The funding/personnel shortages will be investigated for future legislative changes and/or grant applications. The information flow problems, where appropriate, are included in the Juvenile Justice Management Information System concept.

Within our community, we are working to identify and define the needs for an improved community-wide Juvenile Justice Management Information System (JJMIS). During a review of existing systems, the team identified the need for an improved management information system. This funding was supported by information developed by other workgroups. The workgroup received verification of this finding through repeated anecdotal evidence of widespread delays in service caused by the slow flow and magnitude of paperwork, and by limited access to existing data in other agencies.

The workgroup developed a concept of "A Systems Approach to Juvenile Justice Management Information Systems Improvement." The concept was informally coordinated with Cameron County Juvenile Probation Department, Developmental Research and Programs, and others. All concurred that this concept  could be a significant improvement in managing the juvenile justice system in our community. Improved support for the juvenile justice program will provide expedited intervention and referrals.

**Recommendation 1: Youth Commission**

There was a critical need to include a systemic link between the Community Planning Team/Director of the Comprehensive Strategy and City/County governmental leaders. It is envisioned that the Youth Commission will be appointed by the Mayor/City Council to act as a liaison with the City Council, and will become part of the juvenile justice system, composed of key adult leaders of the community and functioning similarly to the existing City Beautification Commission. Hopefully, this could develop into a joint Brownsville/Cameron County organization to address common issues in our community and to support all five risk factors.

**Recommendation 2: Legislative Issues**

A coalition should be formed between all Texas Comprehensive Strategy Legislature Workgroups (i.e., Houston, Galveston, Corpus Christi, McAllen) to address specific legislation that influences juvenile delinquency, intervention and prevention.

**Recommendation 3: MIS**

The Legislative/Policy/Systems issues team suggests all concerned agencies work together to further define our automation support needs and investigate integrating those efforts with RIONet. We specifically request "hands on" (rather than just consultation/advice) technical assistance in analyzing those needs and defining an action plan for this issue.

**Recommendation 4: Pilot Project**

The purpose of the Pilot Project is to determine how the strategy can be applied in our community and how provable outcomes can be demonstrated through a research based approach. The Pilot Project provides an "umbrella" where recommendations from this and other workgroups can be implemented on a trial basis. The Project would identify an at-risk neighborhood and establish an "after school" program for kids. The Project would be located in an existing facility, such as a school, Boys and Girls Club. The idea is to use an existing facility to cut overhead costs and maximize resources.

## **Discussion**

### **Management Information System/Automated Information and Referral System**

The OJJDP *Guide for Implementing the Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offenders* states that "A well-designed Management Information System (MIS) is another core component of the Comprehensive Strategy." The group recommends that within the five-year plan additional funding and technical assistance be sought to establish a Juvenile Justice Management Information System within our community. Key elements of the JJMIS project would:

- Facilitate the timely flow of information between authorized juvenile justice agencies and their representatives.
- Reduce the paperwork overhead and associated waste of resources.
- Within privacy act, "need to know," and other applicable restraints, provide for the flow of automated juvenile justice information system between: courts, police, and probation departments both juvenile and adult, social services/health care agencies, child protective services, schools, and prevention support agencies.
- Investigate the possible use of the system to establish baseline data for the Comprehensive Strategy and maintain updated data for future project evaluation.

An important opportunity exists to coordinate and seek support from ongoing, federally funded initiatives supporting improved law enforcement automated management information systems in our area. RIONet is a CTAC-sponsored project which provides a comprehensive communications infrastructure for police departments in the Rio Grande Valley. The system provides for sharing information on a secure, Internet-based network. Different agencies are able to share data despite having different and incompatible record management systems. The project has developed a comprehensive data management and communications system that is generic and affordable. This system could probably be expanded to provide timely information sharing, within legal/privacy constraints, on juvenile justice issues throughout our region. This is especially important because the Rio Grande Valley functions as one socio-economic unit spanning many different municipalities and county boundaries.

**Problem: Background of Existing Management Information System**

The Cameron County Juvenile Probation Department is currently using *CASEWORKER 4*, an automation system designed for and distributed by the Texas Juvenile Probation Commission. This system provides automation support to probation officers, from initial referral to disposal of the case. The State Commission will ultimately connect all county systems in Texas. Hopefully, this will occur within the next year.

Unfortunately, there are no links to provide automated information into or out of the *CASEWORKER 4* system at the local level. This situation requires the production of hard copy reports, the transmission of those reports, and the entry/reentry of the information into an automated system. The resultant waste of manpower and time slows down our response to juvenile crime and the provision of support services to juveniles who are at greatest risk.

**Courts, Police and Adult Probation**

Other agencies within the Cameron County Justice System are working on developing another local information management system for their needs. Agencies to be included in this system are District Court, Adult Probation, Sheriff's Office, District Clerk, and County Clerk. Until this time, there have been no plans, provisions, or funding to provide an automated link between the Cameron County Juvenile Probation Department and these agencies.

Consequently, any other agencies feeding information into the Cameron County Juvenile Probation Department either do not have automation support or do not have the capability of providing "soft" or automated copies of information to those responsible for overseeing juvenile justice cases. For example, juvenile probation officers have to wait for a hard copy of referrals from local police departments. Providing automated flow of that information into the Probation Department would speed up the process, eliminate unnecessary data input by Probation Department staff, and support the provision of immediate sanctions to juvenile offenders. Examples of other agencies interacting with Juvenile Probation Department are:

**Social Services/Health Care**

Mental Health and Mental Retardation (MHMR) clients sometimes become subject to the Juvenile Probation Department. There is a need to provide some, but far from all, MHMR

information on the client to Juvenile Probation. Similarly, Juvenile Probation has occasion to refer some of its clients to MHMR for evaluation and counseling. Some, but not all, of the resulting information is given to Juvenile Probation. Likewise, some, but not all, Juvenile Probation information may be furnished to MHMR. None of this information flow is automated. Coordination between the two agencies is by telephone and hard copy.

### **Child Protective Services (CPS)**

If Juvenile Probation (JP) has a child who they suspect may have been abused, JP will refer the case to CPS. Likewise, CPS may obtain information which they should provide to JP. Follow up information is also passed between the agencies. None of this information flow is automated. Coordination between the two agencies is by telephone and hard copy. Coordination between CPS, MHMR, and the schools is likewise restricted to telephone and hard copy.

### **Schools**

There is a need for coordination between Juvenile Probation and the schools. JP needs information on performance, discipline, and truancy to help evaluate its new clients. JP also needs information from the schools on any problems with adhering to the requirements of their probation. Due to privacy considerations, limited information is furnished to the schools from JP. None of this information flow is automated. Coordination between the two agencies is by telephone and hard copy.

### **Prevention Support**

Agencies providing prevention support to juveniles and their families have identified a need to provide counselors with current, comprehensive information on services available to the juvenile and the family. Past efforts have centered on providing printed handbooks to counselors throughout the county. Unfortunately, these handbooks frequently contain outdated information before they get back from the printers. The problem only gets worse over time. Therefore, they make providing comprehensive prevention services more and more difficult. This obstacle wastes resources and fails the child, the family, and the community.

### **Database Comprehensive Strategy Support**

During the preparation of Comprehensive Strategy, it was very difficult to obtain current, standardized data to be used in the preparation of our Community Assessment on the 19 Risk Factors. To facilitate success, the Community Planning Team will need updated, standardized data to establish a baseline of relevant information to validate the need for a project. During the life of the project, that and similar data will be needed to track trends and assist in focusing resources. Similarly, updated data will be needed to evaluate the degree of success of our projects.

### **Resolving MIS Shortfalls**

Any efforts to implement considerations will be in accordance with the concept, A Systems Approach to MIS Improvement. Options being considered to remedy the Support Services problem include establishing an Automated Information and Referral System. This could be established by obtaining and implementing "IRIS" software, with associated hardware and telecommunications support. This technology will provide a database of support services in our community which will give scattered counselors access to the latest, updated information on the availability of services and the qualifications and restrictions associated with those services. Solving the Support Services Information flow will enhance prevention efforts. Efforts to improve the information flow concerning specific children and their families between agencies will take considerably more effort. The Automated Information and Referral System is seen as being separate from the Juvenile Justice Management Information System because their basic functions are separate and distinct. Trying to combine the systems would unnecessarily add security and privacy aspects and related costs to the otherwise minimum security Automated Information and Referral Service.

### **Improving Juvenile Justice Information Flow In The Community**

The various agencies involved in the JJMIS will probably have their own "in house" MIS organizations. The size and experience level of those MIS resources will vary considerably. None of those "in house" resources will be staffed to analyze, design, and build our systemwide improved JJMIS. As can be seen by the information laid out above, this is a complex task that will require competent, professional, outside assistance to do this job right.

The outside assistance will require the advice and local expertise of "in house" MIS personnel in designing the system. Some areas of required assistance from "in house" MIS personnel will include:

- Inventorying types of existing hardware/software to be used by agency personnel.
- Providing current internal data element standardization information.
- Providing information on current capacities.
- Identifying shortfalls within current systems.
- Providing technical advice and assistance to user personnel and functional managers.
- Serving on committees to develop standards and procedures for operating the JJMIS.
- Operating their part of the system.
- Maintaining database backups and data integrity
- Serving on Configuration Control Boards to manage the JJMIS once it is implemented.

### **Possible Sources of Assistance for JJMIS**

While the *Guide For Implementing The Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offenders* appears to call for establishing a separate JJMIS, efficient use of available resources may call for "piggybacking" our efforts onto ongoing programs. An article in the *Valley Morning Star*, page A3, February 3, 1999, tells of a new Regional Information and Operations Network (RIONet) being established in the Rio Grande Valley. Using high speed, secure internet access, the Brownsville, McAllen, and Mission police departments are in the final stages of working to link their databases. The system will allow participating law enforcement agencies to share current and historical information and to analyze shared data. Since the Rio Grande Valley actually functions, to a large degree, as one large metropolitan area, it seems that RIONet could serve as the basis for coordinating juvenile justice efforts throughout the Valley. When we consider the disposition of a juvenile offender, we need current information on all his/her illegal activities, not just those activities occurring within a single local jurisdiction.

## **Funding**

RIONet is a research and development project of the Counterdrug Technology Assessment Center of the Office of National Drug Control Policy. It will cost about \$1 million to set up the program, and the individual departments will need \$10 to \$15 thousand a year to maintain their parts of the system. Obviously, we do not have the funds to replicate the effort within the Comprehensive Strategy - nor should we waste money trying to do so. An obvious, possible solution would be to piggyback on the RIONet system and expand it to include the Juvenile Justice System. We should investigate this "piggybacking" possibility and the possibility of gaining separate funding for our JJMIS "add on" to RIONet.

## **JJMIS Task Force - The Next Step**

In order to make a reasoned approach to "piggybacking" on the RIONet project or to begin our own JJMIS, we need to conduct a scoping analysis of JJMIS needs within our community. A JJMIS Task Force, consisting of both technical automation and line Juvenile Justice staff members must be formed. The purpose of the task force will be to review existing systems and describe a broad overview or scope of the JJMIS project. Participation of juvenile justice community members is critical to this effort. However, we cannot expect them to both do their everyday jobs and concurrently do the important work of a thorough scoping analysis. We will need outside contractor assistance to assist the JJMIS Task Force in conducting the scoping analysis and in producing the documents necessary to obtain funding for the effort.

## **Steps Toward an Improved JJMIS**

- a. Establish a JJMIS Task Force to provide support and guidance for developing a JJMIS Project for our community.
- b. Define funding requirements to hire contractor support to define the scope of the project.
- c. Investigate the possibility of "piggybacking" our JJMIS needs on the RIONet project.
- d. Seek additional funding to support the scoping, analysis, design, and implementation of our JJMIS needs.

## **A Systems Approach to Juvenile Justice Management Information System**

Underlying our information system improvement study is the understanding that we should use an approach based on the needs of the juvenile justice community. Those needs should be



determined through a systematic analysis of our goals and how we will work to achieve them. When we have that defined, we can then begin to formulate the information systems needed to support it.

We can use a building construction analogy to show how we will design our information system. We will first determine the functions to be performed in the building. From an analysis of those functions, the form of the building should emerge. After we have determined the form of the building, then we can get down to determining how we are going to construct the building. Then, and only then, do we start to list the types and quantities of nuts, bolts, nails, timbers, wiring, plumbing that we will need. Likewise, for our information system, we will analyze the needs and functions of our proposed system. That will give us the form of the business process support within our system. When we have it all laid out, we can then get down to the data elements or nuts and bolts of our system.

### **Designing the Overall System**

To design our Juvenile Justice Information System (JJMIS), we will first analyze and document the requirements of the improved juvenile justice system we want to have. The flow charts our committees have produced are a good starting point. When these flow charts are connected (to show relationships between the parts), they will reflect the existing system. With the existing system documented, the charts can be used to help design the improved system that we want to have. Until we have that improved system designed, validated by the Juvenile Justice community, we will be unable to devise the physical (hardware, software, training, maintenance, and life cycle management) system needed to support it.

Included in the systems analysis of our existing and future JJMIS, we will explore community data systems to locate any and all existing data systems that can provide baseline data and periodic updates. This data will be considered for incorporation in the statistical analysis to validate the need for a project, the progress, and the verifiable outcomes of the project. An effort will be made to obtain valid data and to incorporate changing data on the status of the 19 Risk Factors considered in the Comprehensive Strategy approach.

### **Documenting the Business Processes**

The interconnected flow charts will show how a juvenile will flow through the improved Juvenile Justice System (JJS). Within the overall JJS, the charts will document which organizations do what and how they are interconnected to the whole system. Within the flow charts, we will document *Who does What, When, and How* their actions are coordinated with others. In the terms of our analysis, these will be the business processes we use to accomplish our work. These business processes will be analyzed and documented in a standard format. To ensure success, the ultimate users of the JJMIS must be consistently involved in the process of analysis and documentation. Those users and their supervisors must review and affirm (validate) that their business processes have been correctly documented. A key point here is that a successful system is a product of the system's users, not of automation technicians hired to support the system. This documentation procedure will require the consistent participation of knowledgeable individuals to represent the user community representatives. The information they glean must be converted into a standardized systems analysis format. The information gained through this process will be used by automation technicians in designing the actual JJMIS.

### **Documenting Sub Processes**

After we have determined what our improved system will look like, and the business processes that will be conducted within it, we will then analyze and document the subprocesses within our system. Simply put, these subprocesses are the tasks we do to complete the job.

Each of these tasks must be analyzed to determine what information is needed to accomplish the task where the information is obtained (inputs), what information is produced by doing the task (outputs), and where the information goes, and where it is stored when the task is complete.

For a hypothetical example: Intake screening of a juvenile offender might require records of previous arrests, adjudication records for previous offenses, records on probation status, and the current arrest report. We would document *What* information is obtained and from *Where*.

Additionally, the Intake Screening might include an interview where additional information is obtained from the juvenile offender and his parents. The previous and new information will be used to determine what is to be done with the offender. More information is then produced as a record of what was done with the offender. For our system to work, we must determine, and thoroughly document, what the different pieces of information (data) are obtained for, modified by, and produced as part of this task.

### **Data Concerns**

As we document the data needs associated with our subprocesses (tasks), we must also address critical concerns about the data we use. Some, but not all, data related concerns are listed in the following sections.

### **Data Element Dictionary**

We must compile a "dictionary" of all the data elements we use. This "dictionary" must include standard "definitions" that we can all agree to and understand. Without it, we will not have consensus, and misunderstandings and misrepresentations are certain to occur.

### **Data Element Standardization**

Not only must we agree *what* a particular data element is, we must also agree *how* we will record that particular item within our common system. For example, Social Security Numbers might be entered as: 123-45-6789; 123 45 6789; or 123456789. Likewise, dates could be entered as: January 1, 1999; 1 January 1999; Jan 1, 1999; 1 Jan 99; 01/01/99; 99/01/01; dd/mm/yy; yy/dd/mm;mm/dd/yy. Variations within date concerns might include Fiscal Year, Calendar Year, Quarters. Individual agencies may continue to use some information in a format different from the common system with an automatic conversion being performed as the nonstandard information is moved into the common system. Likewise, there may be instances where standardized information in the common system is converted into a different standard as it moves into a separate agency's system. If we do not set up a standardization system, we will not be able to share data. Worse misunderstandings could lead to an offender being released on January 3, 1999 instead of serving out his sentence until March 1, 2099.

### **Who "Owns" the Data**

(Read and Write Authority) Within our system, many pieces of information will be "owned" by a person or agency. Only some people will be authorized to enter or change a particular piece of information. Others may be authorized to read, but not change the information. For example: the police will "own" the arrest record for an offense; the court or the District Attorney will "own" the data showing how the offender is complying with the terms of his probation; the school system will "own" the offender's grade level, report card, and attendance and school disciplinary record. Different system users within the school system might "own" different pieces of information of the offender. An "owner," and possibly a supervisor, will be the only people in the system who can "write" that particular piece of information into the system and the ONLY people in the system who can CHANGE that particular piece of information. Obviously, without these controls, chaos could occur.

### **Access Controls and Limitations (Privacy and Security)**

In addition to ownership/read/write concerns, we must be very careful how information within the system is protected from unauthorized viewing and use. Federal Privacy Act standards are only part of our concerns. For us to design our improved system, we MUST understand ALL the privacy and security limitations necessary to protect the individual and the justice system. We would not want the names of rape victims made public, nor would we want the names of confidential informants to be made available to the criminals, nor would we want personal data on police officers, jailers, probation officers, or judges to be accessible by criminals. Of course, we also must not allow Privacy Act information on the juvenile offenders, or their victims, to be obtained by anyone who is not legally entitled to view the information or who does not also need to know the information.

Therefore, we must thoroughly document *who* is allowed to see *what* information and *when*. We cannot allow unauthorized users access to our information system. These protections must be recognized and designed into the system from the start. Additionally, system users must be trained and monitored to ensure that no unauthorized persons obtain access to the information. For example, the screens of computer monitors must not be placed where unauthorized persons can view them, either up close or through an open door or window.

Likewise, unattended computers must not be accessible to unauthorized users. All of these concerns must be addressed throughout the life cycle of the JJMIS.

### **Points of Information Sharing**

Replacing all the computers and software within all the agencies using the JJMIS is probably not practical or affordable. Accordingly, different agencies within the Juvenile Justice System will continue to use their existing automated systems for their internal purposes and share selected information with other systems, while gaining selected information from other parts of the system. How and where those information exchanges occur must be carefully designed to ensure a reliable system which provides current, accurate information when and where it is needed and authorized.

### **Database Maintenance**

Updating of data from member agencies into the common system will be critical to the success of the system. For example, if a police agency only updates its arrest records into the common system every 90 days, an offender could be given probation as a first-time offender while other police department records might contain several arrests for increasingly serious offenses. The Comprehensive Strategy calls for immediate graduated sanctions. If our JJMIS does not provide current data, our graduated sanctions system will not work.

The need for a related, but separate, automated Information and Referral System was also identified. This separate system is needed to provide constantly updated intervention and referral service information throughout the community. This could include the Automated Services Information and Referral Database (possibly using the IRIS software) as recommended by the Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Workgroup.

## **Objective Decision Making Workgroup**

**Membership** Amador R. Rodriguez, Chair, Chief Juvenile Probation Officer  
Sylvia Perez, Co-Chairperson, Brownsville Independent School District  
Lynne Depault, Texas Workforce Center  
SFC Jorge Torres, U.S. Attorney's Office  
Jose A. Lopez, University of Texas at Brownsville Police Department  
Raquel S. Valdez, Local Active Woman/Professional Office Service  
Armando R. Villalobos, Assistant District Attorney Cameron County  
Lt. Orlando Rodriguez, BISD/Criminal Investigations Division  
Esther S. Perez, Criminal Investigation Division, Brownsville Police Department  
Luis Lopez, Federal Probation Department

### **Tasks**

1. Identify all decision points along the juvenile justice system flowchart.
2. Determine what are the referral, case management, and service delivery options.
3. Develop a juvenile justice flowchart.
4. Identify obstacles in development of client tracking, case flow, and integrated case systems.
5. Examine how decisions are currently made and how risk assessment and classification systems are used.
6. Make recommendations as to which points should be studied and analyze current effectiveness and potential benefits of improvements.

### **Process**

As its first order of business, the committee was given an overview by the chairperson on the Juvenile Justice System. At its second meeting, the committee began to review the attached flow chart of the Cameron County Juvenile System and its case management procedures. The educational process continued with emphasis on sanctions as adopted by the Texas Legislature during the 74<sup>th</sup> session. The state recognized that by implementing these sanctions, juvenile age children would be held to a higher level of accountability for their involvement in delinquent conduct. Impacted also, in a positive manner, would be public safety and community protection.

The committee continues to be educated in juvenile law and its process by presentations conducted by several members, such as Assistant District Attorney Armando Villalobos (juvenile prosecutor) and Lt. Orlando Rodriguez of the Brownsville Police Department.

### **Preliminary Recommendations**

1. Additional funding for personnel in the Juvenile Justice System in order to adequately supervise and comply with state standards and sanctions.
2. The Neighborhood Heroes Program that will provide both youth and their parents the opportunity to practice and demonstrate their skills in addressing real-life situations.
3. The formulation of adequate aftercare programs.
4. Counties of a population of over 125,000 should have a designated juvenile justice court.
5. Referee Judges should have complete dispositional power, with the exception of certification hearings and determinate sentencing cases.
6. Appropriate more county, state, and federal funding for placement of children.
7. Juvenile Practitioners should make use of the statute and hold parents accountable for their children's behavior.
8. Decrease the overwhelming amount of paperwork required by Juvenile Probation Officers.
9. Empower District Attorney & juvenile authorities to be more victim sensitive which is due to the Juvenile Justice System being Anti-victim (rehabilitative in nature vs. punitive, victim's expectations).
10. There is a need for improving communication between all agencies involved in the Juvenile Justice System.
11. There is a lack of immediate intervention of juvenile offenders after their initial contact with the police or other authority.

**Barriers and Issues** - These barriers correspond to Preliminary Recommendations, respectively.

1. Funding from county, state, and/or federal government to increase juvenile justice personnel.

2. Training for all parties involved for the success for the Neighborhood Heroes Project.
3. Funding from county, state, and/or federal government for specialized local aftercare programs, i.e., sexual offenders, therapeutic, substance abuse.
4. Lack of specialized Juvenile Justice Court for immediate intervention and expediting of juvenile cases.
5. Lack of referee's complete dispositional power to eliminate the need for approval by a District Judge on court decisions.
6. Funding from county, state, and/or federal government for the placements of juveniles.
7. Juvenile authorities, District Attorney, and Juvenile Court failure to implement the statute which holds parents accountable for their children's behavior.
8. Juvenile probation practitioners manually documenting and reporting excessive and repetitive forms when this work may be easily accomplished by automated documenting and reporting.
9. Increase victim sensitivity by police, juvenile authorities, District Attorney, and Juvenile Court throughout the case.
10. Lack of knowledge in the Juvenile Justice System by all agencies involved, i.e. police, school personnel, and other social service agencies.
11. Lack of law enforcement personnel at prevention and immediate intervention.

<b>Decision Points</b>	-Police Referral	-Custody/Placement
	-Crisis Intervention from General Public	-Supervision/Probation
	-Referral to Juvenile Probation Department	-Violation of Probation
	-Intake Process	-Revocation
	-Release	-Discharge
	-Detention	-Release/Termination
	-Petition	-Aftercare
	-Adjudication	-Programs/Services
	-Disposition	



## **Technical Assistance Needs**

### Administrative Training

- Time Management Assistance
- Employment Interviewing Techniques
- Budget Preparation and Control
- Internal Case - File Monitoring
- Evaluation - Personnel Performance
- Evaluation and Development of Organizational Chart

### Line Staff Training

- Time Management
- Counseling Techniques
- Report Writing
- Crisis Intervention

### Support Training

- Utilization of Technology

## **Planning, Monitoring , and Evaluation Workgroup**

**Membership** Alejandro Coronado, Chair, Cameron County Housing Authority  
Ricardo Gonzales, Co-Chair, Communities In Schools  
Genario Muniz, City of Brownsville  
Nelda T. Najera, Cameron Works  
Mary E. Cruz, Cameron Works  
Pat Solitaire, Cameron Works  
George Samano, UTB/TSC  
Alberto C. Villareal, UTB/TSC  
Dr. Susan Ritter, UTB/TSC  
Dr. Sherry McCullough, UTB/TSC  
Edward A. Valent, BISSD  
Kim Baker, United Way  
Amanda Lopez, Juvenile Probation  
Hilda B. Garcia, Cameron County Housing Authority

### **Tasks**

- Integrate all the issues and recommendations provided by Data Collection & Analysis, Resource Assessment, Structured Decision Making and Legislative/Policy/Systems Work Groups.
- Based on recommendations and issues identified by these groups, the Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Work Group will develop a cohesive five year Comprehensive Strategy plan and report.

### **Process**

The Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Workgroup met several times during the period when the Community Planning Team's workgroups were conducting their data gathering and analysis.

Upon the completion of the identification of issues and recommendations by the other workgroups, those issues and recommendations were integrated into a cohesive 5 year Comprehensive Strategy plan and report.

That plan was presented to the Governor's Office on June 15, 1999.

## **PART III – PRIORITIZATION PROCESS**

The prioritization process included the following steps:

1. Workgroups met individually to review all reports and recommendations. Groups voted to accept or reject recommendations and reports.
2. CPT members met to discuss recommendations and make modifications to reports. Recommendations were prioritized by CPT members voting on each issue.

**Listed below are the prioritized recommendations made by each of the workgroups.**

### **Outreach/Communication/Media Workgroup:**

1. Conduct media and outreach campaign to make the community aware of the comprehensive strategy process.

### **Resource Assessment Workgroup:**

1. Provide ongoing assessment and networking as well as awareness and training on being family driven and solution focused.

### **Legislative/Policy/Systems Issues Workgroup:**

1. Establish a Youth Council to advise the members of the Comprehensive Strategy Planning Team and the Director of Comprehensive Strategy. It is envisioned that the Youth Council will be appointed by the Mayor/City Council to act as a liaison between the City Council, Director of Comprehensive Strategy and the CPT. It is envisioned that the Youth Council will be composed of key adult leaders of the community and function similar to the existing City Beautification Commission. Hopefully, this could develop into a joint Brownsville/Cameron County organization to address common issues in our community.
2. Seek additional funding and technical assistance to establish a Juvenile Justice Management Information System within our community.

3. (Legislative Issues) A coalition should be formed between all Texas Comprehensive Strategy legislation workgroups to address specific legislation that influences juvenile delinquency, prevention and intervention.

**Decision Making Workgroup:**

1. Provide additional funding for personnel in the juvenile justice system in order to adequately supervise and comply with state standards and sanctions.

**Data Collection and Analysis Workgroup:**

1. Adopt a systemwide balanced approach to funding for prevention, early intervention and graduated sanctions rather than funding on a program-by-program basis, implementing service consolidation and redesign where appropriate. Funding priorities should be based on both the safety needs of the community and treatment needs of at-risk and juvenile offenders and their families. A centralized database should be established for yearly needs assessment.
2. Provide relevant ongoing evaluation of programs, agencies and strategies to ensure effectiveness and to allocate resources based upon need and documented effectiveness.
3. Adopt community risk and resource instruments to periodically assess and identify local community needs, resources and priorities for the development of community-based prevention programs that target at-risk youth and juvenile offenders.
4. Adopt risk and treatment needs instruments that assess individual at-risk youth and their families. Promote and secure the consensus from all private and public agencies on use of these instruments.
5. Provide case management and process control to follow each youth through the various stages of the continuum of care. Designate the Chief Probation Officer with the responsibility and resources needed to coordinate an interagency centralized intake process, case management and program control (including assessment, monitoring and feedback) for identified at-risk and juvenile offenders.

## SECTION TWO

### **Brownsville's Plan for Addressing Juvenile Crime**

The purpose of the Brownsville Comprehensive Strategy Plan is to improve and marshal the resources needed to reduce juvenile crime and delinquency in areas identified as at-risk within the Brownsville community. This section of the Brownsville Plan presents the themes, specific recommendations, and strategies needed to implement a full continuum of services and resources in a collaborative and integrated manner. This plan will serve as a blueprint for community action and collaboration. It provides a broad spectrum of strategies to help mobilize youth and adults to strengthen themselves, their families, and their own neighborhoods. No single individual, organization, or agency, in isolation, can address all of the factors contributing to juvenile delinquency and violence. Working together, however, local leaders, representatives of public and private groups, schools and individual community members, including youth, can bring about strategies that work.

Like OJJDP, the Brownsville Plan strongly believes that a continuum of services must be available throughout an entire system of prevention and graduated sanctions strategies including intervention, supervision and incarceration. The Brownsville Comprehensive Strategy Team discussed and developed a consensus on a number of common juvenile justice system themes or attributes (within both a prevention and graduated sanctions focus) that *must be* incorporated into the plan of action in order for it to succeed. The following themes, although identified independently by the Brownsville team, are also recurrent throughout OJJDP's Guide. These themes are built around a philosophy of enhancing the quality of life for youth and their families, which will enable them to contribute and develop in ways that benefit society, promote social equality and mutual respect.

It is believed that these themes must be the foundation upon which the infrastructure, services and programs are designed and delivered. The successful implementation of the Comprehensive Strategy must ensure that the spirit of these themes are incorporated, not only in services and programs, but also in agencies, organizations, and institutions that work with

youth and families. As noted, these themes coordinate with the OJJDP Guide description of key activities necessary for implementation of a comprehensive plan.

### **Action Plan Themes**

- **Promote a community delinquency model** as the most cost-effective and humane approach to reducing juvenile delinquency. The model will be complemented by diverse intervention resources that offer early identification, timely response, immediate consequences, and access to community-based resources at all levels.
- **Include youth, family members, and other significant community members** in program design, development and implementation.
- **Focus on family**, strengthen families and provide inter-generational family support services, resources and parenting skills.
- **Provide graduated sanctions** with early identification, diversion, intervention and ongoing support as follows:
  - Immediate intervention for first time, non-violent offenders
  - Intermediate sanctions for more serious offenders
  - Secure care programs for the most violent offenders
  - After care programs involving families and communities to assist youth with reintegrating into the community following out-of-home placement.
- **Be holistic (comprehensive or multi-systemic) and multi-disciplinary to deal** simultaneously with many aspects of the youth's life. Address the youth's family and relationships dealing with intimacy, community, peers, school and work (i.e., offer wrap-around services).
- **Utilize a case manager and case management approach** that begins at intake and follows the youth through various program phases until successful completion. This involves the development of individual service and treatment plans that are updated on a

consistent, goal driven basis.

- **Build upon youth and family strengths** rather than focusing on their weaknesses. We need to shift the primary emphasis from risk to resiliency.
- **Hold families accountable for their children and systems accountable to families.**
- **Be gender specific and culturally and linguistically appropriate.** Programs must reach and be acceptable by diverse racial, cultural and socioeconomic groups in the community.
- **Be intensive.** Have multiple contacts with at-risk youth by staff who have manageable caseloads to allow for individualized attention and follow through.
- **Offer comprehensive alcohol and other drug treatment, recovery and aftercare services** in all phases of the continuum, including prevention.
- **Have a solid focus on education, job readiness, skills training and employment** through combined intensive services.
- **Utilize comprehensive community risk and resource models** that prioritize target areas.
- **Develop information systems** that enable data sharing (within legal limitations) and that are accessible by criminal justice agencies and collaborative entities. The system should allow for client case management tracking, budgeting, and evaluation, and should be available to all criminal justice agencies and collaborative entities (as authorized by law).
- **Adopt common definitions, referral, and response protocols and instruments for assessing risk in the community and the treatment needs** of individual juvenile offenders. These may be used by all agencies that participate in the juvenile justice system (including law enforcement, education, and community-based organizations).

- **Provide on-going evaluation** for informed decision making based upon an assessment plan agreed upon by all system participants.
- **Adopt a system-wide resource allocation strategy**, rather than funding on a program-by-program basis. Look at service consolidation and redesign where appropriate.

### **Recommendations and Strategies**

Like OJJDP's Comprehensive Strategy, the recommendations and strategies in the Brownsville Plan reflect the philosophy that it is the family and community, supported by core institutions, that have the primary responsibility for meeting the basic socialization of our children. Socially harmful conduct, acting-out behavior, and delinquency may be the signs of the family's inability to meet its responsibilities. At these times the community must support and assist the family in the socializing process, particularly for those youth at the greatest risk of delinquency.

The Brownsville Plan addresses the same two basic components as the OJJDP's Comprehensive Strategy:

- Preventing youth from becoming delinquent by focusing on prevention programs for at-risk youth that:
  - communicate consistent, healthy beliefs and clear standards and encourage bonding;
  - reach and are acceptable to the diverse racial, cultural and socioeconomic groups in the community;
  - connect the program activities with risk-reduction factors.
- Improving the juvenile justice system through a continuum of graduated sanctions that include: intervention, supervision, incarceration, treatment and aftercare appropriate for each step.

In the following sections, detailed recommendations and strategies are set forth, along with responsible parties and time lines for implementation. Our recommendations are organized around three major topics:



### **Part 1 - Prevention for serious, violent, and chronic juvenile delinquency**

Prevention is the first critical step towards reducing juvenile delinquency. It requires a coordinated approach. Research has clearly demonstrated that prevention approaches to reduce risks and enhance protection can be effective in preventing crime, violence and substance abuse.

### **Part 2 - A risk focused approach to graduated sanctions**

A risk focused continuum of graduated sanctions reserves secure care (i.e., incarceration) with treatment, for the small percentage of juvenile offenders who are violent. The programs will stress a broad range of intervention, supervision and treatment programs. Community-based programs for most offenders will be emphasized. Research has shown that community-based programs can reduce recidivism more effectively than traditional large-scale institutions.

### **Part 3 – Management, evaluation and implementation**

Prevention and graduated sanctions must be coordinated and integrated at both the policy and operational levels, including planning, implementing, management and evaluation. Although these two components may have separate, identifiable resources, formal channels of communication must be established between them. According to OJJDP research, attempts at comprehensive approaches have often failed because they treat prevention and graduated sanctions as separate and unrelated activities. Prevention and intervention should support and enhance one another.

Brownsville's intent is to forge cost effective and efficient partnerships between public and private agencies that result in less juvenile crime and delinquency. The following recommendations and accompanying strategies call for new levels of coordination, initiative and management. Filling the gaps in our continuum may require building new or expanding capacities of existing resources. Therefore, the following plan of action intends to enhance the current prevention and intervention efforts, while at the same time creating new programs to deal with changing needs.

## **Part I - Recommendations and Strategies for Prevention of Serious, Violent and Chronic Juvenile Delinquency**

Historically, government has responded to youth problems by providing services to address symptoms, often resulting in inefficient use of scarce resources. Children labeled delinquent traditionally enter the correctional system, which is unable to pay attention to underlying family or other problems. Youth intervention agencies identify some children as abused or neglected, remove them from their homes, and place them in foster care. If families had more than one child, families were spilt due to the lack of foster homes designed to keep brothers and sisters together. In Brownsville, the overwhelming problems have resulted in agencies often failing or being unable to provide family support or preventive mental health services. Fragmentation and lack of necessary services does not serve anyone effectively--youth, families, or communities. The system is expensive and often fails to solve youth's problems. Comprehensive, integrated and targeted collaborative efforts can more effectively assess the needs of at-risk youth, and implement promising strategies and maximize community resources. This means that communities and families must have the primary role in preventing juvenile delinquency. All community members--business leaders, media representatives, teachers, parents and grandparents, neighbors, youth, policy makers, clergy, elected officials and law enforcement--are responsible for ensuring the health and well being of children. When all members of the community work together to achieve common goals, everyone benefits from the strength of the working partnerships.

In Section One, we described how the Brownsville team reviewed existing resources and came to a consensus on critical gaps for a prevention and graduated sanctions continuum. Through the development of specialized community task forces, supplemental information on service gaps were obtained. These task forces consisted of key stakeholders in areas of community risk factors. These task forces have agreed to work collaboratively over the next 5 years to mobilize the community, to identify and to prioritize new gaps, to create opportunities for the whole community to participate in a on-going process of finding and

implementing solutions, as well as strengthening and enhancing existing efforts. The task forces and their beginning membership list include:

(1) *Family Preservation Task Force:*

- Planned Parenthood
- BISD Homeless Youth Program
- BISD Parent Involvement
- BISD Alternative Center
- BISD Campus Care
- Friendship of Women (Battered Women Shelter)
- Ozanam Homeless Shelter
- Resource Development Institute
- Tip Of Texas Family Outreach
- Tropical Texas MHMR
- University of Texas in partnership with Texas Southmost College
- Monica's House

(2) *Substance Abuse Task Force:*

- Resource Development Institute
- Sunglow Day Treatment Center
- BISD SAFE Intervention and Prevention
- Brownsville Housing Drug Prevention Program
- Cameron County Housing Drug Prevention/Intervention
- Palmer Drug Abuse Program
- Recovery Center Drug Treatment Center

(3) *Education and Job Training Task Force:*

- BISD Alternative Center
- Recovery Center Drug Treatment
- Texas State Technical College
- University of Texas in partnership with Texas Southmost College, Continuing Education and Workforce Training
- Youth Build Program
- BISD Career and Technology
- BISD At- Risk Department
- BISD CYD
- Cameron Works
- Recovery Center
- Resource Development Institute
- South Texas Vo-Tec

The results of these task force meetings are summarized in four tables.

Table A Summarizes support services that must be available for primary treatment to be effective (such as child care, transportation, housing, etc.).

- Table B Summarizes the critical prevention gaps identified in this process.
- Table C Summarizes programs gaps unique to various geographic areas of the city.
- Table D Summarizes policies, process and procedural elements that must be in place, such as accountability/evaluation tools, communication mechanism, etc., in other words, the “glue” that holds the system wide plan intact and makes it work effectively and efficiently.

**TABLE A**  
**RESULTS OF SURVEY TO IDENTIFY**  
**CRITICAL CONCRETE SUPPORT SERVICES NEEDS**

Concrete, support services necessary for the primary treatment programming to be effective include:

- Basic housing necessities, including utilities
- Child care
- Clothing
- Health care services
- Income maintenance
- Independent living skills
- Job training and placement
- Transportation
- Mentoring support (community-wide)

**TABLE B**  
**CRITICAL PREVENTION GAPS IDENTIFIED**

Top Ranked Prevention Gaps:

*Economic Deprivation:*

- School Behavior Management Strategies – Truancy Prevention
- Youth transitional program for 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> grades in conflict resolution, decision making, resiliency skills and rites of passage programs dealing with developmental issues
- Hands-on vocational/technical training, especially in skilled trades for both child and parents with incentives, stipends for performance
- Family literacy (under 7<sup>th</sup> grade reading level for adults and students)
- Dropout Recovery Program
- Vocational and college prep courses at middle school
- Parent involvement programs
- Peer tutoring

*Family Management and Conflict:*

- Runaway shelters
- Parent training, support and home visitations
- Inter-generational programs involving parents, youth and grandparents
- Family therapy
- Gender specific programming
- Violence prevention
- Family and youth mentoring program community wide
- Fathers parenting program
- Support services for abused children and children in families with domestic violence

*Availability of Drugs:*

- Youth Commission established to advocate for youth needs and programs with city and county government
- Teen Court
- Substance abuse prevention, intervention, treatment and aftercare
- Critical hour programs for middle school/latency-age youth focusing on adolescence development training and education
- Early screening and intervention for high risk factors/behaviors across community systems
- Charter School for high at-risk student that includes treatment and aftercare program
- Increased number of licensed chemical dependency counselors
- More holistic programs including art, music, spirituality, inter-generational and animal therapy

**TABLE C**  
**RESULTS OF SURVEY TO IDENTIFY CRITICAL**  
**GEOGRAPHICAL PROGRAMMING GAPS IN BROWNSVILLE**

Geographic gaps identified as critical:

- Prevention program (extended days) provided for students living in the city zip code of 78520. No such services are currently provided to 78521 zip code.
  
- Pockets of very low socioeconomic neighborhoods in the southern (Southmost area) or western areas of Brownsville (i.e., Garden Park School Neighborhood), colonias and housing authorities that lack resources. One third of Brownsville school age children live in Southmost area.

**TABLE D**

**IDENTIFIED CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS IN BROWNSVILLE**

Infrastructure needs (policy, process, and procedural elements) that must be in place to “hold” the system together and make it work effectively and efficiently:

- Accountability tools such as ongoing evaluation and assessment of program and system outcomes.
- Adoption of a systemwide approach to funding new programs and expansion based on risk and resource assessment (look at the effectiveness of entire system).
- Common definitions of geographic boundaries/service delivery areas among all of the various public systems. These can be used for planning and needs assessment, allocation of resources, service delivery management of indicator data, etc. This would facilitate integrated planning, service delivery, data sharing outcome evaluation.
- Community development approaches that involve the community (including businesses) in program and implementation, and foster their involvement and commitment in developing a community environment that is anti-crime.
- Community education on service delivery systems and the role of the juvenile justice system.
- Consistency among views/policies of law enforcement agencies on how to be an effective partner in developing and implementing the comprehensive strategy (e.g., common criteria on when to refer youth to various resources, how to handle a youth’s first contact, etc.)
- Cross-training between public and private agencies on how to be an effective partner of a family focused service delivery community coalition.
- Memorandums of agreements/understandings between programs and collaborative agencies that focus their responsibilities and roles for implementing a holistic, multi-systemic approach for treating at-risk youth and families.
- More participants in the comprehensive strategy effort.
- Requirement that students removed from regular school setting for use or possession of drugs be required to attend drug treatment or intervention (reexamination of zero tolerance policy).
- Risk/needs assessment for at-risk youth at all stages of the continuum across program boundaries.
- Management information and communication systems that allow accurate and efficient data collection compilations, and data sharing to occur across multiple agencies (where allowed by law).

The following recommendations and accompanying strategies are presented to “plug” these holes in our existing prevention resources. However, this list will continue to evolve as new information about emerging and specific community needs becomes available.

**Recommendation 1 - Community Mobilization:** Increase the number of community members (individuals and families, schools, business, organizations, service providers, etc. ) engaged in efforts to mobilize and promote crime free, healthy communities.

Strategies:

- Develop a pool of community leaders, youth and young adults who can regularly speak at public functions to mobilize the community.
- Develop appropriate and relevant means for sharing information and engaging the community.
- Advocate that a Youth Commission of key leaders be appointed by the Mayor/City Council in cooperation with the Steering Committee, to act as a liaison between city, state and national government entities on youth issues and solutions.

Lead Responsibility: Outreach Committee, Steering Committee, Education and Job Training Task Force, Substance Abuse Task Force, Family Preservation Task Force, and Graduated Sanctions Task Force

Time frame for Completion: End of 1999

**Recommendation 2 - Community Risk and Resource Assessment:** Adopt instruments to assess and identify local needs, resources and priorities for development of community- based prevention programs that target at-risk youth and juvenile offenders.

Strategies:

- Develop community planning teams to build consensus on obtaining, supporting and promoting needed services through structured risk and resource assessment methods.
- The teams should include broad-based youth development organizations, schools, law enforcement, local government, businesses, public agencies, civic organizations, religious groups, parents and teens.



- Train community planning teams to implement a risk focused prevention strategy.
- Obtain copies of other risk assessment instruments. Modify or add to the risk assessment instrument based on individual community needs. Take care to maintain sufficient consistency so that cross-community comparisons of key risk indicators can be made.

Lead Responsibility: Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Committee, Data Collection and Analysis Committee

Time Frame for Completion: End of 1999

**Recommendation 3 - Vocational Training-School To Work:** Build a framework that will inventory, coordinate and develop vocational skills, school to career/employment preparation and apprenticeship programs for both parents and youth.

Strategies:

- Increase educational partnerships with private sector to increase youth's vocational skills and opportunity for employment and career/vocational opportunities.
- Build networking links so vocational training programs are coordinated and linked throughout the region.
- Seek funding to support the expansion of the following:
  1. Truancy reduction program
  2. Youth transitional programming for 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> grades for conflict resolution, decision making, and developmental issues
  3. Programs that provide hands-on employment experience, enhance literacy and provide training opportunities for middle and high school students and their parents with stipends and incentives
  4. Inter-generational programs involving parents, youth and grandparents
  5. Support services such as academic advising, counseling, instructional, tutoring and mentoring to increase the chances of success in higher education.
  6. Business entrepreneur courses
  7. Dropout recovery programs

Lead Responsibility: Education and Job Training Task Force

Time Frame for Completion: On-going

#### **Recommendation 4 - Lobby for Legislation to Support Prevention and Intervention Goals**

Strategies:

- Survey all agencies involved in juvenile justice issues in Brownsville, in order to identify changes in existing legislation or new legislation necessary to better address juvenile crime in our community.
- Recommendations for improvements in legislation will be obtained from those who work closely with the issue and are aware of the problem and the legislation related to the problem.
- Clear, complete, problem statements, discussions, and recommendations will be developed by those who have the greatest knowledge of the issue. Resulting recommendations will be reviewed by supervisory personnel, and coordinated among other interested community agencies.
- By the end of year 2000, the Legislative/Policy/Systems Committee will meet with other Texas Comprehensive Strategy sites (i.e., Galveston, Houston, Corpus Christi, McAllen) to develop a plan of action for impacting specific legislation.
- Develop plan of action for becoming involved in specific legislation that will impact Brownsville in the year 2001.

Lead Responsibility: Legislative/Policy/Systems Issues Committee

Time Frame for Completion: On-going

#### **Recommendation 5 - Implement Innovative Approaches to Fill Prevention Gaps:**

Implement innovative approaches to prevention that address community risk and protective factors, and fill recognized prevention gaps. The OJJDP National Juvenile Justice Action Plan has identified various programs that show promise for reducing delinquency and youth violence. Among the model programs they have identified as worthy of replication are those that deal with truancy reduction, mentoring, conflict resolution, tutoring, vocational training,

youth leadership, and multi- purpose family resource and neighborhood centers that provide youth with productive alternatives for occupying out-of-school and weekend time. Brownsville's critical gaps were identified as the same as the OJJDP prevention focused areas. The purpose of the strategies and related tasks listed below is to increase family and community protective factors by increasing youth job programs, communicating strong community norms about parental control, create more positive and relevant alternative and after-school activities and expand parent/family training and support groups in school, community, churches and custody settings.

Strategies:

- Work with the community and social service agencies to support their efforts to obtain funding for existing and new prevention programs.
- Support programs that increase the number of families meeting basic needs and moving toward self-sufficiency, as well as, decrease family violence and substance abuse.
- Obtain funding for neighborhood centers that provide alternative activities, parent and family defined services which include: family counseling, family therapy, parenting skills, in-home visiting, support and mentoring.
- Develop programs that are culturally, developmentally appropriate and specifically tailored to meet individual and family needs.
- Establishment of a task force comprised of community leaders to provide guidance and oversight for community prevention education including gender specific programming.
- Develop work groups that target select populations of youth, such as those referred by the juvenile justice system or those at-risk for early pregnancy or drug use.
- Develop a community resource of research-based data that identifies the unique psychological needs and problems of Hispanic youth living along the U.S. Mexican border.
- Seek funding opportunities for research based programs to improve student behavior and support family strength through a well defined collaboration between parents, the school, mental health agencies, substance abuse providers, and program coordinator.
- Work with CYD to obtain funding for evaluating and replicating successful prevention programming to include those areas of Brownsville which are not covered by existing

prevention services.

Lead Responsibility: Family Preservation Task Force, Substance Abuse Task Force, Education and Job Training Task Force, Graduated Sanctions Task Force

Time Frame for Completion: On-going

**Recommendation 6 - Innovative Community Prevention Demonstration Project:** Create a demonstration project in an at-risk neighborhood to test the effectiveness of interagency networking. Brownsville proposes to pilot and evaluate a Community Assessment and Family Resource Center approach to prevent and divert youth from the juvenile justice system based on assessed risks/needs. Existing community-based Neighborhood Service Centers, schools, churches or other appropriate buildings in an at-risk neighborhood will be used. This Center will have common screening tools, processes for sharing data and case management protocols.

Multi-disciplinary Community Intervention Teams will include collocated law enforcement, school, social service, health and community members to identify potential at-risk youth and develop a multi-disciplinary action plans to prevent youth from entering the justice system. Referrals will be received from school, community agencies, law enforcement and county staff. A truancy retrieval program will be co-located in the facility. One neighborhood will be targeted for this pilot, such as the Southmost area, colonias, or housing projects.

The Community Assessment and Family Resource Centers will provide parenting, family therapy, psycho-social education, continuing education, school programs, and intensive, home-based family oriented services for high risk youth as well as delinquent youth. There will be a service hot line that would automatically assign a case manager or advocate (who would be responsible for initial crisis support, complete first assignment, and conduct follow-up).

**Recommendation 7 - Gender Specific Programming:** Include model local and national programs that have successfully implemented effective programs and services. In addition, set up a community wide task force comprised of community leaders to provide guidance and

oversight for community education that promotes attitudes in agencies and systems that encourage girls to reach their full potential.

Strategies:

- Identify key leaders and establish countywide task force.
- Inventory existing services unique to girls.
- Develop source documents to educate the public to the unique needs of girls.
- Provide a framework for the development of short and long term strategies to address girls' issues.
- Seek funding for programs to reduce teen pregnancy, reduce female substance abuse, reduce female criminal justice referrals, and increase resources for job training /employment.

Lead Responsibility: Family Preservation Task Force

Time Frame for Completion: 1999, On-going

## **Part II - Recommendations and Strategies for A Risk Focused Approach to Graduated Sanctions**

The following recommendations and accompanying strategies are made to fill a continuum of graduated sanctions that combine accountability with treatment, and provide for intensive treatment and rehabilitation services for delinquent juveniles. As with the list of prevention gaps, this list will continue to evolve as new information about specific community needs becomes available and as the profile of youth involved with the justice system changes over time.

**Recommendation 1 - Risk and Treatment Needs Assessment:** Adopt risk classification and needs assessment instruments for assessing at-risk youth or juvenile offenders' risk to the community and their specific treatment needs. Promote and receive consensus on the use of these instruments by all public and private agencies involved.

An effective juvenile justice system uses risk classification instruments and needs assessment to appropriately place juveniles. Placement is determined by clearly designed, objective criteria that focuses on the seriousness of delinquent behaviors or acts, potential risks for reoffending based on presence of risk as well as protective factors, and risks to public safety. Needs assessment helps to ensure selection of most appropriate programs based on chronic or multiple needs (including family needs), as well as to assist long range case planning. To achieve this purpose, a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary needs and risk assessment (covering medical, mental health, education, substance abuse, psycho-social, learning style/disabilities etc.) should be used to determine appropriate levels of service treatment interventions and supervision that will be established for the youth. Several recommendations have been put forth to improve the system.

### Strategies:

- Form Graduated Sanctions Task Force to review current standardized risk assessment instruments that may be used for entrance into an aftercare program from current juvenile probation bootcamp and for assessment at Community Assessment and Family Resource

Centers.

- Use the OJJDP technical assistance and resources in developing, testing and implementing of the instrument.
- Develop a comprehensive management information system for capturing and analyzing information collected in risk and needs assessment. These data can be used for continued instrument refinement, case management and planning.
- Evaluate Juvenile Probations caseload management system to address some or all of this need.
- Explore substance abuse diagnostic instruments

Lead Responsibility: Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Committee, Data Collection and Analysis Committee, and Graduated Sanctions Task Force

Time frame for Completion: End of 1999

**Recommendation 2- Substance Abuse Treatment Efforts:** Community planning efforts identified substance abuse treatment (across all steps of the continuum) as a top programming need.

The 1999 County Community Plan found that substance abuse was a priority health problem for adolescents and young adults. Currently 30% of juvenile probation youth go without adequate treatment. Of the 2000 youth that Juvenile Probations deals with each year, 45% are chemically dependent and 75% have some problems with substance abuse.

There are no local youth day treatment facilities or residential treatment centers. Likewise, there is inadequate treatment for both juvenile probations long-term and short-term youthful offenders. There is no aftercare program across the continuum. Community feedback supported an integrated approach to treating substance abuse at all levels of the continuum. Numerous strategies and long- and short-term tasks were developed to address the needs of Brownsville youth.

Strategies:

- Integration of expelled, suspended or other students removed from the school setting with the zero tolerance policy into a substance treatment or intervention program before reentering into school (re-examination of zero tolerance policy.)
- Expansion of alcohol and drug screening to all points of contact between health and safety professionals, law enforcement, juvenile court, school counselors, etc.
- Seek funding opportunities and inter-agency agreements which identify common clients and missions and which clarify roles and relevant expertise so that collaborations can be more effective.
- Explore research based models for adjudicated youth that include screening and assessment, referral for treatment, in-house treatment and random drug testing as a condition of probation, if warranted by screening and assessment results. Monitoring program to help youth and families address alcohol and other drug abuse or abuse issues. Community-based organizations should be used to implement these programs.
- Programming for pregnant juvenile female offenders with a history of substance abuse.
- Obtain funding for residential and day treatment facilities.
- Involve offenders in program design.
- Adopt countywide, common definitions for various drug/substance abuse treatment modalities.
- Convene key players (private and public) involved in substance abuse intervention and treatment activities throughout city/county into a Substance Abuse Task Force.
- Design a uniform process, definitions, criteria for evaluating and referring youth to available intervention and treatment options.
- Establish memorandums of understandings for cooperation and collaboration.
- Continue seeking funding opportunities that support expansion or establishment of new treatment aftercare and intervention programs.

Lead Responsibilities: Substance Abuse Task Force

Time frame for Completion: Ongoing



**Recommendation 3- Innovative Approaches to Fill Graduated Sanctions Intervention Gaps:** Implement innovative approaches to intervention for use in at-risk communities which are shown by OJJDP to be effective, and that fill recognized intervention gaps.

The OJJDP Guide states that “lack of consistent intervention with juvenile offenders soon after their initial contact with the police or other authority figures has long been recognized as perhaps the largest single gap in services for trouble youth” (p.144, of the OJJDP Guide). Without a mechanism to intervene predictably and early, the juvenile justice system is unable to impose swift and clear consequences for delinquent behavior. Likewise, it cannot provide support services to address the individual, family and community issues that typically underlie such behavior. This does not mean that every young offender needs intensive, long-term intervention - many do not. But for some youth, failure to intervene means that they fall through the cracks of the juvenile justice system and social agencies that might otherwise act on their behalf. OJJDP research shows that two-thirds of juveniles responsible for violent crimes have had no official juvenile justice system record.

Brownsville has been pursuing several promising innovative programs including: intensive supervision, electronic monitoring, JJAEP Education, community service and probation officers in the schools. Some models of successful programs in the OJJDP that correlate with community needs include:

- Teen Courts
- Community Intervention Probation Officers stationed in community-based organizations or other sites in high risk communities
- Probation Officers stationed in Family Resource Centers
- Intensive in-home therapy for youth and families
- Substance abuse treatment and intervention for youth and families
- Aftercare
- Girls Programming
- Mentoring

Strategies:

- Convene all key players (public and private), involved in juvenile diversion and intervention activities throughout the region into a Graduated Sanctions Task Force. This task force will design a uniform process, definitions and criteria for evaluating and referring youth to available intervention options.
- Establish memoranda of understanding for cooperation, information sharing and use of a universal risk and needs assessment between agencies, law enforcement, community-based organizations and school districts. This risk and needs assessment would provide the basis for determining appropriate levels of interventions and follow-up needed by youth and their families.
- Continue to seek funding opportunities that support expansion or creation of new intervention programs that OJJDP research has shown to be effective.
- Involve community members, parents and teens in program design and implementation.
- Explore funding opportunities to reduce caseloads of probation officers from 60 to 1 to a more manageable caseload of 25 to 1.
- Explore the use of a community-based assessment and resource center to facilitate multi-disciplinary assessments that utilize a risk/needs assessment instrument and provide referrals to needed services. (Note: These Centers could be used for both prevention and intervention.)
- Develop a service hotline that would automatically refer callers to community resource centers. These centers would assign a case manager or advocate (who would be responsible for initial crisis support, complete the first assessment, and conduct follow-up interviews at home). Consumer forums could also be conducted to obtain community feedback on the effectiveness of the community resource centers.
- Establish a process that clearly identifies and assigns responsibility for referral follow-up and follow through, both critical to a successful intervention.

Lead Responsibilities: Graduated Sanctions Task Force

Time frame for Completion: End of 1999

#### **Recommendation 4 - Implement Innovative Approaches To Fill Graduated Sanctions Incarcerations Gaps:**

Implement innovative approaches to incarceration and treatment that fill recognized gaps and are shown by OJJDP research to be effective or promising. There is still inadequate program capacity or no services in several areas of the continuum. This includes residential treatment, day treatment and aftercare. One population that is particularly in need of an aftercare unit is composed of juveniles returning from out-of-home placements in private residential facilities and those with significant substance abuse problems being released from Juvenile Boot Camp. These programs would need to include individual treatment, supervision plans and close supervision to maintain positive behavior. Aftercare should have a strong monitoring and intensive family therapy component. In addition, one critical need in treatment is for youth in long and short-term placement. There is need to develop and expand graduated sanction programs across the continuum that are specially designed to meet the needs of girls. Work is currently underway with the NCCD to identify innovative programs and funding sources for developing additional resources for girls.

#### Strategies:

- Collaborate with community organizations to locate OJJDP or NCCD funding and research based models for girls' programming, day treatment, residential treatment, family therapy, aftercare and monitoring programs.
- Develop formal links with various collaborative organizations that would be interested in focusing on family therapy particularly for youth on probation, treatment for families and youth on short and long term placement, monitoring and aftercare.
- Examine and communicate findings of research continually published through OJJDP on effective and promising graduated sanctions programs.
- Pursue opportunities to fill graduated sanctions resource gaps through the work of a newly formed Task Force on Graduated Sanctions. Involve community members, parents and teens in program, design and implementation.

Lead Responsibility: Graduated Sanctions Task Force

Time frame for Completion: End of 1999 and ongoing

**Recommendation 5 - Innovative Graduated Sanction Demonstration Project:** Create a demonstration project that enhances and expands juvenile probation programs by adding alcohol and drug treatment and family support workers for youth and families. The project will create a day treatment program for juvenile offenders.

Brownsville plans to pilot and evaluate a program that will be fully integrated, geographically diverse and provide a service delivery model for prevention, intervention, supervision, treatment and incarceration of juvenile offenders. The selection of this demonstration project addresses the high priority gap identified by Brownsville's Resource Assessment Planning Team for substance abuse treatment for youth and families at all steps of the continuum. It also addresses the CPT concern that programs have a strong family-focused component.

The proposed pilot will serve up to 75 high-risk youth ages 13-17 referred by the Juvenile Court to the program as well as serve at-risk siblings and their families. Substance abuse treatment and family intervention will be made available to youth and families throughout each level of the response continuum.

The proposed project builds on the multi-agency assessment and reassessment process, and makes alcohol and other drug services and family support workers available based on assessed need. The effectiveness of the program depends on the multi-agency assessment/reassessment process, range of treatment options and the immediate response available without returning the targeted youth to court. The demonstration project adds to the existing array of services and integrates all programs into a single service delivery system capable of moving targeted youth up or down the program continuum.

The probation program supervisor, case managers, mental health therapists, correction health nurses, community agency social workers, teachers and alcohol/drug specialists, in conjunction with targeted youth and families, will design an individualized treatment program and contract. This multi-agency, family driven assessment process will function as the "hub" that connects the youth and family continuum of treatment services. The assessment process will be conducted at locally placed Community Assessment and Resource Centers. This

demonstration project will add to the necessary day treatment programs in the area. The model will follow guidelines set out by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administrations, Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, and Guidelines for Treatment of Substance Abusing Adolescents. Among other components the design will include mentoring, role modeling, family groups, family involvement, group therapy, school programs, vocational programs, support and 12 step meetings, transition and follow-up, recreational components, and family counseling.

### **Part III – Recommendations and Strategies for Infrastructure of Management, Evaluation and Implementation**

The purpose of Part III of the action plan is to provide a useful infrastructure, for implementing, managing and evaluating prevention and intervention efforts involving risk and protective factors for communities, families, and individuals in order to increase the efficient use of resources. In order for the plan to be successful, prevention and graduated sanctions components must be integrated at policy and operations level. It is widely recognized that only a coordinated effort to develop an interagency continuum of mental health, churches, social services and substance abuse programs for at-risk youth can make an impact on juvenile crime and delinquency. According to OJJDP research, attempts at comprehensive approaches in the past have failed because they have treated prevention and graduated sanctions as two separate and unrelated systems.

Brownsville is fortunate in that broad support for our comprehensive planning efforts has already been secured from many elected officials and other juvenile justice policymakers, community leaders, public and private program administrators, schools, law enforcement, community programs and groups. Through the consortium model, many members of Brownsville are beginning to work together to raise awareness, influence the creation of new programs, and increase networking goals. Currently, this process does not have a strong and concise framework or infrastructure. For example, as the Data Collection and Analysis Team was moving forward in its planning, it became evident that a full time coordinator was needed. The task of coordinating the efforts of public, private, youth and family serving entities throughout the city under the umbrella of a integrated plan is a monumental task. Therefore, funding will be sought for a full time coordinator position. Furthermore, throughout the planning process, “Comprehensive Strategy Themes” clearly emerged. The OJJDP Guide describes (pp. 46-51) several key activities necessary for successful implementation of the comprehensive plan to reduce juvenile crime and delinquency, including:

- Securing broad-based support from the community at large during the planning stage, as

well as during and after implementation. Public education and outreach is critical and is the best way to generate program support and minimize oppositions.

- Ensuring interagency cooperation through formal agreements between agencies.
- Having an effective case management system that follows each youth through the various stages of the continuum.
- Developing a Management Information System that can be used for client tracking, planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation.
- Incorporating a comprehensive evaluation component that consists of both process and outcome evaluations.

Using the Comprehensive Strategy Themes and OJJDP Guide's key activities, the Comprehensive Strategy Team designed an infrastructure framework. This infrastructure began with recommendations and an action plan.

**Recommendation 1: Develop Public Outreach Strategy:** Mobilize the community and increase the percentage of community members (individuals and families, schools, business, organizations and service providers) engaged in efforts to promote crime free, healthy communities.

According to OJJDP, the goal of public outreach is two-fold:

- To change public perception of youth violence and effective solutions; and
- To convince adults and youth that their active involvement is essential to success.

The recommendation by the Outreach Media Committee, as well as the vast amount of OJJDP research, stress the importance of public outreach (including effective media campaigns). The campaign will engage the public and policy makers in promotion of healthy and crimefree lifestyles and in prevention and reduction of juvenile crime. The campaign will secure broad based support from the community-at-large during the planning stage, as well as during and after implementation. Public education and outreach is critical and the best way to generate program support and minimize opposition.

### Strategies

- Secure media and public relations expertise that can help the city determine what combination of media will prove most effective to publicize their delinquency prevention and intervention strategies and success; inform residents about local resources and give public recognition for community service, neighborhood or school achievement.
- Promote pictures and expectations of healthy lifestyles that can positively impact community norms.
- Involve at-risk youth and parents in the implementation process providing leadership experiences.

Lead Responsibility: Outreach Media Committee, Education and Job Training Task Force, Family Preservation Task Force

Time frame for Completion: Ongoing

**Recommendation 2 - Cross Training:** Training will be provided between public and private agencies to forge new community based service partnerships. Cross-system training between public and private agencies will allow providers to acquire common language and methodologies and promote collaborative efforts. Coordination and collaboration among numerous public and private agencies are critical to achieve the goal of reducing juvenile crime and delinquency. In addition to the key leaders and community planning teams, there are literally hundreds of other organizations that will become a critical part of our proposed, integrated approach to addressing juvenile crime. There must be a means to offer training to these diverse agencies and provide them with skills and tools necessary for forming and furthering community partnerships and collaboration.

To this end, Brownsville will review other comprehensive strategy training programs (i.e., Partners for Success). Other sites have used a two and half day training session developed by a cross-system professional development team to help initiate new partnerships. These sessions are used to promote the new service delivery paradigm of comprehensive, family-focused, outcome driven, integrated/coordinated and community based services.



Strategy:

- Utilize resources, like those available through the Partners For Success Program, to provide cross-training that encourage and enhances collaboration throughout communities and the entire region.

Lead Responsibility: Education and Job Training Task Force, Family Preservation Task Force

Time frame for Completion: Ongoing

**Recommendation 3 - Interagency Agreements:** Develop formal interagency agreements (such as Memorandums of Understanding or Agreements) that explicitly state the relationships between agencies.

Successful implementation of a comprehensive plan depends on the coordinating of the multiple agencies, including: schools, community programs, law enforcement and many other programs servicing at-risk youth and families (e.g., mental health, medical resources, drug and alcohol , support groups, etc.)

Strategy:

- Develop formal cooperative agreements that clearly state the relationship between agencies. These agreements should include descriptions of services to be provided, criteria for determining type of youth to be served (or referred), and information that can be shared, by and to whom, and under what circumstances.

Lead Responsibility: Outreach Specialist, Steering Committee

Time frame for Completion: Ongoing

**Recommendation 4 - Case Management and Process Control:** Develop a case management system that follows each youth through various stages of the continuum. Designate the Chief Probation Officer with the responsibility and provide resources needed to coordinate an interagency process, that follows each youth through the various stages of the

continuum of care. Designate the Chief Probation Officer and Legislative Workgroup Chairperson with responsibility and resources needed to coordinate an interagency, centralized intake process, case management and program control (including assessment, monitoring and feedback) for identified at-risk youth and juvenile offenders.

Case management leads to coordination of services and a high level of accountability. The OJJDP Guide states that an effective case management system is “critical” to the success of a comprehensive plan. Case managers are responsible for case assessment and planning, referral and monitoring of service delivery, and reassessment. They serve as service brokers, as well as service providers. Behavioral contracts based on the case plan are developed by the case manager, the youth and the youth’s parents. According to the Guide, case managers should have caseloads of no more than 15 to 20 serious offenders.

The Brownsville plan intends to follow a case management /case manager concept in a multi-disciplinary team setting. The Probation Department is the most appropriate agency to coordinate and provide overall program control. Probation is committed to providing prevention, intervention and appropriate community-based alternatives to incarceration. This system will incorporate OJJDP’s suggested components for an effective case management system, including risk and needs assessment, re-assessments, and behavior contracts. Adequate resources, however, must be allocated to allow for effective case management and coordination for youth at various parts of the continuum.

Strategies:

- Utilizing the expertise of the Brownsville Comprehensive Planning Team and OJJDP, assess resources needed for the Probation Department to provide the needed level of coordination and program control.
- Identify the most effective options available for providing case management and overall program control.
- Allocate appropriate resources to provide an adequate infrastructure to implement and manage the process.

Lead Responsibility: Graduated Sanctions Task Force, Legislative/Policy/ Systems Issues Committee and Steering Committee

Time frame for Completion: Oct. 1999 and continuing as part of the demonstration grant program implementation

**Recommendation 5- Management Information Systems:** Build on existing Management Information System (MIS) efforts in order to facilitate relevant communications and information sharing by all juvenile justice agencies and collaborating entities (public and private). Legal mandates/protection on Privacy Act data, as well as Rights to Data must be built into this improved system. Make maximum use of existing systems, system integration, data sharing, and data warehousing to provide the juvenile justice community with a modern, flexible, secure, cost effective system to support their efforts while protecting the rights of the juvenile and the family.

A well-designed MIS is a core component for managing and evaluating implementation of a Comprehensive Plan. It can be used for program and client case planning, management, budgeting, monitoring, and evaluation. The MIS should include client-level data that can be used to track individuals as they move through the system, as well as produce aggregate system-level data for program administration and management, such as program enrollments, terminations, and length of stay. These client-level data usually include youth demographic characteristics, offense and placement history, risk and needs assessment information and outcome information. The MIS may not be completely automated as some processes may be most efficiently conducted using manual systems. Such determinations of efficiency are based on the cost of automation versus manual record keeping and analysis, frequency, and periodic reporting requirements. The Brownsville plan will be to hire consultants, as appropriate, to develop/assist in development of a Juvenile Justice Management Information System (JJMIS) to address key issues related to the Comprehensive Strategy's short and long term requirements, including hardware, software, systems integration, user training, technical support, maintenance, staffing, and life cycle management of the system. It is assumed that some level of outside funded (Grant Funded) contractor support will be required in every phase of this project.

Strategies:

- Develop a plan, using outside consultants as appropriate, to build upon existing systems to enhance communications, information sharing, and coordination between entities that are involved in the prevention, intervention, supervision, incarceration, treatment and aftercare for at-risk youth, juvenile offenders and the their families. Extreme care will be given to insure Privacy Act information is obtained and shared with only those who have an authority and "need to know" the information.
- The project will be accomplished in 4 phases:

**Phase 1. Grant Justification and Award, Scoping Analysis of Existing Systems and Problems:** Local agencies do not have the resources to conduct in house/community wide analysis of Management Information Systems. Additional funding, from outside sources, will be necessary at every step in the process to develop a modern Juvenile Justice MIS for Brownsville.

**Phase 1A. Seed Money:** The first step is to write a seed grant application and obtain seed money to provide support to local MIS authorities in the development of a full grant application. This effort will provide a general description of existing systems and problems for use in preparing the full grant application. The estimated duration of this phase, from project initiation to completion, is 3 months.

**Phase 1B. Full Grant Application and Award:** During this phase of the System Development Process, the JJMIS Task Force will conduct a full Scoping Study of the Brownsville JJMIS project. Task force personnel will conduct a general Systems Analysis of all existing MIS. General JJMIS system descriptions, shortfalls, gaps, and target goals will be documented to support the grant application. The grant application will be prepared, reviewed, approved, and submitted. The estimated duration of this phase, from start until submission of the grant application documents is 6 months.

**Phase 2: Systems Analysis, Development of a Functional Description:** During this phase, the Systems Analysis and Documentation Team will conduct a full Systems Analysis of Juvenile Justice business processes, document that work, and have it reviewed and approved by the participating agencies. This is an exhaustive, time consuming effort. The estimated duration of this phase is 12 months.

**Phase 3: Development of Request for Proposals, Solicitations for Bidding, Evaluation of Submissions, and Contract Award:** This phase includes preparations of the RFP, legal/contracting officials review and approval, pre-proposal notification, conference activities, evaluation of submissions, and contract award. The estimated duration of this phase is 4 months.

**Phase 4: Design and Development of Improved JJMIS:** Design an Improved System to meet identified needs and construct/install the system. The estimated duration of this phase, from project initiation to full system deployment is 12 to 18 months, if full funding for deployment is available. Full deployment will most likely be conducted in phases, over time, as funding becomes available. Excessive delays in funding will require updating baseline data to insure we don't buy an outdated system.

Lead Responsibility: Legislative/Policy/Systems Issues Committee

Time frame for Completion: Approximately 39 to 45 months depending on funding and administrative processing

**Recommendation 6 - Evaluation:** Provide for locally relevant, ongoing evaluation of programs, strategies and system wide responses to allocate resources based on need and documented effectiveness.

Evaluation is the key requirement for implementing a comprehensive plan. Effective evaluation tools to measure the progress are critical for refining and modifying existing prevention and early intervention strategies as well as graduated sanctions programs. Also, evaluations conducted for programs operated by others often form the basis for

recommending replication in other places (e.g. such as OJJDP Guide's assessment and recommendations of proven and promising program models.)

Brownsville is limited in its ability to draw upon a number of organizations with evaluation expertise. Among the organization with evaluation expertise is UTB/TSC and the Resource Development Institute. Little is being done in the way of evaluation locally for individual projects and programs. In addition, there is not yet a system-wide approach to evaluation in place that can be used to look at the effectiveness of the various programs being operated in specific communities or in the region as a whole.

Strategies:

- Continue the development of city and countywide outcome measures ( in addition to those included in this plan) that can be used to evaluate effectiveness of system wide and community strategies.
- Develop and implement evaluation tools that match local strategies, including expansion and coordination of MIS across youth service agencies.
- Develop ways to obtain local community participation (including youth) in program evaluation efforts. Use existing youth leadership activities to support evaluation efforts.
- Fund programs and develop new resources that are relevant to desired outcomes and continue funding those that can demonstrate effectiveness.
- Form a workgroup to develop a SOP for process and outcome evaluations including a standardized assessment instrument that can be used at all stages of the continuum and by all involved agencies, beginning with prevention and early intervention.
- Develop an Evaluation Cookbook that can be used by other comprehensive evaluation sites including process evaluation forms, research designs, statistical techniques, community surveys, participant surveys and testing materials.
- Use the OJJDP technical assistance and resources in developing, testing and implementing the Evaluation Cookbook.

Lead Responsibility: Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Committee and Data Collection and Analysis Committee

Time frame Completion: Within 1 -2 years, and ongoing

**Recommendation 7 - Systemwide, Balanced Approach to Funding:** Adopt a system wide, balanced approach to funding/prevention, early intervention and graduated sanctions programs that considers both safety needs of community and treatment needs of at-risk youth, juvenile offenders and their families.

The OJJDP planning process supports a balanced and restorative justice approach consisting of three related objectives: community protection, accountability and competency development. Community protection requires that the juvenile justice system ensure public safety. Accountability refers to the requirement that juvenile offenders receive sanctions for their offenses and that they make amends to the victim and to the community for harm caused. Competency development suggests that youth who enter the juvenile justice system should exit as capable of becoming productive, responsible citizens.

Decades of research have demonstrated that delinquency prevention is cost effective. According to the OJJDP Guide, one conservative estimate puts the average cost of incarcerating a juvenile for one year at about \$34,000. Others put the figure at between \$35,000 and \$64,000. In addition, the total cost of a young adult's serious, violent career is estimated to be \$1.1 million (for youth aged 18 to 23 years). As uncovered in the resource needs assessment, youth with problem behaviors can be found moving in and out of four separate and fragmented systems - juvenile justice, mental health, dependency, and alcohol and drug abuse. We need to start funding programs and start funding a comprehensive system.

Strategies:

- Continue to strengthen linkages recently created by Brownsville Comprehensive Strategy.
- Work collaboratively with the Brownsville Community Foundation and United Way to coordinate ways of filling prevention and intervention gaps.
- Seek funds to provide more prevention/early intervention (front end) services
- Evaluate traditional roles of law enforcement providers in light of their changing roles and

determine if they need to be used and/or trained more effectively in the new prevention-focused, community-based, family-oriented paradigms.

- Use existing forums or sponsor youth forums to participate in all phases of planning for implementing the full continuum of prevention and graduated sanctions services.
- Develop common definition of geographic boundaries/service delivery areas among various public agency systems that can be used for allocation of resources, planning and needs assessment, management indicators data, etc.

Lead Responsibility: Steering Committee

Time frame for Completion: Ongoing



## **PART IV -Year One of Action Plan**

Successful accomplishment of this Action Plan's recommendations and accompanying strategies call for heightened levels of collaboration, coordination and commitment among local leaders, representatives of public and private groups, schools, community providers and residents (including youth) and existing collaborative efforts underway to address the needs of at-risk youth, juvenile offenders and their families.

We are especially fortunate that within the last five years, Brownsville was selected to participate in several innovative, prevention and family focused programs that target the needs of the at-risk community and schools. The CPT identified numerous geographical, program, support service and infra-structure requirements, all of which need to be addressed if a full continuum of prevention and graduated sanction resources are to be made available to youth and their families. There are various efforts now underway to fill these gaps. Our demonstration project will also provide Brownsville with a valuable opportunity to fill critical gaps and to test the efficacy of these innovative program design.

It is the Brownsville CPT's belief that this Action Plan should not be considered a final planning document for implementing a response to juvenile crime and delinquency in the region. Rather, it should be considered a document that will be reviewed and monitored on a ongoing basis, and changed to reflect new information as it becomes available. For example, over time, profiles of youth offenders may change along with their needs and service requirements. Or, services currently available to address at-risk communities may change (i.e., services may increase, be reduced, or be completely eliminated). Either of these situations will require that we revisit our plan and identify if and when changes are warranted.

Brownsville is fortunate to be supported by the technical expertise available through OJJDP for the development and implementation of this comprehensive plan. The Action Plan provides for the framework for continuing to build our comprehensive strategy. Several new task forces on prevention and graduated sanctions are preparing detailed work plans to refine and further develop recommendations and strategies.

Critical to the success of the Action Plan is having an organizational structure and process that facilitates a rational, managed approach to following through and monitoring the status of the Action Plan's recommendations and strategies. The coordination and linkages we have already created between graduated sanctions and prevention will be essential for successful integration of components at policy and operational levels. OJJDP research states that many attempts at comprehensive approaches have failed in the past because they treat prevention and graduated sanctions as two unrelated and separate systems. We believe that our integrated approach, which uses the CPT to oversee the development and implementation of the entire continuum will ensure success.

### **Plan of Action for Overall Program Management**

Administrative responsibility lies with the Steering Committee. Overall program responsibility will be given to a Program Director to be hired. The Program Director will be responsible for administration, staffing grant preparation, provision of services, public information, direct supervision, training, and direction of staff, program planning and implementation. The Program Director will solicit input and utilize the expertise of consortium members to maximize the impact the project will have on the families, service agencies, and youth. Weekly meetings with the Program Director and project staff will take place to ensure activities are in line with project goals and objectives. The Neighborhood Youth and Parent Councils will provide grassroots and frontline input needed to successfully impact the problem. The Neighborhood Parent and Youth Councils will report directly to the Program Director and provide input on the project's ongoing philosophy, implementation, management, and future enhancement.

Currently, the Steering Committee has not selected a fiscal agent although several have come forward: county, city, and school district. There is also the question of whether the project will move into a 501 c (3) and become its own fiscal agent.

## **Youth and Parent Steering Council**

The OJJDP review of successful prevention and intervention programs indicates that the most effective programs provide opportunities for youth to become involved in the program decision-making. Youth who show a commitment to the program, whose attendance is consistent and whose behavior and attitudes can serve as a role model to other children will be inducted into the Council and form a steering committee that will be responsible for welcoming “newcomers” planning group activities and serve as sponsors and mentors to the new members. These youth will participate in Peer Leadership Training.

A Steering Committee for parents will also be implemented for those parents who exhibit the same qualities of commitment to the program as measured by program attendance. They will be responsible for welcoming new parents and planning program activities for the program. These parents will also participate in Leadership Training. Parents will also participate in a neighborhood watch and make recommendations how to make the community safe.

## **Overview of Demonstration Project**

The demonstration program will bring together schools and school districts, health (including mental health) human service agencies, local government and business to focus their collective resources and expertise on responding to the needs of Brownsville’s at-risk children, youth and families in their community. The program will have both a prevention and intervention focus. This program will use a community-based family resource center model for operations, housing multi-disciplinary staff from many public and private agencies. The program will be housed near a school in a low income neighborhood, housing project or colonia. Additional sites will be added in the near future as funding becomes available.

The new program will be an intervention (with treatment) and delinquency prevention program that uses a multi-disciplinary team to provide integrated services and treatment to a family. Special effort will be made to recruit high at-risk youth and other siblings in the family. The intervention and treatment program will provide for both probation and social service youth. The program will offer a day treatment alternative to residential out-of-home

placement where the youth can live at home and attend a structured school setting with after-school counseling, recreational activities for the whole family , mental health and wrap around services in the home. In addition, the center will house a community truant processing center managed by BISD Police and staffed with social service and community agencies to provide one-stop family services. One Probation Officer will be stationed in the center to serve as Community Family Monitor to ensure probation youths comply with their contracts, to make referrals to community resources, and to counsel youths and their families. The Community Family Monitors will provide both prevention and intervention services. The BISD Police Department will be responsible for the truant processing center.

In terms of prevention, the center will operate an “After-school Learning Center” between 4:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. five days a week. The “Study After Hours” program will focus on homework and individual tutoring needs of low income youth, along with upgrading education skills in math, reading and skills acquisition. Neighborhood youth and intervention youth will benefit from an anti-drug/gang program that will include conflict resolution and character education. These services will improve the chances of the targeted youth to meet success in school and develop survival skills. Both the intervention and prevention program will include the following activities for parents, youth and significant others in family:

- Parent Training
- Family Therapy
- Mentoring
- After School Recreation
- Gang Prevention
- Community Service
- Vocational Training and Employment
- Adult Literacy
- Conflict Resolution and Violence Prevention
- Tutoring
- Spiritual Advising/Counseling (optional)

The demonstration projects will use support groups for students to learn positive coping skills as well as refusal skills, reinforced self esteem and learn to address problems such as child abuse, sexual abuse, family violence, substance abuse and relationship issues. Program components will include support groups, individual, group and family counseling, parental education and alternative activities.

The following is a discussion of several components of the intervention program ( counseling, parental education, and alternative activities):

As noted earlier, the project will expand current services in order to develop a comprehensive, community wide crime prevention and intervention program for the most troubled at-risk students. The project will use an innovative approach to implement integrated services. Modeled after successful coalitions in other parts the county, this consortium model directed and implemented a series of innovative and proven methods of working with at-risk youth and families. Based on these meetings, the program was designed to:

1. Utilize a holistic approach addressing educational, economic and personal needs through a family approach. This approach focuses on case management. Activity coordinators and counselors will first assess participants' needs, then, develop a plan involving parents that maximizes service delivery by coordinating the services and resources of existing agencies.
2. The program will develop parent and youth steering committees that will provide feedback on the progress of the program.
3. The program will emphasize its efforts toward working with a majority of Hispanic Americans. The district is comprised of an 88% Hispanic population. All program components, dissemination efforts and replication methodologies will be culturally sensitive, relevant and developed, and implemented in a bilingual/bi-cultural design.

A number of benefits are planned and expected to occur because of this project. A major benefit of the project will be the development and field testing of a model program to prevent and intervene in the involvement of Hispanic youth in drug and gang activity in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. This model can be adopted or adapted by other border communities and

school districts faced with the problem of access to drugs on the border and a rising incidence of gangs. It will serve as a model for Brownsville to follow after the federal funding ends.

As a result of the consortium, there will be improvement in the coordination of anti-gang/drug services and activities for at-risk youth and their families. Participants will work together to develop action plans to implement when they return to their agencies or departments. Furthermore, the gang/drug problem in the Rio Grande Valley is a relatively recent dilemma in comparison to larger cities. This consortium will be long lasting and benefit the communities in many other ways. The problems of education, health care, housing and employment are a few of the future issues the consortium will address. Local businesses and government agencies have forecasted that the Valley's population is going to increase enormously with the passing of NAFTA. The Valley needs to prepare for the problems and opportunities that will come with this growth. Therefore, it is now imperative that local school districts, city agencies and other agencies collectively coordinate and direct their efforts to work on future problems.. Other community-based agencies in the Valley will benefit from the leadership training opportunities, media campaign and gang/drug conferences that will disseminate gang/drug information.

The parenting education program and parenting education activities will be centered on a "family strengthening philosophy." The results will be parents who are better able to raise and guide their families. The program will implement activities that involve families in positive communications and learning sessions. Many of the targeted youth are from dysfunctional families where physical abuse and neglect are found. The mothers are often battered and have poor self-images. The program will provide training and support to both the parents and the youth in order to teach them how to change their lives. As a result of the program, all neighborhood residents will be able to access and receive counseling, tutoring, monitoring and gang/drug prevention/ intervention education and related services designed to serve as alternative activities and support services that will replace or negate delinquent and criminal activities.

Furthermore, targeted low income residents, ages 6 to 19, will benefit from an anti-crime/gang/drug program that includes conflict resolution and character development. These services will improve the chances of the targeted youth to meet success in school and to develop survival skills. The youth and parent steering committee, the monitoring, and the recreational activities will allow youth to become involved in positive community and personal development activities increasing self esteem and neighborhood pride. The program will empower youths to take on positive roles in their community. The overall benefit to the community will be the diversion of potential gang members from gang related activity into community involvement.

In addition, the treatment, intervention and prevention education and support groups that will focus on life management skills will prepare the targeted participants for a successful lifestyle. This approach will provide multiple benefits to youths, enabling them to make decisions, plan and carry out goals. Overall the results from these activities will be:

1. To improve the youth's ability to manage risk and stress allowing them to see the value of risk taking and to be open to new experiences that can change their lives in a positive manner;
2. To develop leadership that builds teamwork and collaboration;
3. To give the individual an opportunity for self-discovery, empowerment and a new awareness of personal capabilities;
4. To improve communication skills;
5. To enhance the values of cooperation, mutual support, interdependence and compassion;
6. To develop trust in persons no matter what their background, heritage or physical limitations;
7. To enhance their individual self-concept (sense of confidence, sense of competence and self-awareness);
8. To enhance their individual sense of responsibility for self, others, the environment, and society as a whole;

9. To improve their critical thinking and problem solving skills allowing the individual to understand a decision according to its consequences and show a level of empathy and complexity of thought.

Generally, youth from areas of the community where gangs are active have limited access to adults who know how to listen and to provide assistance in making positive decisions at their level. The program staff will create a safe environment where nurturing and caring relationships can develop while teaching children that the world can be a safe place and that they deserve the very best life has to offer if they work for it. The monitoring program will provide caring and compassionate men and women who have met success in life to serve as role models. This program will have the benefit of increasing educational and career aspirations of disadvantaged youths. The long term goal of these in-services are to ensure that the low income neighborhoods are safe, orderly and free from drugs and violence making it conducive to children growing up happy, healthy and safe, and to internalize that they have every right to grow up in this type of environment.

### **Youth to Be Served**

The drug/gang prevention program will target 200 high at-risk youth age 6 to 20 “in and around” a low income neighborhood. The day treatment and intervention program will target at least 75 youth “in and around” the same low income neighborhood, ages 13 through 19 years of age. These participants will include current gang members, drug users and offenders. Identifiable characteristics will include, but not be limited to, the following: inappropriate behavior, gang membership, discipline problems, long term suspension for drugs, involvement with the juvenile justice system or siblings of gang members/ drug users. This program will intervene and provide services to youth “already” involved in gang/drug related activities. The intervention project will also provide services to a minimum of one parent per household. The majority of these youth are of Hispanic origin. Spanish has remained the language that is most often spoken in the home and will be a consideration in program development.



## **Research Rationale for Day Treatment**

Past research indicates that no one approach by itself will work as an intervention or prevention model. What is needed is not a single approach to intervention but a comprehensive one. This research indicates that intervention strategies for Hispanic youth should be focused on several approaches. These approaches must be appropriate for high risk youth who need special assistance to recognize the signs and symptoms of initial substance abuse dependency or gang involvement. Both drug and gang involvement may be curtailed by developing support services and support networks for youth and families. With additional services, such as support groups, crisis intervention or counseling, youth may receive the help needed to resist gang involvement or drug use and to cope with problems and pressures in more useful ways. Successful interventions services should include: counseling, crisis intervention, family counseling, and leadership programs. Furthermore, research indicates that family preservation programs are a very effective intervention in the gang problem (Horten, 1988; Stapleton, 1983) This program was designed to replicate components from several successful treatment models across the county:

**Michigan State Diversion Project:** Used 8 weeks of training in behavioral intervention, community service and involved a greater emphasis on developing empathy and communication between caseworker and clients.

**Lucus County Intensive Supervision Unit:** Used individual, family and group counseling; psychological assessment for the youth and family; assessment for chemical dependency of youth and family members; school evaluations; random urinalysis and community services.

**Wayne County Intensive Probation Program:** Used ongoing individual and group counseling; youth information groups; group parenting sessions; psychological evaluation; pre-employment preparations for older students; family outings and structured group activities.

**Vision Quest:** Youth participate in an adventure or experiential program that teaches the value of cooperation, self discipline and the work ethic.

**Project at Mendez School:** Used support groups to learn coping skills, reinforced self esteem and learned to cope with problems such as child abuse, family violence, substance abuse and relationship issues.

At the generic level, interventions considered the most successful are behavioral, cognitive behavioral skills or life skills oriented, multi-modal and family oriented. The literature on effective treatment programs key components include:

- A holistic approach to dealing simultaneously with many aspects of the youth's lives;
- Intensive, often multiple contacts weekly or even daily;
- Strong case management that begins at intake and follows through various phases of the program;
- Effective education, vocational and counseling strategies tailored to the individual needs;
- A variety of individual, group and family counseling;
- Opportunities for the youth to be involved in the program decision making;
- Recognition and understanding of thought processes that rationalize negative behavior;
- Program components adapted to the needs of the individual youth;
- The program develops new resources and support services when needed;
- Enriched educational and vocational opportunities; and/or
- Youth bonding to prosocial adults and institutions.

Based on the research, the treatment components for this plan will include community service, case management, employment and career options, support groups, individual, group, spiritual, and family counseling, parental education, mentoring, psychological assessment of youth and family, life management skills, psycho-educational sessions, educational/information sessions and experiential sessions (Ropes Course).

On the average, youth will remain in the program 4 to 6 months. Services will consistently be a combination of group therapy, educational groups and individual counseling in the amounts of 8 hours per week. Family therapy and counseling will be available to parents and they are encouraged to take an active role in their child's intervention. Parent training will be held twice a week. In most cases, youth will receive individual counseling in substitute for educational sessions one day per week. Since most youth attend public school, the primary schedule of services will be conducted after school and the early evening hours. Individual counseling will be arranged by the primary counselor according to the needs of the client.

Transportation will be provided for youth and parents who do not have access to intervention services at key points in the community.

### **Intervention Counseling**

The OJJDP review of successful intervention programs indicates that successful programs were most likely to have approaches that allowed youth to recognize and understand the thought process that rationalized negative behavior. Many of these program used Multi-Modal Therapy following a cognitive-behavioral model. Based on this research, the day treatment program will utilize the Multi-Modal Therapy as developed by Arnold Lazarus. Emphasis will be placed on integrating Reality Therapy (Glasser, 1965) techniques and Cognitive Therapy (Beck, Newman, Leise, 1993). Reality Therapy helps youths in assuming responsibility for their own behavior and circumstances. Cognitive Therapy helps youths understand the belief and thought processes that have affected behaviors, emotions and their role in drug and alcohol use. This combined approach provides the counselor with a systemic approach that allows flexibility to approach each adolescent with respect to his/her individual problems and responses. The Multi-Modal Therapy approach is most appropriate for Mexican Americans in that it can include external factors (i.e., social, environmental, institutional ) and allows the client to express his/her views on the cultural relevance of planned interventions (Ponterrato, 1987). Group counseling will be provided to assist youth in resolving conflicts through peer interaction and experiential activities such as Gestalt, Psychodrama and Reality approaches. The youth and family will be given the option of additional spiritual advising/counseling.

### **Soundness of Prevention Approach**

The primary target for the demonstration program is youth 6-17 years of age of both genders and their families who reside in low income neighborhoods and surrounding areas. The program will be designed to be culturally sensitive to the languages, customs and traditions of the predominant culture. The program design is based on the following research.

Research done under the auspices of the National Association of State Boards of Education and the National Institute on Drug Abuse has led to gang related factors identified with at-risk youth and suggests approaches to help them cope with problems. This research indicates that

although much is now known about risk factors for gangs, drugs, crime and violence in the majority culture, very little is known about specific risk factors that are salient for minority youths. Even less is known about what types of preventive strategies will be effective in addressing those risk factors. In order to select the most valid approach in designing a program to meet the needs of Brownsville's mostly Hispanic at-risk population, the proposal team reviewed the following: Cameron County/Brownsville at-risk factors, other successful culturally sensitive prevention/intervention programs; research on gang involvement and drugs; and school/community resources. As a result of this review, the program will be based on recent research and program evaluations (Austin City Council; The Family and Youth Service Bureau's Hispanic Health Council; National Gang Information Center; and the Pueblo Youth Services).

Past research indicates that no one approach by itself will work as a prevention/intervention model. What is needed is not a single approach to prevention but a comprehensive one. This research indicates that early prevention and intervention strategies for Hispanic youth should be focused on five approaches. These approaches, philosophies, along with research and established practices, will guide the development and implementation of the program.

**Informational Approach:** This approach describes the harmful physical and psychological consequences of drug consumption and gang involvement through drug/gang education lectures and films. The program is based on the assumption that youth will not use illicit substances or join gangs if they fully understand their dangerous effects and consequences. In addition, extensive teacher in-services and parent presentations are provided based on the assumption that if the adults in these children's lives have accurate information, they can communicate this information to their children. In addition, if they know the signs of gang involvement and symptoms of drug abuse, they can identify early use or involvement and take steps, specifically referrals to our program, to prevent continued use or involvement (Thompson, 1988).

**Educational Approach:** Youth vulnerable to gangs and drugs are rarely able to develop coherent self identities or a positive self image; experience success in school or sports; rarely

have experienced trust, security or love; have deep seated anger which can erupt into intense hostile actions; have difficulty understanding self or others; seek short term pleasures and have experienced various discriminations (Phillips, 1990; Moore, 1985). This approach remedies deficiencies in social and psychological skills, improves interpersonal communication, promotes self understanding and acceptance and helps students master refusal skills to counter social influences to use drugs or join a gang (Phillips, 1990). Research indicates that academic success and achievement motivation may serve as a protective factor against drug use and other anti-social behavior (Hawkins, 1988; Brook, 1986) and that activities which improve educational attainment are invaluable.

**Alternative Approach:** The gang experience offers recreation to young people who otherwise have limited social activities. Gang activities such as hanging out, partying, stealing cars, and "drive by's" are structured for members and associates. Youths may become involved with gangs or drugs because, as they might say, "there's nothing else to do." Creating healthy legal alternatives can provide "something to do" and can offer a more desirable alternative recreational choice for youths. Involving parents and other community adults can also contribute to the development of a sense of community. Positive alternatives to drug use or gangs have included mentoring, volunteering time and talents to help another person, cooperative community service, and sports. Recreational, educational and social activities should be structured to meet the emotional needs related to gang involvement stressing identity building, positive recognition, role models, group belonging, affirmation of cultural values, success, and rites of passage into adulthood (Phillips, 1990)

**Intervention Approach:** This approach is appropriate for high-risk youth who need special assistance to recognize the signs and symptoms of initial drug and alcohol dependency or gang involvement. Corrective or rehabilitation actions may take the form of numerous services. In terms of gangs, most interventions should be focused on the individual, social or family problems of the youths which led to their gang involvement, without stressing the "gang aspects of the problem" (Moriarty, 1990; Jackson, 1986). Both gang and drug involvement may be curtailed by developing support services and support networks for students and parents. With additional services, such as support groups, crisis intervention or

counseling, youth may receive the help they need to resist gang involvement or drug use and to cope with problems and pressures in more useful ways. Intervention services may include counseling, including crisis intervention, peer counseling, family counseling or leadership programs. Furthermore, research indicates that family preservation intervention programs are very effective intervention in the gang problem (Horten, 1988; Stapleton, 1983) .

**Parenting Skills Approach:** Expert opinion on intervention and prevention programs state that "programs that encourage family unity and involvement must be utilized to their utmost" (Jackson, 1986; Spergel, 1990). There is some evidence that youth who become involved in gangs and drugs come from families in which there is poor discipline (e.g., overly strict or overly permissive), poor supervision and lack of parent-child communication. Furthermore, the gang experience provides for a sense of family (Moore, 1985), as a majority of these youths are from dysfunctional families. A preventive strategy based on these research findings can enhance parenting skills through a parenting education program and involve parents in the intervention/prevention process. If parents improve their parenting skills, then parent-child communication is likely to improve, along with increased parent involvement with child and more effective supervision. The key outcomes in this approach are improved parenting skills, improved parent-child communication and more consistent and effective discipline practices. Furthermore, OJJDP research has found that parent training and family therapy is an essential component of any successful intervention and treatment program .

**Consortium Approach:** It is widely recognized that only a coordinated effort to develop an interagency continuum of mental health, social service and substance abuse services for at-risk youth can make an impact on the gang phenomena (Spergel, 1990). The consortium model is based on three assumptions: (1) early intervention with young children and strengthening of the family will prevent the involvement in negative activities; (2) the problem of gang/drug involvement must be approached "holistically" addressing educational, economic, and personal needs; and (3) through the development of professional partnerships a consortium will maximize comprehensive delivery of services. Through a consortium model, many members of the community work together to raise awareness, influence the creation of new programs or increase networking of support services for at-risk youth. This sharing of

technical assistance usually involves a cross section of the business, education and the human service sector in order to develop multifaceted community involvement. In addition, the consortium tries to increase parent and neighborhood awareness of the gang/drug problem so that young people can be diverted from gangs and drugs as early as possible.

### **Supportive Services for Intervention and Prevention**

One feature for program success outlined by Greenwood and Zimring in One More Chance: The Pursuit of Intervention Strategies for Chronic Juvenile Offenders (1985), is for program components to be adapted to the needs of individual youth. Once the candidate is selected to participate in the program or is a part of the truant processing center, the caseworkers will initiate a action plan that is most appropriate for the individual and his/her family's needs. This process will include two phases. Phase One will be a personal needs assessment that will evaluate employment potential, housing needs, educational background, job training, external support services, (e.g., child care, transportation) and any other special needs that could be a stress factor. Phase Two will be the development of an individualized action plan that utilizes the information developed in the personal needs assessment to identify specific activities and services to reduce social environmental risk factors.

In Phase One, participants will undergo a highly structured interview to acquire sufficient information about the participant and his/her family. The highly structured interview will focus on the youth's unique skills, interests, short and long goals, needed support services and special needs such as substance abuse counseling, child care, transportation, religious advising, vocational and educational counseling and guidance. This component has an intensive assessment component involving both interview and psychometric assessment of youth and family to develop an intervention plan best suited to their needs. All participants (parent and student) will be required to undergo a series of personality, aptitude, family cohesion and vocational interest inventories. The goal of the assessment is to provide insight into a candidate's: (1) behavioral and attitudinal problems; (2) self esteem and self image; (3) coping resources for stress; (4) assessment for chemical dependency; and (5) unique talents and interest. Indicators related to these constructs will be assessed by the use of standardized measurement. As a result of these assessments, monitoring, counseling strategies, vocational,

educational and supportive activities can be explored during Phase Two by counselor and youth who will encourage personal development, life management skills and positive self-image.

In Phase Two, an action plan will be developed in consultation with the parents, youth and counselor, using information from Phase One, that matches the student to an educational, vocational and supportive service program that is best suited to his/her interests and needs. Due to the broad support that has been pledged to comprehensive strategy efforts, it is believed that there will exist very few areas in which support services can not be made available.

After the youth and family have gone through orientation and been accepted into the program the initial plan is drawn up. Thereafter, the action plan will be reviewed by counselor, youth and parent quarterly, and the services, modified as appropriate or on a three semester basis. Activities will be conducted through the Community Assessment and Family Resource Centers and donated community sites. These activities will occur during the first two months of funding.

### **Case Management Approach**

Research from the OJJDP reports that successful intervention programs need on-going case management to meet the needs of the youth. At the time a youth is referred for program services, a needs assessment is made and a service delivery schedule is developed. The counselor, parent and student are all parties to developing this assessment and service delivery. The counselor will implement a "holistic" case management approach in order to ensure quality control of intervention service delivery. Case management is a client-centered, goal oriented process for assessing the needs of individuals for particular services and assisting him/her to obtain those services. This proven practice has the following components:

**Assessment** - The case managers or counselors, with the family, will identify the barriers/causes of the at-risk student's difficulties, that are unique to the student and are associated with family or environmental circumstances. Standardized scales and tests (i.e.,



Walmar Scales, Family Environmental Scale, Youth Self Report, Jesness Personality Inventory, Coopersmith Self Esteem, Risk Assessment Survey, SASSI, Myers Brigs for Children and Multiple Intelligence and the Jesness Personality Inventory) will be used to evaluate the youth, parent and family's level of functioning in daily life.

**Development of a Service Plan** - Activity coordinators and counselors working with consortium members and families will develop a plan of coordinated multiple services tailored to each youth and family. This plan will generally include a mix of community and in-house services both short-term and long range.

**Brokering** - The Prevention/Intervention /Treatment staff will link youth and families to needed services that cannot be provided by the case management team. Brokering generally involves much more than making a referral. In times of crisis, program staff or trained volunteer will personally accompany the youth and/or family to the referral agency.

**Service Implementation and Coordination** - The role of the program staff and their case management team will be twofold: (1) to deliver the services on site which they planned to provide themselves; (2) to be sure that all services to an individual youth and his/her family are working together for his/her benefit and that appropriate communication is taking place between the various service providers. In addition, each staff member will expand the potential for individualizing services by training volunteers to become team members.

**Advocacy** - Activity coordinators and counselors will act as advocates assisting and sometimes mediating youth and family communications within or outside service agencies or the school, and help the youth and/or families negotiate the many different bureaucracies involved. This function will sometimes require an appropriate team member to serve in a third party role in conflict resolution (e.g., between youth and family members, students and service providers, etc.)

**Monitoring and Evaluation** - Through this activity, the case manager will monitor the services being delivered to each youth and family so that adjustments in the service plan can be made by the case management team as circumstances and situations change.

**Mentoring** - An appropriate member of the program staff will be designated as the primary professional caring for the youth within the partnership of service agencies involved. No matter the number of specialists, this is the one person who follows through for the youth and/or family. At-risk youth and family often have not formed this kind of sustained

relationship with a responsible adult and the intent is for the case management team to identify one member to become the person with whom the youth and his/her family can comfortably communicate and turn to on an ongoing basis.

### **Treatment, Intervention, and Prevention Screening**

Screening information will be disseminated and explained to school personnel and youth servicing agencies. Program personnel and other agencies will screen potential applicants who live in and around the targeted low income neighborhood and make referrals. The Community Assessment Center will assess families for at-risk factors such as: poverty, parent-substance abuse, gang involvement, child difficulties, marital conflict, financial strain, academic difficulties, unemployment history, history of abusive treatment, substandard housing, substance abuse of family members, legal difficulties, etc. Intervention and treatment participants will be identified as having involvement with the juvenile justice system, substance abuse, or gangs through the community's current formal referral process. In addition, the program outreach specialist will assess the community, going door to door and surveying participants who have children in the appropriate age group. A verbal explanation of the program detailing the benefits of their participation will be given. Neighborhood families will be invited to attend a "Community Outreach Meeting and Pot Luck Supper" at the local Community Center, school or church. Outreach will also be done through a prevention newsletter and culturally appropriate social events planned especially for recruitment.

The community outreach meetings will be an orientation including topics such as program objectives and operating plans, selection process, resources available, commitments expected of participants and other necessary information. During the orientation, applications will be distributed and the staff will offer to assist those who need help completing the application. The interview format will be designed to provide insight into individual and family characteristics of the client. The format will specifically address the youth and parent's long and short term goals, as well as, their perception as to how to achieve these goals. Furthermore, the parent will be asked to provide a psycho-social history in order to gain as complete a historical perspective of the youth. Specific aspects of the youth's previous history

will include medical, dental, family problems (past and present), housing, child care, transportation, legal history, financial status, educational achievement and work history.

### **Parenting and Family Therapy**

Expert opinions on juvenile delinquencies state that programs that encourage family unity and involvement must be utilized to their utmost (Jackson, 1986; Spergel, 1990). OJJDP has found that parent training and family therapy is an essential element of an successful prevention, intervention or treatment program. Based on this research, the prevention and intervention component will utilize weekly support groups and psycho - educational classes for parents. These components will be designed in collaboration with the CPT Family Preservation Task Force and will become part of an aftercare program. Classes will be held at Community Assessment and Family Resource Centers. Overall parenting education and activities will be centered around a "family strengthening philosophy." The purpose of these meetings is to have a strong, healthy and safe environment where parents can find other parents who are experiencing similar situations and where they can empower themselves to face the responsibility of raising their children in a healthy manner. English and Spanish will be used to assure that communication is clear and comfortable.

Two approaches to parenting will be used. The first group will be involved in the "Families and School Together (FAST) Program." FAST is a parent professional partnership/ prevention program based on the principles of family therapy. Using a multi-family approach, it intervenes in early childhood, elementary school or middle school youth ages 3 -14, who are at-risk for alcohol and other drug abuse, school failure or juvenile delinquency. It is a model program recognized by the White House Conference on School Safety, Office of National Drug Control Policy, US Department of Education (OERI and OSIERS), US Department of Health and Human Services (OHD, CSAP, SAMSHA, and NIDA), and OJJDP. FAST is currently being implemented in over 400 school in 29 states and 5 countries, in diverse schools and communities in rural, suburban and inner cities. FAST consists of 8-10 weekly sessions where the whole family participates. The program impacts the following:

- Fosters parental involvement in school activities ;
- Integrates abuse prevention methods in as many areas of the school setting as possible;

- Facilitates parental communication of disapproval of alcohol and drugs by their children;
- Increases family support including mother's education, aspirations for student, study aids and parental involvement.

The intervention/treatment program will utilize weekly support groups and psycho-educational classes for parents. Classes will be provided at the community-based Assessment Centers. One curriculum, that will be used will be "Strengthening Families : A Curriculum for Hispanic Parents" by the National Coalition of Hispanic Health and Human Services Organization. Overall, the parenting education program will focus on such topics as: parents who feel helpless to deal with their children's inappropriate behavior, feel victimized and betrayed by their children, feel inadequate to deal with the present situations and are confused by what is happening to the family. Parents will learn about tough love, the dynamics of alcohol and drug use, setting boundaries, following through with consequences, their responsibility as role models to their children and healthy ways to communicate with all family members.

Some of these prevention and intervention groups will be designed as parent-child activities and conjoint family sessions. These group sessions will be for parent/child pairs to address issues related to substance abuse, family violence, and parent/child communication.

- a. Parent/child pairs will participate in at least one support group focusing on parent/child communication.
- b. Parent/child pairs will participate in at least two activities designed to reduce gang/drug interest or involvement.
- c. Parent/ child teams will participate in at least one event focusing on reducing /coping with family abuse and violence.
- d. Parents will attend at least two training sessions per month related to parenting knowledge, conflict resolution, family dynamics, single parenting issues, behavior management and discipline, stress management, child development, gang/drug awareness and parent child communication.

Initially, parent and child will be attending groups separately providing them enough time to learn that the program is safe and that they are capable of learning new and safe communication skills to interact with each other. Conjoint family sessions will be loving and supportive for each family member; parents will be supportive of other parents and children will be supportive of their peers. Furthermore, the parent group's ultimate goal is that parents will learn to become group leaders and role models for the "new" parents who will be coming in as time goes on. Parents of "intervention" and "prevention" youths will be included in the planning, implementing and evaluating of project activities.

Families needing more intensive therapy will have the option of holding therapy sessions one or two times a week, or more if needed. Family therapy will utilize several approaches:

- Structural family therapy (Salvador Minnchin) has been used successfully across different ethnic populations including Hispanics.
- Family Therapy (Jay, Haley) and inter-generational Family Therapy (Murray Bowen) has been successful in families with substance abuse issues.
- Outreach therapy serves as a good approach to dealing with multi-problem, multi-crisis families.

### **Alternative Activities Component**

The staff of the Boys and Girls Club, and UTB/TSC Continuing Education will develop a series of activities and groups which youth can participate in throughout the year. The alternative activities can mainstream at-risk youth into existing recreational and educational activities. The alternative activities will focus on sports, mentoring, community service, education and leadership programs. While a number of activities are planned, input from parents and youth will guide the type of activities to be implemented. Some youth will be assigned to recreational and leadership activities based on student at-risk profile indicating improvement areas (i.e., communication skills, low self esteem, teamwork, risk taking). Treatment youth will be allowed to participate in alternative activities based on group attendance and 30 days sobriety. Alternative activities may include the following:

## **Sports**

This alternative activity can mainstream at-risk youth into existing recreational and educational activities. The project in partnership with the Boys and Girls Club of Brownsville, UTB /TSC Continuing Education, Local Active Teens, and other local agencies will introduce at-risk youths to recreational activities including basketball, t'ai chi, kick boxing, horseback riding, volleyball, water safety, and billiards. While a number of activities are planned, input from youth and parents will guide the activities to be implemented.

## **Mentoring**

Generally, youth from areas of the community where there is economic deprivation have limited access to adults who know how to listen and to provide assistance in making positive decisions at their level. The purpose of this program will be to promote youth bonding to prosocial adults and institutions. The mentoring program will provide caring and compassionate men and women who have met success in life to serve as role models. This program will have the benefit of increasing educational and career aspirations for disadvantaged youth. The monitoring program will involve community members inside and outside the consortiums. Youth will have the opportunity to experience different careers and lifestyles. Program staff will help identify persons in the school and community who are interested in working with individual youth. Mentors will be assigned a child of the same sex. Mentoring may focus on career, hobbies or school. Goals of this program will include improving self-image, coping with personal problems, overcoming barriers, planning skills, and other essential issues. Mentoring activities will take place once a month on weekends or during times of personal crisis. This program will become a community resource where other agencies can tap in and use the mentors. Research from the OJJDP indicates that mentoring programs that are most successful include behavior management techniques. Therefore, the mentoring relationship will be critical.

## **Community Service**

Research from OJJDP indicates most successful programs facilitate youth-community interaction and involvement. Throughout the program, youths will be involved in some kind of community services projects (i.e., working with the disabled, elderly, homeless, Habitat for

Humanity). Community service projects will be developed in cooperation with local agencies such as United Way and local churches where youths can volunteer and develop a sense of community and pride in themselves. The goal of these projects will be to teach caring and responsibility through community services.

### **Educational Enrichment Activities and Tutoring**

Classes will be held after school and on weekends. Treatment students will attend at least two sessions per week. Similar to the successful intervention, Program Vision Quest, treatment students will participate in experiential activities that teach juveniles the value of cooperation, and self-discipline. These activities will be held in cooperation with CYD and the Boys and Girls Club. Tutoring will be provided at the Center for homework assistance, skill development and daily educational practice. Teachers will provide tutoring two days per week for both parents and youth. Family computer assisted instruction will be established. Instruction will focus on visual learning that develops decision making, critical thinking, problem solving, academic skills, and refusal skills. Experiential learning workshops will be held once a month to develop motor skills, build confidence, enhance music and art appreciation, cultural enrichment, understand ecology and principles of physical science. These may include ropes challenge courses and field trips to local cultural, historic and educational attractions. Educational assessment in relation to student's individual learning style and aptitude will be provided and a detailed educational plan developed. Students will participate in art/music/drama activities organized by the Program Director and the community. At-risk youth who have an obvious interest or talent in music, art, or drama will be allowed to interact with Hispanic music and art professionals to participate in group sessions focusing on positive self image, community involvement, positive lifestyle, and cultural pride.

### **Educational and Vocational Programming**

Research by OJJDP indicates the most successful prevention and intervention programs provide enriched vocational and educational programming. The program will be coordinated with Youth Build, Motivation Education & Training INC, (MET) BISD Career and Technology Program, Texas State Technical College and UTB/TSC Continuing Education and Cameron Works, which will allow intervention /prevention youth to pursue vocational and employment goals. Treatment youth will be referred for job training and placement after 90 days of sobriety. The program will work closely with the Office of Employment and Training, administrative entity of the MET and JTCA to refer participants for job training and placement. This activity will primarily coordinate youth referrals in two programs, Title 11-A and Title 11 -B. The intent of Title 11-A is to provide participants with the necessary skills to compete in the labor market and to develop economic self sufficiency.

This year-round training program will provide both prevention and intervention for youth and parents with employment and training opportunities. Parents will be motivated to continue their education or seek employment opportunities. Parents will be able to receive on site (or at a nearby school) the same training as youth. This training will include but will not be limited to:

- Special skills training
- On the job training
- Work experience
- Limited work experience
- Classroom training
- Pre-employment skills
- Vocational education exploration programs
- Educational and career counseling
- General Equivalency Diploma
- Drop out recovery
- Special classes for offenders, disabled, AFDC recipients
- Life skills



- Entrepreneurship, teaching the unemployed how to be self employed
- Job search, resume writing, effective job interviews
- Assessment of job skills; and /or
- Evening support groups to discuss problems of job seeking, work and job retention.

The University of Texas in partnership with Texas Southmost College, Texas State Technical Institute, South Texas Voc-Tech, and Brownsville Independent School District will provide training. Once a week and after school, secondary youth interested in advertising and journalism will work with RDI, Upward Bound and UTB/TSC Outreach Services to produce a quarterly bilingual newsletter. The publication will contain information on proven parenting strategies, success stories, services available, events calendars etc.

### **Prevention Information and Psycho- Education**

Classes will be held after school and on weekends. Prevention/Intervention students will attend at least two sessions per week. This project will include a culturally sensitive, bilingual drug prevention program. The program helps students to resist negative pressures; develop a commitment to a drug free lifestyle; teach life skills; emphasize a strong abstinence philosophy and teach young people specific strategies for saying "NO" to drugs and alcohol. The program has a strong coping skills component in relationship to other programs reviewed. Coping skills have been earmarked as a protective skill to gang involvement. The program involves training the parent and community in making a difference in the lives of young people. The activities will encourage role-playing, games, journal writing, and working in groups. The education sessions will be taught by the counselors and will be integrated into their weekly group sessions.

The education sessions will be taught by activity coordinators or counselors at each Community Assessment and Family Resource Center and will be integrated into their weekly group sessions. Different curriculum that is culturally sensitive will be reviewed and modified. The program will have five components: Conflict Resolution, Character Education, Gang Awareness Information, Alcohol and Drug Use Education and Independent Life Skills.

OJJDP recommends conflict resolution curriculum to improve students' problem solving skills and anger management skills. The conflict resolution component will help students understand the value of conflict; ways to deal with anger and counteracting violence; the importance of getting along with others; resolving conflicts, techniques in resisting negative peer pressure; the process of peer mediation; and the skills to communicate effectively. Group members will develop the necessary skills to manage conflict with peers, parents, and other adults. The goal of this component is to help them realize that gang violence is not necessary, fulfilling or inevitable. They will also pursue the development of behavioral strategies for avoiding gangs. To promote multi-culturalism, group members will be asked to practice conflict resolution methods that address cultural barriers. This program will include structured psycho-educational exercises based on a curriculum approved by the state of Texas.

In addition, the program has a strong coping skills and life management component. As noted earlier, life management skills and coping skills have been earmarked as a protective skill to juvenile delinquency. The activities will encourage role-playing, games, journal writing, and working groups. The Independent Living Skills component will focus on increasing the success of youth as independent adults by increasing their knowledge of key information concerning life skills (money, credit, consumer, education and employment and how to use resources available in the community). This prevention-focused program will provide skills to youth ages 14 to 19. The program will also deal with developmental issues including a rites of passage component.

The character education component addresses the issues of developing sound character values and personal responsibility. The curriculum will include the following values: responsibility, honesty, truthfulness, kindness, love, self esteem, responsibility, respect, convictions, tolerance, resisting negative pressure, importance of rules/laws, honor, saying "no" to gangs and drugs, goal setting, developing a positive self identity apart from the gang, taking pride in one's heritage, and contrasting materialism with values. The goal of this component is to help youths recapture their own dignity and recognize the rights of others. This component will provide and reinforce the values of the culture.

The gang awareness information will be based on expert opinions on gangs that indicate these programs are helpful in diverting "Wanna-be" youth in gang activities (Stapleton, 1983). The informational component will teach the harmful consequences of gang involvement and positive alternatives. Some topics will include: gangs and violence, history of youth gangs, gangs and turf, impact of gangs on family members' peer pressure to be bad, gangs and drugs, what it means to belong to a gang, and other alternatives to gang membership.

The alcohol and drug education component will address the "de-glamorization" of the drug and alcohol use culture. A reality-based approach will be used to highlight the destructive and lethal consequences of the use of illegal chemicals and underage drinking. The goal of this component is to help group members understand the myths about the drug culture and to see the negative reality of drug and alcohol use. Additionally, it will provide them with healthy and responsible ways to find solutions to their problems and guide and assist them in learning to live life in a manner conducive to a drug free lifestyle, regardless of the environment they must return to.

### **Truancy Diversion Partnership**

The Community Assessment and Family Resource Centers will house a truant processing center staffed with BISD police, social service and community agencies to provide one-stop family services. The program includes a risk assessment and evaluation of every participating youth and parent and requires them to complete a counseling component and other supportive services. The Truant Center will be open full time during the school year. The Center could very well reduce daytime crime by 25 percent. The probation officer and BISD officer will work with parents to implement the "Neighborhood Watch and Community Mentoring Project." One purpose of this project is to identify informal leaders in the community and train them in "mediation and conflict resolution." Officers will schedule neighborhood meetings twice a week

### **Demonstration Projects Participant Confidentiality**

As noted earlier, the demonstration projects will model case management procedures to effectively guard the confidentiality of participating youth and families. In instances where

information must be passed on to other resources on behalf of the youth, a release of information, signed by youth guardian, must be secured in order for that information to be forwarded. A copy will be maintained within the case records. No information on youth/families will be released without authorization unless circumstances pose a threat to the safety and well being of themselves or others.

### **Ethnic/Cultural Approach in Two Demonstration Projects**

All program materials and testing instruments given by staff, contractors, evaluators and volunteers will be modified or specially developed for the predominately Hispanic target population. All contractors, volunteers, staff or consultants will follow an ethnic/cultural approach to program design, staffing and presentations including but not be limited to:

- All sessions will include culturally relevant information as well as strategies designed to address educational issues (i.e., refusal skills, conflict resolution, peer pressure).
- All program components, lecture and printed materials, will be presented in both English and Spanish.
- All persons providing direct services to the target population will be bilingual
- All program components will try to incorporate the Hispanic natural support system which involves the family (both immediate and extended) and the use of religious institutions in some form.
- Training for cultural sensitivity will be ongoing for the staff. Included in the training will be the use of appropriate counseling and teaching techniques.
- Due to the high drop out rate of Hispanic youth, this project will encourage Hispanic youth to remain in school.
- The program will demonstrate staff sensitivity to the culture of the target population through recruitment of minority staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers at all levels of the prevention and graduated sanction programs.
- The program components will encourage cultural revitalization activities to eliminate cultural alienation among minorities, such as celebrating cultural festivals and teaching in the traditional language (Spanish), values and rituals.
- The staff, contractors, consultants or volunteers will have had extensive experience working with Hispanic disadvantage youth and families.

## **Community Mentoring**

Neighborhood interventions will include neighborhood watch training, crime prevention and community mentoring and educational sessions. Overall, the neighborhood interactions will include the following:

### Interactions with the Community

1. Small group dialogues with owners of neighborhood businesses, local school principals, neighborhood group leaders and church leaders
2. Neighborhood gatherings-once a week gatherings at the Community Assessment Center with neighbors and youth's family
3. Initial family meetings
4. Community celebration activities following the completion of program benchmarks.

### Community Mentoring

1. Identification, recruitment, training and development of neighborhood mentors
2. Mentors and program group meetings to discuss neighborhood concerns and developing networking relationships
3. Mentors and program group interaction activities (i.e., lunch/dinner; meet mentor family).

### Community Service Projects

1. Development of community service projects combining youth, mentors, neighbors and community leaders in the neighborhood.

## **Volunteers and Staff Members for Demonstration Projects**

Volunteers will be actively recruited among members of the cultural and ethnic minorities, including practicum-internship students, parents, teachers and members of the minority community-at-large through personal presentations to civic organizations, public service announcements, word of mouth, community awareness and education programs and peer recruitment. The Steering Committee and Program Director will develop and supervise the volunteer program. In addition, all volunteers will undergo training. Staff who will be employed on a full-time or part-time basis by the project and other key staff members will receive training in a variety of areas at the Community Assessment and Family Resource Centers. In-service trainings will include: crisis intervention, family systems, employment discrimination, and sexual harassment, cultural diversity, communication strategies, conflict

resolution, character education, drug knowledge, identification of at-risk youth, research related to at-risk youth, preventions that work and counseling strategies, drug, alcohol, violence, gang signs and agencies that help.

Staff for the proposed intervention/treatment program will be Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselors and bilingual. The staff patterns will represent the number of positions necessary to carry out the program as designed and scheduled to maintain client-to-counselor ratio.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The project seeks to accomplish the following goals and objectives over the years. The purpose of the proposed program is to conduct community based, comprehensive, and coordinated activities to reduce and prevent the involvement of at-risk youth in juvenile gangs that engage in crime, which includes illicit drug related activities and violence. The program is designed around the 5 approaches discussed earlier. The following goals and objectives are intended to define program efforts that will be implemented toward the achievement of this general goal.

**Goal 1. To raise awareness and involvement of low-income targeted neighborhood residents and the community in order to improve the coordination of programs and services, with the aim of preventing juvenile crime and violence (i.e., assault, robbery, gang activity, etc. )**

Obj 1 Recruit, hire, orient and train Program Director and staff.

**Evaluation Method:** Hiring and training dates and agendas on file.

Obj 2 Program Director will develop accountability, fiscal and paperwork systems.

**Evaluation Method:** Copy of system and forms on file.

Obj 3 Outreach Specialists will establish a pool of community leaders, young adults, youth and parents to speak on the benefits of comprehensive strategy at media events, community events, etc.

**Evaluation Method:** List of names and speaking engagements on file.

Obj 4 The Program Director will coordinate the project with city and county anti-crime gang/drug programs and activities into an inter-agency consortium.

**Evaluation Method:** Records will be kept on the number of memorandums of understandings signed by authorized agency officials and on the meetings held with cooperating law enforcement, prosecution, social service agencies, school districts, health and community organizations.

Obj 5 The Outreach Specialist will identify missing leaders and recruit participation by 30% per year.

**Evaluation Method:** Contact notes on file with documentation of increased number of participants.

Obj 6 The Project Coordinator will meet with private and public TV stations, newspapers, radio and Rio Grande Valley Advertising Federation to bring awareness to the issue and to develop a plan for disseminating information.

**Evaluation Method:** Evidence of Obj 6 will be a developed media plan on file.

Obj 7 The Outreach Specialist and Outreach/Communication/Media Committee will have developed media packets involving at-risk youth and parents to raise awareness.

**Evaluation Method:** Brochures, logo, fliers etc. will be on file and documentation of the number distributed.

Obj 8 The Outreach Specialist, parents and youth will produce and distribute a quarterly bilingual newsletter for distribution that promotes successful parenting, proven strategies in working with youth or gang/drug awareness.

**Evaluation Method:** Articles, copywriting and distribution will be under the supervision of the Outreach Specialist. The number of copies distributed and reader feedback will be on file.

Obj 9 The Outreach Specialist will implement a bilingual web site and video involving youth and parents focusing on the goals of the Comprehensive Strategy.

**Evaluation Method:** Web page and video on file.

Obj 10 Community agencies will develop and implement cross training between agencies for new members on Comprehensive Strategies goals and techniques in building coalitions.

**Evaluation Method:** Records will be kept of training agenda materials and of persons attending the training. Each participant will be asked to complete an evaluation form including quality of session, usefulness of information presented.

Obj 11 By the end of the year, Neighborhood Youth and Parent Councils will have participated in several leadership activities.

**Evaluation Method:** Number of youth and parents attending; youth and parent feedback in a self-report measure.

Obj 12 By the end of the program year, Comprehensive Strategies members will have successfully lobbied for a City Youth Commission to advocate youth issues between the project, city and county.

**Evaluation Method:** Documentation of meetings and recommendations on file.

Obj 13 Use existing or sponsored forums for youth to participate in all phases of implementation of the full continuum of prevention and graduated sanctions

**Evaluation Method:** Number of youth involved and description of involvement and feedback from youth.

**Goal 2. To reduce at-risk behaviors and attitudes related to substance abuse and juvenile delinquency.**

Obj 1 Program Director and intervention counselor will develop an action plan for each family and provide referrals for supportive services.

**Evaluation Method:** Evidence of Obj 1 will be found in documentation, needs assessment, action plan, supportive services and case notes of each client.

Obj 2 By the end of the program year, 75 youth and families will have been provided with 8 hours a week of drug treatment services including: community service, mentoring, group counseling, psycho-educational sessions, peer support sessions, individual/family, counseling, advocacy and crisis intervention.

**Evaluation Method:** Evidence of Obj 2 will be found in documentation; assessment, action plan, case notes in each client's file, number of referrals to support agencies, number of individual and family counseling sessions, number of instructional minutes per week/month/ and attendance/number at educational sessions.

Obj 3 By the end of the program year, at least 200 high at-risk youth and 75 treatment youth from "in and around" a low income neighborhood will be involved in an after school prevention/intervention/treatment program, three times a week for two hours at a local community site. Community Assessment and Family Resource Centers will provide:



mentoring program, recreation, employment, family therapy, monthly community service and an enhanced drug prevention/intervention treatment program which will include: support groups, group counseling, family therapy, drug education, conflict resolution, coping skills, self esteem building, character education and life management skills.

**Evaluation Method:** Activity coordinator and/or counselor will record the number of instructional minutes per week/month and attendance.

- Obj 4 By the end of the program year, youth will show a significant increase in *knowledge* of the impact of substance abuse on family, conflict resolution skills, anger management, gang awareness and drug prevention education as measured by pre- and post-risk assessment measures listed in Prevention Plus III.

**Evaluation Method:** Student gain scores will be considered statistically significant at the .05 level through statistical test of correlated -t test, MANOVA Repeated Measure or chi square.

- Obj 5 By the end of the program year, youth, teacher, and parents will report that youth show a significant decrease in *behavioral* problems related to substance abuse and juvenile delinquency (i.e., delinquent behavior, aggressive behavior, social problems, anti-social behaviors at school, disciplinary action at school, involvement in illegal activities, association with peers involved with substance abuse or illegal activities, drug use). Results will be measured by a pre-test and post-test on the Youth Self Report, Risk Assessment Survey, Teacher Report Form, Child Behavior Checklist, and other measures cited in Prevention Plus III.

**Evaluation Method:** Student gain scores will be considered significant at the .05 level through the statistical test of correlated -t, MANOVA Repeated Measures or Chi Square.

- Obj 6 By the end of the program year, parents, teachers, youth will report that youth show a significant positive change in *attitudes* related to juvenile delinquency and substance abuse (i.e., emotional problems, self esteem, withdrawal, social anxiety, resistance to peer pressure, non-use attitude, school bonding, etc.). Results will be measured by a pre-test and post-test of the Risk Assessment Survey, Youth Self Report, Coopersmith Self Concept, and other measures listed in Prevention Plus III.

**Evaluation Method:** Student gain scores will be considered significant at the .05 level through the statistical test of correlated -t, MANOVA Repeated Measures or Chi Square.

Obj 7 By the end of the program year, youth and parents will report a significant increase in *family cohesion, communication, interaction and support*, etc. as measured by pre-test and post-test on the Risk Assessment Survey, Family Environmental Scale, Witte Parent Survey, Parent Stress Inventory and other measures listed in the Prevention Plus III.

**Evaluation Method:** Student gain scores will be considered significant at the .05 level through the statistical test of correlated -t, MANOVA Repeated Measures or Chi Square.

Obj 8 85% of the youth and families participating in prevention, intervention and treatment services will report the services as positive and helpful.

**Evaluation Method:** Participants at the end of program will rate the appropriateness, usefulness and quality of services at the end of the year and/or after the service is delivered. Responses will be gathered through a self-report questionnaire or personal interview.

Obj 9 At a 6 month follow-up evaluation after leaving the treatment program 40% of the youth will have remained drug free and will have no involvement with the juvenile justice system.

**Evaluation Method:** Interviews with parents, youth, probation officers and records supplied by schools, law enforcement and other social service agencies.

**Goal 3. To increase support services to students and parents in order to provide for prevention and intervention.**

Obj 1 The Program Director and intervention counselors will develop an action plan for each family and provide referrals for supportive services.

**Evaluation Method:** Evidence of the plan will be found in documentation, action plan, needs assessment, supportive services and case notes in each client's file.

Obj 2 Program Director and intervention counselor will hold twice weekly meetings and work flexible hours to accommodate those youth that have become involved with the juvenile justice system and/or are involved with substance use or abuse.

**Evaluation Method:** The hiring date for each of these positions and orientation activities will be reported.

Obj 3 At the beginning of each year, prevention and intervention staff will be trained on gang/drug intervention techniques/strategies and other issues.

**Evaluation Method:** The date, topic and number of employees trained at each session will be reported. Trainees will rate the appropriateness, usefulness and quality of training on an evaluation form.

Obj 4 75 treatment youth and 200 prevention/intervention youth and their families will be provided with support services including psycho-educational sessions, peer support sessions, individual /family counseling, home visits, advocacy and crisis intervention.

**Evaluation Method:** Evidence of Obj 4 will be found in documentation: assessment, action plan, case notes in each client's file; number of referrals to support agencies; number of individual and family counseling sessions; and number at educational sessions.

Obj 5 At-risk youth referred for intervention/treatment counseling services will attend twice weekly peer support sessions that teach life management skills, coping skills, conflict resolution, character development and other drug/gang related topics. These support groups will focus on complete abstinence from all mood-altering chemicals.

**Evaluation Method:** Evidence of this Obj 5 be found in documentation: needs assessment, action plan, supportive services, case notes in each client's file; and number and attendance at educational sessions.

Obj 6 85% of students and families participating in early intervention services will measure the activities /services as positive and helpful.

**Evaluation Method:** Participants at the intervention program will rate the appropriateness, usefulness and quality of services at the end of the year and/or after the service is delivered.

**Goal 4. To improve family climate and increase parental involvement in the prevention/intervention process, so at-risk youths are exposed to a less stressful, more cohesive and supportive family environment.**

Obj 1 At least 35 parents in the prevention program and 75 parents in the treatment program will be involved in either an English speaking or Spanish speaking neighborhood parenting group twice a week.

**Evaluation Method:** Evidence of this Obj 1 be contained in attendance sheets and documentation in client's file.

Obj 2 At least 30 elementary neighborhood youth identified by teachers who are headed for academic or social failure will be involved in the FAST Track Parenting Program. (10 to 15 families per 8 week cycle).

**Evaluation Method:** Enrollment and attendance sheets on file

Obj 3 By the end of the program year, at east 75 parent/child pairs will have attended parent-child activities to address issues related to substance abuse, family violence and parent/child communication. Parent/child pairs will participate in :

- At least one support group focusing on parent/child communication
- At least two activities designed to reduce gang/drug interest and involvement
- At least one event focusing on reducing/coping with family abuse and violence.

Parents will attend at least 2 training sessions per month related to parenting knowledge, conflict resolution, family dynamics, single parenting issues, behavior management and discipline, stress management, child development, gang/drug awareness and parent/ child communication.

**Evaluation Method:** Evidence of Obj 3 will be contained in attendance sheets and documentation in client's file.

Obj 4 By the end of each program year, 85% of at risk youth and their parents in the prevention/intervention program will have participated in educational activities designed to prevent and divert youth from gang/drug involvement.

**Evaluation Method:** Attendance records and case records should document the following:

- Youth in the program will have attended group and education sessions twice weekly for at least 3 months.

- Parents in the program will have attended parent support and education sessions once weekly for at least 2 months.
- Each family will have participated in at least one family conjoint session where individual/ family issues are addressed and communication skills are practiced.

Obj 5 By the end of the year, parents in the intervention/prevention program who complete educational activities will demonstrate a statistically significant increase at the .05 level in the following factors:

- Parents and teachers of the targeted child will report a 15% overall average decrease in problem behavior at home and school as measured by the *Revised Behavior Checklist*.
- At least a 3% increase in their family's ability to adapt to change and increase the degree family members are connected as measured by the *Family Environmental Scale - Family Adaptability and Cohesion Scale*.
- Parents will report an overall average increase in the positive activities and the amount of quality time spent with child on educational related activities as measured by the *Witte Parent Survey*.
- Student will report an overall average increase in home/parent self-esteem, and general self-esteem as measured by a pre-test/post-test on the Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory.
- Parents will reports a 7% decrease in parental perceptions of social isolations and stress as measured by the Parenting Stress Inventory.

**Evaluation Method:** Increase in attitudes, perceptions, knowledge and behavior will be measured by clients' gain scores on the standardized scales for prevention and intervention programs from entry level pretest to post-test.

**Goal 5. To involve at-risk youth in recreational, leadership and leisure opportunities to divert them from negative gang/drug related activities and promote self-esteem and self-expression.**

Obj 1 By the end of the year, 85% of at-risk youth will be involved in positive and lawful alternative activities designed to replace illegal or anti-social activities.

**Evaluation Method:** The number of youths involved in each alternative activity will be used to assess this component as measured by the following criteria:

1. A minimum of 20 prevention and 20 treatment youth will be involved with the Steering Committee, attend leadership training and assist in planning, organizing, and implementing positive and relevant activities for peers as documented in meeting reports.
2. All participants will be introduced into the Boys and Girls Club of Brownsville, Local Active Teens and other local youth organizations in the Brownsville areas and participate in recreational activities such as basketball, volleyball, water safety, billiards, and horseback riding.
3. All participants will be exposed to at least one cultural awareness field trip to raise community awareness:
  - Youth will be involved in art, music, or drama:
  - Youth will be involved in experimental education activities (i.e., ropes challenge course) to raise self esteem.
  - Youth will be involved in community service projects.

Obj 2 At the end of the year, 70% of the youth participating in the alternative activities will measure them positive and beneficial on an evaluation form.

**Evaluation Method:** Students will rate the appropriateness, usefulness and quality of alternative activities.

**Goal 6. To increase education and employment opportunities for at-risk youth and their families.**

Obj 1 By the end of the program year, at least 200 prevention and 75 treatment youth will be involved in the "After School Learning Centers" within the Community Assessment and Family Resource Centers, twice a week for 2 hours a day with a certified teacher and computer assisted instruction, to provide homework assistance and remedial education.

**Evaluation Method:** Education plan, attendance sheets and student progress notes will be on file.

Obj 2 By the end of the program year, prevention youth between the ages of 14 to 17 and treatment youth that have remained drug free for 90 days will be involved with educational and job training activities through M.E.T., BISD Career and Technology Department, UTB/TSC or Cameron Works.

**Evaluation Method:** Documentation of participation will be in student files.

Obj 3 By the end of the program, at least 25 parents will have enrolled or attended a adult continuing education or employment course (GED, ESL, job readiness).

**Evaluation Method:** Documentation of participation will be in student files.

Obj 4 By the end of the year, 75% of the youth will have been involved with monthly educational enrichment activities such as experiential education, cultural-historical field trips, science field trips, etc.

**Evaluation Method:** Attendance sheets on file.

Obj 5 By the end of the year, 70% of the youth and parents participating in the educational and career components will measure them positive and beneficial on an evaluation form.

**Evaluation Method:** Student and parents will rate the appropriateness, usefulness and quality of alternative activities on a self-report questionnaire at the end of the component.

Obj 6 At the end of the year, student will show a significant increase in academic and school self-esteem as measured by Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory and parents and teachers of the targeted child will report a significant decrease in problem behavior at home and school as measured by the Revised Behavior Checklist and Teacher Report Form.

**Evaluation Method:** Student gain scores will be considered statistically significant at the .05 level through statistical test of correlated t-test and Chi Square.

**Goal 7. To provide a comprehensive prevention program to reduce the probability of juvenile delinquency, gang involvement and/or drug abuse.**

Obj 1 By the end of the program year, 200 participants in the prevention program will have participated in an enhanced drug prevention educational program using a culturally sensitive, age appropriate curriculum.

**Evaluation Method:** Activity coordinator will record the number of instructional minutes per week/month and attendance.

Obj 2 By the end of the program year, youth participating in the prevention program will demonstrate a statistically significant increase at the .05 level in the following factors: knowledge of drug abuse problems, negative attitudes towards drugs, knowledge of stress management, confidence that they can avoid taking drugs, skills in the decision-making process and increase in other skills specific to the curriculum.

**Evaluation Method:** Increase in attitudes, perceptions, knowledge and behavior will be measured by client's gain scores on the standardized scales for prevention and intervention programs produced by the Department of Health and Human Services (1989) and others from entry level pre-test to post-test.

Obj 3 By the end of the program year, participants in the prevention program will participate in a comprehensive Gang Prevention Information Program that will help them remedy deficiencies in social and psychological skills, improve interpersonal communication, promote self acceptance and master refusal skills to counter a variety of social influences to use drugs or join gangs.

**Evaluation Method:** Activity coordinator will record the number of instructional minutes per week/month and attendance.

Obj 4 By the end of the school year, students participating in the Gang Prevention curriculum will demonstrate a statistically significant increase at the .05 level in the following factors: knowledge of gangs and negative consequences, negative attitudes towards gang involvement, knowledge of stress management skills, ways to re-direct anger and counter violence, confidence that they can avoid gangs, communication skills, problem solving skills, conflict resolution skills, importance of rules/law, a greater appreciation of individual rights, assertiveness, peer resistance skills and other skills specific to the curriculum.

**Evaluation Method:** Increase in attitudes, perceptions, knowledge and behaviors will be measured by client's gain scores on the standardized scales for Alternatives to Gang Membership Gang Prevention Curriculum (1989), the Department of Health and Human Services (1989) and others, from entry level test to post-test.



**Goal 8. To develop an intervention/prevention evaluation and funding model for use in other communities.**

Obj 1 To assess changes across time in terms of attitudes, perceptions, knowledge, and behavior indicators of gang involvement and drug use that are related to program effectiveness.

**Evaluation Method:** Pretest and post-tests (i.e., knowledge, behavior, skills, attitudes) where possible for psycho-educational sessions and activities that may be arranged based on needs of clients.

Obj 2 75% of the at-risk youth and parents in the prevention and intervention program will participate in alternative activities, counseling and other related activities for the duration of the project.

**Evaluation Method:** Attendance and case files.

Obj 3 Community agencies will provide specialized services to targeted youth and families and share information.

**Evaluation Method:** Dates and attendance at consortium meetings will be reported and minutes kept on file. Referrals will be found in student case files.

Obj 4 By Aug. 1999, the Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (PME) and the Data Collection and Analysis Committee (DAC) will have obtained key leader commitments to the strategy of funding programs based upon assessment and outcomes. Support of key leaders to make funding available for evaluation, including long-term evaluations, that are necessary to evaluate impacts of prevention strategies that may require years to detect and measure.

**Evaluation Method:** Minutes of meetings and Memorandums of Agreements in place and on file with Steering Committee.

Obj 5 By Sept. 1999, the PME and DAC will have reviewed and made recommendations for the adoption of local outcome assessment instruments and protocols to identify yearly local needs, resources and priorities.

**Evaluation Method:** Recommendations and plan of action on file with Steering Committee.

Obj 6 By Oct. 1999, the PME and DAC will develop a strategy for Community Coalition Members to use the same process intake/screen and data collection procedures.

**Evaluation Method:** Recommendation and plan of action on file with Steering Committee Members.

Obj 7 By Oct. 1999, the PME and DAC will review and make recommendations for technical assistance to establish a community wide Resource Development and Evaluation Center to utilize grant resource networks, foster community collaborative to seek partnership, seek funds, centralize data processing and fill gaps.

**Evaluation Method:** Recommendation and plan of action on file with Steering Committee.

Obj 8 By Nov. 1999, policy and procedures will be established to provide linkages between programs development and practice, with ongoing evaluation findings and recommendations used to refine and enhance program design (or discontinue programs if intended results are not supported by evaluation findings).

**Evaluation Method:** Policies and procedures on file

Obj 9 By Sept. 1999, the PME and DAC will have developed a time line and evaluation plan for reviewing existing and future programs. Plan will include a strong research design, long term follow-up and adequate documentation for program implementation.

**Evaluation Method:** Recommendation and plan of action on file with Steering Committee.

Obj 10 By 2001, the PME and DAC Committees and contracted evaluators will have conducted prevention and intervention program evaluations on Phase I of programs to be refunded. A set of policies and procedures for conducting ongoing evaluations for refunding will be in place by 2000.

**Evaluation Method:** Program evaluations and recommendations on file with Program Director.

Obj 11 PME and DAC Committee will continue the development of city-wide outcome measures that can be used to evaluate effectiveness of system-wide and community strategies.

**Evaluation Method:** Activities documentation in Committee Meeting Notes.

Obj 12 Evaluation Handbook on specifics of process and outcome evaluation of prevention and intervention programs will be documented.

**Evaluation Method:** The training manual format will be established with full input from the State and Federal officials and reviewed by persons with expertise in evaluation through their affiliation with at-risk youth and cultural and community programs. The manual will be piloted with staff and volunteers from other local communities and reviewed as necessary.

Obj 13 A draft manual for replicating the program and evaluation will be designed.

**Evaluation Method:** Finished document on file.

**Goal 9. To decrease juvenile related crime in and around targeted low-income neighborhoods by increasing awareness and involvement of residents in prevention activities.**

Obj 1 Program staff, neighborhood parents and youth will produce and distribute a quarterly bilingual newsletter promoting crime prevention strategies, drug and gang information, successful parenting, successful youth, etc.

**Evaluation Method:** Articles, copywriting and newsletters will be on file.

Obj 2 By the end of the program year, neighborhood residents will be provided the opportunity to attend at least two educational seminars informing them how to confidentially report any suspicion of drug use, drug dealing or criminal activity in their area, how to refer family members for intervention/treatment services and other crime and drug prevention topics.

**Evaluation Method:** Dates and attendance at seminar will be recorded and kept on file.

Obj 3 At least 15 parents and 15 youth in each neighborhood receiving prevention and intervention services will form a Steering Planning Council to be included in the planning, implementing and evaluation of project activities.

**Evaluation Method:** Evidence of Obj 3 will be included in monthly minutes, meetings, reports and recommendations.

Obj 4 The Parent Council at the neighborhood program site will be trained and provide services as a neighborhood watch to develop and recommend crime prevention strategies, identify issues related to drug trafficking, drug use, crime and other relevant issues.

**Evaluation Method:** Evidence of Obj 4 will be included in monthly minutes, meetings, reports and recommendations.

Obj 5 By Sept. 1999, Program Director will have a plan of action to engage local neighborhoods in programs including but not limited to:

- Small group dialogues with owners of neighborhood businesses, local school principals, neighborhood group leaders and church leaders;
- Neighborhood gatherings, once a week gatherings at the Community Assessment Center with neighbors and youth's family;
- Community celebration activities following the completion of program benchmarks;
- Identification, recruitment, training and development of neighborhood mentors;
- Mentors and program group meetings to discuss neighborhood concerns and developing networking relationships;
- Mentors and program group interaction activities (i.e., lunch/dinner; meet mentor family);
- Development of community service projects combining youth, mentors, neighbors and community leaders in the neighborhood.

**Evaluation Method:** On file action plan, dates of events, sign-in sheets, and participant feedback.

Obj 6 To implement a full time Community Assessment and Family Resource Center Truant Processing Center staffed with BISD police, social service and community agency members to provide one-stop family services.

**Evaluation Method:** On file clients risk assessment, action plan and supportive services.

Obj 7 Probation officer and BISD Police will train neighborhood Parent Council on mediation and conflict resolution.

**Evaluation Method:** Training sign-in and agenda on file.

Obj 8 By the end of the program year, neighborhood residents will report less exposure to public drug use, drug trafficking, violence or crime in neighborhood as measured by pre- and post- test of resident perception on Risk Assessment Survey.

**Evaluation Method:** Change of proportions over time will be considered significant at the .05 level by the Chi Square statistical test.

Obj 9 By the end of the program year, police reports will show fewer security calls in comparison to last year in each of the targeted neighborhoods, especially during daytime

**Evaluation Method:** Comparison of 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000 police reports for the neighborhood by number and percentages.

## **PART V - Outcome Measures And Evaluation**

### **Longitudinal Study**

The goal of this project is to reduce juvenile crime through a comprehensive, system wide, multi-agency collaborative approach that identifies and develops resources for the entire juvenile justice continuum, from prevention through intervention and graduated sanctions.

An effort of this magnitude requires that the evaluation be comprehensive and system wide to determine if the system is working effectively, as well as, be program specific to determine if specific programs or interventions work effectively. Effective evaluation tools to measure progress are critical for refining and modifying existing prevention and early intervention strategies, as well as graduated sanctions. Evaluations will form the basis for recommending replication in other places. Consequently, the evaluation must be both process-oriented, as well as outcome (impact) oriented. Process evaluations assess the degree to which a program model was implemented as planned. Outcome evaluations analyze how effective the program was in meeting its objectives, such as reducing youth crime and recidivism.

Evaluation research can contribute substantially to the development of effective juvenile justice and delinquency prevention programs, if the evaluation model incorporates:

- Effective evaluation capabilities, including data collection, technical expertise, and a focus on both outcome and process evaluation.
- Evaluation includes a strong research design, longer follow-up, and adequate documentation of program implementation.
- Linkages between program development and practice. The program designer should work with program implementer to make sure the program is consistent with the beginning mission.
- Ongoing evaluation findings and recommendations are used to refine and enhance program design (or discontinue programs if intended results are not supported by the evaluations findings).

- Willingness to make adequate funding available for evaluation, including long-term evaluations that are necessary to evaluate impacts of prevention strategies that may require years to detect and measure.

Implementation of this local plan of action will require that outcome measurement and evaluation be conducted at the overall citywide and juvenile justice system levels, as well as at the specific demonstration project level. Analysis of program impact will be used to determine if the program met intended outcomes related to completion rates, improved individual behavior for targeted youth and families, increased family functioning and reduced recidivism. A process evaluation will also be conducted and combined with results of the impact evaluation. Furthermore, the project will set up a process to collect, maintain, and analyze crimes as defined by the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) system, as well as the police work-load data. The CPT and local police departments have a working relationship that will provide the project with crime statistics for each low income target neighborhood per 6 month period. Furthermore, the project will do annual resident surveys based on questions formulated from the HUD Drug Elimination Outcome Monitoring Forms. All information will be encoded into a database (ACCESS) containing descriptive information and crime data on all project participants. This will allow for the measurement of the impact of the program by objective crime rates and subjective residents' perceptions. Furthermore, the project will develop an evaluation cookbook to be used as an evaluation training manual (i.e., process and outcome evaluation techniques) in other communities replicating comprehensive strategies. Based on a review of the related literature and discussion among professionals who work with juveniles, a number of indicators are highly desirable for assessing changes in juvenile behavior. These data will be analyzed annually for 5 years and compared to trends prior to the Brownsville Comprehensive Strategy implementation.

The following is a list of some data indicators that could be compiled consistently over a 5 year period and compared to the trends prior to the implementation plan.

*Region*

- Number, rate and type of juvenile arrest
- Crime rates by type

- Teen pregnancy rates
- Completion of 4 years of school for person 25 years and older
- Educational attainment (less than 12 years of school)
- Adult drug offenses
- Number of runaway reports
- Child abuse and neglect cases
- School dropout
- School discipline related to substance abuse and violence
- Specific data from surveys: Youth Risk Behavior Surveys/ Community Risk Survey
- Rate of educational certificates and graduations
- Rate of youth engaged in full time education, training, employment or combination
- Rate of youth in higher education
- Rate of persons 25 years or older completing high school
- Career/Vocational opportunities

*Individual Program Indicators*

- School attendance
- School discipline problems
- Improved school performance
- Employment
- Education/vocational training
- Change in test scores (individualized program)
- Graduation and certificates
- Change in at-risk attitudes and behaviors for youth and parents

*Juvenile Justice System*

- Number of youth committed to TYC
- Number of youth who complete community service conditions
- Number of youth ordered to pay restitution and percent compliance
- Number and type of out-of home placement



- Drug treatment admissions
- Number of treatment waiting list
- Number and type of probation referrals (new and subsequent)
- Proportionate distribution of probation disposition (counsel and close, informal supervision, petition filling)
- Rate of successful completion of probation

*Priority Area Outcome Indicators*

**Substance Abuse**

By 2005, the availability and use of drugs will be reduced as measured by:

- 12% reduction in District-wide 8<sup>th</sup> graders reporting alcohol is "Easy to Obtain"
- 11% reduction in District-wide 8<sup>th</sup> graders reporting cocaine "Easy to Obtain"
- 6% reduction in District-wide junior high students and 9<sup>th</sup> graders reporting that they have "Ever Used" Rohypnol
- 8% reduction in District-wide 8<sup>th</sup> graders reporting "Ever Used" downers
- 10% reduction in District-wide high school reporting "Ever Used" cocaine
- 15% reduction in reported substance abuse arrests
- 15% reduction of youth DUI arrests
- 15% reduction in child abuse and family incident reports
- 15% decrease in school suspension for substance abuse
- 30% reduction in number on juvenile probation treatment waiting list
- 30% increase in the number of students completing a substance abuse treatment program who have been removed from school due to zero tolerance

**School Drop Out**

By 2005, commitment to school will be increased as measured by:

Education

- 35% reduction in reported truancy rate
- 5% increase per year in persons completing a four year high school and/or receiving certificates

- 10% increase per year in the number of students attending higher education
- 10% increase per year in high at-risk students receiving a diploma with a certificate of proficiency in a BISD Career and Technology course area
- Employment
- 15% increase per year of number of youth not in school receiving vocational training or employment
- 10% increase per year in number of youth participating in a drop out recovery program
- 10% increase per year in the percentage of women placed in nontraditional placement

#### Vocational Training

- 20% increase per year in options and capacity to provide opportunities for youth

#### Apprenticeships

- 20% increase per year in the options and capacity to provide opportunities to youth

#### **Violence**

By 2005, teenage violence will have been significantly reduced as measured by the following:

- 20% reduction in the rate of youth aggravated assault
- 15% reduction in runaways
- 20% reduction in 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> youth district-wide reporting friends who brought a weapon to school
- 25% reduction in school violations related to violence

#### **Teenage Pregnancy**

By 2005, teenage pregnancy will have been significantly reduced as measured by the following:

- 8% reduction in the rate of teen pregnancy per 1000
- establishment of a runaway center to prevent teenage girls from engaging in early sexual activity
- 15% reduction in female juvenile justice referrals

## **Delinquency**

By the year 2005, juvenile delinquency will be reduced as measured by:

- 15% reduction in the percentage of 8<sup>th</sup> graders district wide reporting on a self report survey that some or most of their friends belong or want to belong to gangs
- 10% reduction in juvenile disorderly conduct arrests
- 20% reduction in juvenile vandalism arrests
- 15% reduction in juvenile property crime

## **Demonstration Project Evaluation**

The core components for the demonstration project are the Community Assessment and Family Resource Centers with day treatment. Probation Officers, Law Enforcement and other service providers will staff community centers. Centers will provide access to youth and families, and utilize a standardized risk/needs assessment instrument to identify youth and family issues. The goal will be to assist youth and families and prevent or reduce entry in the juvenile justice system. In addition, the center will house a truant processing center. Targeted youth for these programs will include at-risk youth and juvenile offenders and their families.

The evaluation of the demonstration project will include a process evaluation to determine if the program was implemented as designed as well as an impact assessment to measure the effectiveness of the program on individual behaviors of targeted youth, siblings, and parent(s), family functioning and recidivism (i.e., subsequent delinquency of targeted youth and siblings). The data elements and analysis for both the graduated sanctions and prevention demonstration projects are very similar. Throughout this evaluation study, the use of multiple indicators over time, along with a comprehensive process assessment, will provide rich information to decision makers about the effectiveness of the comprehensive strategy.

## **Research Questions**

The research design to be used is a pre-test/post-test single sample design. The evaluation design is structured to answer the following:

- Was the demonstration program implemented as designed?
- How many participants were served?
- Did the program target the intended population?

- What are the characteristics of the targeted youth, their siblings and families?
- How long do targeted youth stay in the program?
- What types and frequency of services are provided to participants?
- Was the intended comprehensive continuum of services delivered?
- Did the services received match the needs and risk factors of target youth and their families?
- How is the continuum of services integrated and coordinated?
- Do the risk/needs assessments adequately identify needed services?
- Is recidivism reduced system-wide for targeted youth and siblings and at-risk youth? Recidivism will be measured system-wide by probation referrals overall, no further escalation into the system by targeted youth (i.e., arrests, non-technical violations and first time entry into the system by siblings and at-risk youth) and entry into the justice system prevented for at-risk youth.
- Has individual behavior improved for targeted youth and siblings?
- Do positive changes occur in family functioning?
- Is the impact of the project consistent with the benchmarks described in the program design?
- What regional and/or system-wide outcomes could be attributed to the demonstration project?
- What is the cost of the project compared to alternative responses?

### **Responsibility for Evaluation Task**

The Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Committee and contracted evaluators will be responsible for the final design and implementation of the evaluation. Included in their responsibility are the following tasks:

- Finalize research design
- Define baseline data measures
- Design sampling strategy pre- and post-test cases
- Develop data collection instruments (e.g., providers surveys, client surveys, data collection forms)

- Design sampling strategy for Community Assessment Center sample and control group
- Train data collectors
- Develop computer software programs
- Attend project meetings
- Review program documentation and observe activities
- Collect data
- Analyze data
- Write evaluation report

Evaluators will comply with all State and Federal statutes regarding the use of data for research purposes.

### **Program Evaluation**

This evaluation plan is designed to address three district purposes: (1) periodical assessment of activities and effectiveness for reports to funding agencies (outcome evaluation); (2) continuous assessment for program review and refinement (process evaluation); and (3) the identification of assumptions, goals and strategies critical to program replication. All persons who come into contact with the programs, its staff, and clients are potential sources of information useful to the programs' evaluation.

### **Data Sources**

A number of data sources will be used: review of records, intake interview with targeted youth and families, assessment tests, tabulation of program data, exit interviews and follow-up interviews and assessments with targeted youth and families, at one-year intervals after program admittance. Additional process measures will also be included in the evaluation design (including quantities of services delivered, nature and linkages with collaborative agencies, etc.) . Outcome data sources for the evaluation are listed below.

1. **Level 1** (Program Providers). Persons directly involved in the service delivery of the program services, including staff members, program directors and volunteers.
2. **Level 2** (Significant Others) Participants of services including persons who receive

information and referral over the phone.

3. **Level 3 (Significant Others)** Family, friends and other persons in the client's life who themselves neither attend nor participate in program sponsored activities, but who are likely to observe or be affected by attitudinal and behavioral changes of participants.
4. **Level 4 (Keystake Holders in Community).** Directors, officers and employees of community agencies and organizations with which the program develops service focused and supportive relationships.
5. **Level 5 (Archival Data Sources)** Various program documents and records including minutes of staff meetings, staff calendars, case records and anecdotal notes regarding activities and clients.

### **Outcome Evaluation**

The evaluation design for the measurement of outcome is quasi-experimental. It is structured around pre-measures (baseline) at the beginning of each program element and post-measures at the end of each program element. This methodology will permit the assessment of changes during the program. Control groups are not feasible for the program because of ethical concerns about withholding treatment for the target population. The initial step will be to compile a demographics profile of the clients and their families. The second step will be to assess the success of program elements (independent variables) in achieving program objectives (dependent variables). Completion of program goals and objectives will be evaluated on the basis of comparisons of pre-measures and post-measures of goals and objectives. The success of the intervention will be based on measures of knowledge, behavior, skill and attitudes of client and significant others. Both qualitative and quantitative data will be used. The evaluation will occur at the beginning of the year and at the end of the year, as well as, before and after each program component. This schedule will allow for the continuous assessment of change and retention. The primary sources of data for the outcome evaluation include:

**Standardized Scales and Inventories** The majority of instruments will be standardized scales for the measurement of at-risk populations on a pre- and post-test basis. Standardized scales for the measurement of at-risk populations are prepared by the Center for Health

Promotion and Education, United States Center for Disease Control and the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health, United States Department of Health and Human Services by IOX Assessment Associates. The validity and reliability of these scales have been established. Other scales and measures will be constructed as necessary. All measures will be examined for internal consistency. The outcome measures used for this evaluation are briefly described below. There were several criteria for selecting measurement including: (1) psychometric properties (i.e., reliability and standardized validity), (2) simplicity and ease of administration, and (3) relevance for high at-risk Hispanic populations. Priority was given to outcome measures that had been used successfully in similar programs with a Hispanic population. The primary sources for data for the outcome evaluation process include:

**The Risk Assessment Youth Survey** This measure focuses on individual characteristics and environmental factors that places youth at-risk of dropping out of school, juvenile delinquency, and substance abuse. The survey was developed as a pilot project for the Texas Commission of Alcohol and Drug Abuse. Youth (5<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup>) answer multiple choice items on family environment, at-risk behaviors and attitudes, related to substance abuse and at-risk community factors.

**Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory (SEI)** This measure was used on a group basis. By administering the SEI to a group, a general assessment of self-esteem was obtained. Information is used to develop an average profile of a high at-risk student and locate particular instructional areas in need of development or not in need of development. The SEI is designed to measure attitudes toward the self in social, academic, family and personal areas of experience. In relation to the SEI, self-esteem is defined as an expression of approval or disapproval, indicating the extent to which a person believes him/herself competent, significant, and worthy. Self-esteem is a personal judgement of worthiness expressed in the attitudes a person holds towards self. The SEI inventory consists of a 50 item, true or false inventory. The items relate to self-attitudes in 4 areas: peers, parents, school and personal interest. These 4 areas make up 4 subscales:

- A. *Home-Parents Subscale* - measures effective communication between parents and youth and family adjustment.
- B. *Social Self and Peer Subscale* - measures perceived popularity, resistance to group pressure, and factors related to social success and failure.
- C. *School-Academic Subscale* - measures factors related to school achievement.
- D. *General Self Subscale* - measures perceived adequacy of self, perceived inadequacy of self, and rejection of self.

Subscales are added up to arrive at a *Total Self Score*. The SEI has high test-retest reliability (.88) and has been used in similar evaluation with Hispanic students from 8 to 10 years of age.

**SASSI** This measure was developed for youth ages 12 through 18. The objective decision rules on the SASSI scales agree with counselor's judgement of whether adolescent were chemically dependent or not in more than 90% of the cases where counselors were most certain of their judgements. The SASSI retains validity in identifying chemically dependent individuals even when they are in denial or deliberately trying to conceal evidence of the problem. The SASSI is a composite of several scales measuring:

1. *Risk Prediction* factors which includes a direct measure of substance abuse. This is the easiest scale for a respondent to fake responses on.
2. *Obvious Attributes* of substance abuse includes items that typically do not mention chemical use, but whose relevance to chemical abuse is sufficiently apparent that test takers may lower their scores by concealing their problems.
3. *Subtle Attributes* of substance abuse includes items that typically address issues that appear unrelated to chemical dependency and are difficult for test takers to fake.
4. *Defensiveness* of substance abuse includes items that differentiate those deliberately trying to minimize any signs of the problem.

**Youth Self-Report, Teacher-Self Report, Child Behavior Checklist** This measure is designed to obtain a student, parent and teacher report about the student's school competencies, emotional problems and behavioral problems. Normative data is provided to enable the sample group to be compared with peers. Cut points have been developed to assess



level of emotional, behavioral and learning problems. Youth scoring on one side of the cut point are considered to be normal, whereas those scoring on the other are considered to be in need of crisis intervention. Cut points for crisis interventions will allow for the discrimination of those students who need counseling, need borderline clinical psychological services and those needing clinical services. This instrument has been routinely used in school settings to refer students that have emotional/behavior problems for intervention or clinical services. The YSR emotional and behavioral data is based on seven syndrome scales that measure specific problems that impact school performance. The seven syndrome scales include: *Thought Problem Scale, Attention Problem Scale, Delinquent Behavior Scale, Aggressive Behavior Scale, Withdrawn Scale, Anxious/Depressed Scale and Social Problem Scale*. The YSR reliability and validity is well documented and very good. A substantial body of research has been done using this instrument with similar populations in a school setting

**The Jesness Inventory** This measure is a 155-item true-false personality measure developed as part of a 5-year research program on delinquency. Researchers sought to develop a tool that would be predictive of delinquency and responsive to change during intervention strategies. The Jesness Inventory provides scores on 11 personality characteristics and has been normed on both delinquent and non-delinquent samples. The Jesness Inventory was used to assess delinquency orientation, personality characteristics and changes in these students over time. This tool was developed to measure a variety of attitudes, perceptions and traits useful in predicting change in delinquents and has been used with a similar population in the Austin Independent School District. It has been used in many practical settings, to help counselors and teachers better understand the types of delinquent behaviors and differentiate intervention strategies for levels of juvenile delinquency. A brief definition of each scale follows:

- A. *Social Maladjustment Scale (SM)* - 65 items. Social Maladjustment refers here to a set of attitudes associated with inadequate or disturbed socialization, as defined by the extent to which individuals share the attitudes of persons who do not meet environmental demands in socially approved ways.

- B. Value Orientation Scale (VO) - 39 items, Value Orientation refers to a tendency to share attitudes and opinions characteristic of persons in the lower socio-economic classes.
- C. Immaturity Scale (Imm) - 45 items. Immaturity reflects the tendency to display attitudes and perceptions of self and others that are usual for persons of a younger age than the subject. As keyed, a high scorer shares attitudes more common among persons of a younger age. The Immaturity Scale was positively correlated to conforming, non-aggressive behavior and low social status. Scores on this scale have been related to speech problems, passivity and a tendency toward nonparticipation in groups.
- D. Autism Scale (AU) - 28 items. Autism measures a tendency in thinking and perceiving to distort reality according to one's personal desires or needs.
- E. Alienation Scale (AL) - 26 items. Alienation refers to the presence of distrust and estrangement in a person's attitudes toward others, especially toward those representing authority.
- F. Manifest Aggression Scale (MA) - 31 items. Manifest Aggression reflects an awareness of unpleasant feelings, especially of anger and frustration; a tendency to react readily with these emotions; and an obvious discomfort concerning the presence and control of these feelings.
- G. Withdrawal-Depression Scale (Wd) - 24 items. Withdrawal indicates the extent of a youth's dissatisfaction with self and others and a tendency toward isolation from others.
- H. Social Anxiety Scale (SA) - 24 items. Social anxiety refers to conscious emotional discomfort in interpersonal relations.
- I. Repression Scale (Rep) - 15 items. Repression reflects the exclusion from conscious awareness of feelings and emotions that the individual normally would be expected to experience or it reflects his failure to label these emotions.
- J. Denial Scale (Den) - 20 items. Denial indicates a reluctance to acknowledge unpleasant events or conditions encountered in daily living.
- K. Asocial Index (Asoc) - Asocialization refers to a generalized disposition to resolve social or personal problems in ways that show a disregard for social customs or rules.

The samples used in the inventory's development consisted of 970 delinquents and 1075 non-delinquent. The non-delinquent sample was obtained in ten public schools in Northern California. The majority of these subjects lived in urban areas, with two schools located in small towns. Most of the schools were situated in what was described by school officials as "lower-class" socioeconomic areas. All delinquents were adjudicated, and most were awaiting placement in youth authority institutions. The delinquents were referred to the California Youth Authority and then sent to reception centers for classification and assignment to appropriate correction institutions, or, in some cases, directly to probation in the community.

**Family Environmental Scale** The FES can be used to describe family social environment. It contrasts parents and children's perceptions and compares actual and preferred family climates. This assessment is most useful when the family is encountering a life crisis or transition or when it needs to change. This assessment can help people better understand their family, learn how family members perceive family and become more aware of how their behavior affects the family and ways of coping. This assessment has been used in similar studies to measure changes due to family intervention. The FES is composed of 10 subscales that measure the social environment of the family:

*Relationship Dimensions*

- Cohesion
- Expressiveness Conflict

*Personal Growth Dimensions*

- Independence
- Achievement Orientation
- Intellectual/Cultural Orientation
- Active/Recreation Orientation
- Moral/Religious Emphasis

*System Maintenance Dimensions*

- Organization
- Control

This scale has consistently been used in programs to describe changes in at-risk youth family relations. The scale has high validity and reliability and has been used with Hispanic populations.

**Murphy-Meisgeier Type Indicator for Children** The Murphy-Meisgeier Type indicator for Children (MMTIC) is a self report instrument designed to identify personality type in students grades 2 through 8. The inventory items are at a reading level appropriate for grades 3 to 6 and it has been used in similar studies to assess students at high at-risk of dropping out. MMTIC is being used widely in learning and study centers in order for students to gain a better control of their learning, and by teachers to understand why they reach some students more easily than others. Research suggests that personality types provide insight into how students learn and how teachers and counselors can intervene to improve learning as a function of personality type. It has been shown that teachers and counselors' knowledge of the students' personality type can improve the instructional relationship and lead to the development of instructional and counseling strategies that maximizes the students' opportunity to learn. The Texas School Improvement Initiative on Alternative Accountability states that many effective alternative schools have developed curriculum that uses strategies based on "understanding yourself" profiles such as personality types.

**Teeles Multiple Intelligence Inventory (TIMI)** This measure provides information on a student's strength in the seven intelligence (i.e., linguistic, logical mathematical, spatial, bodily kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and musical). Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligence Theory has provided a useful framework for understanding the educational process, as it applies to cognitive preference and to the learning style of the student. It is being used nation-wide to create schools that are learner centered by helping teachers to develop and approach an attitude to their instruction that focuses on how students learn and the unique qualities of each learner.

**Client & Significant Other Satisfaction Questionnaire:** The evaluators will identify the satisfaction of the clients and others with the overall program and individual activities. Satisfaction will be measured with standardized Likert Satisfaction Scales administered

through a paper and pencil survey. This aspect of the evaluation will also have a process dimension to it. A series of open ended questions will be posed to individuals interviewed, allowing them the opportunity to reflect and discuss aspects of the program that foster cognitive and behavioral changes among recipients. In particular, attention will be focused upon respondent's assessment of program components and approaches. These surveys will be conducted once a year at the end of the program or when the client is discharged. Questionnaires will also focus on issues of cultural relevancy, attitudes of employees to client and usefulness of materials and activities. Survey results will be turned into evaluators for data analysis by the end of the program year.

**Key Stakeholder In the Community Questionnaire:** Key Stakeholders in the community will be surveyed by the evaluator concerning the impact of the program on the community. Examples of these leaders will include city administrators, federal/state/local social service agency administrators, law enforcement officials, juvenile probation officers, housing authority directors and school administrators. Key Stakeholders should have interfaced with program clients or staff members and/or have a vested interest in the project. In the survey, Key Stakeholders will be asked to provide input on program objectives, goals and approaches. A short paper and pencil survey will be sent out using a Likert Scale rating and will include several open ended questions. Follow-up mailing for non-response will cover a 5 week span with telephone interviews conducted when necessary.

**Archival Data:** Documentation from records of activities schedules including persons attending services provided, psycho-social screening, referral records, case management assessment of client's progress and problems, weekly client journals will be utilized in the evaluation process.

**Follow-up Data:** Staff members will conduct personal or telephone interviews with clients and significant other, 3 and 6 months after termination from the program, concerning behavioral and attitudes changes. Intervention youth will be tracked for one year after contact with the center to determine if there was any type of subsequent contact with the juvenile justice system.

**Attrition Data:** Recipients and their families will be tracked on an individual basis throughout the project. Evaluator will hold a termination interview with any person deciding to discontinue participation in the project. Characteristics of drop out will be analyzed and compared to individuals who remain in the program to assess if there are any significant differences.

**Process Evaluation:** Process questions must be approached "from both ends," that is, we must not only document the program strategies from the prospective of the program's staff, but must attempt to understand what strategies are perceived by clients themselves to have been most responsible for the results they have experienced. Process data will help explain how outcomes are achieved as well as to identify those that need to be revised for increased impact. The methodology for process evaluation will include:

1. process traces through documents
2. personal interviews with staff members
3. personal and telephone interviews on samples of clients chosen for this purpose, and
4. observations.

The following is a description of the methodologies and time frame for the process evaluation:

1. **Documentation Checks:** Documentation checks will be conducted quarterly on Dec. 15, March 15, June 15 and Sept. 15. This includes a procedure for on-going documentation of the project activity consisting of client records, case management and program records (i.e., monthly reports to management, quarterly reports and annual reports to Steering Committee). The evaluator will use current documentation checklists that have been developed by cooperating program directors. However, over the program year, the Program Director, Evaluator and CYD Coordinator will try to develop a form that is consistent across programs. A written report of the findings will be reported to the Program Director one week after the evaluation. In addition, beginning at the start of the fiscal year, evaluation training will be provided 3 times a quarter. The date, topic, and number of employees trained at each session will be reported. Furthermore, trainees will rate the appropriateness, usefulness and quality of training.

2. **Periodic Staff Surveys:** Anonymous computer or paper interviews will be conducted twice a year in July and December. The questions will focus on the staff members' perceptions of what the program looked like in operation, what methods or materials seemed to work best and why, what were the strengths of the program and what were the changes they would like to make to improve the program. A job satisfaction scale will be included in the interview. Furthermore, personal interviews with randomly selected staff members will be conducted twice a year in July and December. A formal written report of the findings will be delivered to the Program Directors on their employees' perceptions and feedback 3 weeks after data collection.
3. **Client and Significant Other Interviews:** Telephone interviews or personal interviews will be conducted with randomly selected clients and other persons who have interfaced with the program. Questions will focus on issues of cultural relevancy, attitudes of employees to clients, usefulness of materials or activities. Survey results will be turned into an evaluator for data analysis by Sept. 15. Testimonials about the program will be solicited. These will be quoted to support the findings indicated by the data.
4. **Monitoring:** Program observations will be conducted by the evaluator twice a year, July 7 and March 7. Standardized forms will be used and a written report will be filed with the program directors of cooperating agencies one week after the monitoring. This evaluation activity will be used for training purposes. Furthermore, video taping of treatment and family counselors and educators should be done once a year by the end of the fiscal year (Aug. 31). Program Directors will review tapes and make recommendations with regard to training the first week of September.

**Data Analysis:**

All data will be collected anonymously, identification of evaluation subjects will be for statistical analysis only, and no individual will ever be associated with any of his/her responses to any interview or instrument in any written or oral report of this study's findings. Data will be coded from the files by the evaluator. Coded quantitative data will be entered to computer files and analyzed using SPSS-PC statistical program. Data analysis will be presented for all program participants and various subpopulations based on gender, ethnicity, risk status, age and religion. Qualitative data will be content analyzed and linked to program

operations to assess the impact on the program. In order to statistically assess the impact on the program, test and scales results will be matched across time using confidential client ID numbers. Respondents will be matched to the entry level pre-test and end of program post-test. Those clients who participate in both will constitute the primary sample to be studied. Descriptive statistics, chi-square correlated t-test, and MANOVA for Repeated Measures, will be used as appropriate for research questions. Results will be summarized and presented as tables with a discussion of findings.

**Schedule of Reports:**

The evaluator will be responsible for generating written reports to insure that the Director, Steering Committee and all staff members will be kept fully appraised of the status, needs and procedures of the evaluation efforts. Specific objectives that must be accomplished to meet this goal are listed below:

- (1) Periodic reports of evaluation activities, requirements, decisions and results will be made at regular Steering Committee Meetings.
- (2) Written reports of evaluation activities and results of data analysis will be prepared and submitted to the Program Director at the end of each fiscal year of operation.
- (3) A comprehensive and cumulative summary report for the entire funded period will be prepared and submitted at the end of the final year of funding as requested by the funding source.

**Follow-up Treatment/Intervention Evaluation:**

A 6 month and one year follow-up evaluation will be conducted on youth who leave the program. Interviews will be conducted with youth and Key Stakeholders (i.e., parents, probation officers, social service agency officials, law enforcement, school personnel) and other documentation will be reviewed to provide evidence that the youth has remained drug free and has no involvement with criminal justice system.