

**Hall County
Three Year Comprehensive
Juvenile Services Plan**

January 1, 2009 – December 31, 2011

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NEBRASKA COMMISSION OF
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II. COMMUNITY TEAM SECTION

The Hall County Community Team was initially formed in the Spring of 2003. A wide variety of individuals from the community including representative from several agencies of Law Enforcement, Mental Health Agencies, and Juvenile Justice were involved in the process. The Team has met in different capacities in the past 6 years on a quarterly basis. A planning committee was formed at our regular meeting on October 20, 2008, to begin the process of developing the next three year plan. On November 19, 2008, December 3, 2008, and December 15, 2008, the planning committee of the Hall County Community Team met to discuss the Comprehensive Three Year Plan for 2009-2011. The planning committee included Troy Chandler, Todd Usrey, Robyn Hassel, Michelle Walker, Becca Moore, Jeff Hubl and Ann Wood. Julie Rogers of the Juvenile Justice Institute also assisted the planning committee during the meetings. The following is a list of the Hall County Community Team Members:

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III. JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM ANALYSIS TOOL

The planning committee of the Hall County Community Team met on November 19, 2008; December 3, 2008 and December 15, 2008, to discuss the comprehensive plan for Hall County. Julie Rogers of the Juvenile Justice Institute at the University of Omaha, completed the process of working through the Juvenile Justice System Analysis Tool. The summary recommendations of the plan indicate that this community has systematic responses to deal with the issues in the community. As a result of the community planning process, three priority areas are recommended for the next three year plan. The planning tool is attached as Appendix A.

IV. COMMUNITY SOCIO-ECONOMICS

Hall County is a rural area in central Nebraska. Grand Island is the hub of the region with 80% of the population. Doniphan, Wood River, Alda, and Cairo are four smaller communities within 20 miles of Grand Island with populations of less than 5,000. Grand Island serves as the central location for services, shopping and employment. Agriculture and related manufacturing is the primary economy within the region.

Hall County currently has a population of 53,534 people of which 49,940 live within the city limits of Grand Island. The remaining population resides within one of the smaller surrounding communities. The age breakdown of the population is as follows: 27% of the population is under the age of 18. This is the second largest representation within Hall County. 8.9% of the population is 18 to 24 years of age, 28.3% falls between the ages of 25 to 44 years of age. 21.7% is 45 to 64 years of age with 14% being 65 years or older. 88.6% of the population reports themselves as being white. 14% is Hispanic or Latino. The remaining races make up the remainder with no racial group making up more than 2%.

Within Hall County there are 18 elementary schools, three middle schools and six high schools. There are also post-secondary educational opportunities offered through Central Community College, Doane College, Zenon and Joseph's College of Beauty.

Hall County is the home of Mormon Island, City of Grand Island's "Island Oasis", Stuhr Museum, Fonner Park, The Heartland Event Center, Heartland Shooting Park, and the host of Husker Harvest Days, the largest working farm show in the world. These along with other activities provide juveniles as well as the rest of the population with leisure activities.

V. IDENTIFIED PRIORITY AREAS

The County Planning Committee identified three top priorities for Hall County:

Priority #1:

Options to Secure Detention: Hall County will develop and improve options to secure and non-secure placements

The Hall County Attention Center was created for short term placement (10 hours or less). It is used for temporary holding because it is not secure and not designed for long term detention. A new county jail facility was just built in Hall County, but there is no place for juveniles because of staffing and resource issues.

After an initial hearing, electronic monitoring is sometimes utilized in Hall County, but problems are that there must either be a landline (many families only rely on cell phones), or charging batteries through the cell phone method becomes an issue.

If a juvenile from Hall County needs to continue in secure detention, they will be transported to either Lancaster County, Madison County, Douglas County, or, finally, Scottsbluff. All of these options are very expensive not only to place, but to transport as well.

Lack of therapeutic placement options is also an issue for Hall County. Youth are placed at Boys Town when appropriate and available. Not enough shelter space exists in Hall County for runaways and the like. Other services that are available and utilized, but not necessarily appropriate are electronic monitoring, emergency shelter, the youth's home, the attention center, or foster care. Appropriate placement options are not available in Hall County and transporting to appropriate placements outside the county are expensive.

Priority #2:

Chemical Dependency and Mental Health Services: Hall County will work towards enhancing the current chemical dependency and mental health treatment needs for the youth in Hall County.

Currently in Hall County, a seamless continuum of chemical dependency and mental health services does not exist for youth or adolescents.

Services that are available in Hall County include substance abuse education programs through the schools, diversion, and the Central Nebraska Council on Alcoholism. Individual therapy and general outpatient therapy is also available. The biggest gap for adolescents is treatment services in between outpatient and inpatient programs. Intensive outpatient therapy for youth does not exist in Hall County. If such services do exist, they are not appropriate for the juvenile justice population.

Juveniles who are dually diagnosed go through the system very quickly because services are either not appropriate or do not exist to address needs. In these situations, either the chemical dependency issue or the mental health issue is focused on, not both.

In addition, if a level of service is identified as appropriate and needed at a lower level of supervision, but is not available, the juvenile is sent “on up” to the next higher, and more expensive, level of supervision.

Priority #3:

Truancy: Hall County will continue their current efforts to curb truancy and look to improve.

Since Hall County’s previous Comprehensive Juvenile Services Plan was implemented, many efforts have been implemented to address truancy and dropout rate issues. An attendance hearing officer program through the Hall County Attorney’s Office began this school year in the Grand Island Public Schools. School resources officers/social workers and the rural school and family intervention specialist positions have helped the truancy problem. Such efforts are very positive, but there is need for more.

Intervention specialists must turn certain youth down when needing help because caseloads are so high. The intervention specialist in rural Hall County could spend all her time in just one town to address school and truancy issues of youth, and there are several schools in the rural Hall County towns of Alda, Cairo, Doniphan, and Wood River. More positions are needed in both Grand Island and rural Hall County.

Factors contributing to the truancy issue and high dropout rate include lack of parental involvement, socio-economics, and lack of transportation to and from school. In addition, no alternative school exists in Grand Island.

VI. STRATEGIES

Strategies for Priority #1:

OPTIONS TO SECURE DETENTION

Hall County will continue to utilize the pre-trial Juvenile Diversion program when appropriate, rather than prosecuting first time offenders, thus reducing the need for secure/non-secure detention.

HALL COUNTY JUVENILE DIVERSION PROGRAM	JAN – DEC 2006	JAN – DEC 2007	JAN - DEC 2008
# Referred to Diversion Office	631	559	813 (+22%)
# Eligible for Diversion Program (accepted)	481	408	557 (+13%)
# Enrolled in Diversion Program (served)	*358	*336	*391 (+8%)
# Completed	248	243	239 (-3%)
# Total Not Completing the Program	212	192	250 (+15%)
# had new law violation	24	13	30 (+20%)
# dropped out/failed to complete program	62	86	90 (+31%)
# declined to enroll in program	126	93	129 (+2%)

WHO WILL WORK ON IMPLEMENTATION; Hall County Juvenile Services, District 8 Probation, Department of Health and Human Services and Mid-Plains Center

TIMELINE; On-going

RESOURCES NEEDED; Continued funding for staff in order to meet the growing number of juveniles in need of diversion services.

EXPECTED RESULTS; increased number of juveniles serviced in an in-home placement, thus reducing the need for secure and non-secure placements.

Strategies for Priority #2:

CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Hall County will evaluate the current services available and identify the gaps and needs in service. This will be done by a call to action by Central Nebraska Council on Alcoholism and Addiction to local service providers.

WHO WILL IMPLEMENT THIS SERVICE: St. Francis Medical Center, Mid-Plains Center, Region III Behavioral Services, Central Nebraska Council on Alcoholism and Addiction, South Central Behavioral Health, as well as numerous private providers.

TIMELINE; on-going

RESOURCES; in kind match of meeting coordination and meeting location

EXPECTED RESULTS; Development of a plan to address the needs of the portion of the population unable to access services.

Strategies for Priority #3:

TRUANCY

Hall County will continue to promote the current efforts to reduce truancy in our community. Evaluate the efforts of the rural school intervention worker as well as the Grand Island Public School attendance program. Hall County will address problems within the program identified through the evaluation process.

WHO WILL IMPLEMENT THE STRATEGY: Grand Island Public Schools (K - 8), Hall County Attorney, Mid-Plains Center, Department of Health and Human Services, District 8 Probation Office, Hall County Juvenile Services, and the Rural Schools Intervention Worker.

TIMELINE; on-going

RESOURCES NEEDED; funding to expand the program to better address Hall County's truancy issues.

EXPECTED RESULTS; Decreased truancy and increased school connectedness.

APPENDIX A

HALL COUNTY

JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM ANALYSIS TOOL

(COMMUNITY PLANNING DECISION POINT ANALYSIS)

The Juvenile Justice System Analysis Tool (Tool) was developed by the Juvenile Justice Institute at the University of Nebraska at Omaha in conjunction with the Nebraska Crime Commission to assist in County Juvenile Services Comprehensive Planning.

The Tool consists of twelve areas of decision points that make up the formal juvenile justice system in Nebraska. Various factors are present at each decision point—oftentimes changing from year to year based on state or county dynamics within the system such as changes in policies, programs, and/or personnel.

There are formal factors dictating certain decision points in the system, such as statutory authority. In addition, each county or community has unique factors surrounding certain decision points within the local county juvenile justice system. Identifying such informal factors helps to understand and assess juvenile justice needs and issues in individual locales.

Available data might also inform the factors surrounding a data point. Anecdotal data might be compared with statistical data, for example, to assess the true state of the system. County data is assessed when applying the Tool where applicable.

Hall County

Hall County Comprehensive Plan meetings were held November and December 2008. Those present included local representatives from Hall County Juvenile Services, Probation, the Office of Juvenile Services/Health and Human Services, school social worker from Grand Island Public Schools and the school intervention worker for “greater” Hall County.

Each of the twelve decision points were discussed as they relate to the juvenile justice system in Hall County.

The following analysis names the decision point and states any *noteworthy* issue identified or problem acknowledged at the particular stage, particularly since the last submission of the Juvenile Services Comprehensive Plan for Hall County. Not all decision points are commented on. An assessment of the Hall County data has been completed as part of applying the Tool. Such data is referenced throughout this report when necessary to fully analyze a certain decision point.

**NEBRASKA JUVENILE COURT REPORT - HALL
COUNTY
(Nebraska Crime Commission)**

	2005	2006	2007
ARRESTS	540	564	478
OFFENSES			
1st/2nd Degree Assault	0	0	2
3rd Degree Assault	41	35	51
Sexual Assault - 1st	2	3	1
Robbery	1	2	2
Arson - Misdemeanor	0	4	1
Burglary	4	2	5
Drug - Felony	5	8	6
Drug - Misdemeanor	0	1	0
Theft > \$1500	1	3	5
Theft < \$1500	3	3	2
Theft < \$500	6	10	9
Theft < \$200	29	42	45
Crim Mischief - Felony	2	2	1
Crim Mischief - Misd	17	38	52
Major Trespass	9	11	4
Forgery - Felony	1	2	0
Forgery - Misd - Major	1	0	0
Weapon - Misd	2	0	1
Disturbing Peace	3	11	13
Other Felony	9	15	16
Other Misdemeanor	62	55	51
Truancy	10	12	14
Ungovernable Behavior	52	24	17
Possession of Alcohol	21	29	37
Other Status	5	5	6
Neglect	171	105	69
Dependent	18	8	2
Other/Unknown	70	66	66
TOTAL	545	496	478

Hall County Data

Hall County has a juvenile population (ages 0 – 17 years old) of about 15,200, according to OJJDP at <http://www.ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/ojstatbb/exapop/>. The biggest minority juvenile population is Hispanic with 4,322 in 2006 and 4,573 in 2007.

When comparing Hall County data from 2005 through 2007 to statewide data during the same time period, the only significant difference is that neglect filings in Hall County are higher than statewide filings for neglect. Neglect filings made up 31.38% of the total in 2005, 21.17% in 2006, and 14.44% in 2007. The percentages have been decreasing during the last three-year time period. Third degree assault and criminal mischief-misdemeanor filings in Hall County are slightly greater than the statewide average.

Decision Points:

Arrest/Citation (Police/Law Enforcement)

Whether an information report should be filed, or what offense, if any, under which juvenile should be cited or arrested

Whether to cite or arrest juvenile for juvenile or adult

Whether to take juvenile into custody or to cite and release

Initial Detention (Probation)

Whether juvenile should be detained or released

Notes:

Hall County utilizes the intake and assessment process as established by Probation Administration Regular intake. The staff secure facility to detain juveniles closed in Hall County, so those that need to be detained are detained in the sheriff's safety department.

Charge Juvenile (County Attorney)

Whether to prosecute juvenile

Whether youth should be prosecuted as juvenile or adult

Offense(s) for which juvenile should be charged

Notes:

The impression is that the Hall County Attorney's office prosecutes all cases law enforcement reports to them.

Hall County has a very active diversion program. Criteria to be eligible for diversion is that the participant must have no prior record and the offense for which there was contact with law enforcement must have been lower than a Class III felony. After an assessment is made, if the offender's need is too high for the diversion program, he or she is referred back to the county attorney for filing in juvenile court. About 400 go through Hall County's diversion program each year, and most are between 13 and 16 years old.

Pre-Adjudication Detention (Juvenile Court Judge)

Whether juvenile detained at the time of citation/arrest should continue in detention or out-of-home placement pending adjudication

Notes:

If a juvenile from Hall County needs to continue in detention, they will be transported to either Lancaster County, Madison County, Douglas County, or, finally, Scottsbluff. The Hall County Attention Center is a brand new, temporary holding facility, but it is designed for *temporary* holding.

Probable Cause Hearing (Juvenile Court Judge)

Whether State can show that probable cause exists that juvenile is within the jurisdiction of the court

Competency Evaluation (Juvenile Court Judge)

Whether juvenile is competent to participate in the proceedings

Whether juvenile is “responsible” for his/her acts

Notes:

Once in a while there will be a very young offender (10-11 years old), but not very often.

Adjudication (Juvenile Court Judge)

Whether juvenile is, beyond a reasonable doubt, “a person described by §43-247”

Whether to order probation to conduct a pre-disposition investigation (PDI)

Whether to order OJS evaluation

Whether to order a PDI and an OJS evaluation

Notes:

The usual practice in Hall County for PDIs and OJS evaluations is that if the offender needs are met through a PDI, then a PDI will be ordered. If not and the juvenile’s needs are higher, an OJS evaluation will be ordered.

Disposition (Juvenile Court Judge)

Whether to place juvenile on probation

Whether to commit juvenile to the Office of Juvenile Services (OJS)

Whether to place juvenile on probation and commit juvenile to HHS or OJS

Notes:

Usually the recommendations of the PDI or OJS evaluation are followed. Either the juvenile is placed on probation or committed to HHS or OJS, not both probation and HHS/OJS.

Administrative Sanctions (Probation)

Whether to impose administrative sanctions

Notes:

Sanctions are used as much as possible. Sanctions are used informally within the diversion program in Hall County.

Motion to Revoke Probation (County Attorney)

Whether to file a motion to revoke probation

Notes:

In some cases, motions to revoke probation are very clear and a motion to revoke is appropriate. Other times it is reported that it is very hard to know when to file a revocation because the juvenile's needs are not being met. What works for one juvenile might not for another.

Modification/Revocation of Probation (Juvenile Court Judge)

Whether to modify or revoke probation

Notes:

A modification of probation occurs once in a while in Hall County, but revocation of probation is more prevalent.

Setting Aside Adjudication (Juvenile Court Judge)

Whether juvenile has satisfactorily completed his or her probation and supervision or the treatment program of his or her commitment

Whether juvenile should be discharged from custody and supervision of OJS

Notes:

Obtaining the appropriate agreement from all parties to be discharged from juvenile court jurisdiction is sometimes difficult in Hall County, but usually all agree.

Summary:

Hall County juvenile justice professionals and interested community members are a very committed group, working together to address the needs of youth across the continuum of services—from prevention programs in the community and in the schools to diversion to sanctions.

As a result of the discussions had for the juvenile system analysis in addition to the Hall County data that was examined, addressing the following issues may be considered:

1) Neglect, Third Degree Assault, Theft under \$200, Criminal Mischief – Misdemeanor

Filings in Hall County juvenile court that were the highest over the past 3 years were neglect, third degree assault, theft under \$200, and criminal mischief—misdemeanor. It may be beneficial to discuss why these particular filings are high in Hall County to determine how best to prevent such crimes.

2) Truancy

Truancy remains an accurate predictor of future delinquency. Along with truancy comes the issue of school connectivity. If not being used already, the use of a standardized assessment instrument (YLS/CMI) could benefit school administrators and juvenile justice professionals with the ability to evaluate a juvenile's situation before it got to the point of justice intervention. A community-wide focus on ensuring truancy is addressed early might be something Hall County continues to work on. As truancy and school connectivity are related, a community is tasked with the efforts to provide after school programs, mentoring, and other community service activities to youth.

The Hall County Attorney has implemented a new program within the Grand Island Public Schools this year which has high potential to positively affect truancy. An attendance hearing officer comes into the schools to more immediately address the issues surrounding a student's absences.

Truancy, or school resource officers need continual support due to the positive interaction they provide between children in school and law enforcement. Because the need is high for Hall County and the beneficial impact these officers have on students, additional officers may be needed in both Grand Island and the rural areas of Hall County.

3) Sliding Scale Services

The biggest problem or need identified in Hall County related to the juvenile court system was the lack of sliding scale services for substance abuse treatment and mental health treatment specifically for youth. For example, no intensive outpatient services exist for adolescents in Hall County. In addition, if a juvenile is not formally within the Office of Juvenile Services or Health and Human Services system and does not have insurance, there are no services available in Hall County for that youth.

4) Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC)

Hall County's 2006 – 2008 Comprehensive Juvenile Services Plan listed DMC as a priority issue to be addressed. There was concern expressed that there has not been much action on issues surrounding DMC in Hall County, and coordinating events or trainings to impact DMC would be beneficial.

5) Options to Secure Detention

When a youth must be detained for longer than what the Hall County Attention Center may hold a youth (temporarily), there is a lack of secure detention options. If a juvenile from Hall County needs to continue in detention, they will be transported to either Lancaster County, Madison County, Douglas County, or, finally, Scottsbluff. All of these options are expensive and not ideal for Hall County juveniles. More options are needed.