

Platte County Juvenile Services Comprehensive Plan 2006-2008

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LAW ENFORCEMENT AND
CRIMINAL JUSTICE

II. Community Team:

The Columbus Comprehensive Juvenile Services Plan (CJS) Committee consists of key community leaders brought together to make recommendations to develop a long-range plan to serve the at-risk juveniles of this community. Concerns which impact juveniles in Platte County were identified and prioritized. The committee was comprised of the Board of Directors of the Platte Valley Diversion Program (PVDP), City County and State Law Enforcement, probation, school officials, health care professionals, Health & Human Services and numerous community organizations dedicated to the healthy status of juveniles in Platte County. The Platte Valley Diversion Board meets once a month and hears reports from its Administrator. The reports concern the operation of the Diversion Program and the status of resources developed through the Comprehensive Juvenile Service Plan.

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Community Planning Decision Point Analysis

Data Points	Total Population (*2000)	Juvenile Population (**2004)
Total Population	31,662	4,512
Male	15,700	2,272
Female	15,962	2,240
White	29,854	4,053
Black/African American	111	45
Asian	127	29
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	10	Not reported
American Indian	90	22
Hispanic	2,072	363
Juveniles Arrested		328
Juveniles Detained		8
Juveniles Prosecuted		229
Juveniles Placed in Diversion		154
Number of Juveniles Adjudicated		215
Number of Juveniles placed on Probation		138
YRTC-Kearney commitments		3
YRTC-Geneva commitments		4

Sources:

*2000 U.S. Census Data

**2003 OJJDP website 2004 DMC Federal Reports (Ages 10-17)

System Decision Point: Arrest/Citation: Police/Law Enforcement

Decision: *Whether an information report should be filed, or what offense, if any, with which juvenile should be cited or arrested*

Formal Determining Factors

- Sufficient probable cause to believe that an offense has been committed and that the accused is the one who committed the offence.
- Evidence supports statutory elements required to prove offense

Informal Determining Factors

- Age
- Nature of offense
- Probability of continuation or escalation of criminal activity.
- Flight risk
- Dynamics of family
- Law enforcement contact is documented in a data base
- There is one school resource officer for the public schools and one for parochial schools

Decision: *Whether to cite or arrest juvenile for juvenile or adult*

Formal Determining Factors

- Seriousness of offense
- Age

Informal Determining Factors

- If the juvenile is in the care and custody of HHSS, law enforcement may contact the worker on call to discuss options
- Law enforcement protocol mandates all Juvenile offenders are cited or detained as a juvenile. The County Attorney makes the determination whether to proceed in Juvenile Court or file a criminal complaint.

Decision: *Whether to take juvenile into custody or to cite and release*

(NRS § 43-248(1), (2); § 43-250(1), (2), (3))

Formal Determining Factors

- As stated in statute

Informal Determining Factors

- Immediate risk to juvenile
- Immediate/short term risk to public
- Seriousness of offense
- Extent to which parent, guardian or other responsible adult is available to take responsibility for juvenile
- In the majority of instances, the juvenile is cited and released to parent or responsible adult
- If the juvenile is detained due to a mental health crises, the on-call HHSS worker is notified. Deference is given to placement with parents who voluntary seek the appropriate mental health care necessary to avoid the immediate harm.

Comments:

According to statistics from the Crime Commission, a total of 328 juvenile offenders had juvenile petitions filed in the Platte County Juvenile Court in 2004. (The Court Administrators Office reported 411 total juvenile filings for the same time period. That number includes law violations, abuse/neglect petitions and termination of parental rights cases. The Platte County Court reports 439 total juvenile filings for 2005.) The Columbus Police Department has a database that allows tracking of any contact of a juvenile by an Officer. The Platte County Sheriff's Department and the Nebraska State Patrol track by citation or written warning only. The absence of accurate data or data limited to citations and warnings may not accurately reflect the scope of law enforcement contact with juveniles. There seems to be an increase of law enforcement contact with juveniles 10 to 12 years of age. If a citation is issued, a juvenile of that age is offered Diversion by special arrangement with the Diversion Administrator. Alternatively, the Juvenile and their parents are invited to the County Attorney's office and the County Attorney and a willing on duty law enforcement officer lecture the juvenile and the citation is not filed.

System Decision Point: Initial Detention: State of Nebraska Probation

Decision: *Whether juvenile should be detained or released*

Formal Determining Factors

- Outcome of risk assessment
- Accessibility of placement options: parent's/guardians, emergency shelter, staff secure facility, secure detention facility

Informal Determining Factors

- Law enforcement considers every option before contacting probation to utilize the Juvenile Detention Screening Instrument (NRS 43-260.01)
- Secure detention is a last resort for law enforcement and probation
- Platte County contracts with Northeast Nebraska Juvenile Services located in Madison, NE for secure and staff secure placement of juveniles who meet the criteria necessary for detainment.
- Probation may be notified in the event of a law violation that may be associated with a mental health crises. In such cases the behavioral health issue takes precedence. Juveniles who may present a danger to self or others and who may have a DSM IV diagnoses are not sent to Madison.

Comments:

According to District Three Probation statistics, eight (8) Platte County juveniles were detained in Madison by probation. Mike Applegate, Executive Director of Northeast Nebraska Juvenile Services, (i.e. "Madison"), reports the total number of Platte County Juveniles detained in 2004 and 2005 as follows:

	Secure	Staff Secure
2004	15	21
2005	14	28

These numbers reflect the combined total of juvenile detentions ordered by Probation, the Court, and OJS.

System Decision Point: Charge Juvenile: County Attorney

Decision: *Whether to prosecute juvenile*

Formal Determining Factors

- Whether admissible evidence supports the elements of the offense to be prosecuted
- Factors under NRS § 43-276

Informal Determining Factors

- Diversion is an alternative offered to first-time non-violent misdemeanor offenders 18 or younger
- Spanish speaking diversion officer assists Hispanic juvenile offenders and their families
- One County Judge dedicates his docket strictly to a juvenile case-load
- Probable Cause hearings to determine continued detention are held as soon as possible before either the County Judge or Juvenile Judge.
- Certified Court interpreter available for Juvenile Court proceedings

Decision: *Whether youth should be prosecuted as juvenile or adult*

Formal Determining Factors

- Gravity and nature of offense
- Services available to juvenile for rehabilitation
- Prior history in Juvenile Court
- Factors under NRS § 43-276
- Age

Informal Determining Factors

- Degree of accountability
- Best interest of juvenile

Decision: *Offense for which juvenile should be charged*

Formal Determining Factors

- As outlined in statute
- Charge must be supported by sufficient evidence to establish proof beyond a reasonable doubt

Informal Determining Factors

- Prosecutorial discretion
- Nature of offense
- Eligibility for Diversion

Problem: Cases referred to diversion are limited to those 18 years of age and younger who are first time misdemeanor offenders who did not commit a violent crime against a person and who have not been charged with a DUI. There is no screening or assessment tool employed to alert the County Attorney or Diversion Program Administrator to the needs of a juvenile which may be beyond the scope offered by

diversion. The County Attorney makes the initial determination of eligibility based on the above criteria. The Diversion Administrator utilizes a four-page intake questionnaire to make a determination of how best to utilize the resources available through Diversion for the juvenile in question. This questionnaire sometimes reveals prior law violations from other jurisdictions that do not appear in the County Attorney's database. In such instances the juvenile is no longer eligible for Diversion and the case is referred to the Court. A Nationally accepted standardized assessment tool would allow the Diversion Administrator the ability to offer additional services to address individual needs of a particular juvenile which may be above and beyond the routine Diversion program.

Solution Implement an assessment tool into the intake procedure for diversion eligible juveniles. YLS/CMI, SASSI, MAYSI are accepted assessment tools. Training in administering the assessment protocol is readily available. Care must be taken to ensure that the juvenile, who is otherwise eligible for Diversion but whose needs may be beyond the normal scope of diversion, is not deprived of the opportunity for an alternative to the criminal justice system.

Comments:

In 2005, one hundred sixty-three (163) juveniles participated in Diversion. Of that number eight (8) juveniles were terminated from the program. Two hundred fourteen juveniles were offered the opportunity of Diversion. Fifty-one (51) juveniles declined to participate. In 2004 one hundred fifty-seven (157) juveniles participated in Diversion and 2003 saw one hundred fifty-four (154) participants. In 2005, twenty-five (25) Hispanic juveniles participated in the Diversion program compared to fifteen (15) in 2004 and five (5) in 2003. Platte County is determined to meet the needs of all juvenile offenders. To that end, certified court interpreters fluent in the Spanish language are available to assist in Juvenile Court proceedings. The Diversion program has been proactive in providing resources to Hispanic juvenile offenders and their families. The Diversion Office employs a part-time bilingual Diversion Officer. With the number of juvenile cases being considered for Diversion it may be of benefit to the County Attorney and Diversion Program Administrator to implement a standardized process for determining admission and case management of Diversion participants. The Diversion program is operated in accordance with Nebraska Revised Statutes 43-260.02 to 43-260.07. The Diversion program is in keeping with the spirit of LB640 and LB193. The Diversion Program is supported by grants and program fees. Scholarships are available. No eligible juvenile is denied participation because of an inability to pay. At this time Platte County does not make a monetary contribution, but does make an in-kind contribution of office space, utilities, phone, fax, e-mail and office supplies.

System Decision Point: Pre-adjudication detention: Juvenile Court Judge

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

Formal Determining Factors

- Whether there is an "immediate and urgent necessity for the protection of such juvenile"
- Whether there is an "immediate and urgent necessity" for the protection of persons or property
- Whether the juvenile is likely to flee the jurisdiction of the court
- Nature of the offense
- NRS 43-253 et seq provides that a hearing for continued detention in a pre-adjudication setting must be held within 48 hours of the detention.

Informal Determining Factors

- The majority of juvenile offenders who are detained are released to parent/guardian after the detention hearing. The Judge makes a finding that it is in best interest of the juvenile. The Judge also establishes that the parent or guardian are willing to take responsibility for the juvenile and that the in-home placement is in a secure setting
- Electronic monitoring is an option for pre-adjudication detention
- Strict criteria must be found to keep a juvenile in detention.
- Detention is an alternative of last resort.

Comments:

Both the Juvenile Judge and the County Judge who may preside at detention hearings believe the law does not allow juveniles to be in detention longer than necessary. This same standard is also applied to any other out of home placement. As a result, most juveniles who have met the criteria for detention are returned to the care and custody of their parent or guardian. Electronic monitoring is an option available in this jurisdiction. Electronic monitoring allows a higher degree of supervision for an in-home placement. The County Court funds pre-adjudication and pre-disposition electronic monitoring. A grant associated with Platte County's Comprehensive Juvenile Plan funds electronic monitoring for juveniles on probation.

System Decision Point: Probable Cause Hearing: Juvenile Court Judge

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

Formal Determining Factors

- NRS 43- 253 et seq

Informal Determining Factors

No factors reported.

Comments:

The State must meet a Probable Cause Standard to show that the Court has jurisdiction in a Detention hearing. The State must show by a preponderance of the evidence that the Court has jurisdiction in a 43-247(3)(a) adjudication. The State must show by clear and convincing evidence that the Court has jurisdiction in ICWA 43-247(3)(a) and non-ICWA 43-292

termination of parental rights and 43-247 (3)(c) mental health adjudications. The State must show beyond a reasonable doubt that the Court has jurisdiction in 43-247(1), 43-247(2), 43-247(3)(b) and in ICWA 43-292 termination of parental right adjudications.

System Decision Point: Competency Evaluation: Juvenile Court Judge

Decision: *Whether juvenile is competent to participate in the proceedings*

Formal Determining Factors

- As found in NRS 43-247(3)(c) and NRS 71-908, The Mental Health Commitment Act
- Hearing must be held within seven (7) days

Informal Determining Factors

- State must prove the Courts jurisdiction by clear and convincing evidence.
- State must show that the juvenile presents danger to self or others and that there is a DMS IV diagnoses that may be shown by a reasonable degree of medical certainty. State must show that the recommended disposition is the least restrictive treatment alternative.
- State usually files a 43-247 (3)(a) with the (3)(c) to provide the Court with dual jurisdiction

Decision: *Whether juvenile is "responsible" for his/her acts*

Formal Determining Factors

- "Complete evaluation of the juvenile including any authorized area of inquiry requested by the court."
- Expert opinion of psychiatrist, or Ph.D. psychologist

Informal Determining Factors

- No factors were reported

Comments: NRS 71-908 requires the preparation of a mental health treatment plan, however HHSS has promulgated no rules to direct their caseworkers to provide such a plan to the Court. The dual adjudication provides a means for the information to be disseminated through a case plan and court report.

System Decision Point: Adjudication: Juvenile Court Judge

Decision: *Whether the juvenile is, beyond a reasonable doubt, "a person described by § 43-247"*

Formal Determining Factors

- The Court's determination rests on whether the State proved beyond a reasonable doubt that the Court has jurisdiction over this juvenile whether it is by adjudication of the allegations contained in the petition or by admission of the juvenile, by providing sufficient factual basis to support the allegations
- The burden of proof beyond a reasonable doubt applies to 43-247 (1),(2) and (3)(b)
- Residency
- Age
- NRS 43-279

Decision: *Whether to order probation to conduct a pre-disposition investigation (statutory authority unclear--see also: § 29-2261 (2))*

Formal Determining Factors

- NRS 43-286
- NRS 43-413

Informal Determining Factors

No factors reported. In order to protect the rights of the juvenile, informal considerations are not utilized

Informal Determining Factors

- Judge may order "direct" probation without preparation of PDI
- Judge may order PDI when additional information is needed for disposition
- If the case results from an unsatisfactory termination from diversion, and if the circumstances of the termination warrant, the Diversion Administrator may ask the Court to consider ordering a PDI or OJS evaluation .

Decision: *Whether to order OJS evaluation*

Formal Determining Factors

- NRS § 29-2204 (3): "Prior to making a disposition which commits the juvenile to the Office of Juvenile Services, the court shall order the juvenile to be evaluated by the office if the juvenile has not had an evaluation within the past twelve months.
- NRS 43-413

Informal Determining Factors

- The Court usually orders an OJS evaluation subsequent to a PDI

Decision: *Whether to order a PDI and an OJS Evaluation*

Formal Determining Factors

- NRS 43-413

Informal Determining Factors

- The Court initially orders a PDI
- An OJS evaluation is ordered in the event the Court requires additional information for disposition

Problem: There may be a lag time between the unsuccessful termination of diversion and the juvenile's Court appearance. The Court date is docketed approximately three (3) months in advance to allow completion of diversion. All cases referred for Diversion are filed in the Juvenile Court and dismissed successful completion of Diversion and payment of Court costs by the juvenile.

Solution: Under certain circumstances the County Attorney may file a Praecipe for Summons which would compel the juvenile's appearance within thirty (30) days of service. Service is in the manner provided by law. As juvenile justice professionals realize, swift justice is effective justice. The deterrent effect lessens as the time lapse between the commission of the offense and the consequences administered, lengthens.

Comments:

According to statistics from Crime Commission, Platte County had 215 juvenile adjudications in 2004. Note: These statistics are adjudications, and do not include pending adjudications or adjudications which may have been filed in the previous year but adjudicated in the current year.

System Decision Point: Disposition: Juvenile Court Judge

Decision: *Whether to place juvenile on probation*

Formal Determining Factors

- As outlined in statute

Informal Determining Factors

- The Court, at disposition, may order a term of probation with a set expiration date. The order of probation is frequently ordered without preparation of a PDI

Decision: *Whether to commit juvenile to the Office of Juvenile*

Formal Determining Factors

- Whether juvenile is at least twelve years of age

Informal Determining Factors

- The Court will not place with OJS unless (1) out of home placement is warranted (2) resources are an issue or, (3) if juvenile is under care and custody of HHSS in an in-home placement setting
- YRTC placements are infrequent and considered an alternative of last resort by this Court

Decision: *Whether to place juvenile on probation and commit juvenile to HHS or OJS*

Formal Determining Factors

- As outlined in statute

Informal Determining Factors

- The Court supports a continuum of care

Comments:

According to probation statistics for 2004, 138 juveniles were placed on probation. The Court uses a continuum of care approach. The least restrictive alternative is given the greatest weight. School Administrators report that they have an excellent working relationship with Probation, HHSS, and OJS.

System Decision Point: Administrative Sanctions: Probation

Decision: *Whether to impose administrative sanctions on a*

Formal Determining Factors

- Probation officer has reasonable cause to believe that probationer has committed a non-criminal or substance abuse violation
- Substance abuse violation refers to a positive test for drug or alcohol use, failure to report for such a test or failure to comply with substance abuse evaluations or treatment

Informal Determining Factors

- Probation uses administrative sanctions for non-criminal violations
- New law violations result in a notification and request to the County Attorney for the filing of a Motion to Revoke Probation
- Administrative sanctions are not applied when a probationer absconds from supervision, presents an imminent harm to self or others or exhibits a deliberate pattern of multiple non-compliance

Comments:

No comments for this section

System Decision Point: Motion To Revoke Probation: County Attorney

Decision: *Whether to file a motion to revoke probation*

Formal Determining Factors

- As outlined in statute

Informal Determining Factors

- If a Motion to revoke is based on an a new law violation which has yet to be adjudicated, the matter is often continued to allow that adjudication . In that event the disposition of both matters is often handled at the same time.
- If a PDI was not ordered at time of the original disposition it may well be ordered at time of re-disposition.

Comments:

No comments for this section

System Decision Point: Modification/Revocation of Probation: Juvenile Court Judge

Decision: *Whether to modify or revoke probation*

Formal Determining Factors

- As outlined in statute

Informal Determining Factors

- The Court usually modifies probation with additional terms and conditions rather than revoke or unsatisfactorily discharge the Order of Probation
- The Juvenile is usually sent to YRTC or OJS in the event the Court revokes the probation

Comments:

Even though the Court uses a continuum of care approach, Intensive Supervision Probation (ISP) has a low juvenile caseload in Platte County.

System Decision Point: Setting Aside Adjudication: Juvenile Court Judge

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

Formal Determining Factors

- Juvenile's post-adjudication behavior and response to treatment and rehabilitation programs
- Whether setting aside adjudication will depreciate seriousness of juvenile's conduct or promote disrespect for the law
- Whether failure to set aside adjudication or seal the records of the proceeding, may result in disabilities disproportionate to the conduct upon which the adjudication was based

Informal Determining Factors

- Judge sets termination date and unless there is a modification or MTR filed, termination date will be considered a satisfactory completion of probation
- Unsatisfactory discharge is accomplished in a formal court hearing or informally by written acknowledgment of the juvenile and after a finding by the Court that the resources available to the juvenile have been exhausted.

Decision: *Whether juvenile should be discharged from custody and supervision of OJS*

Formal Determining Factors

- Many of the same considerations as those for Probation. Decision is up to OJS/HHSS.

Informal Determining Factors

- OJS/HHSS informs Court of release from YRTC. Juvenile may be administratively released or released on parole into care and custody of OJS/HHSS
- There is no further Court involvement. The Court loses jurisdiction over the Juvenile once the juvenile is committed to YRTC.

Comments:

No comments for this section

Summary/Recommendations:

On November 15, 2005 and again on January 18, 2006 community leaders in Platte County met to formulate the next three-year Comprehensive Juvenile Service plan. The Crime Commission's community planning tool was used as a format to help identify the priorities and problems of each system point. A multi-disciplinary group was in attendance including the jurisdiction's State Senator, a Police Department Captain, a NSP Sergeant, Educators and counselors from local high schools and middle schools, the County Attorney, the Chief Probation Officer and two Senior Probation Officers, a representative from HHSS, Platte Valley Diversion Administrative Director, a bilingual Diversion Officer, Catholic Charities, The CCT Director and the Project Extra Mile Coordinator. As a result of these meetings, the following recommendations are submitted for review to help establish the planning priorities for the next three-year Comprehensive Juvenile Service Plan:

- 1) Contrary to the 2000 census, Platte County has a growing and diverse minority population. The number of minority contacts with the Juvenile Justice system has increased. Platte County needs to ensure that all juveniles are treated equally in the Juvenile Justice system. Platte County has made strides toward meeting this challenge. Certified Court interpreters are available to assist in Juvenile Court proceedings. Diversion employs a bilingual Hispanic diversion officer. Columbus Community Hospital employs an interpreter and bilingual staff. Law enforcement has on-call interpreters and bilingual publications. The Victim Assistance coordinator uses an interpreter when necessary. Schools employ English as a Second Language instructors. Meeting the needs of the minority population in the juvenile justice system should continue to be a priority for this community. The minority population encompasses residents and individuals of surrounding communities who frequent the area for retail, employment, and social activities.
- 2) Disproportionate Minority Contact is an issue that is being addressed at a national level by the Federal Government. Due to the minority contacts issues for Platte County, it would benefit this community to work with the State's DMC coordinator to assist with any training and educational services.
- 3) Law enforcement reports increased contact with younger offenders ten (10) to twelve (12) years old. This is a difficult age to bring in front of the Juvenile Court as sanctions available for this age are limited and the Court must be satisfied that the juvenile understands the proceeding and is able to assist in his/her own defense. The Platte Valley Diversion Program has dealt primarily with referrals from the County Attorney's office involving teenage offenders. It may benefit Platte County to develop additional services for the Diversion program to respond to the needs of these younger offenders. It may be wise to require a higher level of parental involvement than is required with the teenage juvenile.
- 4) Another issue in the juvenile justice system is peer accountability. A recommendation to address this issue would be to start a Teen Court. Peer accountability in the form of Teen Court is a proven and effective response to law violations most commonly committed by juvenile offenders. Peer accountability has a proven track record in curbing under age drinking. Implementation of teen court would require funding, training, staffing, an attorney volunteer, and

community acceptance and support. There is a possibility this program could be incorporated into the Diversion program.

5) Truancy remains an accurate predictor of future delinquency. Along with truancy comes the issue of school connectivity. Between July and December 2002, the YLS/CMI (Youth Level of Services/Case Management Inventory) assessment tool was administered to approximately 1100 Nebraska youth. The results of this tool indicated that truancy was the 7th highest ranked risk factor of juvenile delinquency. The use of a standardized assessment instrument provides school administrators and juvenile justice professionals with the ability to evaluate a juvenile's situation before escalating to the point of justice intervention. The local community must face these issues and endeavor to provide after school programs, mentoring, and other community service activities to youth.

6) The Youth Behavior Risk Survey results for this year will be published in the near future. Juvenile Justices officials recognize that Platte County continues to have a substance abuse issue among the 10-17 year old ages. With the results of this survey and other research, Platte County may need to start looking at taking a more aggressive stance against substance abuse issues in this community. A recommendation for this community would be for a juvenile drug court. As part of this drug court planning process, there needs to be an comprehensive look at substance abuse from prevention to treatment to aftercare. The treatment program needs to be specifically designed for the juvenile substance abuser.

7) Eligibility for the Diversion program is limited to those 18 and younger who are first-time misdemeanor offenders who have not committed a violent crime against a person and who have not been charged with a DUI. At this time, there is no screening tool in use to alert the County Attorney or Diversion Program Administrator of the needs of a juvenile, which may be beyond the resources available in the Diversion program. Screening and assessment tools such as the YLS/CMI, SASSI, or MAYSI might be used to develop a more efficient way to evaluate and case manage juveniles who may present with greater and more significant needs. This would be in sync with probation and OJS who are both implementing such instruments into their investigative and supervision policies. This would allow for a continuum of risk /needs assessment for a juvenile throughout the juvenile justice system. Note: A juvenile's need for a broader range of services should not, in and of itself, deprive that juvenile of an alternative to the Juvenile Justice system.

NOTE: It is vital that previously identified priorities not be allowed to wither with the identification of new issues. Vigilance is the key to success. As a community we must continue to focus on under-age drinking. Use of alcohol and other drugs by juveniles continues to pose a grave threat to this community and its youth. We must maintain our focus on safe and enriching activities to curb juvenile violence and property damage crimes. We must not loose ground on recent gains in behavioral health services available for juveniles. We must continue, as a community, to encourage parental involvement. We must remain steadfast in our involvement and support of the numerous organizations dedicated to the health and welfare of the youth of this community. We have made many positive gains, but the task is still at hand.

IV. Identified Priority Areas:

Throughout committee discussions, the following three areas became the focus of community need and program enhancements. This does not exclude other identified priority points. As the committee continues to examine the juvenile needs throughout the next three years, it will become apparent that the needs of the county will more than likely see a shift of priorities as greater change continues in the dynamics of an increasingly diverse community.

Priority #1:

Eligibility for the diversion program is limited to those 18 and younger who are first-time offenders who have not committed a violent crime against a person and who have not been charged with a DUI. At this time, there is no screening tool in use to alert the County Attorney or Diversion Program Administrator of the needs of a juvenile, which may be beyond the resources offered by the diversion program. Screening and assessment tools such as the YLS/CMI, SASSI, or MAYSI II could be used to develop a more efficient way to evaluate and case manage the juveniles who may present greater and more significant needs. This would be in sync with probation and OJS who are both implementing such instruments into their investigatory and supervision policies. This would allow for a continuum of risk and needs assessment for a juvenile throughout the juvenile justice system.

Supportive Data:

- a) In 2005, there were approximately fourteen (14) diversion intakes that resulted in additional information sharing with client at the time of the intake. As a result, this information proved the client to be deemed ineligible because of a prior offense. However, there is no tool in place to identify possible additional needs of each client that could ultimately affect the outcome of the diversion tenure.
- b) In 2005, nine baseline drug screening identified the existence of possible substance abuse issues among diversion participants.
- c) In the past two years, client academic and school behavioral issues have been identified, but not until several weeks of participation in the diversion program had lapsed.

Priority #2:

Contrary to the 2000 census, Platte County has a growing and diverse minority population. The number of minority contacts with the juvenile justice system has increased. Platte County needs to ensure that all juveniles are treated equally in the juvenile justice system. Platte County has made strides toward meeting this challenge. Certified Court Interpreters are available to assist in Juvenile Court proceedings. Diversion employs a bilingual Hispanic diversion officer. Columbus Community Hospital employs an interpreter and bilingual staff. Law enforcement has on-call interpreters and bilingual publications. The Victim Assistance coordinator uses an interpreter when necessary. Schools employ English as A Second Language instructors. Meeting the needs of the minority population in the juvenile justice system should continue to be a priority for this county. The minority population encompasses residents and individuals of surrounding communities who frequent the area for retail, employment, and social activities.

Supportive Data:

- a) The Hispanic/Latino population has increased dramatically in Platte County. 1990 census data reported merely 255, less than 1% Hispanic/Latino populations. The 2000 census reported 2,072 or a 6.5 % increase.
- b) The Platte Valley Diversion Program has seen an increase of Hispanic clients (5-25) since 2003. 51% (17) of the 25 Hispanic diversion clients in 2005 qualified for the Free Subsidized School Lunch Program.
- c) Local agencies presented educational conferences allowing experts in diversity issues to share information and data. This has brought about a heightened awareness of different community programming needs within Platte County.

Priority #3:

Law enforcement reports increased contact with younger offenders ten (10) to twelve (12) years old. This is a difficult age to bring in front of the Juvenile Court as sanctions available for this age are limited and the Court must be satisfied that the juvenile understands the proceedings and is able to assist in his/her own defense. The Platte Valley Diversion Program has dealt primarily with referrals from the County Attorney's office involving teenage offenders. It may benefit Platte County to develop additional services for the Diversion program to respond to the needs of these younger offenders. It may be wise to require a higher level of parental involvement than is required with the teenage juvenile.

Supportive Data:

- a) Law enforcement records indicate an increased number of "contact" filings with 10-12 year olds for inappropriate behavior. The Columbus Police Department has now started to track those numbers for data collection.
- b) In 2004, The Platte Valley Diversion Program was asked to involve twelve (10-12) year old first-time offenders and in 2005, the PVDP involved fifteen (10-12) year old first-time offenders.
- c) The Platte Valley Diversion Program Parenting Class evaluations consistently suggest that the information which is included in the mandatory class would have been of greater benefit had the parent been able to implement strategies when child was younger.

V. Strategies:**Priority #1: Assessment Tool**

- a) Research and implement one of the following assessment tools to be used by the Platte Valley Diversion Program: YSL/CMI, SASSI, or MAYSI II. This data would become a part of the current Crime Commission Diversion Case Management System data collection.

This strategy would include staff training and change of procedure for the current Platte Valley Diversion Program. It would involve the Platte Valley Diversion Program Board of Directors, the Platte County Attorney, the Platte Valley Diversion Program Administrator and the expertise of resource personnel familiar with the assessment tools. At the present time, the diversion administrator is a part-time employee and full-time status would need to be addressed.

Priority #2: Increased awareness of Hispanic/Latino community needs when addressing the involvement of Hispanic/Latino juveniles in the juvenile justice system.

- a) To incorporate Hispanic Parenting Education and make it readily available to schools, local community agencies and the court system.
- b) Create a greater awareness and provide more opportunity for non-English speaking or Limited-English speaking adults to acquire English speaking skills.

These strategies would involve several local agencies: The Columbus Collaborative Team, Columbus Public, Private and Rural Schools, The Platte County Juvenile Judge, The District #3 Probation, The PVDP Board of Directors, The Platte County Attorney and the PVDP Administrator.

Priority #3: Increased contact by Law Enforcement involving 10-12 year olds.

- a) Create a developmentally appropriate component for the 10-12 year old population to be incorporated in the Platte Valley Diversion Program to assist with program needs.
- b) Provide a variety of Parent Strategies for parents of younger children to assist with parenting skills.

These strategies would involve many local agencies: UNL Extension, Columbus Collaborative Team, Columbus Public, Private and Rural Schools, Family Counselors, Boys & Girls Home Education Center, various United Way Agencies, parents, involved citizens, The PVDP Board of Directors and the PVDP Administrator,