

Matagorda County Criminal Justice Community Plan



2013-2014

April 15, 2014 Revision

Matagorda County Criminal Justice Community Plan

What Is a Community Plan?

This plan is formally known as the Matagorda County Criminal Justice Community Plan, the purpose of which is to identify gaps in services regarding criminal justice issues. The Criminal Justice Division of the Governor's Office (CJD) requires that Criminal Justice Community Plans be developed and maintained by counties and regions throughout Texas.

The document that is represented here reflects the efforts of many in Matagorda County that are concerned with assuring that any gaps in services are closed, thus making our communities safer places in which to live and work. It is with grateful acknowledgement that the names of those involved in the process of developing this Plan are listed in the section entitled Community Planning Team.

Though the final draft of this Plan was completed in December of 2013, this is a work in progress. New criminal justice goals are identified, the Planning Group changes as a result of individual and agency circumstances. Also requirements concerning the makeup of the Plan are subject to change from year to year. Thus, Matagorda County is interested in keeping up with these changes, and including them in updates that will be posted from time to time.

If you are reading this Plan and have not been involved in its development, you are invited to join in this ongoing effort. Any questions you may have can be addressed to either Harriet Townsend, Community Plan Coordinator for Matagorda County, or to a Criminal Justice Program staff member of the (COG). Contact information is provided at the end of this document.

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

Areas Represented

Incorporated Communities:

Bay City Palacios

Unincorporated Communities:

Van Vleck	Blessing	Wadsworth	Cedar Lane	Sargent
Ashwood	Matagorda	Midfield	Collegeport	Markham
Pledger	Cedar Lake	El Maton	Sugar Valley	

School Districts:

Bay City Independent School District	Matagorda Independent School District
Palacios Independent School District	Van Vleck Independent School District
Tidehaven Independent School District	

Brief description and history of Matagorda County:

History: Matagorda County, created in 1836 is rich in history and tradition. It was an early home of the Karankawa Indians and landing place of La Salle in 1685. It began its existence as a Spanish province, and was settled in 1822-1836 by colonists of Stephen F. Austin. It is one of the original 23 counties and is part of Stephen F. Austin’s original grant. It contained Texas’ third largest town at the time of the Battle of the Alamo, and was one of the few Civil War battle sites in Texas.

Matagorda was the county seat from 1837-1894, but the county seat was moved to Bay City in 1894. In the early days Matagorda County was on a key route between settlements. The Colorado River was a major obstacle for early travelers, and many used Cayce’s Ferry. During Texas’ republic days, a garrison of 30-40 men was stationed in Matagorda County near the ferry.

The citizens of Matagorda County have contributed greatly to the development of Texas culture – (1) the pioneer woman teacher, Mary S. Wightman Helms, (2) an early newspaper, “The Matagorda Bulletin”, as well as (3) the first Episcopal Church.

Description: The County is located between Galveston and Corpus Christi, along the Gulf Coast, and enjoys a diversity of geography from its wide expanse of prairies to the many creeks, rivers, lakes, bays and the Gulf of Mexico. Birders have a wealth of places to choose from especially with the 34 acre Matagorda County Birding Nature Center along the Colorado River 1.7 miles west of Bay City on Texas 35. In addition, Mad Island Marsh Preserve and Wildlife Management Area boasts the highest species of birds in the Audubon Christmas Bird Count of any location in the entire United States. Matagorda County offers some of the finest saltwater fishing on the entire Gulf Coast, and its bays are filled with red fish, flounder, trout, crab and shrimp. The Lower Colorado River Authority has developed Matagorda Bay Nature Park, a 1,600 acre park and preserve at the mouth of the Colorado River on the Matagorda Peninsula. The park provides nature education, recreation and nature tourism opportunities for visitors. Matagorda County is home to the South Texas Nuclear Plant, Celanese, and Lyondell. Tenaris Bay City has just recently broken ground for a new state of the art pipe manufacturing company. Matagorda County has strong agricultural ties in the production of cotton and rice; and, aquaculture has also grown with the production of crawfish, catfish, redfish, and shrimp.

The County is a political subdivision of the State of Texas. The elected Commissioners Court is the governing body of the County which is comprised of the County Judge and four County Commissioners. Commissioners serve four-year staggered terms, two members elected every two years. The County Judge is elected at large to serve a four-year term. The Commissioners Court has certain powers granted to it by the state legislature. Its duties include approval of the budget, determination of the tax rates, approval of contracts, calling elections, issuance of bonds, and the appointment of certain county officials.

During 2010 Judge McDonald and his counterparts in Colorado and Wharton Counties recognized that shrinking budgets, increased needs for social services, increasing rates of high school dropouts, lack of college completion and the high levels of low adult literacy were compounding to impact the justice system and increase high poverty levels in the region. The Judges collaborated to support the creation of the Tri-County Coalition for Literacy and Community Services and successfully applied for a Renewing Our Communities Grant from the OneStar Foundation out of the Governor's Office. This organization has since become the Rural Literacy Coalition.

Demographics: Matagorda County is a rural area with a population of 36,702 according to the 2010 Census. There were 13,901 households out of which 36.70% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 53.80% were married couples living together, 12.70% had a female householder with no husband present, and 28.60% were non-families. Of the 13,901 households, 10.40% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average family size was 3.25 individuals.

In the county, the population was dispersed among age groups as follows: with 30% under the age of 18, 8.90% are from 18 to 24, 26.90% from 25 to 44, 21.80% from 45 to 64, and 12.40% who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 35 years, and for every 100 females there were 98.60 males. Nearly 14.90% of families and 21.2% of the population were below 100% of the poverty line, including 23% of those under age 18, and 13.60% of those, age 65 or over. Children living in poverty are at 23.7%. According to the Texas Workforce Commission, the unemployment rate for Matagorda County in August 2013 was 10%, and the state average was 6.3%.

Ethnic Make-up: Caucasian 47.44%
 Hispanic 38.38%
 African American 10.99%
 American Indian .28%
 Asian 1.89%
 Multi-Racial and Other 1.02%

Community Planning Team

Community Plan Coordinator for Matagorda County: Harriet Townsend/ Executive Secretary to County Judge/ Matagorda County

In developing this Community Plan, members of the team were divided into several focus groups for the purpose of narrowing the scope of research and data that are incorporated into the Plan. Some members may serve in multiple capacities/categories.

Juvenile Services:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Agency</i>
Judge Jeanette Bell	Justice of the Peace, #1
Judge Suzan Thompson	Bay City Municipal Court and Justice of the Peace, #2
Eugene Davis	Crisis Center
David LaVassaur	Boys and Girls Club of Bay City and Matagorda County
Tami Savage	Boys and Girls Club of Bay City and Matagorda County
Kelsey Mund	City of Bay City
Di Ann Sneed	Matagorda County United Way
Francie Cole	MEHOP
Jeremy Rodriguez	Interim Chief of Juvenile Probation Department

Victim Services:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Agency</i>
Monica Tucker	Crisis Center
Eugene Davis	Crisis Center
Di Ann Sneed	Matagorda County United Way
Rachel Stone	Matagorda County United Way
Susan Maxwell	Matagorda County District Attorney's Office
Lettie Ramos	Bay City Police Department
Colleen Labar	MEHOP
J. T. Saglime, Jr.	MEHOP
Kim Schneider	MEHOP

Law Enforcement:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Agency</i>
David Miles, Chief	Palacios Police Department
Steven Baker	Matagorda County Sheriff's Office
Robert Lister, Lieutenant	Bay City Police Department
Christella Rodriguez, Captain	Bay City Police Department
Steven Reis	Matagorda County District Attorney's Office
Lindsey Deshotels	Matagorda County District Attorney's Office
Karma Chambless	Matagorda County Adult Probation Department
Peggy Stanley	Business Owner

Education:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Agency</i>
Colleen LaBar	MEHOP
Margaret Doughty	Rural Literacy Coalition
Monica Tucker	Crisis Center
Rachel Stone	Matagorda County United Way
Misti Ebenkamp	MEHOP
Gail Purvis	The Trull Foundation

Identification of Community Problems

General Public Safety Needs and Issues

Matagorda County is a diverse rural community that is experiencing issues that are usually associated with large metropolitan areas. Poverty and unemployment are high in Matagorda County, which has been proven to increase crime. When crime increases, demands for victims services, law enforcement, and juvenile services increase. The community faces a higher unemployment and poverty rate than the statewide averages according to the 2010 Census Information: 23.7% of Matagorda County's population under 18 lives in poverty according to Census Bureau. The many accompanying issues in Matagorda County include increasing high school dropout rates, unemployment, substance abuse, juvenile crime, poor transportation developments, poverty levels, homeless minors, and the need for funding in all areas of the community. Literacy is the foundational tool for individual prosperity and community economic self-sufficiency and is the root cause for high levels of poverty and associated criminal justice issues. 26% of adults in Bay City over the age of 25 do not have a high school diploma. Additional resources are needed to address these issues. The community must address the needs for psychiatric care for underinsured and long term psychiatric placement, affordable legal services, affordable housing, utility and rental assistance, increased access to health care for the uninsured and underinsured, transportation, crime prevention programs, community awareness programs, bi-lingual services, child and teen programs, child day care, community education, professional education, crisis intervention services, substance abuse and expansion of job training and skill building programs.

Matagorda County United Way plays an important role facilitating and supporting services to Matagorda and Wharton Counties. It was organized to develop the financial and community resources needed to meet the human service needs of the community and to deploy United Way financial support to maximize the resources available to agencies aimed at the most urgent needs of the community. The United Way office administers Matagorda County HELPLINE, a free, bilingual and confidential information and referral service available for citizens of Matagorda, Wharton and Colorado Counties. United Way is the catalyst for the Matagorda County Interagency Community Resource Coordination Groups for Families, a collaborative effort organized to keep organizations up to date on program changes, resources, grant opportunities, and as a help to specific clients directing them to needed services. An Information & Referral Directory of social service organizations (State, Federal and Private) is maintained. The United Way is the fiscal agent for the Tri-County Coalition for Literacy and Community Service bringing together Matagorda, Wharton and Colorado Counties with a goal to strengthen literacy delivery skills and used best practices through the three county areas.

Matagorda County United Way is making great progress in meeting increased needs of the community, but will continue to see an increasing demand from agencies due to the Welfare to Work reform. More responsibility is being placed on local communities to meet special community needs due to less control and dollars available from the State. Consequently, the community will rely more heavily on the Matagorda County United Way, and other agencies, for support in these many areas!

The Boys and Girls Club is proving that it is essential that children receive the best chance possible to live a healthy and productive life. The underserved youth have the chance to participate in and enjoy physical activities and the thrill of competition all the while increasing their capacity to engage in

positive behaviors that nurture their own well-being, set personal goals and live successfully as self-sufficient adults. This is a safe and positive alternative to the city streets for many youth, but there are many more youth that are on the waiting list. The club is open during the hours that young people are most likely to engage in negative behavior, from 3-7 p.m.

In each of the areas on the following pages, problems are identified and data is included that supports both the existence and severity of gaps as they are found in Matagorda County. Below the description and data are a discussion of the problems, the manner in which the problems are being addressed, and strategically how responses to these community problems could be improved.

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

Priority #1	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Education:</p> <p>Students attending public/private schools who complete and earn a high school diploma or GED</p>	<p>The Graduation rates and Drop Out Rates for all School Districts in the county are as follows:</p> <p>Bay City Independent School District: Graduation Rate in 2011 – 89.7% Drop Out Rate 7th & 8th Graders – 0% Drop Out Rate 9th thru 12th Graders – 1.2% The percentage of economically disadvantaged is 73.3% for 2012</p> <p>Palacios Independent School District: Graduation Rate in 2011 - 90,2% Drop Out Rate 7th & 8th Graders – 0% Drop Out Rate 9th thru 12th Graders – % The percentage of economically disadvantaged is 66.5% for 2012</p> <p>Van Vleck Independent School District: Graduation Rate in 2011 – 96% Drop Out Rate 7th & 8th Graders – 0% Drop Out Rate 9th thru 12th Graders – 0% The percentage of economically disadvantaged is 57.3% for 2012</p> <p>Tidehaven Independent School District: Graduation Rate in 2011 – 96.3% Drop Out Rate 7th & 8th Graders – 0% Drop Out Rate 9th thru 12th Graders – 0% The percentage of economically disadvantaged is 65.0% for 2012</p> <p>Matagorda Independent School District: Drop Out Rate 7th & 8th Graders – 0% Does not have a High School, their students transfer to Bay City Independent School District after 8th grade The percentage of economically disadvantaged is 100% for 2012</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>Reconnecting students, who have dropped out of school or who are at risk of dropping out, with either community or school based programs, will better prepare juveniles for adulthood and the workforce. Groups such as E4E 2, Literacy Volunteers of America, and Goodwill Industries of Houston’s Training Young People for Jobs Program all target teens who have dropped out of school, assisting the teen in re-engaging in school, pursuing a GED, or pursuing vocational training with the local junior college.</p> <p>For those students who are still in school, but are experiencing serious academic and behavioral issues, having an appointed advocate who understands the educational system to walk with them, will help keep students in school, and achieve success. At risk students, and their families, many times do not understand how to work through the educational system in order to achieve success. The school system has several programs and opportunities that will help the student succeed, however, not knowing or understanding the system and the availability of these opportunities will keep students and families from requesting and accessing these resources. Having an appointed</p>	

advocate, who understands opportunities and responsibilities of each party, will increase the likelihood of students staying in schools, and becoming successful. Several community groups provide after school and summer tutoring and enrichment services that will increase the likelihood of success for the teen as well. **Boys and Girls Club** is but one group that provides after school tutoring and supervised activities.

Priority #2	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Family Life:</p> <p>Building and bonding of the nuclear family of the Juvenile.</p>	<p>From 2007 – 2012 Child Protective Services have run confirmed victims per 1000, and the corresponding state average for that year are as follows:</p> <p>2007 Allegations (322) Confirmed (7.7%) State Average (11.2%)</p> <p>2008 Allegations (342) Confirmed (8.5%) State Average (11.0%)</p> <p>2009 Allegations (321) Confirmed (6.9%) State Average (10.5%)</p> <p>2010 Allegations (334) Confirmed (5.2%) State Average (10.2%)</p> <p>2011 Allegations (364) Confirmed (7,8%) State Average (9.9%)</p> <p>2012 Allegations (303) Confirmed (9.6%) State Average (9.1%)</p> <p>CPS Foster Care Placements for September 2012 are 19 children in Foster Care in county, 18 children placed out of the county, with 94.7% of children placed out of Matagorda County.</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>Research shows that the establishment of a loving caring relationship between parents, teachers, and the child helps to create a supportive environment. Issues addressed that will positively impact family life, and juvenile success are positive peer involvement (through programs such as Boys and Girls Clubs, church youth groups, organized sports activities, Boy and Girl Scouts, 4H, FFA, and others), exposure to career paths (through job shadowing, school based programs such as DECA, and community groups, such as Goodwill Industries' Training Young People for Jobs Program), quality of life exposure (family activities – examples of existing opportunities are: Family Fun Day – Bay City BACODA, DADS – Dad's day out – Palacios, social skill education (such as Parenting classes, Parenting Academy – Palacios), Life skill education – financial, and job readiness. In today's internet age, on line curriculum is available that will teach basic social and decision making skills that will help establish life competency abilities. These do cost though, Counseling is often needed, two organizations provide this service free or at reduced costs for those who qualify, MEHOP and Matagorda County Women's Crisis Center. By providing these opportunities to parents and juvenile teens alike, the juvenile will experience healthy life style experiences and knowledge, along with stronger role modeling influence, which will create a higher likelihood of success in life. Juveniles who are high risk do not normally come from a supportive environment. These youth also do not normally participate in programs and activities that build a resiliency of success. Thus, there is the need to target this high risk group.</p>	

Priority #3	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Substance Abuse & Chemical Dependency:</p> <p>Dependency upon a controlled substance by a juvenile.</p>	<p>Texas Youth Commission reports that of the state-wide juveniles in the system, 53% have some type of chemical dependency in 2010-2011.</p> <p>Juvenile Courts in Matagorda County reported 29% of all cases seen from September – August 2013 were drug related.</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>Being able to accurately assess a juvenile's substance abuse issue is an ongoing challenge. Thus, having a comprehensive risk and needs assessment tool will help screen and refer juveniles to the correct forms of assistance. Many of these juveniles lack positive peer influence mentoring through organized activities and groups, some of which are listed under Family Life, which will go a long way toward the prevention of substance abuse. It is important to bring awareness of the dangers of this destructive behavior through education to juveniles. Groups, such as BACODA, MADD – through victim impact panels, Crisis Center through its Relationship/Bullying program, DARE in Tidehaven ISD, Bay City/Matagorda County Boys and Girls Club through its Smart Moves/Passport to Manhood Programs, and others serve an important function in building healthy juveniles. However, education alone, often fails without positive peer influence and healthy role modeling. Counseling is available through MEHOP and Matagorda County Women's Crisis Center to those who qualify, however, the counseling is with Licensed Professional Counselors and Psychologists, not Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselors.</p>	

Priority #4	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Poverty:</p> <p>Juveniles who lack the basics of food, shelter, and support services.</p>	<p>In the 2012-13 school year, children classified as homeless under the <i>No Child Left Behind Act</i> were: Bay City ISD (85), Palacios ISD (6), Tidehaven ISD (1), and Van Vleck ISD (20). However the children classified as in Poverty in 2008 were (27%), in 2009 were (29%), in 2010 (28.4%), and in 2011 (29.5%) as per kidscount.org. In the 2010 Census 27% of the population with children under 18 years of age had income below the poverty level, and 15.5% of the population received food stamps/SNAP benefits.</p> <p>The school districts in Matagorda County show their economically disadvantaged students as 73.3% for Bay City ISD, 66.5% for Palacios ISD, 57.3% for Van Vleck ISD, 65.0% for Tidehaven ISD, and 100% for Matagorda ISD.</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>Poverty so often creates an environment when juveniles are left to themselves, because a parent is working. Opportunities are lacking to become involved in healthy group activities, due to lack of time and influence by the parent. This vacuum is filled with anger, despair, and lack of motivation, low expectations, and gang involvement. Solutions include connecting the at risk juvenile to structured environments, such as after school/summer programs that create healthy boundaries, expectations, and goals. These structured environments, which also include organized sporting</p>	

activities and organizations, give the juvenile the opportunity of experiencing healthy life styles, and a positive exposure to wholesome alternatives. Government and Community services are not always accessed, due to a lack of time and availability of services. Even when services are accessed, there is so often a lack of adequacy. In Bay City and Palacios **local groups and churches** provide hot meals (these are only once or twice a week) and food pantries. **Schools** provide meals through the Federal programs of Free and Reduced Lunch, including breakfast. **Golden Crescent Food Bank** is in the early stages of starting the Backpack Program, which provides lunches for students on the weekends. This program though is not county-wide, but ISD and school specific. Having an accessible Texas Benefits Bank will help in providing the opportunity that all eligible families are able to apply for Government services, thus help the family as a whole to begin to financially stabilize.

Priority #5	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Health Issues:</p> <p>Physical and mental health concerns that will result in a physically healthy and able juvenile.</p>	<p>46.1% of eligible children in Matagorda County were involved in early and periodic screening, diagnostic and treatment under Medicaid for children in 2011, as per MEHOP.</p> <p>Chronic diseases of diabetes, hypertension, hyperlipidemia, and COPD/Asthma are above the state and national averages for Matagorda County as per MEHOP.</p> <p>Children receiving Free/Reduced Lunches were 72% in 2008-09, 71.7% in 2009-10, and 75.6% in 2010-11.</p> <p>Children receiving WIC were 43.4% in 2008, 42.9% in 2009, and 50.7% in 2010.</p> <p>Children receiving supplemental Nutrition Assistance were 26.6% in 2008, 31.8% in 2009, and 33.4% in 2010.</p> <p>Also births to teens ages 13-19 out of all live births, were 20.2% in 2006, 17.3% in 2007, and 17.9% in 2008. Births to single teens ages 13-19 out of all live births, were 16.0% in 2006, 12.9% in 2007, and 15.1% in 2008.</p> <p>Previous stats are as per kidscount.org.</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>Not accessing primary preventive health care and participating in risky behavior are the two key issues that are surrounding juveniles in Matagorda County. These are characteristics of communities with significant poverty rates. The principal provider of health care to this population group is MEHOP, a FQHC provider. Programs that address these two areas of concern are needed. Preventive health care is one of education, outreach, and impact upon the groups that are least likely to access health care. Programs that identify risky behavior and the outcomes of this behavior are important as well. These programs, while having a health related cause/outcome, also overlap into the social and criminal sides of life due to the nature of the risky behavior, such as active sexual conduct and drug abuse.</p>	

Priority #6

Problem Identified

Data

Juvenile Crime:

Conduct by juveniles that is subject to legal action.

Over the last three years juvenile crime referrals as reported by the Matagorda County Juvenile Probation Department have increased by about 10%.

2009-10 was 191 2010-11 was 196 2011-12 was 216

The approximate Ethnic % is: Hispanic 58%, Blacks 22%, and Caucasian 19%.

Males make up approximately 70% of the cases, while females make up approximately 30% of the cases. The age range is from 10-17; however, approximately 83% of the youth during these years seen by Juvenile Probation are from 13-16 years of age. The most frequently committed felony offense by juveniles is burglary, followed by aggravated assault, while the most frequently committed misdemeanor/status offenses are disorderly conduct, followed by assault.

From September 2011 – August 2012 Juvenile Court Cases: (offenses are ranked in order of highest to lowest) traffic violations (101), all other non-traffic with fine only (89), non-driving alcohol (61), violation of curfew (36), tobacco (14), truancy (15), education (7), drug paraphernalia (4), and driving under the influence (0).

The total cases in Bay City were 413, and in Palacios were 41 for September thru August of 2013, as per the Office of Court Administration.

Potential Response to Problem

Juvenile Crime is the end result of a breakdown of family life, education, substance abuse, and other issues. These issues culminate in juvenile crime. The highest percentage of juveniles seen by Juvenile Probation are males in their early teens. This is a crucial age when young men are making decisions concerning their life, future, education, values, and dating. Therefore, solutions need to address this specific age group, such as those that provide for positive role modeling, mentoring, group activities, and solutions that focus the juvenile on healthy alternatives, rather than crime. Being able to properly understand the needs of the juvenile is another issue. Lacking is a comprehensive risk and needs assessment tool that will identify criminogenic needs, address status, and dynamic factors. Being able to properly assess with help with addressing the dynamic factors that can be changed with the juvenile. Proper intervention and referral that address the juvenile's mental and physical health needs will then positively impact the success rate of juveniles in the criminal justice system.

Bay City ISD has contracted with the **Bay City/Matagorda County Boys and Girls Club** to offer gender specific programming for young males and females in the alternative school. These programs, "Passport to Manhood and Smart Moves" seek to give the necessary skills in order to make healthy and productive choices, thus avoiding harmful consequences such as juvenile crime. For young males who are experiencing more involved issues, intensive programs, such as those offered by **Gulf Winds**, and other groups, are needed.

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

Priority #1	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Domestic Violence:</p> <p>Domestic violence, also known as domestic abuse, spousal abuse, battering, family violence, and intimate partner violence (IPV), has been broadly defined violence, so defined; it has many forms including physical aggression (hitting, kicking, biting, shoving, restraining, slapping, throwing objects), or threats thereof; sexual abuse; emotional abuse; both controlling and/or domineering; intimidation; stalking; passive abuse (e.g. neglect); and economic deprivation.</p>	<p>In 2012-2013 the Crisis Center reports helping over 400 victims of Domestic Violence in Matagorda County. In 2012, law enforcement reported 415 cases of domestic violence. (Tx Dept. of Public Safety, 2012)</p> <p>The Crisis Center is the only provider of emergency shelter and crisis intervention services for domestic violence victims in Matagorda County.</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>The Matagorda County Women’s Crisis Center has been providing services to domestic violence victims since 1984. In addition, the Crisis Center has provided an Outreach Program in Wharton County since 1992. The Crisis Center works closely with local law enforcement agencies, the District Attorney’s office, County Attorney’s office, local medical providers, United Way and other social service providers to provide immediate crisis intervention services to victims of domestic violence in both counties.</p> <p>Domestic violence continues to be a major problem in our rural area, with not enough qualified advocates available. There is a critical need for victims of domestic violence to be able to access services that will provide immediate safety, emotional support, and personal advocacy after a crime crisis event. While the Crisis Center provides a wide range of services for victims, <i>such as twenty-four hour hotline, emergency shelter, peer support, crisis counseling, professional counseling and safety planning: emergency legal advocacy – including screening and applying for protective orders, support groups, transportation to shelter, accompaniment to law enforcement, courts, and hospitals by advocates, and information and assistance with Crime Victim Compensation;</i> victims do not always avail themselves of these resources, and appropriate referrals for services by law enforcement does not always take place. The need is for stronger training, collaboration, and the strengthening of services.</p> <p>Domestic violence is not exclusively an adult issue. Children are victims as well, both emotionally and physically. The Crisis Center has started a Children’s Advocacy Center to deal with child victims. KIDS (Kids in Distress) provides referrals for counseling for children who are victims. The need is for qualified personnel to deal with child victims</p> <p>The Matagorda County Women’s Crisis Center has partnered in establishing and providing space for a Children’s Advocacy Center in Matagorda County. Now children who are victims of sexual</p>	

assault and domestic violence will be cared for and counseled in Matagorda and Wharton Counties, instead of being taken out of the area for assistance.

Domestic violence is a learned, taught behavior that begins in the home and neighborhood. Presently the Matagorda County Women's Crisis Center prevention program seeks to address bullying, decision making, and teen dating violence through its school and after school programs. These traits develop in an atmosphere where respect, responsibility, and consequences are lacking. The need is for services that will provide the education and mentoring for youth. While several programs do exist, such as **Boys and Girls Club and the prevention program at the Crisis Center**, not enough youth are being reached.

Priority #2	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Sexual Assault</p>	<p>In 2012 Matagorda County law enforcement agencies reported 11 cases of rape. In 2012 Matagorda County law enforcement agencies reported 55 cases of sexual assault. Law enforcement agencies are reporting that sexual assault of adults and children has become a major problem.</p> <p>During the 2011-2012 year the Matagorda County Women's Crisis Center assisted 51 cases of sexual assault for both Matagorda and Wharton Counties. In 2012 some 75 cases of reported sexual abuse were made to CPS for Matagorda County.</p> <p>Teen birth rates were obtained from the National Vital Statistics System (NVSS) at the National Center for Health Statistics, part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).</p> <p>In the last three years available, 2006-2008, the births to teens ages 13-19 have averaged 18.5% out of all live births in the county. Births to single teens ages 13-19 have averaged 14.8% out of all live births in the county.</p> <p>Teenage pregnancy is linked to several risk factors. Being poor, living in a single-parent household, child abuse, and risky behaviors such as drug abuse and early or unprotected sex are all predictors of whether a teenager will become pregnant (Kirby 1997; Dillard).</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>The Matagorda County Women's Crisis Center provides immediate crisis intervention with medical accompaniment for all sexual assault victims. In addition services include the <i>24 hour hotline, emergency shelter, peer support, licensed professional counseling, legal advocacy and accompaniment to all legal proceedings and medical exams, case management, and many more services.</i> From the response, most victims do not report, but many seek services.</p> <p>The Matagorda County Women's Crisis Center has started a Children's Advocacy Center for child victims of crime, or a witness to a crime. The Children's Advocacy Center program started seeing children in March of 2012. In its first six months of operation, 29 children were interviewed in Matagorda County. Statistics show that greater than 75% of the child victims served by Children</p>	

Advocacy Center are victims of some type of sexual assault. These services assist the child, family, prosecution, CPS, and law enforcement in determining the true facts of the incident, individual/family advocacy, and emotion/psychological healing for the victims.

Kids in Distress (KIDS), an organization of long standing, provides emotional/psychological support for children who are victims of crime by paying for professional counseling.

An active collaboration between governmental and nonprofit organizations is needed in order to strengthen the services for victims. Presently there is not a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner's program available within Matagorda County. Both adults and children are taken out of the county for a physical exam. While two organizations deal with child victims of sexual assault, adequate support of services is a continual need. In addition, professional counselors are in short supply.

Teen sexual assault is a serious issue. The need is for education/mentoring for high risk youth. In addition, developing children who have a strong, healthy self-understanding of themselves is necessary if the rise is ever to be stopped. The **Matagorda County Women's Crisis Center prevention program** seeks to instill a healthy self-awareness that will directly combat bullying, child sexual assault, and teen pressure for sexual behavior.

Priority #3	
<i>Data</i>	
<p>Lack of low cost/free Legal service:</p> <p>Basic Legal counsel for Divorce, child custody, tenant issues, wills, etc.</p>	<p>There is a need for pro bono assistance and resources to help with legal issues.</p> <p>In a United Way County-wide Needs Assessment Survey, 33% of respondents stated that lack of affordable legal services was a problem in Matagorda County. Currently, basic low-cost services must be obtained in Brazoria County on a limited basis. The Crisis Center reports that 85% of family violence victims are in need of legal assistance.</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>Lone Star Legal Aid is a 501©(3) non-profit law firm with a rich and deeply respected history of advocacy on behalf of low-income and underserved populations, beginning with the Houston Legal Aid Clinic in 1948 and East Texas Legal Services in 1977. The Houston Legal Aid Clinic, which later became the Houston Legal Foundation, was established by the Houston Bar Association and Texas Southern University, among others.</p> <p>However, many attorneys are unwilling to take cases, such as child custody, that require much time and effort. These types of cases are common with domestic violence and child abuse victims. The need is for a combination of pro bono work and a dedicated attorney for victim services.</p>	

4Priority #4	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Lack of Counseling and Medical Services:</p> <p>Health care (or healthcare) is the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of disease, illness, injury, and other physical and mental impairments in humans. Health care is delivered by practitioners in medicine, chiropractic, dentistry, nursing, pharmacy, allied health, and other care providers. It refers to the work done in providing primary care, secondary care and tertiary care, as well as in public health.</p>	<p>The United States Census Bureau shows that in 2010 19.2% of residents in Matagorda County were in poverty and that 27.0% of the residents under the age of 18 were in poverty. The unemployment rate in Matagorda County was 9.0%, and was higher than the state's average unemployment rate of 6.6% according to the October 2012 Texas Workforce Commission website. According to the Crisis Center, 95% of their clients live at or below the poverty rate, without insurance, and unable to obtain quality medical care or professional counseling.</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>The Matagorda County Women's Crisis Center's professional counselor works with clients who are sexual assault, domestic violence, and child abuse victims. Counseling is needed because of the trauma associated with sexual assault, domestic violence, and child abuse. The Crisis Center is the only agency in Matagorda County that provides this service free of charge to all these groups. Presently one counselor covers two counties, with a minimum of a two week waiting period. Sexual assault victims that have special medical needs such as HIV must go to Galveston or Houston for treatment, counseling, information and referrals. Children who are sexually assaulted must travel out of county for examination. Domestic violence victims receiving emergency room or private doctor prescriptions often do not have the funds needed to obtain their medications. Agencies and other service providers are unwilling to assist with paying for pain medications. Crime Victims Compensation is one avenue for assistance, however, training and personnel are needed to fill the need. Bay City Police has a crime victim's liaison who does an excellent job in working with victims of crime in Bay City. However, this position has suffered due to funding cuts.</p> <p>MEHOP, a Federally Qualified Community Health Center (FQHC), provides healthcare services to Matagorda County and surrounding areas. MEHOP accepts all patients regardless of whether they are insured or uninsured. More resources are needed to meet the demand for services.</p> <p>Kids in Distress Services (KIDS), provides funding for psychological counseling for the victims of child abuse. Resources are limited with increased demand by child victims.</p>	

Priority #5	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Need for safe affordable housing and/or funds to assist with utility and rental assistance:</p>	<p>Presently in Matagorda County there is only one emergency shelter for victims of domestic violence/sexual assault, with a capacity of 35 beds. There is no designated transitional housing available for victims. Section 8 vouchers for permanent housing are issued by The Bay City Housing Authority. Presently there</p>

<p>Public housing was established to provide decent and safe rental housing for eligible low-income families, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Public housing comes in all sizes and types, from scattered single family houses to high rise apartments for elderly families.</p>	<p>are 247 Section 8 vouchers, with a waiting list. The housing authority reports that 40-50 requests are made weekly for housing.</p>
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Potential Response to Problem

The Crisis Center has provided emergency shelter and services to victims of family violence and sexual assault in Matagorda County since 1984. However, many victims are not emotionally or financially ready for independence within the time allowed for emergency shelter. Many return to the abuser because of this reason. The need is for transitional and permanent housing for victims. Some victims live a life of abuse, and need a permanent, sheltered environment in order to live without abuse.

Substance abuse is a large factor in the abuse of adults and children. Presently the only facility within Matagorda County is **Gulf Winds**, which works with preteen and teen males. Currently Region 6 licensing is prevented, due to saturation in the Housing area. If this assistance could be provided, Gulf Winds could hold 16 males.

Priority #6	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Lack of transportation:</p> <p>Without public transportation, victims have difficulty finding transportation to appear in court proceedings or take care of everyday tasks.</p>	<p>Public transportation is limited in Matagorda County. R-Transit provides transportation primarily to Medicare recipients and the elderly. Appointments must be made 24-72 hours in advance. Crime victims that lack transportation have had their access to service providers, social services, medical care, courts, the workplace, daycare and schools restricted due to lack of public transportation. Victims of domestic violence are often forced to leave their homes and possessions behind when they leave their abusive relationships. In a community wide need assessment through focus group community planning: Every area of focus including victim issues identified transportation as a serious issue.</p>
<p><i>Potential Response to Problem</i></p>	
<p>Development of Logistical Transportation Plan: Sustainable transport systems make a positive contribution to the environmental, social and economic sustainability of the communities they serve. Transport systems exist to provide social and economic connections, and people quickly take up the opportunities offered by increased mobility. The advantages of increased mobility need to be weighed against the environmental, social and economic costs that transport systems pose.</p>	

Priority #7	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
Lack of Job Skills or Job Training	<p>According to the Texas Workforce Commission as of September 2012, the unemployment rate for Matagorda County was 8.7% and the state average was 6.6%. Individuals below the poverty rate in the 2010 Census are 19.2%, while the state average is 17.9%.</p> <p>Approximately 75% of Crisis Center family violence victims lack the job skills that are necessary to find meaningful work.</p> <p>There are limited employment opportunities for undereducated adults. Technical schools and/or job training facilities are not available in Matagorda County and referrals must be made outside of the county.</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>Adult/Youth Literacy and Workforce Skill Development assist with limited English skills, learning differences or individuals that are reading below the 8th grade reading level. The Adult Learning Center provides preparation for GED testing. E4E 2 works with youth in securing a GED. The need is for support while victims are in preparation for testing. A job skills/life skills readiness person could be the advocate/mentor in preparing victims for education and job training. Victims lack the understanding to navigate the system, as well as the internal energy to see the process through. This is a characteristic of individuals who have been emotionally, physically, financially, educationally, socially, and sometimes sexually beaten down and threatened. Individuals do not have day care available, or are not able to choose preparation over minimum wage jobs. While Junior College level classes are offered within the county, most victims are unaware, unwilling, or unable to reach this level. Greater outreach by the Junior College, and support services for part time and full time students is needed.</p>	

Priority #8	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Batterer Intervention Programs:</p> <p>Batterers are a separate category of violent offenders requiring specialized intervention. Jail and fines are not enough; programs are needed to focus on ending the violence and abuse and on the batterer's capacity to change. Anger management classes do not work because they avoid fixing the responsibility on the batterer and imply that the victim is to blame.</p>	<p>Currently there are no intervention programs for domestic violence abusers in Matagorda County. Batterers ordered by the court to attend these programs are referred to a private counselor.</p>

Potential Response to Problem

There are no current Batter Intervention Programs in Matagorda County. Funds are needed to produce programs that will assist with Batter Intervention. At present offenders are referred to a private counselor for counseling and receive a certificate for the hours required.

Priority #9

Problem Identified

Data

Day Care Assistance:

Supervision of and care for children or disabled adults that is provided during the day by a person or organization.

According to the Crisis Center, Over **90%** of Crisis Center shelter clients lack funds to obtain quality day care for their children. Average cost for day care is \$400.00 per child monthly. The cost of day care is continuously rising, at a time of high unemployment rates.

Potential Response to Problem

Victims of domestic violence have minimum paying jobs with very little funds to find quality day-care for their children. Funding is needed to assist with child care. Rainbow Land Day Care, a 501©(3) organization in Palacios, provides day care with fees on a sliding scale to allow low income individuals and families the opportunity to work and go to school at a lower cost. Funding is needed to assist with lower cost day care throughout the county.

Priority #10

Problem Identified

Data

Insufficient bilingual services for crime victims:

Having or expressed in two languages (a bilingual document) (an officially bilingual nation)

According to the United States Census in 2010, the Hispanic community makes up 38.3% of the population in Matagorda County. This is a 7% increase from the previous year. Spanish speaking only individuals are under-served, and have a difficult time assessing services due to language, distance and cultural barriers.

Potential Response to Problem

Adult/Youth Literacy and Workforce Skill Development assist with limited English skills, learning differences or individuals that are reading below the 8th grade reading level.

While different agencies seek to hire bilingual speaking staff, qualified, trained bilingual individuals are in short supply. Each agency that works with victims, **Matagorda County Women's Crisis Center, Kids in Distress, CASA, Bay City Police Department**, and others, each have a bilingual staff or referral sources. The need is for active training of qualified individuals, and the ability to attract and retain such individuals.

Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) Bay City is a non-profit organization whose mission is to teach the adult non-reader skills in literacy to increase their occupational competency and to empower their drive toward personal fulfillment. English as a Second Language Program provides one-on-one tutoring of the English language to those individuals whose native language is not

English. **E for E**, a local nonprofit whose mission is to make work and college ready youth who drop out of high school, seeks to serve all drop outs, whether it is those whose language is English or some other.

Matagorda County United Way Helpline is a local helpline that gives answers to important questions. The staff has the training, experience and understanding to listen and give the health and social service needs information for proper information and referrals. The resource database contains files on federal, state, and non-profit resources for human services for Matagorda, Wharton and Colorado County and beyond. The Helpline is a bilingual service.

Priority #11	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
Equipment and furniture needs for victims advocates/shelter:	<p>The need for updated computers, furniture, laptops, copiers, security cameras, DVRs, fax machines, filing cabinets, telephone systems, training aids shredders, shelter furnishings of commercial kitchen appliances, dining room, bedroom, and living room furniture are an ongoing challenge due to nature of victim's services.</p> <p>Technology is ever changing, with equipment life span being 3 – 5 years. Furniture and appliances in shelters have about the same life span, due to continual use and abuse by clients.</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
Victim service organizations, such as CASA, KIDS, Matagorda County Crisis Center, and others must have the basic tools in order to effectively provide services and reporting requirements with local, state, and federal agencies. Funding is needed to update and replace obsolete equipment and furnishings.	

Priority #12	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
Lack of trained volunteers for child victims of abuse/neglect	<p>In 2012 CPS reports that there were 228 cases of child abuse/neglect in Matagorda County. CPS also reports that there is a lack of qualified foster homes for these children within Matagorda County. CPS also reports that October of 2012, 95% of the children placed in foster care were placed outside the county due to a lack of qualified foster homes within the county.</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>CPS is the qualifier of foster care homes for children of abuse/neglect. The need is for more approved homes within the county. The primary advocate for these children is CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate). This organization provides the monitoring and advocacy for these children. The need is for more trained volunteers to advocate for the needs of abused/neglected child victims.</p>	

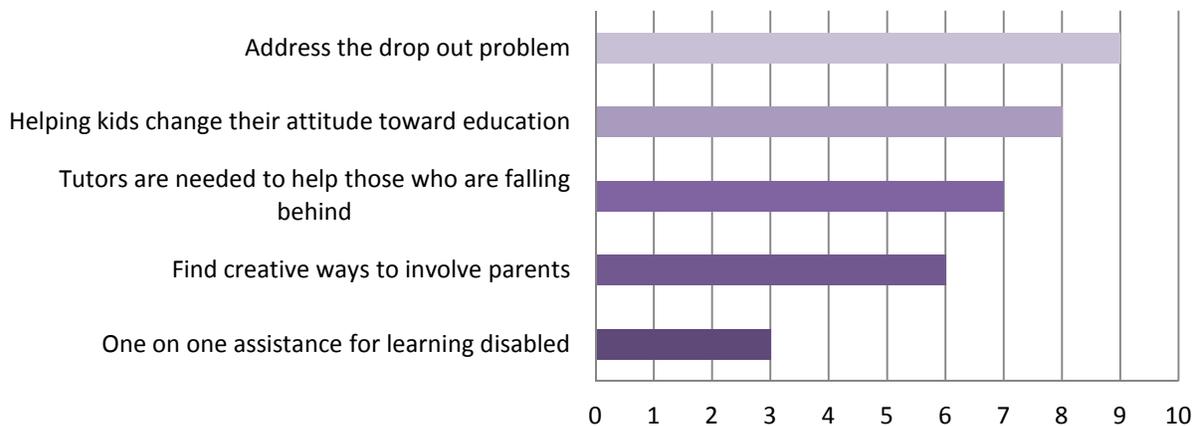
Education Issues (listed in order of priority, greatest need first)

Priority #1	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>High School Drop Out Rate:</p> <p>A Student who withdraws before completing a course of instruction.</p>	<p>According to School Data (a public school information source), the Bay City graduation rate is 88.5%. That concludes that the dropout rate is 11.5%. The Hispanic population rate is the highest rate at 5.3% of the dropout population.</p> <p>The Hispanic community makes up 39.3% of the population in Matagorda County. Spanish speaking only individuals are under-served and have a difficult time assessing services due to language, distance and cultural barriers..</p>

Potential Response to Problem

Bay City Independent School District, Palacios Independent School District, Matagorda Independent School District, Van Vleck Independent School District, and Tidehaven Independent School District can be assisted in dropout reduction programs that include several avenues to help our youth with unplanned pregnancies. The community organizations of the Rural Literacy Coalition identified the following gaps related to improving school retention and success.

Service delivery gaps: K-12



Adult/Youth Literacy and Workforce Skill Development programs assist with limited English skills, learning differences or individuals that are reading below the 8th grade reading level. Their goal is to identify students in middle school, out of school youth and adults and collaborate with existing services to ensure they are prepared for meaningful employment and living wage careers.

The creation of **mentor programs** throughout all Matagorda County school districts is a priority. A mentor is an experienced person who acts as a role model and a guide to others who are learning. The purpose of mentoring is for one person to pass along the knowledge he or she has gained from experience, to another person who is traveling down the same path. In this capacity, the mentor becomes an advisor, coach, advocate, role model, and trusted friend to his or her protégé.

Motivational Speakers: These speakers educate at risk students to prevent high school drop outs by helping them make the right decisions in life. One of the most talked about topics in such assemblies pertain to drug abuse and child rebellion. Using a unique approach to bridge the gap between adults and youth, these speakers aim to discuss different issues with young people.

Development of Logistical Transportation Plan: Sustainable transport systems make a positive contribution to the environmental, social and economic sustainability of the communities they serve. Transport systems exist to provide social and economic connections, and people quickly take up the opportunities offered by increased mobility. The advantages of increased mobility need to be weighed against the environmental, social and economic costs that transport systems pose.

Several programs support youth who have dropped out including Literacy Volunteers of America, Education for Everyone, Wharton County Junior College Adult Education Program, and Palacios High School Adult and ESL programs. These programs touch fewer than 5% of those needing services and are seriously underfunded. The Rural Literacy Coalition continuously explores state and federal funding opportunities to address this issue.

Priority #2	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Teenage Pregnancy:</p> <p>Definition: Pregnancy by a female, age 13 to 19, which is understood to occur in a girl who hasn't completed her core education – secondary school – has few or no marketable skills, is financially dependent upon her parents and/or continues to live at home and is possibly mentally immature.</p>	<p>Teen birth rates were obtained from the National Vital Statistics System (NVSS) at the National Center for Health Statistics, part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).</p> <p>The last Community Plan reported 3.1% of the populated female adolescents experiencing teenage pregnancy. 2009 Texas date for Matagorda County shows a pregnancy rate of 5.0%</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>Bay City Independent School District, Palacios Independent School District, Matagorda Independent School District, Van Vleck Independent School District, and Tidehaven Independent School District require assistance with availability of more well-rounded sexual education programs, and need to include more than one tool to help arm our young people against unwanted pregnancies and the spread of venereal diseases.</p> <p>MEHOP is a Federally Qualified Community Health Center (FQHC) providing healthcare services to Matagorda County and surrounding areas. MEHOP has expressed interest in hosting Health and Sex Education classes, and they accept all patients regardless of whether they are insured or uninsured.</p> <p>AIM is a non-profit Christian organization that focuses on helping families facing unplanned pregnancies. They try to meet the emotional, physical, and spiritual needs of each of their clients.</p> <p>The Pregnancy, Education and Parenting Program (PEP) is a drop-out prevention program designed to aid students who are pregnant or parenting, to remain in school, even during difficult</p>	

circumstances. PEP offers a variety of services enabling students and their families to utilize remaining in school as a viable option. This program has been in existence since 1989 and has allowed many students to not only complete high school, but also to move on to post high school education and training.

Full time **Community Learning Hubs** are under development in both Bay City and Palacios. Matagorda County is developing plans to bring more youth activities and engagement to counteract the rise of teenage pregnancy. There is a strong need for sex education, adult mentorship, and adolescent resources.

Tailored strategies are needed for teenagers in different age groups. Written materials and behavioral strategies should be geared to specific levels of literacy, as well as, physical and emotional development. All teens should learn behavioral skills such as decision-making, refusing to have sex, and how to discuss contraception in a relationship.

Priority #3	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Financing for GED and Vocational programs:</p> <p>General Educational Development (or GED) tests are a group of five subject tests which, when passed, certify that the taker has American or Canadian high school-level academic skills. The GED is also referred to as a General Education Diploma, General Equivalency Diploma, and Graduate Equivalency Degree.</p>	<p>According to CLR search national demographics on Bay City, in 2010, 2,603 people were recorded in Bay City alone, over the age of 25 without the completion of a High School Diploma. This means that 25% of this age group does not have a High School education. Due to the dropout rate, there are many individuals seeking assistance to obtain a GED.</p> <p>There are no agencies that help students pay for the actual test, and the cost for the test is \$80.00.</p> <p>Students seeking vocational training are usually routed to outside municipal areas requiring assistance for transportation.</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>One of the main focus areas of the developing Bay City and Palacios HUBs, under the direction of the Rural Literacy Coalition, will be to strengthen delivery of GED Test support and Vocational programs in Matagorda County.</p> <p>The Rural Literacy Coalition is working closely with HGAC to increase services in the area, and explore increased vocational opportunities, entrepreneurial job development, pre-bridge and bridge programs and new growth sector development including eco-tourism especially highlighting the national birding status of the region.</p> <p>The focus of Matagorda County United Way is identifying and resolving pressing community issues, as well as making measurable changes in communities through partnerships with schools, government agencies, businesses, organized labor, financial institutions, community development corporations, voluntary and neighborhood associations, the faith community, and others. The issues United Way offices focus on are determined locally because of the diversity of the communities served.</p>	

Matagorda County needs funds to assist GED testing applicants. The charge for GED testing is \$80.00, and all GED testing is done outside Matagorda County which requires transportation assistance.

Adult/Youth Literacy and Workforce Skill Development programs assist with limited English skills, learning differences of individuals that are reading below the 8th grade reading level. Their goal is to support pregnant teens to complete their education.

Priority #4	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Health Literacy:</p> <p>Health literacy is the ability to understand health information and to use that information to make good decisions about health and medical care. Health information can overwhelm even people with advanced literacy skills. About one third of the adult population in the United States has limited health literacy.</p>	<p>Using statistics from Bay City Independent School District, the Rural Literacy Coalition has identified that over 59.10% of children between the grade levels of 6-8 are economically disadvantaged in Bay City, Texas. These individuals lack proper health care and proper health care literacy.</p> <p>This means that over half of the population of Bay City, has no access to health care information for deterrence of health risk related behavior such as obesity and AIDS.</p> <p>Using statistics from the Palacios Independent School District, the Rural Literacy Coalition has identified that over 66.80% of children between the grade levels of 6-8 are economically disadvantaged in Palacios, Texas. These individuals lack proper health care and proper health care literacy.</p> <p>This means that over half of the population of Palacios, has no access to health care information for deterrence of health risk related behavior such as obesity and AIDS.</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>MEHOP and Matagorda Regional Health Center and Palacios Community Medical Center are dedicated to providing quality and compassionate healthcare to our community through wellness events. The three medical entities have programs providing diabetes education.</p> <p>AIDS Coalition does anonymous HIV testing (free), prevention counseling, health education/risk reduction, HIV Prevention education, case management for HIV/AIDS, clothing assistance, financial education/emergency assistance, housing assistance, medication assistance program, transportation, volunteer services. Spanish speaking staffs are available.</p> <p>Friends of Elder Citizens, Inc. (FOEC) is a 501©(3) private non-profit organization formed in 1979 and incorporated in 1981, administered by a Board of Directors elected by the open membership. Public Board Meetings are held the third Thursday of every month at the Palacios Senior Center. FOEC offers Group and Individual Activities (both recreational and educational), Health and Safety Education and hot Nutritional Meals to persons 60 years of age and older. FOEC operates programs to meet the needs of senior citizens in Matagorda and Jackson Counties for Nutrition, Transportation, Recreation and Socialization.</p> <p>R-Transit provides transportation primarily to Medicare recipients and the elderly. Appointments</p>	

must be made 24-72 hours in advance. In a community wide need assessment 2002 survey done by United Way, 36% of respondents reported lack of transportation a major problem.

The **Texas State Department of Health Services** is partnering closely with the Rural Literacy Coalition to help in the development of countywide health literacy activities.

Priority #5	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Lack of Availability of Resources and/or Updated Technology:</p> <p>Technology touches almost every part of our lives, our communities, and our homes. Yet most schools lag far behind when it comes to integrating technology into classroom learning. Many are just beginning to explore the true potential tech offers for teaching and learning. Properly used, technology will help students acquire the skills they need to survive in a complex, highly technological knowledge-based economy.</p>	<p>Using statistics from Bay City Independent School District, the Rural Literacy Coalition has identified that the average amount spent on technology per student in the past 2 years spanning from 2009 thru 2010 is \$1,014 in Bay City, Texas.</p> <p>The Rural Literacy Coalition has identified that the average amount spent on technology per student in the past 2 years spanning from 2009 thru 2010 is \$915 in Palacios, Texas.</p> <p>With a high Hispanic population there is only \$12 per student for ESL learning technology and assistance in Bay City, Texas.</p> <p>With a high Hispanic population there is only \$4 per student for ESL learning technology in Palacios, Texas.</p> <p>There is only \$373.00 allotted per student for much needed student support services such as tutoring, college prep and other accelerated interests for High School students in Bay City, Texas.</p> <p>There is only \$280.00 allotted per student for much needed student support services such as tutoring, college prep and other accelerated interests for High School students in Palacios, Texas.</p> <p>Effective tech integration must happen across the curriculum in ways that research shows deepen and enhance the learning process. In particular, it must support four key components of learning: active engagement, participation in groups, frequent interaction and feedback, and connection to real-world experts. Effective technology integration is achieved when the use of technology is routine and transparent, and when technology supports curricular goals.</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>Adult/Youth Literacy and Workforce Skill Development assist with limited English skills, learning differences or individuals that are reading below the 8th grade reading level. Their goal is to identify students in middle school, out of school youth and adults, and collaborate with existing services to ensure they are prepared for meaningful employment and living wage careers.</p> <p>Matagorda County United Way's main focus areas include education, income and health. There is a serious need for a Volunteer Coordination to be housed at the United Way. This will link the National United Way Volunteer Initiative and provide coordination for the Right to Literacy Volunteer Challenge.</p>	

Priority #6

Problem Identified

Data

Lack of Elementary level Fine Arts / and after-school programs:

After-school hours are times when juvenile crime hits its peak, but through attentive adult supervision, quality after-school programs, we can protect our children. As this report shows, in communities with comprehensive programs, children are less likely to commit crimes or to be victimized.

Using statistics from Bay City Independent School District, the Rural Literacy Coalition has identified the need for resources and availability to students in Bay City and Palacios.

There is only **\$373.00** allotted per student for all student programs in Bay City, Texas.

There is only **\$280.00** allotted per student for all student programs in Palacios, Texas.

Teaching through the arts helps students experience concepts rather than simply discussing or reading them. This approach is consistent with educational theories that highlight the importance of using multiple learning styles or intelligences.

The fine arts also provide learners with non-academic benefits such as promoting self-esteem, motivation, aesthetic awareness, cultural exposure, creativity, improved emotional expression, as well as social harmony and appreciation of diversity. These are the very fibers of the fabric known as our American culture.

Potential Response to Problem

The Boy Scouts of America provide a program for young people that builds character, trains them in the responsibilities of participating citizenship, and develops personal fitness.

Boys and Girls Club of Bay City and Matagorda County has just finished three years of operation, and there has been a need to expand with a waiting list from the beginning. They have proven the difference being made by after-school programs, but need more funding in order to touch more young people. After-school programs also can help to improve the academic performance of participating children. For many children, their reading and math scores have improved in large part because after-school programs allow them to focus attention on areas in which they are having difficulties. Many programs connect learning to more relaxed and enriching activities, thereby improving academic performance as well.

First Book provides new books to children in need, addressing one of the most important factors affecting literacy – access to books. An innovative leader in social enterprise, each year, First Book distributes millions for free and low-cost books to disadvantaged children and the programs that serve them. First Book – Matagorda County provides new books to children through eligible community organizations like preschools, day cares, after-school programs, and tutoring/mentoring programs. This literacy program services 80% or more of children from low-income households. The children take home and keep the books that they receive.

The Palacios Library provides an after school tutorial program making computers available to students in Palacios and Blessing to work on school related projects. Many of these students do not have access to computers at home.

Book Shelf Initiative works with faith based organizations to build book shelves for children in homes with few books and reading sources, as a double duty strategy to increase learning rich home environments and provide service learning projects to youth who need support and direction.

Rainbow Land Day Care, Palacios, Texas utilizes educational curriculum for children ages 1-4,

preparing children for entrance into kindergarten.

Head Start programs in school districts throughout the county provide education for children ages 3 & 4, giving them a “head start” for entering kindergarten.

Matagorda United Methodist Church has a latchkey program that has been in effect for several years in Matagorda, Texas. It is maintained and operated by members of the church. A school bus drops them off at the church from school, and the church members provide a snack and help with their homework. They have computers with educational activities available as well. It is a free program, operating only thru an annual fundraiser and donations.

Priority #7	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Education and Training for First Responders concerning people with autism and other developmental disabilities</p>	<p>The incidence of autism is on the rise nationwide and news stories involving tragic encounters between law enforcement and persons on the autism spectrum are becoming more frequent. Autism is a developmental disorder characterized by impaired social understanding and interaction, difficulty with communication, and restricted, repetitive or stereotyped behavior. The cause of autism is unknown. Current statistics from the Autism Society of America site 1% of the population of children in the U.S. ages 3-17 have an autism spectrum disorder. Estimates are 1 in 50 live births will be on the autism spectrum. Texas Education Agency data for 2011-2012 shows 45 students receiving special education services under an autism eligibility in Matagorda County. This number does not include the number of students on the spectrum that are “high-functioning” or unidentified. Based on the 1% statistic and the current population of Matagorda County, it can be assumed that there are at least 365 people with autism currently residing the county. The MEHOP Community Outreach Coordinator reports making at least 50 referrals for further diagnostic follow-up for possible autism in the past year.</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>Specific training for first responders to understand the characteristics of autism is needed as well as provision of a county wide crisis line connected to a mental health specialist who can assist first responders and the community with critical situations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for first responders can be provided through local agencies that serve the autism population such as Texana, Matagorda County Educational Services, or Partners Resource Network- TEAM Project. • Prevent-educate.org has an Autism Awareness Training for Texas Firefighters, Paramedics, EMTs, Police Officers and other First Responders. • Autism Risk Management.com has online training and resources for First Responders. • The county should create and staff a crisis line with qualified mental health specialists with compassion to assist with the whole crisis situation, not just safety and injury prevention. • Training for teens and young adults with autism on how to appropriately interact with first responders can be included in transition planning through the special education process in school. An excellent and low cost curriculum for this training can be found at www.BeSafeTheMovie.com. Viewing of this movie would also benefit first responders in helping to understand people with autism. 	

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

Priority #1	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Drug and Human Trafficking</p>	<p>Matagorda County has 63 miles of coastline and approximately 200 miles of inland waterways. This along with State Highway 35, that links the Drug Cartels and the violent drug gangs and the Houston Galveston areas to the Texas Rio Grande Valley, the largest illegal drug Importation and Human trafficking area, from Mexico to America. Matagorda County Law Enforcement consists of the Sheriff’s Office, Bay City Police Dept., Palacios Police Dept., ISD Police, Constables, Texas Highway Patrol and Parks and Wildlife Officers. Approximately 76,000 calls for service are answered by the Sheriff’s Office, Bay City Police Dept. and the Palacios Police Dept during . These calls are taken care of by 48 sworn county officers, 37 sworn Bay City PD officers, and 15 sworn Palacios PD officers.</p> <p>The County is positioned so that the county is in the middle, east and west between Galveston and Corpus Christi, and south between Houston and Victoria, falling into jurisdictional boundaries of the Houston offices of both Federal and State Law enforcement entities. Therefore there is no full time Law Enforcement assistance from the State or Federal Offices. Any assistance comes from a request leading to a case by case protocol. There are no supplemental resources provided to county Law Enforcement.</p> <p>The Port of Palacios is virtually wide open to smuggling, illegal immigration and Terrorist movement, and the closest Coast guard stations are at Port O’Connor and Freeport.</p> <p>The three combined agencies filed approximately 240 narcotic cases with the Matagorda County District Attorney in 2012.</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
<p>The local law enforcement agencies are doing the best they can with the officers available, but need supplemental resources in order to protect Matagorda County as well as the Southern District of Texas.</p>	

Priority #2	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
<p>Juvenile Crimes</p>	<p>Between the Matagorda County Sheriff’s Office, Bay City Police Department and the Palacios Police Department, there were approximately 75 juveniles arrested in 2012. The juvenile probation office consists of 3 probation officers and 1 director. Each probation officer handles approximately 30 to 40 juvenile probationers at any given time. None of the above named Law</p>

	<p>Enforcement agencies have a full time juvenile investigator, nor are any investigators retained, employed or contracted to the Juvenile Probation Office. Under the current protocol, each agency handles their own juvenile transports, including detention and judicial proceedings, as well as transports to and from long term detention facilities. The man hours expended in the arrest, detention, judicial and correction of a juvenile can consume up to 60 hours per juvenile per arrest. With no investigators available to make home visits and check the status of home bound or confined juveniles, most juvenile continue their criminal direction. The number of juveniles committing criminal offenses grows continuously. There are at least 6 known juvenile gangs that recruit juvenile members. Juveniles are used to distribute and transport narcotics and commit property crimes.</p>
<p><i>Potential Response to Problem</i></p>	
<p>More needs to be done to investigate the compliance by juveniles, including making home visits to be sure that the juveniles and family members are abiding by regulations.</p>	

<p style="text-align: center;">Priority #3</p>	
<p><i>Problem Identified</i></p>	<p><i>Data</i></p>
<p>Mental Health and Mental Health Transports</p>	<p>There are 2 certified Mental Health Officers in the Matagorda County Sheriff's Office, 3 at the Bay City Police Dept, and none at the Palacios Police Dept. The Sheriff's Office answered approximately 629 calls for service involving mental health in 2012, and transported numerous patients to mental health facilities. The Bay City Police Dept. answered approximately 56 calls for mental health and the Palacios Police Dept. answered 28 calls that necessitated transportation of a patient to a Mental Health Facility. Mental Health escalates yearly and the burden is continually placed on Law Enforcement by the Legislators without resources. Mental Health Transportation is one of the leading causes of the depletion of the agencies overtime budgets. Each agency is forced to use manpower from all divisions of their departments, as well as the wear on department equipment.</p>
<p><i>Potential Response to Problem</i></p>	
<p>Something has to be done about Mental Health transports, which takes 6 man hours if in the Houston area or approximately 10 to 12 man hours for facilities beyond. This is a major drain on the individual agencies' man power.</p>	

Priority #4	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
Port and Inland Water Security	<p>Matagorda County is located on the middle Texas Gulf Coast with approximately 62 miles of coastline and approximately 200 miles of inland waters. Along with the East and West Matagorda Bays, Turtle Bay, Colorado River, Tres-Palacios River, the Intercoastal Waterway and the Eastern Matagorda Island, there are hundreds of miles of unimproved county roads in the Southern part of Matagorda County that are excellent clandestine landing strips. The City of Palacios has the Port of Palacios that consists of 4 turning basins with numerous fish houses and docking ports that virtually have no security.</p> <p>The Port of Palacios is operated and controlled by the Matagorda County Navigation District, and they have no Law Enforcement personnel or security systems in place.</p> <p>The Matagorda Island has houses and a landing strip that has the length and capability of use by up to medium twin engine aircraft.</p> <p>There are approximately 40,000 residents of Matagorda County and approximately 20 Law Enforcement Officers on duty daily, with approximately 14 officers at night. This is a ratio of 1 Law Enforcement Officer for every 2,500 residents. This leaves the water ways, Ports and isolated areas unprotected.</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
There is a great need for resources, in order to add officers to patrol the ports and waterways specifically. Giving special attention to the small back roads that are usually not patrolled.	

Priority #5	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
Law Enforcement Training	<p>With ever increasing demands on Law Enforcement, responding to the many different calls for service, the need for training and education of law enforcement increases. There are many new areas that demand new training for law enforcement, such as Homeland Security, Mass-casualty, terrorism, as well as keeping up with the new technology and changing laws. Bay City Police Department has been able to do some of the training, but there is a large need for more diverse training. At the present time we have to send officers to training academies outside the area, and this is very expensive for the different agencies.</p>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
It would be a great help if the training academies could send instructors out into the rural areas for training in different areas of the state, this would allow the officers to attend more training, and not be out for a large amount of time, as well as, cutting the expenses for individual agencies.	

Resources Available

Included below are resources identified by the Matagorda County Community Planning Team that are available to provide services that could potentially help in closing criminal justice gaps:

Juvenile Justice:

<i>Name of Agency</i>	<i>Agency Type</i>	<i>Description</i>
Bay City Independent School District		School
Matagorda Independent School District		School
Palacios Independent School District		School
Tidehaven Independent School District		School
Van Vleck Independent School District		School
Matagorda County D.A.'s Office	Prosecution	Prosecutes Juvenile Cases
Juvenile Probation Department		Supervises the probation of juvenile offenders. Supervises Motivation Day/ALERT Program
Children's Protective Services	Investigation	Investigates reports of abuse and neglect of children, provides services to help youth in foster care, places children in foster care.
Matagorda County CASA	Non-Profit	Provides Court Appointed Special Advocates for abused and neglected children involved in the courts. Provides referral information, awareness programs, and crime victims' compensation help and information.
Kids in Distress Services (KIDS)	Non-Profit	
Boys and Girls Club of Bay City/ Matagorda County		Boys & Girls Club is a community-based organization that provides young people with a fun, safe, and constructive environment when they are not at home or school. Boys & Girls Club offers programs and services designed to build character and strengthen life skills. Neighborhood-centered, Clubs provide programming in specialized areas, including character development, educational enhancement and career exploration. Clubs are staffed by paid, trained youth development professionals. Through a system of informal guidance, Club staff form strong bonds with young people and help them make smart choices in life. For many Club members, Club staff are the most influential positive adult role models in their lives.

Law Enforcement:

<i>Name of Agency</i>	<i>Agency Type</i>	<i>Description</i>
Matagorda County Sheriff's Office	Law Enforcement	Provides information to victims regarding the investigation of their case and assistance with Crime Victim Compensation.
Bay City Police Department	Law Enforcement	Provides information to victims regarding the investigation of their case and assistance with Crime Victim Compensation.
Palacios Police Department	Law Enforcement	Provides information to victims regarding the investigation of their case and assistance with Crime Victim Compensation.
Matagorda County Crime Stoppers	Law Enforcement/Citizen Program	Provides case incentives to witnesses to come forward and report crimes
Matagorda County District Attorney's Office	Prosecution	Provides victims with information, referrals, assistance with Crime Victim Compensation and court notification.

Victim Services:

<i>Name of Agency</i>	<i>Agency Type</i>	<i>Description</i>
Matagorda County Women's Crisis Center	Non-Profit agency for Domestic violence and sexual Assault victims	Provides crisis intervention services to victim's of domestic violence and sexual assault which includes 24-hour hotline, shelter, professional counseling, and transportation, accompaniment to hospitals, courts and law enforcement, assistance with protective orders.

United Way of Matagorda County	Non-Profit	Provides community resources and referrals to other agencies that assist citizens in need.
Community Resource Coordination Group for Families (CRCGS)	Non-Profit	Coordinates community resources to assist citizens in need.
Child Protective Services	Investigation	Investigates reports of abuse and neglect of children, and contracts with others to provide clients with specialized services.
Matagorda County District Attorney's Office	Prosecution	Provides victims with information, referrals, assistance with Crime Victim Compensation and court notification.
Matagorda County Crime Stoppers	Crime Victim Group	Support Group for crime victims to share thoughts and feelings on individual experiences and ideas for purpose of assisting other victims.
Matagorda County CASA	Non-Profit	Provides trained child advocates who act as Guardians Ad Litem for abused and neglected children. Provides community awareness and educational programs as well as referral information.

Health / Medical / Substance Abuse

<i>Name of Agency</i>	<i>Agency Type</i>	<i>Description</i>
Bay Area Council on Drugs and Alcohol	Non-Profit	Provides assessments and referrals to those with substance abuse issues.

Matagorda Episcopal Health Outreach Program (MEHOP)

Non-Profit

Mission is “to improve the health status of clients by providing quality primary healthcare services and spiritual care to people in the communities it serves regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, or the ability to pay”. MEHOP began in 1998 through a vision of three Episcopal churches in Matagorda County who identified a medical need for the underserved rural population. In June 1999, MEHOP broadened its scope and opened a permanent fixed site facility in Bay City.

Prevention / Intervention:

Name of Agency

Matagorda County Women’s Crisis Center

Agency Type

Non-Profit

Description

Provides shelter and crisis intervention services to domestic violence and sexual assault victims. The center also provides community awareness programs and educational programs to the community.

Matagorda County CASA

Non-Profit

Texana Mental Health

Provides trained community volunteers who speak for the best interest of abused and neglected children in court. Provides educational and awareness programs, and referral/information on area resources

Interagency Cooperation

The following is a description of how the various resources listed in the previous pages could cooperatively work together to accomplish the goal of closing identified gaps in services:

The Matagorda County Women’s Crisis Center has cooperative working agreements with all area law enforcement agencies, district attorney’s office, Child Protective Services and local hospitals as well with other social service providers to insure that victims will receive the best possible crisis services available. The Crisis Center is continuing its efforts to coordinate a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) in an effort to provide effective services to sexual assault victims; this is being done in a two-county wide area. Additionally, the center coordinates all community resources for domestic violence and sexual assault victims through its hotline, offices and outreach office as well as providing shelter. The Matagorda County Women’s Crisis Center is working hard to reduce the incidents of sexual assault and domestic violence in our community through crisis intervention services, advocacy, community awareness, professional trainings and community involvement.

Matagorda County CASA has cooperative working agreements with law enforcement, County Attorney, District Judge, and Children’s Protective Services to ensure that child victims receive appropriate services, proper legal representation, ultimately leading to placement in safe, nurturing, permanent homes. CASA acts as a liaison among these agencies advocating for the best interest of abused and neglected children, ensuring that child victims’ cases progress in a timely manner reduction the amount of time a child must stay in the State’s custody. In addition, CASA provides information and referrals, community awareness programs, educational materials, and free advocacy training to community volunteers. Law enforcement, the County and District Attorneys, CASA, and Children’s Protective Services could further enhance services to child victims by formulating and agreeing to a plan that would allow child abuse cases and criminal cases to progress smoothly without further victimizing the children.

Fort Bend Regional Council on Substance Abuse is a potential partner to provide Substance Abuse Treatment Services.

Long-Range Plan Development, Monitoring and Evaluation

The Matagorda County Community Planning Team works in conjunction with other planning groups in the county to ensure a regular exchange of ideas. Individuals active in the planning process generally serve on many of these committees and share mutual concerns.

The Matagorda County Community Planning Team strives to meet periodically to review the Plan and make necessary additions and deletions. At least one formal meeting of the entire group is held each fall, but agency and community representatives typically submit suggestions and changes via telephone and e-mail throughout the year to the Community Planning Coordinator.

Drafts and annual updates of the Community Plan are circulated by e-mail with requests for comments, changes, etc. Wherever possible e-mail is used to reduce the need for meetings, printing, postage, etc.

It is the intent of the Community Planning Group to improve outcomes for Matagorda County families struggling with problems described in the Plan's focus areas. Efforts are being made by many Matagorda County agencies and organizations to address problems with local funds as well as grant funds from multiple state and federal sources. To the extent that these funds are available, the Community Planning Team will continue to encourage agencies to provide programming that addresses the outlined focus areas.

Contact Information

Matagorda County Community Planning Coordinator

Harriet Townsend, Executive Secretary to County Judge
Matagorda County Courthouse
1700 7th Street, Room 301
Bay City, Texas 77414

Community Planning Liaison from Houston-Galveston Area Council

Jim Mahood, Public Justice Planner, Houston-Galveston Area Council
P. O. Box 22777
Houston, Texas 77227-2777

This Plan is available on-line at the following URL address:

www.co.matagorda.tx.us