

Comprehensive Juvenile Services Plan

Webster County  
Clay County  
Adams County  
Nuckolls County

January 1, 2009-December 31, 2011

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LAW ENFORCEMENT AND  
CRIMINAL JUSTICE

## **Community Team Section**

The We CAN Consortium, a four county family preservation and support team from Webster, Clay, Adams, and Nuckolls counties in south central Nebraska applied for and received planning grant money to write the Comprehensive Juvenile/Youth Services plan for the area in 2000.

Over 200 people were invited with thirty-seven attending a meeting in October of 2001 to form what was called the WeCAN LB 640 Juvenile/Youth Services Planning Team. Representatives from the following agencies and organizations were involved in the process: local governments, judges, probation and parole offices, health and human services professionals, county attorneys, diversion coordinators, juvenile justice service providers, education professionals, law enforcement professionals, mental health and substance abuse providers, local members of the clergy, local business owners, parents, and youth.

The WeCAN Juvenile Services team met at a centralized, neutral location once a month from October 2001-May of 2002 to develop the plan and to collate the responses from 42 focus groups in the four counties. Once the plan was in place, the team met on a quarterly basis during 2003 and in 2004 they met twice.

In 2005, the director of the program changed to Carissa Uhrmacher, the current director and meetings were held more regularly in an effort to complete the HHS grant requirements and plan for the new Request for Proposals to the Nebraska Crime Commission. With representation from area agencies and organizations, priorities were identified and strategies developed for the current Comprehensive Juvenile Services Plan. Recently, the South Central Partnership (SCP) was formed to address human service needs in the same four county area. The SCP is a collaboration of the We CAN Consortium, the Continuum of Care, and the United Way Health and Human Services Council. This extended level of collaboration will provide an even more effective infrastructure for service delivery in the four county area.

In June 2006, a Youth Task Force, under the South Central Partnership was formed to oversee the County Plan and Juvenile Services County Aid. This group set a goal of meeting quarterly, rotating across the four counties. Traditionally, the Adams County meeting is the largest attended and also centers on the JSCA application. In August 2008 the Task Force decided to meet the half hour before the SCP large meeting, and is able to use the telenet connection. This has helped with attendance and travel time.

This Task Force is led by Carissa Uhrmacher and reports to SCP leadership team, as well as the four county boards. Minutes have been taken by Pam Davis.

Quarterly reports have been made to each of the County Board of Supervisors since the inception of the plan. Statistical reporting has been documented and the fiscal documentation remains in the office of the Clay County Treasurer, Jan Strattman.

See attached listing of Community Team members from Adams, Clay, Nuckolls, and Webster counties.

LB 640 Stakeholders

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LB 640 Stakeholders

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		Harvard Public School	506 E North	Harvard, NE	68944	772-2171	
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		St. Paul Lutheran Church	PO Box 127	Blue Hill, NE	68930	756-3801	
Note: E-mail not available on members							

### 2008-2009 Youth Leadership Academy

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# Community Planning Decision Point Analysis

Data Points	Total Population (*2000)	Juvenile Population (**2004)
Total Population	47,308	5648
Male	23,077	2768
Female	24,231	2850
White	45,615	5019
Black/African American	219	66
Asian	546	80
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	14	Not reported
American Indian	148	23
Hispanic	1,707	80
Juveniles Arrested		276
Juveniles Detained		31
Juveniles Prosecuted		580
Juveniles Placed in Diversion		111 (Adams Only)
Number of Juveniles Adjudicated		537
Number of Juveniles placed on Probation		42
YRTC-Kearney commitments		8
YRTC-Geneva commitments		3

**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 factual basis to believe offense committed
- Underlying support for a particular offense

**Informal Determining Factors**

- Age
- Criminal history
- If they commit an adult offense as a juvenile will usually cite and release unless it is a felony and a detention is requested

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

**Formal Determining Factors**

- Seriousness of offense

**Informal Determining Factors**

- Most cases are status offenses (i.e.

- Age
- Runaway, uncontrollable), MIP or traffic violations
- Depends on the crime as to whether it is processed adult or juvenile

**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 perceived offense
- Extent to which parent or other responsible adult available to take responsibility for juvenile
- If an officer wants to place a juvenile out of the home at a shelter placement, they are bypassing probation because they don't want to deal with the questions by probation
- Will cite juvenile and contact parent/guardian for release due to detention options being minimal (Nuckolls)-Parents are always notified of offense

**Comments:**

According to statistics from the Crime Commission, the four county area had 276 juvenile arrests. Most cases are cited and released due to minimal options for law enforcement and subsequent agencies to use for placement especially in the more rural areas.

## System Decision Point: Initial Detention: State of Nebraska Probation

### Decision: *Whether juvenile should be detained or released*

#### Formal Determining Factors

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

#### Informal Determining Factors

- Probation is not contacted unless they want the juvenile placed outside of the home
- Probation has several options for placement including local shelter, Mid-Plains in Grand Island (staff secure), Boys Town shelter and secure detention in Madison County
- Detention hearings are not heard by the court until the following Thursday so probable cause needs to be found if over that allotted time limit
- Due to the distance for law enforcement to travel, detaining juveniles is not always the most cost effective detention solution for a
- All counties are contacting the County Attorney to determine if the charges will be filed adult v. juvenile for detention request purposes

#### Comments:

According to statistics from probation, 31 detentions were completed by probation. Due to detention hearings only being done on Thursday, the judges are finding probable cause on a juvenile and then placement remains until the next detention court time. Adams County has the majority of detentions for the four county area. Placements that probation is using are the local shelter, Mid-Plains staff secure facility and Boys Town in Grand Island, and the Madison detention center. Probation noted that they are not contacted unless a case absolutely warrants the request.

## System Decision Point: Charge Juvenile: County Attorney

### Decision: *Whether to prosecute juvenile*

#### Formal Determining Factors

- Likelihood of successful
- Factors under NRS § 43-276

#### Informal Determining Factors

- Adams County has diversion program
- Diversion client pay a fee which is used to support the CASA program for Adams County
- Most cases are being prosecuted juvenile (Adams Co)
- County Attorney does not object to many transfer hearings because they feel they are filing the original charges in the appropriate court
- Truancy seems to be an issue, but the numbers from the school do not indicate a problem
- Educational neglect charges are being filed
- Nuckolls County does not have any type of truancy officer but if a student has less than average grades, they are spending 1/2 hour before and after school along with Saturday school
- Clay County Attorney files adult on most cases which provokes the juvenile to have to have case transferred to juvenile court

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

**Formal Determining Factors**

- Seriousness of offense

**Informal Determining Factors**

- Age
- Previous offense history
- Previous diversion completion
- In Nuckolls County most cases are filed juvenile, but they handle many traffic violation cases
- Webster County files adult to make the juvenile realize the seriousness of the crime, but most juveniles request a transfer hearing and it is granted
- Due to the small community of Webster County, the County Attorney has to deal with the issues of perceived status and his role as a person of the court which cause some conflict in decision making

**Decision:** *Offense for which juvenile should be charged*

**Formal Determining Factors**

- No factors reported

**Informal Determining Factors**

- No factors reported

**Comments:**

According to the Crime Commission's statistics, in the four county area, 580 cases were prosecuted in 2004. Adams is unique that it has a diversion program that is available for the county attorneys to utilize. However, Clay, Nuckolls, and Webster Counties only have juvenile prosecution as their option. Truancy seems to be an issue for schools and the County Attorneys. However, the numbers that are coming from the schools are not justifying a problem because of how they are being documented. It is suspected that the problem will get worse due to the compulsory school attendance laws changing.

## 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 . . .the person or property of
- Whether the juvenile is likely to flee the jurisdiction of the court

### Informal Determining Factors

- Judge uses HHS for many of the post-detention placements

### Comments:

The judges stated that due to costs of keeping a juvenile in a detained facility or status, that many cases with either be released to the parents or placed with HHS for services.

## 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

- As stated in statute

### Informal Determining Factors

- No factors reported

### Comments:

No comments for this section

## **System Decision Point: Competency Evaluation: Juvenile Court Judge**

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

**Formal Determining Factors**

**Informal Determining Factors**

- Judge does not use beside for a true 3 (c) case

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

**Formal Determining Factors**

**Informal Determining Factors**

- "Complete evaluation of the juvenile including any authorized area of inquiry requested by the court."
- Opinion of physician, surgeon, psychiatrist, community mental health program, psychologist

**Comments:**

No comments for this section

## 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**

- Legal sufficiency of evidence presented during adjudication hearing
- Whether juvenile admits the allegations of the petition (or, "pleads to the charges")
- Residency
- Age

**Informal Determining Factors**

- No factors reported

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

**Formal Determining Factors**

- No factors reported

**Informal Determining Factors**

- Judges are doing PDI's on most cases
- If the case is a re-direct from diversion, PDI will be completed
- OJS is unwilling to do evaluations on 3 (b) cases

**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.

**Informal Determining Factors**

- If Judge orders an OJS evaluation, then looking for services
- Judges will usually order a PDI first and then if recommendation from probation is an OJS evaluation will follow up with that report

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

**Formal Determining Factors**

- No factors reported

**Informal Determining Factors**

- Services versus supervision?

**Comments:**

Crime Commission statistics reflect 537 adjudications for Adams, Clay, Nuckolls, and Webster counties. In these four counties, three judges share the juvenile court responsibilities. After a discussion with these three judges, it appears their expectations at adjudication are mostly the same. All three judges would like to use probation for PDI purposes, but if they know it has the potential to require service, they will ask for a report from HHS. The judges' frustrations are that OJS is unwilling to complete evaluations on 3

## System Decision Point: Disposition: Juvenile Court Judge

### Decision: *Whether to place juvenile on probation*

#### Formal Determining Factors

- As outlined in statute

#### Informal Determining Factors

- Probation is noticing that many cases are going to HHS because of the resources available through HHS and not through probation
- Judges feel they are sorting cases at the time of adjudication so at time of disposition the appropriate agency is already involved

### 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

- Judges are more likely to use HHS or OJS for services
- HHS and OJS workers are the same who are dealing with 1, 2, and 3 (b) cases so there is admitted confusion about what type of case the worker is in court for

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

#### Formal Determining Factors

- As outlined in statute
- No apparent authority for delinquent in the legal custody of parents/guardian

#### Informal Determining Factors

- Judges do not do dual supervision cases by probation and HHS
- Judges feel there is not good coordination between probation and HHS which they use as justification to not have both involved

### Comments:

According to statistics from probation, 42 juveniles were placed on juvenile probation. This number is significantly low compared to the number of adjudications for the four counties. The judges stated that because probation does not have the resources to pay for service they are more likely to have a disposition of placement with HHS rather than probation. However, the judges stated that if probation had those resources they would probation for more supervision purposes.

## **System Decision Point: Administrative Sanctions: Probation**

**Decision:** *Whether to impose administrative sanctions on a probationer*

**Formal Determining Factors**

- Probation officers has reasonable cause to believe that probationer has committed or is about to commit a substance abuse violation or a non criminal 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 is using administrative sanctions on juveniles on technical violations

**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**

- In Nuckolls and Clay counties, the County Attorneys are file motions to revoke in a quick manner, however, there seems to be a time lapse issue in the process in Adams County
- Webster and Clay County Attorneys have very few requests for motion to revokes
- Due to limited docket time, the judges are hearing MTR cases on a specific day and time every month

**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**

- Judges will modify and revoke probations to usually a higher level of care

**Comments:**

No comments for this section

## 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 may result in disabilities disproportionate to the conduct upon which the adjudication was based

### Informal Determining Factors

- Judges are placing juveniles on probation until age of majority and if an early release is considered, order has to be sign off by Chief Probation Officer and the Court

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

### Formal Determining Factors

- Presumably same as those for probation

### Informal Determining Factors

- Judges are having review hearings on OJS commitment cases

**Problem:** Since the judges are placing juveniles on until the age of majority, defense attorneys are filing early releases without going through probation to terminate.

**Solution:** Since supervision is being done by probation, Judges have to get the release only by probation. If the defense attorneys want to be notified they can sign off on release order too

### Comments:

Since the orders are terminating at the age of majority, the judges will not release a probation case until they receive a written request from probation. They are willing to do unsatisfactory discharges by waiver or hearing. They also feel that if a case is terminated unsuccessfully that there should not be a consideration for juvenile court again.

## Summary/Recommendations:

As in the previous the juvenile comprehensive plan, Adams, Clay, Nuckolls, and Webster counties are working together for the next three year plan. Several meetings with juvenile justice professionals were had to go over the details for the system point analysis. Persons interviewed include law enforcement, County Attorneys, probation, judges, diversion, schools, and service providers. This four county region includes jurisdictions which have a wide range of juvenile justice issues. Adams County, the most populated county of the four counties, deals with the majority of the juvenile justice issues. The other counties have significantly less dealings with juvenile justice in all points of the system. There are some general themes of issues which cover all four counties, but other are directly county related. Therefore, the following recommendations can be used for consideration for the next three year plan:

- 1) Truancy remains such 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 ranked risk factor of juvenile delinquency. The use of a standardized assessment instrument 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. As the 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.
- 2) The Youth Behavior Risk Survey results for this year will be published in the near future. Juvenile Justices officials recognize that the four counties continues to have a substance abuse issue among the 10-17 year old ages. With the results of this survey and other research, Adams, Clay, Nuckolls, and Webster Counties may need to start looking at taking a more aggressive stance against the 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 aftercare treatment which is juvenile specific.
- 3) At this time, there is no standardization process for juveniles being considered for the diversion program between the County Attorney's office and diversion staff. A standardized screening process using assessment tools such as the YLS/CMI, SASSI, or MAYSI could be used to develop a more efficient way to screen and case manage the juveniles being considered. In addition, probation and OJS are both implementing such instruments into their investigatory and supervision policies which would allow for a continuum of risk and needs for a juvenile throughout the system.
- 4) Adams County only has one local detention option which usually results in placement with HHS for payment. This four county area could benefit from contracting with the local regional center for beds to be used for staff secure detention which would open options for status offenders in this area.
- 5) Adams, Clay, Nuckolls, and Webster Counties have tracker services available through OJS post-adjudication. However, at this time there is no pre-adjudication tracker/detention option which would allow a juvenile to return home under additional supervision. Electronic monitoring is a service that can be contracted out or done by a certain agency with the help of state funding sources.
- 6) Diversion services are available in Adams County. In addition, the extension office is

running separate parenting programs. It would benefit both agencies to collaborate their respective programs to have a parental component to the already existing diversion program.

7) Nuckolls County currently has a teen center being privately ran by a local couple who are funding it out of their own pockets which is preventing them from being open as many days a week as they would like. This place is designed so the teens can do homework and other activities, thus, preventing the teens from being home without supervision. This teen center has potential to not only benefit the teens but the community. It would be a recommendation that this program seek additional funding to be open more days, ability to hire a director/coordinator, and add additional activities.

## **Community Socio-Economics:**

Adams, Clay, Nuckolls, and Webster counties are located in South Central Nebraska.

Adams County total population in 2006 was 33,185, with 23.0% being below the age of 18 and 18.2% 65 and older. 95.4% of the population is white, with the remainder made up of 6.1% Hispanic/Latino, 2.6% Asian, .8% Black, and .4% Native American. The largest city is Hastings, with a population of 24,000. Surrounding communities in Adams County include Kenesaw, Prosser, Hansen, Holstein, Roseland, Pauline, Assumption, Juniata, and Ayr.

Clay County total population in 2006 was 6,564, with 23.5% being below the age of 18 and 15% 65 and older. 98.4% of the population is white, with the remainder made up of 4.4% Hispanic/Latino, .3% Asian, .4% Black, and .5% Native American. Clay County includes Trumbull, Harvard, Glenvil, Inland, Clay Center, Edgar, Deweese, Ong, Saronville, and Sutton.

Webster County total population in 2006 was 3,701, with 20.9% being below the age of 18 and 26 % 65 and older. 98.1% of the population is white, with the remainder made up of .7% Hispanic/Latino, .6% Asian, .2% Black, and .3% Native American and .1 % Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander Decent. Webster County towns include Blue Hill, Inavale, Bladen, Rosemont, Cowles, Guide Rock and Red Cloud.

Nuckolls County total population in 2006 was 4,650, with 20.2% being below the age of 18 and 24.2 % 65 and older. 98.9% of the population is white, with the remainder made up of 1.4% Hispanic/Latino, .3% Asian, .2% Black, and .3% Native American. Nuckolls County towns include Superior, Oak, Ruskin, Sedan, Nora, Hardy, Bostwick, Lawrence, and Nelson.

Schools in this region include Hastings Public Schools, St. Cecilia & St. Michael's Catholic School, Adams Central School District, Silver Lake, Kenesaw, Harvard, Clay Center, Sandy Creek, Sutton, Blue Hill, Red Cloud, Superior, and Lawrence-Nelson. Hastings College and Central Community College are located in or near Hastings.

Adams, Clay, Nuckolls, and Webster counties are rural in nature and mostly agricultural. Main transportation routes include Highways 281, 6, 74, 136, and 14. Nuckolls and Webster counties border Kansas to the south. Attractions include Spring Ranch, Willa Cather Museum, Red Cloud Opera House, Hastings Museum, Lake Hastings, and Crystal Lake State Park

Depressed economies and weak agricultural markets hurt the ability to set up programs that encourage youth to become a part of something. This leads to a lack of opportunities. Where there are opportunities, there may be a lack of leadership, participating population, adult support and marketing to get the youth at the programs. Because of the rural geography of the four county area, transportation and communication continue to be obstacles for program implementation and attendance. Another effect of the rural geography is labeling or categorizing youth's potential or lack thereof.

Many of the strategies are being developed or are ongoing in Adams County, particularly in Hastings. In Nuckolls, Webster, and Clay counties, many strategies are in the startup phase or

are presently non-existent. This has created the imperative need to expand sooner than later. The largest resources needed for each of the strategies are people and money.

The five priorities recognized for 2009-2011 are Substance Abuse (a continuation from previous plan), Empowerment/Accountability (Diversion and After School programs are continuations), Health and Safety, Parenting, and Truancy.

## **Priority # 1 Substance Abuse**

Nebraska continues to have some of the highest reported rates of high risk and underage alcohol use in the nation. The South Central Nebraska Substance Abuse Coalition Profile Report of Risk and Protective Factors of 2007 was completed by youth in the four counties of Adams, Clay, Nuckolls and Webster from the grades of 6, 8, 10, and 12. The youth indicated alcohol use in the 30 days prior to the survey to be high: 1.8% for grade 6, 13.1% for grade 8, 23.6 % for grade 10 and 48.7% for grade 12. These numbers are higher than the state average for students in grades 8 and 10. The surveyed youth felt that laws, policies, and norms favor drug use with 24%, 35%, 31% and 51%. In the family domain, it was reported that 16%, 20%, 37% and 42% perceived parent attitudes favoring drug use. In the peer-individual domain, attitudes favorable to anti-social behaviors were 29%, 27%, 29% and 33%. From that same report, it appears that alcohol is seen as a rite to passage, and adults accept the use of alcohol by underage youth with 83%, 29%, 29% and 20% of youth who drank reporting that they received the alcohol from a parent or guardian.

The most recent data from the same four county region (Adams, Clay, Nuckolls, and Webster counties) indicates that other substances of abuse and additive behavior include cigarettes, chewing tobacco, marijuana, inhalants, methamphetamines, steroids, prescription drugs, non-prescription cough medicine and other illegal drugs. Other issues that need to be addressed in South Central Nebraska include gambling, underage drinking, binge drinking, driving while intoxicated, illegal drug use and truancy.

This is a continuation from our previous County Plan and continues to be the top priority identified by the statistics, the youth, educators, and service providers. Difficulties our four counties face include: rural nature, unless mandated, people do not attend, transportation, lack of follow through/interest/parenting skills

### **Services in Place:**

South Central Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition, Hastings Area Council on Alcoholism, DARE, MADD, Teammates, Big Brothers Big Sisters, All Stars, Diversion, Health Rocks, Mayor's Youth Council dances, Hastings College Peer Umbrella Network, South Central Area Rallying to Eliminate Drugs, Red Cloud Reach, The Ron Gardner Meth Coalition Project (RGMCP) has developed a meth education program utilizing the documentary RISE Above Meth and the Meth360 curriculum, Matrix Skill Building Group in community of Hastings, through Compass Point

### **Services Needed:**

Continued Drug-Free Activities, "more" in rural schools, especially for 6-12 grade, support group (Alateen), group therapy, parenting skills, parent/child activities, Adolescent IOP needed, issues include transportation, referral basis, need for bodies to make group, finance for treatment, timely and affordable screening and assessments (for both substance abuse and mental health), continued funding of treatment services, additional funding and support for holding adolescents accountable, more community and parent education and involvement, family night ideas & funding, presentations to manufacturing/companies, Programs/resources at school open houses, Teaching packets by RGMCP to Teammates, schools, and others, Video Series to utilize

Expansion of MLMH Behavioral Unit, Utilization of counseling students

**Gaps/Needs:**

Work/talk with judges, Resource guide/marketing of resources, Speakers bureau, Health Rocks, peer education; will need supplies, manuals, etc., Drinking age move to 18, pre-policy work; draft letter for YTF to sign

**Strategy #1: ALL STARS**

The mission of All Stars is to “prevent alcohol, tobacco and drug abuse, postpone sexual activity, and reduce fighting and bullying. More than this, All Stars helps teens build bright futures. All Stars is a science-based program that makes sense. All Stars is based on over twenty-five years of research and practical experience. All Stars is interactive, thought-provoking, and fun.”

All Stars is a prevention program geared to students in 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grades. The students are challenged to think about the future, envision their ideals, plan for the future, define hypocrisy, identify their standards and proclaim their commitments. All Stars can be used within a school classroom, in after-school programs or through clubs (girl scouts or boy scouts). One of the important features of All Stars is the homework that the student shares with his/her parent(s). This opens the channel of communication to talk about topics that might be difficult to approach by either the child or adult.

**Implementation of Project:** South Central Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition

**Resource Needed:** None at this time

**Timeline:** The All Stars program is currently being offered through the South Central Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition to seven area schools. Our goal is to expand the classes into other county schools in 2009.

**Expected Results:** To delay use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs and early sexual activity. The All Stars program can help guide a student to understand their own values and commitments. To learn how to turn-away from activities that does not agree with their values and how to respect themselves and others.

**Strategy #2. SPEAKERS BUREAU**

One of the identified gaps in services available in our counties is a speakers bureau that would address all different areas of alcohol and substance abuse. Possible venues would include classrooms, school open houses, lunch and learns at various businesses and service organizations. The RGMCP Meth Education Programming is currently available to any individuals, community agencies, or businesses who request the information or a presentation.

The RGMCP offers quarterly community forums that often feature speakers who are recovering meth addicts or by individuals who have been affected by methamphetamine in others, i.e. family members.

The RGMCP also has volunteers who are in recovery or are a family member of someone in recovery that are available to speak to community agencies, businesses, or other interested groups about meth addiction and recovery.

**Implementation of Project:** RGMCP and Hastings Area Council on Alcohol and Substance Abuse

**Resources Needed:** None at this time

**Timeline:** ongoing

**Expected results:** Increased knowledge by community members and students of the dangers of alcohol, tobacco, meth and other drugs.

**Strategy #3. DRUG FREE ACTIVITIES**

Quarterly drug-free activities are available to all 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade youth in the four counties. The events are free.

**Implementation of Project:** South Central Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition

**Resources Needed:** None at this time, the events are funded by a Drug Free Communities grant. Additional funds would be necessary to increase the frequency of events.

**Timeline:** four times per year

**Expected results:** A decrease in the perceived need to use alcohol and other drugs because “there is nothing to do.” Adults involved modeling that social events do not have to include alcohol to be fun.

**Strategy #4. WORK WITH JUDGES**

Judges have the ability to mandate alcohol education classes for youth who are involved in the judicial system. We would like to persuade the judges that first time offenders would benefit from the classes rather than paying a fine.

**Implementation of Project:** Hastings Area Council on Alcohol and Substance Abuse

**Resources Needed:** Scholarships available for families who meet the poverty guidelines and are not able to cover the class fee.

**Timeline:** We will meet with judges early in 2009. Alcohol Education Classes are held on the third Saturday of every month in Hastings.

**Expected results:** More collaboration between the courts and mandated classes. An increase in the number of youth who are being educated about high risk behaviors.

**Strategy #5. FREE....TO TALK, TO TRUST, TO FEEL (Children of Addicts Educational Support Group)**

A strategy identified to fill a gap in services in the four county areas of Adams, Clay, Nuckolls, and Webster counties is a support group for children of addicts. More than 28 million Americans are children of alcoholics; nearly 11 million are under the age of 18. Because alcoholism and other drug addictions tend to run in families, children of addicted parents are more at risk for alcoholism and other drug abuse than are other children. There are several prevention programs available to the general public through the school systems. However, in this area there is no additional support provided to some of the highest risk youth to use alcohol or other substances.

**Implementation of Project:** The program is designed as a six week program using the Children’s Program Kit, facilitated by two individuals, with at least one facilitator whom is a licensed mental health practitioner. The six week sessions will focus on addiction, feelings, problem solving, treatment and recovery, safe people, and coping. Because the three rules of a family suffering addiction are: 1. don’t talk, 2. don’t trust, and 3. don’t feel, the goal of this support group are to help these children feel free to talk, trust, and feel.

**Resources Needed:** Meeting Space, Activity Materials, Snacks, Copies, Facilitators

**Timeline:** A trial of the curriculum is anticipated for Spring 2009 and then hope to provide at least two offerings per year.

**Expected results:** In a supportive group environment this group will provide kids will learn they are not alone; it will increase the likelihood of breaking denial; it will provide safety and protection; healthy social interactions; opportunities for group validation; and will allow kids to try out new approaches to old problems.

The RGMCP will set up a referral network with school systems, transitional treatment centers such as The Bridge, and half-way houses such as the Unity Houses to ensure that children of addicts are identified and served through the program.

## **Priority # 2 Empowerment/Accountability**

Program areas that have worked to increase school connectivity include after school programs, mentoring, support from school activities, and tutoring. Leaders in local communities have seen after school programs, such as the YWCA-sponsored Middle School and High School Zone have success. Other communities have looked at this and would like to replicate similar programs for their own community, if only the funding and staffing were available. Mentoring exists in a variety of programs (both school and community based), but these can always be enhanced and expanded, with the proper resources. Schools themselves offer many avenues of association, through sports, music, theater, and other extracurricular activities. Schools need to be in contact with community leaders to connect youth with services that are already existent, in the planning stages, or identified as needed.

### **Services Available for Empowerment/Accountability:**

TeamMates/BBBS, Crisis Pregnancy Center, Teen MOPS, Diversion, Community Wraparound, Anger Management Class, AllStars Harvard, Superior, Nelson, Family Planning—body image/peer pressure, Boy Scouts LFL, Families CARE support groups for parents & youth, afterschool programs, Girl Power/Wise Guys, Diversion

### **Determination of Gaps/Needs:**

SASA could do program on dating violence

Have programs before or after school with incentives/rewards

Promote Extracurricular Programs

Work with health programs

Focus on Pre-teens

Teach basis on bullying, socializing, conflict resolution

Ability to work with Doane College to have graduate students working with HHS & Probation, program called Options to Anger

Continue to Expand Diversion

### **Strategy #1: DIVERSION:**

**Implementation of Project:** A diversion program offers a one-time, first offense only, opportunity for youth ages 12 to 18. The advantage to the youth would be skipping the whole court process and having no permanent conviction on their record. In regard to the four counties (Adams, Clay, Nuckolls, Webster), Adams is the only county that offers diversion for minor in possession and youth offenders, (shoplifting, assault, criminal mischief, etc.). In 2005, the Adams County Diversion Program had 17 participants for MIP, under the age of 18 and 35 Youth Offenders (52 total youth). 47 participants completed the program successfully, 5 were revoked.

The contract for diversion is offered through the county attorney's office and is monitored by the office of the Adams County Diversion Program. The following are the requirements of the diversion program:

1. \$75.00 programming fee.
2. Regular attendance at school or a full-time job.
3. No association with other youth who are involved in the

- legal system for criminal behavior.
4. Attend a street laws program (youth offenders). 3 hours
  5. Total abstinence from drugs, alcohol and tobacco (MIPs).
  6. 10 hours of community service through a non-profit agency.
  7. A self-pay drug and alcohol evaluation (MIPs).
  8. Follow all recommendations set forth in the afore-mentioned evaluation in regard to treatment, counseling, therapy etc. (MIPs).
  9. Attend a self-pay 8 hour drug and alcohol class (MIPs).
  10. Notify the Adams County Diversion Program's office of any further contact with the police.

Based on the decrease in the number of youth choosing Diversion, it appears that, after learning of the components of the Diversion Program, many parents encourage their children to accept a conviction to avoid the inconveniences and expenses, not realizing the long-term damage that can result from having a permanent record. Although there are not currently any statistics available to verify this, it appears that the more "high-risk" and dysfunctional the family, the less likely they are to accept diversion, possibly to avoid contact with the criminal justice system.

There are two strategies our community has agreed would be useful in valuing the importance of the Diversion Program. The first strategy would be educating audiences of the benefits of diversion vs. the consequences of conviction. Parents of youth who are offered diversion need individualized intakes and support. All children coming through the diversion program are treated the same. It is obvious that there are some families that need additional services and support. Diversion programs should be established in Clay, Nuckolls, and Webster counties. Contacts need to be made to county attorney's office to educate them on the benefits of diversion in their communities. The Adams County Diversion program could gather information through the county attorney's office to see exactly how many contracts were offered to families and how many families did not accept and the reason why.

Our second strategy is to increase the effectiveness of the diversion program. The way to do this is by tracking youth (pre and post diversion), seeing how many of the youth committed a second offense. Individualized screening, increased supervision, and specific diversion contracts need to be completed for each individual. Intake with the Adams County Diversion typically lasts 15-20 minutes, not nearly enough time to assist a family in crisis. Currently there is only a part-time diversion coordinator who cannot spend the time to adequately crisis-manage youth on diversion. It would be beneficial for the street laws program to be expanded to include additional hours for the youth and also education for the parents.

**Resources:** A full-time case manager, which requires more funding. Similar resources are needed in the other 3 counties of our region.

**Expected Results:** If these strategies are implemented successfully, we believe that the following will result:

1. Juveniles who participate in the Diversion Program will learn to make positive choices and therefore have a lower tendency of recidivism.

2. Awareness among the parents involved increases, therefore helping parents to help their children make better choices.
3. Decrease the number of convictions among 12-18 year olds.
4. Overall, increase the success ratio of the Diversion Program.
5. Decrease the number of police reports involving youth 12-18 years of age.

**Strategy #2: AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS:**

In Nuckolls, Clay, and Webster Counties there are at present no after-school programs offering shelter and guidance to elementary school children whose parents are working or for some other reason not at home. When the weather is nice, children tend to gather at the band shell in Superior's city park where they are easy prey for older kids or adults who seem to enjoy tempting them to experiment with drugs, etc.

**Implementation of the Project:** SCARED has adopted as one of their goals the establishment of an after-school program which would be open to grades 3-6. A committee has met with the Nuckolls County Ministerial Association, which approved the idea. SCARED plans to seek a Juvenile Justice Title grant to hire a director and provide a site.

**Resources Needed:** Besides planning and implementing the program, the director would be charged with recruiting volunteers. The Zone in Adams County would be used as a model.

**Timeline:** If a grant is available, it is expected the program would be implemented for the 2009-10 school year.

**Expected Results:** This strategy will provide a place for youth to go afterschool to be occupied/distracted, to be supervised, to provide incentives and education that will be used to modify behavior. Indirectly, these programs will help prevent crime, drug and alcohol use, and pregnancy rate.

**Strategy #3: ANGER MANAGEMENT GROUP**

**Implementation of Project:** As part of a joint effort, the District 7 Probation Office and the Office of Juvenile Services will be offering an anger management group for the juveniles who are on probation or in the care and custody of the Department. The facilitators will be graduate students pursuing a Masters Degree in counseling through Doane College offered at the Grand Island Campus.

The program we plan to use was created by Northwest Media, Inc as part of their social learning resource curriculum. "Teens Taking Charge" consists of two segments; "options to Anger and "Efficacy: Your Secret Power for Decision Making" which builds on the first segment.

"Options to Anger" program is a nineteen part curriculum that engages teens and makes a lasting difference. It is a unique multi-media curriculum that empowers youth to understand and manage anger. It is based on years of research and best practice models. It consists of a DVD and a curriculum guide with reproducible materials.

"Efficacy: Your Secret Power for Decision Making" serves as a model for teens on how to solve problems and accomplish goals in life. The curriculum offers versatility as it weaves a DVD and CD interactive activities with group sessions in eleven meetings of instructing and three additional meetings involving extensive role-playing exercises. This includes a curriculum guide

which provides step-by-step descriptions, along with supporting notes, and appendixes with supplemental material.

**Resources Needed:** The cost of both programs is \$495 each, but if you purchase both programs, the cost is \$900.

**Timeline:** We plan to start the programs in January 2009, with groups meeting one time per week.

**Expected Results:** Attendance in Anger Management Classes, Increase in Education about Anger Management

#### **Strategy #4. MATRIX PROGRAM**

Compass Point will be the counseling center actively involved in this project.

Purpose of the treatment program is a joint venture with probation and the office of juvenile services to serve adolescents between the ages of 13 and 18 who are enrolled in middle school or high school. We will address the lack of appropriate coping skills, the inadequate use of appropriate coping skills that results in high risk bio/psycho/social consequences that ultimately can lead to subsequent interfaces with the legal system.

**Implementation of Project:** A Matrix Skill Building group will be started in the Hastings Public Schools, to be held at the school. This treatment program will consist of two 1.5 hour groups a week for a total of six weeks. Additionally one education based, non-therapeutic family session will occur at the three week mark to ascertain perceived progress. We will utilize outcome rating scales by Scott D. Miller, Ph.D. from the institute for the Study of Therapeutic Change in Chicago, IL. These will be completed at the end of every group session, family session and individual sessions as deemed necessary. These will be compiled on a weekly basis and needs addressed by staff and client in order to meet client's motivation for change.

**Resources Needed:** Compass Point staff, counselors and community liason to identify youth, space to meet

**Timeline:** Letters sent to school counselors December 2008 and a meeting will be held January 2009 to identify kids, needs and time. First group will start no later than March 2009.

**Expected Results:** This program will provide a more intensive level of intervention along with providing a level of accountability that is currently not in place. It is the therapeutic piece to an integrated approach in working with juveniles in the services systems of our counties. It will also provide a level of care not currently available after diversion, probation and individual/family counseling. This program is about networking with all providers of juvenile services including but not limited to; prevention programs, schools, counselors, probation, health and human services, diversion services and families. It will provide the highest level of care in our four county areas for juveniles allowing providers to work with juveniles at the less intensive levels for intervention and utilizing this program when all lesser levels are unsuccessful.

## **Priority # 3 Health & Safety**

Youth in South Central Nebraska are faced with health and safety issues, as evidenced by the following facts:

- **South Central Nebraska is witness to the state's highest rate of obesity in children and adults!** Students are between 14 and 17 percent more likely to be overweight than those in other areas of the state. (Overweight Among Nebraska Youth, 2004)
- 77% of students (9-12) did not engage in moderate or vigorous physical activity level in 3-5 of the 7 days prior to the survey. (2003 Nebraska Youth Risk Behavior Survey (NYRBS)).
- In Nebraska, 1 in every 6 students (16.2%) in grades K-12 is overweight while an additional 1 in every 6 (17.1%) is at risk for overweight. This indicates that 1 in every 3 (33.3%), or approximately 106,000 Nebraska students, is either at risk for overweight or overweight. Students at greatest risk for overweight include males, students in grades 4-6, Hispanic and Native American students, and students in the *south central Nebraska region*. (Overweight Among Nebraska Youth, 2004)

Other areas are addressed in the service need section below.

### **Services in Place:**

Programs Available: Compass Point life skills & coping skills, Pregnancy Center STD prevention/pregnancy prevention/abstinence/dating violence, Background checks done by many groups working with youth—TeamMates, BBBS, YMCA, 4-H, churches, private schools, Brain Team getting Vision Quest training volunteers and grant for equipment, Creighton Nurses did multi-topic discussion for ZONE, YLA Health Rocks, Voc Rehab has orthopaedic assessment available to assess ability to drive, YMCA fitness programs for youth, Diversion to address petty crimes, oral health-health department ages 3-18, also childhood obesity grant, DARE, FFA in Superior does water testing and safety checks on car seats, Tri-city Safe Kids, Girl Power/Wise Guys, dog from South Heartland, sodas not sold in schools, Zone approved for Healthy Snack Program with state, Rethink Your Drink at Adams County Extension Office, 4-H weather programs & first aid safety/ YES

### **Services Needed:**

Three glaring needs have been identified as the Health and Safety Priority is addressed.

- I. Need: South Central Nebraska sees the states highest level of childhood obesity.** Here are the facts:
  - Between 1976-1980 and 1999-2000, the percentage of overweight U.S. children (ages 6-11) more than doubled (increasing 135%) while the percentage of overweight adolescents (ages 12-19) more than tripled (increasing 210%). Overweight and obese individuals are at increased risk for both physical and emotional disorders. (Overweight Among Nebraska Youth, 2004)
  - Nearly 4 hours of the average school day is spent engaging in Electronic Sedentary Behavior (excluding homework). 27% of students spend 5 hours or more daily. (NYRBS).
  - 88% of youth drink soda daily. (NYRBS)
  - Portion sizes at restaurants have increased over the past decades up to 50% on typical menu items such as French fries. (RWJF "The Challenge").

### **Risks and Health Problems of Increased Weight Among Youth**

- There is a direct association of adolescent obesity to risk factors for coronary heart disease, diabetes (note in local statistics South Central Nebraska has higher rate of these conditions no doubt related to our higher rate of overweight/obesity). It can be reversed and prevented.
- Obesity is second only to tobacco as leading cause of preventable disease and death in the United States. It leads to hypertension, diabetes, coronary heart disease, stroke and some cancers. (Oct 07; American Journal of Preventative Medicine (supplement), 33(4) pp 246-50).

### **NEED 2. This South Central Nebraska area must address the issue of teen dating violence, forced sexual intercourse, STDs, teen pregnancies, eating disorders, bullying and violence, and drug and alcohol use.**

Here are some stats:

#### **DATING VIOLENCE:**

- The 2005 Nebraska Youth Assessment survey reports that teen dating violence in South Central Nebraska is **above the state average**.
- The same source says forced sexual intercourse is **well above the national average**.

#### **TEEN PREGNANCY:**

What's more, the rate of teen pregnancy, pregnancy to unwed mothers, and STDs are on the rise.

- Adams County ranks 7<sup>th</sup> of 93 counties in the state for teen pregnancy (11.4% of births in Adams county are to teen mothers).
- With teen pregnancy comes the risk of low birth rate and greater risk of abuse and neglect (Sawhill, IV Brookings Policy Brief, 1998).
- Less than 1/3 of teen mothers finish high school and only 1.5% earn a college degree by the age of 30 (Mayard, RA, Ed. Kids Having Kids, NY: The Robin Hood Foundation, 1996).
- Almost half of all teen mothers end up on welfare (Sawhill).

#### **UNWED BIRTHS:**

- About 30 percent of the births in Hastings are to unwed mothers. This figure has doubled in the past 20 years to be the highest in state history.

#### **STDs:**

- One in four teens are diagnosed with a sexually transmitted infection (Medical Institute of Sexual Health, [www.medinstitute.org](http://www.medinstitute.org)). Many teens are simply unaware of all of the STDs prevalent, how they can be transmitted, and the inadequacy of some methods to reduce their spread.

#### **EATING DISORDERS**

- Some 45% of 9-12 grade students are trying to lose weight – 34% of those trying lose weight use high high-risk weight loss methods such as fasting, using laxatives, etc. (Overweight Among Nebraska Youth, 2004)

#### **BULLYING AND VIOLENCE**

The same 2005 Youth Risk Behavior Survey reported that

- 29% of 9-12 graders have been in a physical fight in the past year.

- Some 18% have carried a weapon on more or more of the past 30 days.
- 17% seriously considered attempting suicide in the past 12 months.

**NEED 3: Lack of awareness of the opportunities available to contribute to physical, emotional, social, and spiritual health. We must make sure needs of those in this area are assessed and met.**

Although rural, this area is fortunate to have many opportunities for meeting the many needs youth have. We must make sure parents and youth alike are aware of these opportunities, identify gaps in services, and develop innovative and effective vehicles with which to address these gaps.

### **STRATEGIES**

**Promote, provide, and support ample, varied, safe, and age-appropriate activities for 12-18 year olds. These include, but are not limited to workshops, after-school programs such as the Zone and the YMCA, youth groups, etc.**

**Help fund established programs that address: health (including physical, mental and emotional), crime or gang prevention, childhood obesity, drug and alcohol prevention, and healthy relationships among peers, families and mentors.**

**Activity:** Forge collaborations, share resources, collaborate grant efforts.

**Activity:** Compile and establish a master guide to resources and activities available for this age.

**Activity:** Market and promote all opportunities/organizations that address the Health and Safety Priority.

**Activity:** Establish a needs assessment and evaluation method between the collaborative partners.

**Implementation of Project** (who will be responsible for this activity): YMCA/YWCA

**Resources Needed:** Funds for staffing, materials, equipment, facility use, marketing.

**Timeline:** December 09 and ongoing.

**Expected Results:** Awareness of opportunities available. Increased participation in activities. Decrease in obesity rates. Decrease in juvenile crime rate. Decrease in teen pregnancy/STD rate. Increase access to good health opportunities.

## **Priority # 4 Parenting**

Parents or Guardians have a huge responsibility in raising children. They aren't given a manual when the child is born that explains how to best nurture the child. Parents and guardians are expected to innately know how to best care for their child. We also recognize that many children are not being raised by their biological parents and that many grandparents, other family members, adoptive or foster parents are rearing children. Parenting is a difficult area to address because lack of parenting skill is many times not evident until families are at potential crisis. Every agency involved in the planning process is aware of lack of parenting skills and the need to parental participation.

There are many agencies in the four county area that provide assistance to parents and guardians. Some of these include Head Start/Early Head Start, Teen MOPS, Good Beginnings, Parents Forever, Families Care and Moms off Meth. However, there is still a need for more child-rearing education. Much of the support available targets young children with less assistance being available for adolescents. To further compound the problem, most adults have a limited amount of time to participate in parenting education. Too often parents look for help when they are in a crisis.

### **Strategy #1: UTILIZING PARENTING WISELY**

**Implementation of Project:** Parenting Wisely: Teens (PW) is the program we will utilize to connect parents/guardians with parenting education with emphasis on the adolescent. The program is available in both English and Spanish.

Parenting Wisely is a parenting skills education system. The Parenting Wisely website says, "PW is evidence-based and proven effective. Extensive research and clinical tests show that use of Parenting Wisely resulted in:

- Increased knowledge & use of good parenting skills
- A decrease in child behavior problems
- Improved problem solving
- Reduced spousal violence and violence toward their children
- Program completion rates for parents ranged from 83% - 95%

Success of the program has earned it the ranking as a SAMHSA "Model Program" and an OJJDP "Exemplary Program" as well as many other honors and rankings."

PW is can be done in a class format utilizing CD-ROMs or individually online. The information is presented visually, audibly, and in text to accommodate all types of learners.

**Resources:** The Hastings Area Council on Alcohol and Substance Abuse (HACA) will implement the Parenting Wisely: Teens program in the 4 county area. We will partner with other agencies, such as SASA, Good Beginnings, Teen MOPS, CASA and diversion, to offer the program. In addition, we will keep counselors apprised of the program and when classes will be held or schedule times for online use.

**Timeline:** HACA already has the PW: Teens CD ROMs and facilitators ready to hold classes. We will offer classes on a regular basis beginning in 2009 and will subscribe to the online version in 2009 if funds are available.

Future possible offerings include: PW Young Children (ages 3 – 9), PW Foster and Residential Care, Online one-year subscription for parents of adolescents

**Expected results:** More positive interaction between parents/guardians and children, less problems in school, prevention for risky behaviors such as alcohol and drug use.

### **Strategy #2: CASA expansion into Nuckolls County**

**Strategy:** maintain CASA in Nuckolls County by continuing to provide “best interest advocacy for children in the juvenile court system to find a safe and permanent home.

Our statistics for this last year is 6 children currently being served, but a total of 9 for the year. Three children found permanency and their cases were dismissed.

**Resources needed—** Personnel, Travel, Supplies, Training

**Timeline:** Ongoing

**Expected Out comes:**

To maintain services to all abused/neglected children in Nuckolls County who have been adjudicated in court

To increase the number of volunteers serving children under the CASA program

To decrease the number of children who are re-victimized

To increase the number of children in foster care that exit to either reunification, adoption, or legal guardianship.

## **Priority # 5 Truancy**

Truancy is a common and difficult issue in the four-county area. The first recommendation from the Community Planning Decision Point Analysis states that “truancy remains an accurate predictor of future delinquency.

There is an increasing problem with truancy in our community. Truancy is starting with children in elementary schools and spreads throughout up until High school. The problem is that children who are truant from school often go on to have problems in their adult life. Sixteen percent of children in our schools are truant, children who do not attend school regularly often start taking drugs, alcohol, using tobacco and develop other high risk behaviors.

Truancy is the first red flag that a youth will be entering the juvenile justice system.

If left unaddressed truancy during the preteen and teenage years will have a devastating effect on the student, schools and society. Using a negative enforcement such as placing the child in an environment that separates him/her from their family and friends can also take a devastating toll on an already ‘at risk’ youth.

As of 11/11/08, of the 1,658 registered 6-12 grade students in the Hastings Public School district, an average of 6.8% had already missed seven or more of the 51 days school was in session.

Services Available: Individual School Policies and Procedures, County Attorney Involvement

Services Needed: System to prevent intervention of court system, find youth before legal involvement

### Strategy #1:

**Implementation:** Hire a part-time coordinator to lead the CASA exploratory committee (including CASA, Adams County Attorney, Hastings Public Schools, Hastings Police Department, Department of Health and Human Services—Family and Support Specialist Division, Probation, Community Mental Health Practitioner, YWCA Zone, looking into a problem solving approach to address truancy with Hastings youth, ages 12-17.

### **Timeline:**

The coordinator will explore program logistics and grant opportunities as well as community investment through June 30, 2009, at which time the committee should have a clearer idea about how to address the priority goal of truancy through a community problem solving approach.

### **Resources Needed:**

Coordinator, Office Supplies, Postage

**Outcome:** An new and innovative, strength-based, yet accountability driven process will emerge to address the issue of truancy in Hastings, Nebraska with students ages 12-17.

**Strategy #2: Zone Afterschool Program**

Implementation: 'The Zone' after School Program proposes to take a positive stand in the issue of truancy in the youth of Adams and surrounding counties. By attending after school programs youth can develop confidence in their academic abilities, develop a greater interest in school and be a part of a positive, thriving environment, where they can obtain the trust and skills needed to be successful in their lives.

Based in the basement of the Hastings Police Department, The Zone is situated in an ideal setting with features such as a gym to play dodge ball and a large room that holds a big screen TV, Internet access and a craft area.

Staff interacts with all Zone youth by playing ball games, mentoring, and helping with homework by using a Behavior Modification Program (BMP) called 'Zone Bucks'. Zone Bucks is a positive reward system that uses rewards to change behavior in youth. Youth respond very well to this type of BMP as they are rewarded for the changes they make in their behavior in a very positive and respectful manner, thus teaching valuable life lessons and coping skills for the future.

Zone bucks can be used to teach new behaviors, increase or strengthen existing behaviors, eliminate bad behaviors. Youth that have been truant from school can be monitored in their attendance and referred to the Zone program. They will be monitored and mentored to ensure a behavior change to make better choices in their academic and personal lives.

**EXAMPLE:**

Youth is absent from school for 10 consecutive days. Youth is ordered to program to complete 10 week set of sessions, 80 children participating in program.

Coordinator acts as liaison between schools, community organizations and records child's participation in Zone program.

Powerschool is accessed through Zone to obtain current grades and attendance.

Zone buck rewards are given to enforce behavioral changes, rewards, such as food, snacks, vouchers to restaurants and other token personal items.

**Resources Needed:** Coordinator, Zone Bucks/Prizes, Computer, Printer, Ink

**Timeline:** Ongoing

**Expected Results:** By using continuous communication and data collection from the local schools the Zone can provide a measurable, results driven, sound method of helping youth in our local community to reduce truancy rates.