

Wharton County Criminal Justice Community Plan 2022-2023



Fall, 2022

Wharton County Criminal Justice Community Plan

What Is a Community Plan?

This plan is formally known as the Wharton 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 each county in Texas have a Criminal Justice Community Plan.

The document that is represented here reflects the efforts of many in Wharton County that are concerned with assuring that any gaps in services that are identified are closed in a way that will both solve the problem and provide as great a benefit to the community as possible. It is with grateful acknowledgement that the names of those involved in the process of developing this plan are listed in the following page(s) under Part II (Community Planning Group).

Though the final draft of this plan was completed in December 20, 2011, this is a work in progress. New criminal justice goals are identified, the Planning Group changes as a result of individual and agency circumstances, and requirements concerning the makeup of the Plan are subject to change from year to year. Thus, Wharton County is interested in keeping up with these changes, and including such 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 Rosemary Rodriguez, Community Plan Coordinator for Wharton County or to the Criminal Justice Program of the Houston-Galveston Area Council. Contact information is provided within this document.

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

Areas Represented

Incorporated Communities:

Wharton
East Bernard
El Campo

Unincorporated Communities:

Boling	Hungerford
Iago	Louise
Lane City	Danevang
Mackey	Egypt
Magnet	Glen Flora
New Gulf	New Taiton
Pierce	Hillje

School Districts:

Wharton ISD	Boling ISD
East Bernard ISD	Louise ISD
El Campo ISD	

In addition to the school districts noted above, Wharton County is served by two parochial/private schools and Wharton County Junior College with classes offered on the Wharton Campus and at Northside Education Center in El Campo.

Brief Description of Wharton County:

Wharton County is located forty-five miles north of the Gulf of Mexico, adjacent to Fort Bend County to the Southwest of Houston. The county is a rural agricultural region of 1094 square mile in the path of growth from the rapidly expanding Houston metroplex. The 2021 US Census estimates place the population at 41,670.

Wharton County's proximity to the Gulf of Mexico and Houston makes it a prime location not only for agriculture and industry but also as a residential location for those working outside Wharton County. Wharton County is predominantly agricultural, with some tourism and industrial business. It has not yet felt the development pressure affecting counties adjacent to Houston, and in fact its population was essentially unchanged from 2000 to 2010. Growth from Houston along the US 59 corridor and the potential for development of Interstate 69 through Wharton County are expected to spur additional growth in the future.

The local unemployment rate has stayed a point or more below the national average during the recession for a workforce estimated at 20,373 persons. However, the 2010 median household income of \$36,980 is nearly \$12,000 below the state average reflecting the fact that 18.9% of families and 24.1% of children are living below poverty level. These figures are not acceptable. While long term stable economic and cultural change takes time, the people of Wharton County are determined to support the changes recommended in this plan in order to improve the lives of all our citizens.

Community Planning Team

Community Plan Coordinator for Wharton County: Rosemary Rodriguez / Court Coordinator / Wharton County Judge's Office, Assisted by Pat Joyce, Rural Literacy Coalition.

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>
Billie Jean Bram, Juvenile Probation	Wharton County Juvenile Probation
Fred Johnson, Executive Director	Boys & Girls Club of Wharton
Jill Stafford Hearne, Executive Director	Boys & Girls Club of El Campo
Cory Braden	Wharton Little League
Jared Cullar, JP	JP Precinct One
Glenn P. Russell, JP	JP Precinct Two
Donna Wessels, JP	JP Precinct Three
Timmy Drapela, JP	JP Precinct Four
Trey Maffett, County Attorney	County Attorney's Office
Charlotte Jackson, Deputy Director	Just Do It Now, Inc.

Victim Services:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Agency</i>
Rachel Litman, Operations Director	WEDCo
Karen Heintschel, Executive Assistant	Crisis Center
Charlotte Jackson, Executive Director	Just Do It Now, Inc.
Kelli Wright-Nelson, Executive Director	The Crisis Center
Brittany Matthews, Assistant Executive Director	The Crisis Center

Law Enforcement:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Agency</i>
Russell McDougall, Chief Deputy	Wharton County Sheriff's Dept.
Shannon Srubar, Sheriff	Wharton County Sheriff's Dept.
Roxane Marek, Director	Wharton County Adult Probation
Terry Lynch, Chief of Police	Wharton Police Department
Gary Williamson, Chief of Police	El Campo Police Department

Education

<i>Name</i>	<i>Agency</i>
Betty McCrohan, President	Wharton County Junior College
Wade Stidevent, Superintendent	Boling ISD
Tina Herrington, Superintendent	Wharton ISD

Identification of Community Problems General Public Safety Needs and Issues

Through a process of information sharing and statistical data collection, the governmental agencies, school districts, law enforcement agencies and non-profit agencies in Wharton County continue to highlight significant problems faced by children, youth and families.

Research shows a direct correlation between literacy level and criminal behavior. Therefore, a section entitled “Education” has been added to the Wharton County Plan. Literacy goes far beyond being able to read and write. It is a lifelong learning process of understanding and using basic skills across a wide spectrum of knowledge including math, finances, technology, culture, science, health and the workforce. We could even say that knowing how to conduct oneself in a given situation is a form of literacy. All these aspects of “literacy” are necessary for an individual to live a fully functioning productive life.

Statistical data with supporting narrative is provided on the county’s overall educational level and the detrimental effect it has not only on law enforcement, but also employment and overall quality of life. Included are statistics on current educational attainment from pre-kindergarten through adulthood along with solutions planned to address the illustrated needs.

Continued improvement in the communication and cooperation among various agencies must occur when addressing the contributing factors of crime, e.g., poverty, addiction, family violence, child abuse, education, truancy, teen pregnancy, as well as insufficiencies in proactive areas such as crisis management, conflict resolution, effective parenting, and literacy training

In each of the following areas, problems are identified and data is included that supports both the existence and severity of the problems as they are found in Wharton County. Along with discussion of the problems, is the manner in which these problems are being addressed and, strategically, how responses to these community problems could be improved.

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 Wharton 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)

Identified Problem:

Data Collection:

Substance Abuse

Alcohol Usage: Teens consuming alcohol are an ongoing problem in Wharton county. The County's four (4) Justice of the Peace courts and the two City courts in El Campo and Wharton reported ticketing minors for the following offences:

Years	16	17	18
Minor in Possession	4	23	10
DUI	11	4	5

84 Juvenile cases were referred to the juvenile probation department during the reporting period of September 1, 2017 through August 31, 2018. Of the reported referrals, 16 were for drug offences 11 possession of Marijuana (MB), 2 Delivery of Dangerous Drug (SJF), and 2 Possession of Controlled Substance (SJF). Other offenses that Juveniles were arrested for were Assault of a Public Servant (5), Assault Causes Bodily Injury Family Member (8), Aggravated Assault Date/Family/House/w/weapon (6), Assault Bodily Injury (6), Misdemeanor Theft (9), Felony Theft (1) Burglary of a Habitation (1), Burglary of a Building (4), Burglary of a Motor Vehicle (4), Engaging in Organized Criminal Activity(4) Evading Arrest (2), Terroristic Threat (2) Criminal Trespass(16), Indecency with a Child (4) Criminal Mischief (1), Resisting Arrest Search or Transportation (5) and Theft of a Firearm (3).

For more than two decades, researchers, clinicians and juvenile justice program administrators have been aware of the consistent relationship between alcohol and other drug (AOD) use and juvenile crime. (National Institute of Justice)

When young people engage in alcohol and other drug use, they, their families, and their communities usually suffer. In some cases, because of the strong association between substance abuse and delinquency, an increased burden is also placed on the juvenile justice system. Since 1992, the high rate of illicit drug use among youth has been steadily increasing.

The use of drugs and alcohol and juvenile delinquency can be directly related as substance abuse indirectly offers motivation for other crimes. All providers working with the juveniles identify substance abuse as a significant issue and agree that the use of drugs and alcohol is for more prevalent than reported. Substantial numbers of juveniles received by the probation department from

**Substance Abuse
(continued)**

other referrals have reported that they use drugs or alcohol on a regular basis, information supported by a report by the Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring Program (ADAM) data suggesting “that a high proportion of juveniles (likely the majority) processed by the juvenile court have recently used illegal substances.”

Frequently violations of probation for juvenile offenders are for drug use. Drugs and alcohol contribute to a variety of problem areas including juvenile violence, truancy, curfew violations, thefts, and increased sexual activity. An article from the NCJRS states that “people who persistently abuse substances often experience an array of problems, including academic difficulties, health-related problems (including mental health), poor peer relationships, and involvement with the juvenile justice system.”

Drugs and alcohol also added to family impairment by limiting a parent’s ability to properly direct and supervise their children. Drugs and alcohol are commonly being used by parents or other family members in the household. This environment can only increase the chance that the juveniles are going to experiment or continue to use and further increase the chance of juvenile delinquency. The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University released a comprehensive "white paper" documenting some alarming health risks and an epidemic in the making. Specifically, parents who use illegal drugs, abuse alcohol and use tobacco put 50% of the nation's children -- more than 35 million of them -- at increased risk of substance abuse and of physical and mental illness.

Some juveniles are using illegal substances to escape the everyday issues and or problems. They are not being taught coping skills by the family to deal with life issues effectively. The community lacks the resources to appropriately address the serious needs of juveniles and their families. In order to receive in-patient treatment, the family has to seek the services outside the county.

A 2010 CASA report, Criminal Neglect: Substance Abuse, Juvenile Justice and The Children Left Behind, is based on 2000 arrestee and juvenile court data, the most recent available in sufficient detail for this analysis. The report found that juvenile justice systems cost society \$14.4 billion a year just in law enforcement, courts, detention, residential placement, incarceration, substance abuse treatment and federal block grants.

If other costs, such as those for probation, physical and mental health, child welfare and family services, school and victims are included; the price would more than double. A \$5,000 investment in substance abuse treatment and getting other appropriate

services for each juvenile who would otherwise be incarcerated would pay for itself in the first year if only 12 percent stayed in school and remained drug and crime free.

Moreover, the report found, if we could prevent crimes and incarceration of 12 percent of substance-involved adult inmates with juvenile records, we would have 60,480 fewer inmates and 5.9 million fewer crimes, and we would realize \$18 billion in avoided criminal justice and health costs and in employment benefits.

Solutions: Allocate from current funds the \$5,000 suggested above to provide for substance abuse treatment and other needed services for juveniles and their families. Institute the education changes suggested in the next section

Solutions have to be as varied as this problem is complex. Kids who are busy, doing well in school, and have stable home lives are less likely to become involved with drugs. To make a dent in the problem will take years of community commitment and effort. Issues of educational preparation from birth, after school programs to supplement school efforts, better schools, more involvement in extra-curricular activities, breaking barriers to parental involvement in schools, parenting and life skills training for families as well as adult education and training are addressed in the Education Section of the Wharton County Plan. All of these are part of the solution to substance abuse. Local availability for treatment is a serious need for which grant funding will be sought. Boys & Girls Clubs of El Campo and Boys & Girls Club of Wharton offer a BGCA program SMART Moves. SMART Moves is an evidenced based preventative program that helps youth resist alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Boys & Girls Club of El Campo implements Positive Action Program and Botvin LifeSkills. Positive Action goals are: improving academics, positive behaviors, social and emotional learning, cause and effect of actions, reducing substance abuse and bullying. Botvin LifeSkills is a prevention program designed to prevent adolescent tobacco, marijuana, and alcohol use as well as a preventative against violence. Youth.gov affirms that positive mentor relationships will decrease a youth's likelihood of drug use and becoming a victim of bullying. Boys & Girls Club of Wharton offers a prevention program called Girl Circle that is sponsored by the Wharton County Juvenile Probation Office. Just Do It Now is a certified to facilitate the D.O.E.P. (Drug Offender's Education Program) which is required by the legal system. They are the only certified facilitators in Wharton.

Identified Problem:

Data Collection:

<p>Insufficient Mental Health Services</p>	<p>Wharton County Juvenile Probation supervised 84 juveniles. There were 33 juveniles placed on Official Probation and 35 juveniles placed on deferred prosecution during September 1, 2017 through August 31, 2018. 4 juveniles were placed into residential placements from September 1 2017, through August 31, 2018. 84 Juveniles received some form of counseling services from September 1, 2017 through August 31, 2018.</p> <p>Counseling</p>
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	<p>All juveniles placed on probation receive some type of referral to counseling; generally, to one of the following agencies: Texana MHMR, ACE Drug and Alcohol services, STAR, Wharton Psychiatric Services and local licensed professional counselors. These agencies have insufficient capacity to meet the need.</p> <p>Many of the youth we encounter have multiple mental health issues including depression, anger, suicide, thought disturbances, as well as traumatic experiences.</p> <p>Gender Wharton County Juvenile Probation had 64 males and 20 females referred in 2018/2018 they had more referrals of female juveniles than we have in the past. Generally, they have experienced a traumatic experience primarily sexual assault in their past. Assault FV is the most common offense they are arrested for. Many already referred to the local mental health authority TEXANA.</p> <p>Family Involvement The family dynamics are so diverse that they required not only more, but a broader variety of interventions. Programs working with entire family such as basic life skills, parenting management skills and job training are not available to help family's deal with the problems the youth are encountering today. The families need strong, ongoing encouragement and counseling to improve their lives and the lives of their children.</p> <p>Additionally, many parents do not speak English and this is causing a stumbling block to delivering necessary services. Most families lack the money or transportation to access services outside the county. Transportation is the biggest problem with juveniles and their families being able to make counseling appointments.</p> <p>Solutions: Public transportation that is available day and night. Funding is needed to provide greater variety of mental health/substance abuse counseling services for juveniles. Priority should be given to the STAR program since it is available locally and is the only one that is without charge which is often the only viable option for underprivileged. All youth on Medicaid or with private insurance can be referred to the services who charge for their services but accept these sources of payment. The ACE program offers services at very modest fees. Working with faith-based programs that meet state and federal guidelines could add to currently available services.</p>
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Identified Problem:

Data Collection:

Crisis Among Hispanic Youth	Hispanics make up 38.3% of population. But, for the past two years, Hispanic youth made up nearly two thirds (2/3) of the caseload for Juvenile Probation. During the three previous years the number neared three quarters (3/4) of the caseload as
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confirmed by the charts below. The report also shows the majority of problems begin in the early teen years.

YEAR 2015-2016	FELONIES		CLASS A&B		Violation Probation		Contempt Magistrate Order		TOTALS		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	T
AF. AM	6	0	12	8	3	0	0	0	12	8	26
CAUCASIAN	1	0	1	1	6	0	0	0	1	1	3
HISPANIC	13	5	23	15	4	5	0	0	23	15	54
TOTALS	20	5	36	24	13	5	0	0	36	24	83

YEAR 2014-2015	FELONIES		CLASS A&B		Violation Probation		Contempt Magistrate Order		TOTALS		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	T
AF. AM	12	1	12	4	3	1	1	0	28	6	34
CAUCASIAN	8	2	10	2	2	0	0	0	20	4	24
HISPANIC	23	6	25	11	2	2	0	0	50	19	69
TOTALS	43	9	47	17	7	3	1	0	98	29	127

YEAR 2013-2014	FELONIES		CLASS A&B		Violation Probation		Contempt Magistrate Order		TOTALS		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	T
AF. AM.	7	2	11	8	5	0	0	0	23	10	33
CAUCASIAN	12	0	5	1	1	0	0	0	19	1	20
HISPANIC	7	2	18	8	4	2	1	0	30	12	42
TOTALS	26	4	35	17	10	2	1	0	72	23	25

Crisis Among Hispanic Youth (continued)

Parent's dependence on their children to translate and help them with a variety of tasks may cause the children to lack respect for or be embarrassed by their parents. This problem is exacerbated when the children become Americanized while their parents do not. English speaking children can easily deceive their Spanish speaking parents who do not have easy access to information. A breakdown of parental control enhances the chance of delinquent activity.

Educationally, Hispanic youth are falling behind and dropping out of school at alarming rates. This is discussed more fully and supported by verifying data in the education section.

The juvenile justice problems are precursors for future behavior. A fact confirmed weekly in the arrest reports of local papers. There is a critical need to address this crisis as the Hispanic

	population growth indicates this to be an increasing and ongoing problem.
<p>Solutions: Study and apply the research that leads to successful remediation. Recognize the connection between educational difficulties and delinquency and link with school efforts and out-of-school programs that work on remediation. Seek mentors and/or tutors to provide one on one support.</p> <p>Connect with providers of youth activities to encourage them to take on troubled youth. Be knowledgeable of programs that get the child involved, keep them busy and offer a positive influence including but not limited to sports, 4H, scouts, ROTC, music, art, church, clubs—refer to anything that involve the family to whatever degree feasible.</p> <p>Confront cultural norms that reinforce delinquent behavior and reinforce those that have a positive impact. Do not be afraid to involve the church as priests have tremendous influence over both the children and the parents. Support participation in ESL classes for Spanish speaking parents.</p> <p>Push the value of education and training for lifetime success. Get the community involved to provide places for work or service. Offer training for those from the community who are helping in any capacity.</p>	

Identified Problem

Data Collection

<p>Language Barrier</p>	<p>According to the 2014 Census, Hispanics make up 39.7% of the population in Wharton County and are becoming a larger percentage every year. Census data also reports that in Texas, at least one-in-five residents spoke Spanish at home in 2007.</p> <p>The problem of illegal immigration is a major contributing factor to the ongoing issue of not speaking English. Most immigrant populations are English speakers by the second generation. With the tremendous yearly influx of Hispanic illegal’s crossing our border this never has a chance to happen.</p> <p>Another difficulty is that speaking Spanish is so firmly entrenched in some areas that many immigrants may feel no pressure to learn English. According to a census report in 2003, 44 percent of Hispanics did not speak and read English well enough to perform routine tasks, while in 1992 the percentage was 35 percent. This means the illiteracy rate for Hispanic adults rose during the decade whereas it declined for every other major population group</p> <p>There are not enough bilingual employees to meet the need for translators in every area of law enforcement as well as for those providing counseling and health services.</p>
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Solutions: Every effort should be made to hire a translator who could serve the whole county from a fixed location. A phone or video link is a viable option to overcome the language barrier for not only juvenile cases but all law enforcement throughout the county.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

Lack of Public Transportation

Colorado Valley Transit District provides deviated fixed route service and “demand-responsive” transportation service for Wharton County from 6 am to 6 pm on weekdays. Late night, emergency trips and specialized weekend transportation service are not available. Additional route transportation service is needed to adequately address the challenges faced by both individuals and agencies needing transportation.

There is a charge of \$10 round trip when county lines are crossed. For example, if a person needs to come from Colorado County (also served by Colorado Valley Transit) to Wharton County for school, medical or other ongoing needs this fee must be paid each time making the cost prohibitive for regular use by most who would utilize the service.

The U.S. Bureau of the Census profile for year 2000 on vehicles per household had 7.1% of the population with no vehicles; 34.7% with one vehicle and 41.25% with 2 vehicles. Additional to the number of vehicles available per household, the majority of those vehicles are used to commute to and from work and not available to address general public safety needs and issues.

Lack of additional transportation alternatives is a contributing factor in a multitude of problems faced by Wharton County residents. Access to school, the workplace, and service providers (including medical clinics, daycare, after-school programs, and various social service providers) is impeded when an adequate level of service is not an option. Free and subsidized public transportation is needed to address the access needs of residents.

#of juveniles transported:	2,935
#of transportation trips to activities & Services:	6,486
#of transports to school/work:	4,631
#of transports medical/dialysis	10,475

Total number of trips for Wharton County is 30,985 from September 1, 2016 thru August 31, 2017.

Total vehicle miles were 145,322 for FY year

Solutions: Expand the hours and routes of Colorado Valley Transit to include evenings and week-ends. Subsidize the charge for crossing county lines for those who need transportation

service to get to jobs or access education or medical services on a regular ongoing basis. Lack of funds and limited resources demonstrate the need for increased funding and continue emphasis in providing solutions for all of the problems identified in order that effective change may occur. Grant funding will be sought to meet these ongoing needs.

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

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

<i>Identified Problem</i>	<i>Data Collection</i>
<p>Domestic Violence</p>	<p>The Women’s Crisis Center has provided services to domestic violence victims since 1984. In addition, the Crisis Center has provided an Outreach Program in Wharton County since 1992 and has several other outreach locations to better serve those underserved clients in rural areas. The Crisis Center works closely with local law enforcement agencies, the Wharton County District Attorney’s and County Attorney’s Offices, medical providers, and other social service providers to provide immediate crisis intervention services to victims of domestic violence.</p> <p>The Crisis Center provides a wide range of services for victims, such as a twenty-four-hour crisis hotline, emergency shelter, peer support, crisis intervention, professional counseling and safety planning, free legal services, support groups, transportation, legal and medical accompaniment, and information and assistance with Crime Victim Compensation and the criminal justice system. There are several other programs that can assist families in crisis or who need assistance. Victim liaisons from local law enforcement agencies are available to assist victims of crime with a Crime Victim Compensation Application and other resources. Boys & Girls Clubs of El Campo offer SMART Girls and Net SMART. The program’s goals are to improve girl’s knowledge of internet safety and level of self-esteem while reducing vulnerability to traffickers and abusive relationships. Boys & Girls Club of El Campo implements Positive Action Program whose goals are: improving academics, positive behaviors, social and emotional learning, cause, and effect of actions, reducing substance abuse and bullying.</p> <p>In Fiscal Year 2021-2022 the Crisis Center reports providing services to 94 victims of Domestic Violence in Wharton County. According to the Texas Uniform Crime Report, there has been an 8.6% increase in family violence incidents between 2019 and 2020 (TX Dept. of Public Safety, 2020).</p> <p>According to The Texas Council on Family Violence <i>Honoring Texas Victims</i> report, 188 Texas women and 16 men were killed</p>

	<p>by their intimate partners in 2021, an increase of 23 individuals from the previous year.</p> <p>Domestic violence is thought to be a learned behavior. The Crisis Center provided community education programs to over 6,500 individuals in FY21-22. While several programs do exist, not enough are being reached due to the barriers associated with serving rural areas.</p>
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Solutions:

- Fund educational materials and curriculums for both teenagers and adults that focus on healthy relationships and teen dating violence prevention
- Fund life skills classes that provide assistance and resources to those looking to leave violent relationships
- Provide and fund training on the neurobiology of trauma and trauma-informed interview skills to law enforcement and DFPS when responding to victims of domestic violence
- Strengthen existing programs to ensure adequate staffing to reach all areas of the county
- Increase public awareness of the signs and dynamics of domestic violence
- Increase the amount of bilingual service providers
- Support the partnership of The Crisis Center and the Texas Forensic Nurse Examiners Network through additional funding for forensic exams for this client population as it is not funded through the OAG
- Provide funding for temporary emergency shelter in Wharton County

<p>Sexual Assault</p>	<p>The Women’s Crisis Center provides immediate crisis intervention with medical accompaniment for all sexual assault victims. In addition, services include the 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. According to statistics provided, most victims do not report, but many seek services.</p> <p>According to the Texas Crime Report, in 2020 there were 16,969 sexual assault incidents in the state (TX Dept. of Public Safety, 2020).</p> <p>During the 2021-2022 fiscal year, the Women’s Crisis Center assisted and accompanied in 33 sexual assault cases. Law enforcement agencies in Wharton County reported 13 cases of sexual assault in 2021, highlighting the amount of unreported sexual assaults in our area.</p> <p>In 2021, the Wharton County Commissioner’s Court and the Crisis Center worked together to establish a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) in accordance with Senate Bill 476. The purpose of a SART is to increase the efficacy of sexual</p>
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	<p>Victim liaisons from local law enforcement agencies are also available to assist victims of crime and their families with Crime Victim Compensation Applications and other resources.</p> <p>Several other programs provide services such as counseling and educational programs to youth in our community including the Boys and Girls Clubs in El Campo and Wharton.</p> <p>The Crisis Center CAC provided community education programs to over 6,500 individuals in FY21-22. It is more important than ever to find new and innovative ways to provide education to the youth population and community members such as teachers, daycare workers, and other professionals who work directly with children. The Crisis Center offers several research-based curricula for children including Play It Safe! NETSMARTZ KIDSMARTZ, and Child/Teen Safety Matters. These programs educate and give children the necessary tools to reduce the risk of abuse and exploitation. The Crisis Center also offers trainings for adults including Recognizing and Reporting and Parenting in the 21st Century.</p>
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- **Solutions:** Fund educational materials and curriculums for both children and adults that focus on body safety, healthy relationships, teen dating violence, bullying, internet, and phone safety, recognizing and reporting child abuse, and other pertinent topics on prevention.
- Provide funding for parenting class programs including facilities to provide training in rural communities, class materials, certification for class facilitators and ongoing education
- Additional training should be provided to Multi-Disciplinary Team Partners on child sexual abuse including trafficking and exploitation.
- Strengthen existing programs to ensure adequate staffing to reach all areas of the county.
- Increase public awareness of the signs and dynamics of child abuse and neglect by funding additional community outreach.
- Increase the amount of bilingual service providers.
- Support the partnership of The Crisis Center and the Texas Forensic Nurse Examiners Network through additional funding for forensic exams of children.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

Lack of Low Cost/ Pro-Bono Legal Services	<p>Wharton County is part of Lone Star Legal Aid catchment area. The Crisis Center receives funding from the Texas Health and Human Services Commission in order employ a full-time attorney that provides free legal services to clients based on income. The attorney is able to provide pro bono legal clinics, legal counsel for divorce, assist with child custody, tenant issues, protective orders, wills and other subjects applicable to</p>
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	<p>victims. From 2021 to 2022, 1,067 legal services were provided by the Crisis Center.</p> <p>Child custody cases, which require much time and effort, are common with domestic violence and child abuse victims. The number of referrals received by The Crisis Center is overwhelming and clients must meet certain criteria and income standards in order to be approved.</p>
<p>Solutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in free legal services in Wharton County is needed and funding to support • Provide technical support to agencies within the county that would assist them in securing funding or applying for grants that would enable them to contract with or hire an attorney and provide. • Work with attorneys in the community to create a network of pro-bono legal clinics. 	

Identified Problem Data Collection

<p>Insufficient bilingual services for crime victims:</p>	<p>According to the United States Census in 2020, the ethnic make-up of Wharton County was 42.6% white, 43.7% Hispanic or Latino, and 13.5% Black or African American. The amount of Hispanic or Latino individuals has steadily increased over the last decade. However, Spanish speaking only individuals are underserved, have a difficult time accessing services and continue to struggle to find appropriate referrals due to cultural barriers. At this time, Spanish speaking service providers are limited for law enforcement, child protective services, victim advocates and liaisons, legal, counseling, and forensic services.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solutions: Develop adult and youth literacy and workforce programs to assist those with limited English proficiency • Provide funding to recruit and retain qualified bilingual individuals to the field of law enforcement and social services • Work with E4E2 in Houston to develop programs in this area that will help the Hispanic and Latin community with high school dropout rates and college preparedness • Create and disseminate a Spanish speaking resource list to the community • Establish relationships with Hispanic and Latino community organizations and groups in order to provide outreach and education 	
<p>Lack of Counseling & Medical Services:</p>	<p>The Women’s Crisis Center’s contract professional counselors work with clients who are sexual assault, domestic violence, and child abuse victims. In 2022, the Crisis Center established an in-house therapy program as well by employing a bilingual Licensed Clinical Social Worker. However, in the current economic climate it is becoming more and more difficult to find and hire licensed counseling professionals.</p>

	<p>Counseling is needed because of the trauma associated with sexual assault, domestic violence, and child abuse. The Crisis Center is the only agency in Wharton County that provides this service free of charge to all these groups. In fiscal year 2021-2022, the Crisis Center provided over 800 therapy services to adults and children.</p> <p>Victims receiving emergency room or private doctor care or prescriptions, often do not have the funds needed to obtain these services. Agencies and other service providers are unwilling to assist with paying for several types of prescription medication. Wharton County is lacking low cost/free available medical resources to victims of crime and abuse.</p> <p>MEHOP, a Federally Qualified Community Health Center (FQHC), provides healthcare services to Wharton County and surrounding areas. MEHOP accepts all patients regardless of whether they are insured or uninsured. Services from MEHOP include not only medical, but also counseling. Texana is a behavioral healthcare clinic in Wharton that provides treatment to individuals with mental illness, intellectual disabilities, autism, and other disabilities. However, individuals must meet eligibility requirements and are charged for services based upon ability to pay or must have a third-party payment source.</p> <p>The United States Census Bureau shows that in 2020 the poverty rate for Wharton County was 13.8%. According to the American Community Survey, in October 2020 the unemployment rate reached 6.5%, 3% percent higher than the state’s average unemployment rate in 2019. According to The Crisis Center, 95% of their clients live at or below the poverty rate, without insurance and financial means, victims are unable to obtain quality medical care or professional counseling.</p>
<p>Solutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase funding that supports and assists those wanting to pursue counseling degrees/ careers ● Increase funding for social service providers who provide free counseling services ● Provide outreach in the community on the importance of mental health and stigmas surrounding ● Increase organizations in rural areas that do not require insurance to receive mental health services ● Provide funding for prescription assistance programs ● Increase outreach in rural communities to assist in education on CHIP, Medicaid, Medicare, Healthy Texas Women Program and other free or low-cost medical programs and insurance coverages 	

Identified Problem

Data Collection

<p>Safe & Affordable Housing and Utility Assistance</p>	<p>The Women’s Crisis Center has provided emergency shelter and services to victims of family violence and sexual assault in Bay City 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 for transitional and permanent low-income housing for victims is more important than ever. Some victims live a life of abuse, and need a permanent, sheltered environment in order to live without abuse. Until there is a transitional housing program, we will continue to see high rates of homelessness and individuals returning to shelters after leaving. The nearest shelter to Wharton County is provided in Bay City by The Crisis Center.</p>
<p>Solutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish temporary emergency shelter and/ or transitional housing in Wharton County through additional funding • Purchase or rent space for transitional housing through grants, endowments, or other funding • Increase low-income housing options in Wharton County 	

<i>Identified Problem</i>	<i>Data Collection</i>
<p>Childcare Assistance</p>	<p>The Women’s Crisis Center established a child care center for temporary shelter clients that meet criteria in Bay City, but due to lack of funding and space has not been able to do so in Wharton County. In Bay City, the center can operate 8 hours a day with a maximum capacity of 17 children. Continued funding is needed to assist with ongoing child care needs such as supplies, insurance, staffing, training and continued education. Headstart, Creative Child’s Care and The Boys and Girls Club all offer free or low-income childcare assistance but are unable to alleviate the problem fully.</p> <p>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. In fiscal year 2021-2022, the Crisis Center provided 1,509 childcare services.</p>
<p>Solutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for an increase of low-income or free childcare • Space for non-profit agencies such as The Crisis Center to establish free childcare services in Wharton County 	

<i>Identified Problem</i>	<i>Data Collection</i>
Lack of Transportation	<p>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> <p>The Wharton-Colorado Valley Transit System services provide responsive and fixed route services in Wharton and Colorado Counties. However, the service does require a fare and for responsive service you must give a 24-hour advance notice.</p> <p>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. The Women’s Crisis Center may provide transportation to individuals that meet criteria.</p> <p>Given the rural make-up of Wharton County, many residents commute for work. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 2020 the average commute for residents of Wharton County was 25 minutes. Increased public transportation is needed for the rural communities that make up this county.</p> <p>In a community wide needs assessment through focus group community planning every area of focus including victim issues identified transportation as a serious issue.</p>
	<p>Solutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Obtain funding or grant opportunities for public and private agencies to purchase vehicles for client needs ● Increase fixed routes of public transportation ● Create criteria for free transportation within the Wharton-Colorado Valley Transit System

<i>Identified Problem</i>	<i>Data Collection</i>
Lack of Life Skills and Job Training	<p>Workforce Solutions in Wharton assist clients in developing skills and interests in order to plan long-term goals and devise career strategies. The Adult Learning Center provides preparation for GED testing. E4E2 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. Parenting classes are offered by the Crisis Center using Parenting in the 21st Century</p>

	<p>curriculum, but only two staff members are certified. 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>
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- Solution:**
- Establish funding and training of social service providers to provide basic life skill education
 - Provide funding to GED Programs
 - Increase funding to outreach programs such as junior colleges
 - Provide funding for parenting class facilities in Wharton County, education materials and certification of instructors.
 - Provide free training for social service providers in life skills such as resume building, computer skills etc.
 - Provide funding for social service organizations to hire a full-time employee who can focus on life skills for clients

<p>COVID-19</p>	<p>The Women’s Crisis Center has provided uninterrupted services throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic. This virus continues to thrive in our communities providing further barriers to accessing services.</p> <p>Reports from the National Commission on COVID-19 and Criminal Justice have shown an 8% increase in domestic violence incidents since 2020 lockdowns. There is also emerging evidence that lockdowns significantly worsened child abuse. The culmination of school closures, restricted movement and unemployment have affected the frequency and intensity of risk factors for child abuse. This can be seen through spikes in child abuse hotline calls and, locally, an increase in child fatalities involving abuse or neglect. Now more than ever, there is a critical need for victims of family violence, sexual assault, and child abuse to access services that will provide immediate safety, emotional support, and personal advocacy after a crime or crisis event. While the Crisis Center and other victim service organizations in Wharton County provide a wide range of services, it is important that these organizations are properly equipped and funded in order to remain open.</p>
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- Solutions:**
- Ensure access of personal protective equipment such as gloves, masks, and face shields to first responders and other essential victims service workers

- Provide access and/ or funding for increased sanitation products such as Lysol, Clorox, and hand sanitizer to organizations that work directly with victims and provide shelter
- Seek funding to increase training and staff to answer the 24-hour helplines, providing virtual/ online crisis intervention and counseling services
- Fund virtual platform subscriptions such as Doxy.Me, Zoom, GoToMeeting and Google Meet
- Create community outreach campaigns that offer discrete and alternate emergency contacts and reporting information.
- Create community outreach campaigns that acknowledge the long-term effects of pandemic lock downs and provide mental health resources
- Prepare and train for the long-term effects of the virus and how it will impact client safety, health, and well-being.

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

Identified Problem

Data Collection

Solutions: Based upon the research cited herein, increasing the availability of substance abuse treatment and other related services in Wharton County as well as transportation to get to and from services would enhance the safety of the public by helping current offenders to become pro-social and productive members of society. This would, in turn, reduce the amount of crime being committed, the number of individuals being victimized, and positively impact the quality of life in the county.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

<p>Worn Out and Out-Dated Equipment</p>	<p>Wharton County is a rural county covering 1100 square miles, with a population of 41,280 people, a figure which is expected to double in the next 10 years. There are three incorporated cities within the county, Wharton, El Campo and East Bernard. Wharton and El Campo have their own police departments but the sheriff’s office is responsible for East Bernard, the unincorporated towns and the rest of the county.</p>
<p>Worn Out and Out-Dated Equipment (continued)</p>	<p>Two major rivers flow through the county. The Colorado flows through the City of Wharton and the San Bernard flows through East Bernard. Both Mustang and Tress Palacios Creeks traverse El Campo. Because Wharton County is 75 percent rural and with the four waterways flowing through it, 4-wheel drive high clearance vehicles are needed. They are necessary for flooding events but are also needed in areas of the county and both cities where 2-wheel drive police vehicles are unable to go.</p> <p>Because Highway 59, which runs through the county, is a major corridor used for drug and alien smuggling as well as opening the area to gangs. There is a growing need not only for new equipment, but also for the replacement of equipment</p>

	<p>that is outdated as well as standard patrol equipment. Also needed are training aids for use of force scenarios and decision-making situations.</p> <p>The County Law Enforcement agencies do not have body cameras for documenting evidence and this would be a need in the very near future due to recent national events.</p>
<p>Solutions: Modern law enforcement is technologically based. Therefore, equipment for law enforcement agencies needs funding to meet the most current technology in order for law enforcement to police the community in a safe, effective and efficient manner.</p>	

Identified Problem

Data Collection

<p>Solutions: Coordinate court scheduling to avoid the problem when possible. Identify funding for additional personnel and security equipment.</p>
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Identified Problem

Data Collection

<p>Consistent Enforcement of DWI</p>	<p>The social and financial impact on Wharton County and its citizens resulting from DWI are enormous. In 1999 the national highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimated that the average alcohol-related fatality due to a motor vehicle accident in Texas costs between 1.1 and 3.3 million in monetary costs and \$2.2 million in losses to quality of life. In 2000, Texas motor vehicle crashed costs due to alcohol totaled over \$390 million in legal/court costs, insurance administration and vehicle damage. The estimated cost per injury survivor of an alcohol related crash averaged \$48,000-96,000 in monetary costs and \$48,000 in quality of life losses.</p> <p>NHTSA estimated that alcohol is a factor in 25% of the costs associated with motor vehicle crashes in Texas. In 1999 alcohol-related crashes in Texas cost the public an estimate 10.3 billion including \$4.5 billion in monetary costs and almost \$5.8 billion in quality of life loses. People other than the driver paid .3 billion of the alcohol-related crash costs.</p>
<p>Solutions: Identify funding sources to procure enhanced DWI enforcement equipment that would also allow for more expedient processing of DWI prisoners and evidence.</p>	

Identified Problem

Data Collection

<p>Insufficient Mental Health Facilities and Resources</p>	<p>Currently in Wharton County over thirty (30) persons a month (approximately 370 persons per year), require mental health evaluation and transportation to an out-of-county hospital</p>
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Insufficient Mental Health Facilities and Resources (continued)

approved by the State of Texas, or a state-owned mental health treatment facility.

Wharton County Peace officers spend four to six (4 to 6) hours with each person requiring mental health evaluation. During the evaluation process, if treatment for the person is deemed necessary, arrangements are made with a proper mental health treatment facility. With the exception of a local geriatric unit, the nearest mental health treatment facility is a one-hour trip one-way from Wharton County. These distances result in the peace officers spending four to 8 hours transporting each person requiring treatment.

In 2010 the Wharton County Sheriff's Office Jail division booked in 2,186 persons. Of those booked into the county jail an average of 20 inmates per day required mental health treatment under criteria established by the State of Texas. In Wharton County a large number of these persons should be assessed in detail and diverted prior to incarceration. Although assessment by the local MHMR provider (Texana) is available, Texana is unable to provide residential stability treatment for that number. As a result, many persons who could be diverted to treatment prior to booking are not.

Wharton County currently lacks a facility for pre-booking screening which is an adequate site for medical clearance to be accomplished and which provides adequate segregation of mental health screening from persons being booked into the jail on charges, as required by the Texas Health and Safety Code. As a result, that medical screening must occur at the hospital emergency room, which is not staffed to provide that service.

To further compound these difficulties, law enforcement agencies in the county are not resourced to provide escort and transportation to persons to distant mental health treatment locations unless the person is already in custody on an emergency mental health warrant. Insufficient law enforcement staff, vehicles and transportation funding make booking into and retention in jail rather than mental health treatment alternatives the most rational course of action for law enforcement agencies that encounter a person exhibiting potential mental health impairments. Furthermore, many more incarcerated persons are eligible for diversion for jail to outpatient mental health treatment than current resources can support.

Solutions: Obtain resources including additional deputies, vehicles, and transportation funding for transport, when necessary, of persons to distant inpatient psychiatric facilities for stabilization prior to outpatient treatment.

Obtain additional funding for expanded use of contract hospital facilities for short-term stabilization.

<i>Identified Problem</i>	<i>Data Collection</i>
<p>Need for additional capacity in the Wharton County Jail</p>	<p>Although Wharton County has an excellent jail facility that houses a maximum of 144 prisoners it lacks capacity to meet steadily increasing needs. Since 2009 prisoners have had to be shipped out to other facilities. Currently all prisoners in excess of the 144-bed maximum go to Fort Bend County. The cost for each prisoner is \$48 a day. Further expense is incurred in transporting prisoners initially and then additional times for court dates. These are excessive expenses on the Wharton County tax payers.</p>
<p>Solution: Double the size of the current jail from 144 to 288. Wharton County is expected to double in population over the next ten years. Any initial extra space can be used to house overcrowding in other facilities until the space is needed for local use.</p>	

<i>Identified Problem</i>	<i>Data Collection</i>
<p>Insufficient law enforcement training resources</p>	<p>The Wharton County Sheriff’s Department, El Campo Police Department, Wharton Police Department, Texas Department of Public Safety, Texas Parks and Wildlife Game Wardens, Wharton I.S.D. Police and four Constable Offices all serve Wharton County. Currently, Wharton County Junior College trains police recruits through their Basic Police Officer Academy, but is unable to provide continuing education classes for officers. Local agencies are forced to send officers to training facilities in other counties to meet their TCLEOSE required educational needs.</p> <p>Identified Needs: A need for local training classes exists for state mandated courses, such as Use of Force, Child Abuse, Arrest/Search/Seizure, Cultural Diversity, Mental Health Officer, Family Violence, Sexual Assault, etc. There is also a need to provide specialized training, such as Communication skills, including report writing, verbal tactics, crisis intervention techniques, and courtroom testimony. This specialized training need helps officers in a majority of daily situations, yet very little quality, cost-effective training is available on this topic. Another topic set included tactical training for patrol officers, such as active-shooter intervention, tactics off-duty officers, combat casualty care for first responders, and low-light shooting skills. This skill set is imperative to prepare officers to fulfill</p>

	<p>their role as first responders. A third training need identified was the need for judgment and decision-making in high-risk activities, such as firearms use and driving. Firearms and driving simulators are offered in the marketplace; however, the expense makes them too costly for many agencies to purchase on their own. Moreover, trained operators and instructors are needed to ensure a positive learning experience.</p>
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<p>Solutions: Identify funding and resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To offer local in-service courses, and to support specialized training in a variety of communications skills, tactical skills and training simulators to enhance judgment and decision-making in high-risk activities. 	
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Identified Problem:

<p>Increased bond supervision population with limited ability to fund expansion of program</p>	<p>Although the probation department has always supervised a very small number of bond cases, recent nationwide changes in bail reform has led the implementation of a bond program for Wharton County. The bond program under adult probation's supervision started accepting bond cases through JP courts in September 2019. This began slowly with JP1 then in November JP4 was added. JP2 and JP3 are slated for January 2020. The bond supervision program allows the county to more adequately control its jail population, reduce incarceration costs and comply with bail reform. Bond intake for 2018 totaled 8 defendants with a total of 18 cases; however, as of December 17, 2019, there have been 62 defendants with a total of 102 cases. This increase from 2018 to 2019 represents a 467% increase in cases and a 675% increase in defendants requiring face-to-face supervision. Because full implementation of the bond program through four JP courts as well as the district court will not be complete until January 2020, the number of individuals supervised by the probation department on bond supervision will continue to increase exponentially. Although salaries in the probation department have not historically been tied in any way to county funds, the increased supervision of bond cases has resulted in a small amount of county funds being channeled to the probation department for the bond program. As this is a county function and not a district function traditional state aid for probation departments cannot be utilized for this type of supervision.</p> <p>Like their counterparts in law enforcement, in order to attract, hire, and retain qualified personnel, the probation department must also be able to secure additional funding for its bond supervision program.</p>
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<p>Solutions: Increase the availability of funds to supplement current funding from the county so that bond program can continue to run efficiently and be an effective means of assisting with the control of the jail population and court appearances as well as helping to keep the community safe.</p>	
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Education Issues (listed in order of priority, greatest need first)

Identified Problem

Data Collection

**Failure to Attend/
Truancy**

Data: Failure to attend continues to be a major problem for school districts. Statistical Data below shows a varying rate from 2008 through 2010 with the numbers showing a substantial increase in 2011 even though only a partial year is being reported.

Failure to Attend cases filed in JP Courts

2008	246
2009	117
2010	148
2011	338

According to the Texas Education Code §25.094, a juvenile commits the offense of “Failure to Attend” if the juvenile fails to attend school:

- On 10 or more days or parts of days within a 6-month period in the same school year; or
- On 3 or more days or parts of days within a 4-week period.

The problem is made more serious by the fact that excused absences are not counted making it possible for a student to miss a substantial amount of school without the absences being addressed as truancy and remedial action taken.

There are no truant officers in Wharton County. Wharton ISD’s police officer handles truancy along with his other duties. In El Campo the city assigns officers to the middle school and high school but their responsibilities do not include truancy. It falls to the school districts, JP courts and the juvenile probation office to address the problem.

Cooperative reports from Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program, U.S. Department of Education state that excessive absence signals the beginning of a lifetime of problems for students. They fall academically and many drop out of school. It is also a stepping stone to delinquent and criminal activity.

A report compiled by the Los Angeles County Office of Education on factors to juvenile delinquency concluded that chronic absenteeism is the most powerful predictor of delinquent behavior. Several studies have documented the correlation between drug use and truancy. A report from the University of Maryland found that 51 percent of female juvenile detainees not in school at the time of their arrests tested positive drug use. Another study by the U.S. Department of Justice's

**Failure to Attend/
Truancy (continue)**

Drug Use Forecasting (DUF) program reported that more than half (53%) of a group of 403 male juvenile arrestees in San Diego, California, tested positive for drug use when taken to juvenile hall. Not surprisingly, those who did not attend school were more likely (67% versus 49%) to test positive for drug use than those who did attend.

Community partners such as law enforcement and courts may support targeted efforts by providing immediate consequences for truancy. However punitive approaches alone are not likely to succeed and must be balanced with supporting services and even alternative educational approaches. Long term solutions come by aggressively intervening when students are young and targeting problems before they become chronic.

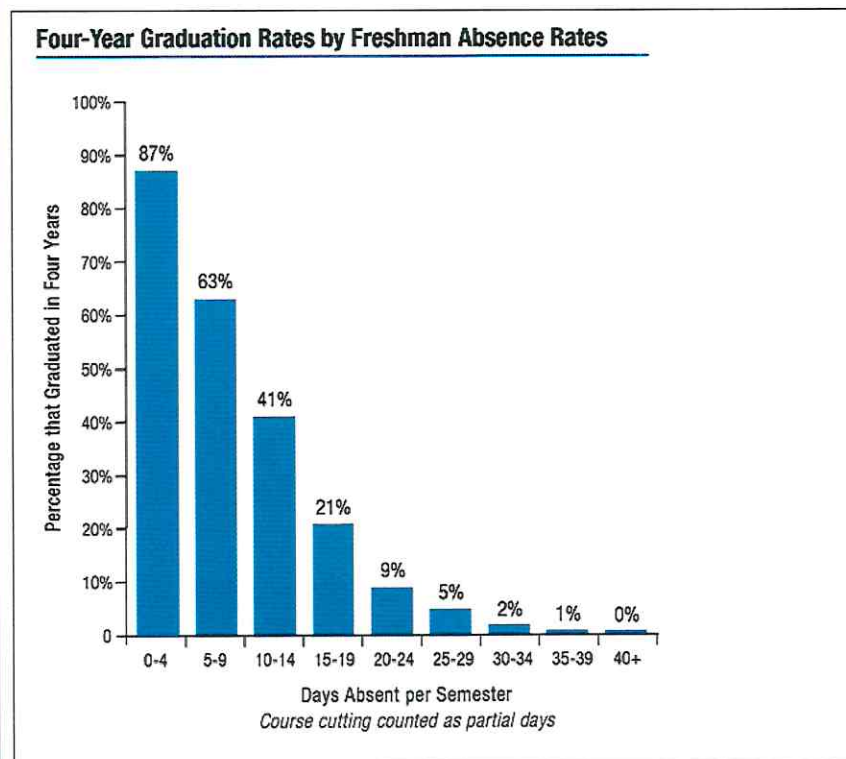


Chart by Allensworth and Easton University of Chicago

The chart above from Allensworth and Easton shows the effect on graduation rates of attendance during the ninth grade. Long term solutions come by aggressively intervening when students are young thereby targeting problems before they become chronic.

The Campaign for Grade-level Reading reports that 1 in 10 kindergartens and first grade students nationwide miss nearly a month of school each year in excused and unexcused absences. Disadvantaged children have limited vocabulary levels and start school behind and stay behind. Most students who fail to read on grade-level at the end of third grade falter in the later grades and often drop out.

**Failure to Attend/
Truancy (continued)**

Information from the statistical report of the Wharton County Juvenile Probation Department shows that most delinquent behavior serious enough to be referred to their department begins in in the teen years.

ALL ALLEDGED DELINQUENT BEHAVIOR 2010-11						
AGE	FELONIES	CLASS A & B	Violation Probation	Contempt Magistrate Order	TOTALS	%
10	0	0	0	0	0	0%
11	0	3	0	0	3	2.6%
12	0	3	0	0	3	2.6%
13	10	7	2	0	19	16.4%
14	4	13	1	0	18	15.5%
15	10	11	10	0	31	26.7%
16	10	19	5	0	34	29.3%
17	0	0	8	0	8	6.9%
TOTALS	34	56	26	0	116	100%

For the past 5 years an average of 57% of those referred were behind or failing behind in school. Since most 17-year-olds are treated as adults, these are predominantly youth 16 and below. Truancy is not the only component to academic failure, but it is a significant contributor.

Solutions: Working on chronic absence is a good starting point. Continued cooperation between the school districts and law enforcement has great impact in rural areas where people know each other and the numbers allow for individual attention. However, there must be services available for referral. Parents must be involved and held responsible for their children's school attendance. The Yes, We Can Youth Program run by Just Do It Now is an excellent example of what can be done to keep children in school and out of trouble. This program needs to be duplicated across the County. Boys & Girls Club of El Campo offer after-school and summer program to provide structure and safety during out-of-school time, especially for high-risk youth. Their BGCA programs provide support and positive protective factors to give youth the skills to display appropriate coping behaviors, build relationships, reduce risky behaviors, and grow youth's sense of worth.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

**Drop Out Rates for
Local ISDs**

The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) has worked with TEA for over 20 years researching and publishing an annual Texas Public School Attrition Study. Latest statistics available are for 2009-10 school year. The report's dropout rates are listed below along with data on the number enrolled and the percent of economically disadvantaged youth in each ISD. Graduation rates and the TEA drop out figures, which differ greatly from the IDRA drop-out rate, are included.

**Drop Out Rates for
Local ISDs (continued)**

Wharton County ISDs	# En-rolled	Eco. Disadvantaged	Reported Grad Rate 2010	TEA D.O. Rate 2011	IDRA D.O. Rate 2009*
El Campo	3,477	2,362	89.0%	11%	25%
Wharton	2,167	1,362	82.9%	17.1%	19%
East Bernard	948	341	97.1%	2.9%	5.4%
Louise	497	276	100%	0	0%
Boling	1,014	538	100%	0	32%
Total/Avg	8,103	4,879	93.8%	10.3%	27.1%

**IDRA Drop Out Rate is calculated by subtracting the Freshman enrollment of a class from the Senior class three years later. This attrition formula is used by the TEA in its (Secondary School Completion and Dropouts in Texas Public Schools, for July 2009) Report, page 62.*

The attrition rate for the State of Texas in 2009/2010 was 29%. There continues to be significant and justifiable criticism leveled at TEA for the formula and underlying components used to designate 'leavers' in the system that significantly understate reported attrition rates. Even the IDRA rate ignores the fact that many students leave school prior to entering ninth grade and even some who are enrolled as seniors do not graduate.

The actual drop-out rate for Wharton County is estimated to be near the average for Texas. This is not acceptable. If Wharton County and the State of Texas are to prosper, something must be done to improve our educational outcomes. Students should leave high school prepared for further education or to enter the workforce. On the whole, this is not happening as will be seen in the following sections.

Solutions: The TEA statistics must not be accepted. The real scope of the problem can and should be identified. Children drop out of school for many reasons making any solution to the problem complex. It is seldom that a child from a family that values education leaves school. Increasing the perception of all ethnic groups to see education and lifelong learning as keys not only to financial success but to a full a satisfying life is the task at hand. Some steps in the process of solving the drop out issue are detailed in subsequent sections, but recognition of the problem is the initial requirement. Boys & Girls Clubs of El Campo provide after school tutoring and supervised activities. The Club offers Project Learn, an evidence-based program that is comprised of educational components as well as STEM activities.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

Education from Birth through Grade 3

Nationally, there is growing recognition among educators of the importance of children reading at grade level by the end of third grade. This recognition is the result of research over the past 20 years showing the correlation between students' reading ability at the end of third grade and their subsequent academic success. Most recently, the National Research Council concluded: "Academic

Education from Birth through Third Grade (continued)

success, as defined by high school graduation, can be predicted with reasonable accuracy by knowing someone’s reading skill at the end of 3rd grade. *A person who is not at least a modestly skilled reader by that time is unlikely to graduate from high school.*” Previous sections have documented the link between educational deficiency, delinquency and future criminal behavior.

There are major differences in size, economic level and ethnic makeup of the population of the 5 school districts in the county.

	Black	Hispanic	White	Other	Econ Disad	At Risk
Boling	109	490	398	17	538	355
East Bernard	71	284	587	6	341	267
El Campo	458	2019	958	42	2362	1549
Louise	27	236	228	6	276	143
Wharton	597	1156	386	28	1362	1048

The above differences in size and ethnicity make averaging for the whole county inaccurate but the scores below show where individual school districts stood on test scores for third grade reading and math over the past 10 years. Note the progressive decrease in scores overall during these years, particularly for minorities.

Early Intervention

The most comprehensive strategies for achieving their third-grade reading goals look not only Pre-K through Grade 3 improvements but also interventions for families and children, birth through age 3. There is no state of federally funded early childhood programs in Wharton County. Programs that work through family literacy programs or that go into the homes of at-risk families to educate them on how to prepare their children for educational success show the most long term success both for the parents and the children.

Entering School

Most at-risk children enter school behind and continue to lose ground each year. Family socioeconomic status is highly correlated to the level of academic growth or decline in the summer months. Census data shows that 18.9% of families and 24.1% of Wharton County children are living below poverty level.

Average losses of 2.6 months in Math and at least 2 months in Reading occur during the summer vacation for these at-risk youths. Wharton County children cannot afford the loss. Summer reinforcement can help and is explored in the section on after-school programs. Low-income parents often lack the resources to provide children with sufficient reading materials needed to

reinforce important literacy skills. Further children who are English language learners need additional exposure to print material, which may be difficult for children in homes where English is not the native language (Guryan and Kim, 2010).

Solutions: Admit the problem and begin to work together as a community through collective impact to solve it. The schools alone cannot fix what is broken.

The Rural Literacy Coalition serves Wharton, Colorado and Matagorda Counties under a broad-based board chaired by Matagorda County Judge, Nate McDonald. The coalition is using the concept of collective impact to bringing together all aspects of the community including government, schools, agencies and non-profits to make the most out of what is now available as well as to access a variety of grant funding sources.

The Rural Literacy Coalition has targeted the early childhood area and is applying for funding and working to establish a volunteer center. Experienced providers of the highly successful Parents as Teachers program in Colorado County are offering their expertise to get a form of the program operating in Wharton County.

The Boys & Girls Club of El Campo offer Power Hour during the school year to help with homework and the BGCA Summer Brain Gains program in the summer to impede summer learning loss by incorporating hands-on educational activities.

Turning around the juvenile and adult problems encountered by law enforcement starts here! Changes in values are not easily made, but early childhood intervention has proven to be one successful method.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

Education from Fourth through Eighth Grade

For at-risk youth the years from fourth through eighth grade are critical. County statistics show that it is during the early teens that serious delinquency problems manifest. The 2011 referrals to juvenile probation increased from slightly over 2% of the total at age 12 to 16. % at 13 and increase sharply to 28% of total referrals by age 16.

Intervention for those behind at grade 3 is difficult but possible. Continuing to keep on doing the same things with at-risk children is not the answer. After grade 3, instruction in “how to read” ceases and children are expected to use their skills to move on in all subject areas. Therefore, inadequate math skills are further affected by reading deficiencies. Asking teachers to teach reading along with expected subject content puts great stress on classes and impedes progress for those who already have basic reading skills.

Solutions: Ignoring the academic issues that are often the source of behavior problems is no longer an option. If Wharton county is to grow and prosper, the problems of the at-risk youth must become a priority for the entire community. The Boys and Girls Club and Yes,

We Can are effective in keeping students passing and in school. Boys & Girls Club offer Project Learn, an evidenced based program, that is comprised of educational components. Boys & Girls Club of El Campo provides youth with Summer Brain Gains Program. This program adds hands on, educational activities to help impede summer learning loss.

Mentors and/or tutors can do wonders to encourage those who may not have family able to help academically. Many disturbed youths have little or no family support and respond to caring attention. Peer tutoring should be used as it is great not only for the one receiving help but it does wonders for the one helping. After-school and summer programs must be supported by the whole community with funding and willingness to volunteer.

Respect for fellow students, faculty and administration is key to smooth running schools and workable classrooms.

Parental involvement has proven to be a great asset in some area schools. When parents are called when a problem arises from the time a child first starts school, parents know the teachers and as a rule support them and the school rather than demonstrating an adversarial attitude. This practice should be implemented by all districts at all grade levels. Boys & Girls Club of El Campo offers a BGCA program Junior Staff. Junior Staff teaches youth to develop leadership, responsibility, mentorship, and employable skills. Boys & Girls Club of El Campo and Boys & Girls Club of Wharton offer Passport to Manhood and SMART GIRL'S curriculum helps character development and is a preventative juvenile delinquency program. The Wharton Club offers the program at the Wharton High School partnering with WISD.

Just Do It Now has a peer to peer mentoring program to help with tutoring. Just Do It Now collaborates with WISD in offering behavior coaching at all school campuses.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

High School Education that Prepares for College or Career

One look at the tenth-grade results on the standardized tests in both reading and math make it clear that most Wharton County schools, for whatever reasons, have not met this need for far too many of their students. It should be noted that by tenth grade, a substantial number of students, particularly those with reading difficulty have dropped out. Remember that poor reading skills affect all coursework and in late middle school and high school math skills also cross course lines.

Youth need adequate preparation for post-secondary education to avoid costly remedial courses or the discouragement that comes from failure. Not all students have to go to college. Trade programs that train in saleable skills are no longer available in our schools and need to be reinstated. There is a need for adolescent life skills program that includes understanding and using basic skills across a wide spectrum of knowledge including math, finances, technology, culture, science, health and the workforce. Interviews with students reveal that many do not understand the life-long value of staying in school.

High School Education that Prepares for College or Career (continued)

It is not just the schools. There are a myriad of problems dealing with adequate educational services for the youth of today. Society as a whole continues to demonstrate a downturn in basic values. No matter the reasons, our youth must find positive role models in our schools and communities and their own families. These must be people of integrity that they can trust. Only by exposure do children learn ethical behavior and moral values. Without role models to help them understand what is right or wrong, our youth are strongly influenced by peer pressure which is the blind leading the blind.

Solutions: Schools need to institute successful models to lift not just scores on tests but the competency of the students they graduate to make use of what they have learned.

Counselors need to be relieved of paperwork in order to again be able to have time to counsel students.

The whole community must come together to show that they value education by offering their own talents and time. This means volunteering to tutor or mentor or train—whatever you have to give, give it.

After-school programs must be supported with volunteer time as well as financial contributions.

Youth life skills curriculum must be made available through schools, after-school programs, literacy providers and churches.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

Expand Availability of After-School programs

El Campo 2014 – 494 2015 - 421

After School Program Enrollment	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
El Campo B & G Club	988	401	731	833	886
Wharton B. & G Club	637	688	757	797	829
Yes, We Can	193	238	248	359	476

Unsupervised youth are a major factor in juvenile crime. According to crime statistics, juvenile crime rates are highest between the hours of 3:00pm and 6:00pm, after school and before parents get home from work. After school programs have been found to be fairly effective in reducing the risk of criminal and delinquent behavior. There are three after-school and summer programs in Wharton County. Boys & Girls Clubs are located in El Campo and Wharton each are affiliated with the national Boys & Girls Clubs of America. Boys & Girls Club of El Campo opened in 1991. Boys & Girls Club of Wharton opened in 1998. Wharton’s Just Do It Now organization facilitates the Yes, We Can Youth Program which opened in the spring of 2009. There are no after-

	<p>school programs in East Bernard, the unincorporated towns or rural areas.</p> <p>Transportation is an issue for after school programs. Many families, especially those from school districts outside of Wharton and El Campo ISD service areas, do not have the means to provide their child with transportation to or from after school programs. El Campo ISD provides transportation after school to the El Campo Club.</p>
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Solutions: More after school programs are needed and/or more access is needed to existing programs, particularly in the rural sections of Wharton County. Financial resources are needed for families who cannot afford the cost of existing programs as well as operating support for the organizations as the costs to operate far exceeds the return for membership dues. Expansion of hours and routes of Colorado Valley Transit to include evenings and weekends would also be beneficial in enabling programs to serve more youth. Using school buses for after school transportation should be investigated if funding can be found. Boys & Girls Club of El Campo and Wharton offers after-school and summer programs. The Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan (2015) states, “Boys & Girls Clubs fill the gap between school and home, providing safe environments with peers and caring adults.”

Identified Problem

Data Collection

<p>School Safety and Security</p>	<p>According to the U.S. National Center for Education Statistics, school violence is a serious problem. In 2007, the latest year for which comprehensive data were available, a nationwide survey, conducted biennially by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and involving representative samples of U.S. high school students, found that 5.9% of students carried a weapon (e.g. gun, knife, etc.) on school property during the 30 days antedating the survey. In the 12 months antedating the survey, 7.8% of high school students reported having been threatened or injured with a weapon on school property at least once. In the 12 months antedating the survey, 12.4% of students had been in a physical fight on school property at least once. In the 30 days antedating the survey, 5.5% of students reported that because they did not feel safe, they did not go to school on at least one day.</p> <p>According to the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, in 2009, 10% of high school students reported driving a car or other vehicle during the past 30 days when they had been drinking alcohol. In addition, 28% of students reported riding in a car or other vehicle during the past 30 days driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol.</p>
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Marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug among youth in the United States. In 2012 the National Center on Drug Abuse found that that 17 percent of 10th graders and about 23 percent of 12th graders polled had used marijuana in the past month.

Solutions: Funding for public schools to maintain Safe & Secure Schools programs designed to prevent related problems from further infiltrating Wharton County Public Schools and improve student safety on our school campuses.

Equipping the Library to Support Learning for Lifetime Success

As has been stated earlier in this report, research has shown that a relationship exists between literacy level and criminal behavior. A combination of minimal literacy levels and economic disadvantage compound a problem currently evident in Wharton County. The statistics below clearly illustrate the issue:

US Census Information 2016	Wharton	Texas	Nation
Population 25 or over without a High School Diploma	22.0%	17.7%	13.0%
Percent living at or below poverty level	17.4%	15.6%	12.7%

Language development and literacy skills begin at birth. The Wharton County Library, with locations in Wharton, El Campo, East Bernard, and Louise, offers a variety of services and resources to children, parents and caregivers that support and strengthen these skills. Children who are read to from an early age have a larger vocabulary and better language proficiency. There are age-appropriate reading programs and story times, as well as professionally cultivated literary collections, offered at all locations within the Library System.

With the advent of the electronic age, digital literacy has become a necessity that impacts daily life and economic success. Applying for jobs, filing income tax returns, and registering for government programs are a fraction of the services that are now only available with an internet connection. Without that connection, county residents cannot be competitive in education, workforce, and economic development.

According to the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, public libraries are the only source of public Internet access for approximately 60% of communities. The

Equipping the Library to Support Learning for Lifetime Success (continued)

Wharton County Library is uniquely qualified to bridge this digital divide and deliver services that meet our community's needs. The average number of library visits per year for the last two years (2015-2016) has been 173,549. Among those visits, the average yearly usage of the public access computers was 27,244 sessions.

But, the necessity for these services requires that a library maintains a robust high-speed Internet connection to meet the demand. The United States Federal Communications Commission adopted standard for public library internet speed is 100 megabits/second for libraries serving fewer than 50,000 persons. With the recent installation of an AT&T fiber optic connection, this standard is only met in the Main Branch of the Wharton County Library. The branch libraries in East Bernard and Louise share a T1 line that provides a connection at the speed of 1.5 megabits/second. This slower connection impacts the services offered by the library, creates delays in circulation, delays in reporting, and deters patrons from using the public access computers. The average number of computer usage sessions in East Bernard and Louise were only 4% of the total for the entire Library System; compared to the average library visits which were 16% of the total for the entire system.

Solutions: To research the availability of an internet service provider that can design and implement affordable broadband connectivity that adequately serves the Wharton County Libraries located in the East Bernard and Louise communities.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

Services for Special Needs children

After school and summer school services are needed for special needs school age children. Due to behavior and special needs local day care facilities will not accept these children and parents have not resources if family is not available. Teachers and instructors with specialized training are needed to provide care for these children.

Data for Wharton County Special Needs Students

	Wharton	EB	Boling	EC (inc LISD)	Total
ECI					37
PrK-K	11	3	6	3	23
1st	9	4	4	3	20
2nd	10	4	2	3	17
3rd	12	5	3	3	23
4th	13	12	4	4	33
5th	8	--	5	8	21
6th	12	2	6	1	21

7th	15	4	7	1	27
8th	13	2	8	6	29
9th	14	5	8	2	29
10th	20	7	11	4	42
11th	9	5	11	3	28
12th	20	5	7	4	36
Step II				3	3
Total					311

There are 311 Special Needs Children in the Wharton area who need after school and summer programming. The local day cares are not equipped for special needs children, especially those with behavioral issues. The majority of these families are at or below poverty level so specialized day care would not be affordable even if it were available.

Solutions: Medicaid, CHIPS & Private insurance will now pay for specialized care. With specially trained staff and a Behavior Analyst on site the program will qualify for Behavior Supports care rather than a day care. Texana Center will provide staff with specialized training utilizing a combination of Texana Children’s Center for Autism, Just Do It Now (JDIN) & Wharton ISD (WISD) for after school & summer programs.

Identified Problem

Data Collection

Need for a suitable well-trained workforce

The availability of good jobs is critical to the reduction of crime in Wharton County. A well-trained workforce is critical to having business view the community favorably when considering expansion or relocation. One measure of a well-trained workforce is the education level. A second indicator is the poverty level. Wharton County has a problem that is reflected in the statistics below.

Need for a suitable well-trained workforce (continued)

U.S. & Wharton County Statistics from US Census Information	Wharton	Texas	Nation
Population over 25 with a High School Diploma	74.6%	79.3%	84.6%
Population over 25 with Bachelor’s Degree or higher	15.7%	25.4%	27.5%
Population percent of change from 2000 – 2010	0.2%	20.6%	9.7%
Percent living at or below poverty level	18.9%	17.3%	14.3%

Wharton County is on Highway 59 and is a prime area for business and industry wanting to expand from Houston. However, many things are involved in economic development including land, community interest, housing, good schools, amenities, access to a

commercial trade route but without a suitable well-trained workforce little progress can be made.

Texas ranks below the nation in all the listed categories and Wharton County is substantially below the figures for Texas. Improvement starts with facing the facts and deciding what can best be done to improve the situation.

Plans for long term systemic change are documented in previous sections particularly "Education for Birth through Third Grade." However, much can be done to improve the workforce with short term vocational training through the public schools, adult education, Wharton County Junior College and other post-secondary training.

Technical schools and junior colleges are turning out a wide variety of students who have completed certificate programs or job-related associates' degrees in health, behavioral science, technology, business and vocational science. These students are prepared for the workforce and are able to make a living wage. Every student is not college material and many either can't or don't want to seek post-secondary instruction. Introduction to trades at the middle and high school level not only prepares them for the future but contributes to keeping them in school.

Solutions: In order to provide technical training, public schools must reintroduce training students for trades, an area that has been dropped from most curriculums.

Adult Education classes to get the literacy level and GED required for entrance into most jobs or post-secondary training must be made available locally at times, and with guidelines, that make it possible for adults with family and job responsibilities to attend. Bridge classes that move students from ABE/GED level to vocational courses must be expanded.

Available tutoring for those having difficulty helps get individuals over hurdles and prevents the loss of a skilled worker and tuition money.

Seek apprenticeships from local business. Link with Workforce Solutions in every possible area. Provide help in filling out financial aid forms and applying for scholarships.

Resources Available

Included below are resources identified by the Wharton 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>
Wharton Co. Juvenile Probation	Government	Supervises the probation of juvenile offenders
Boys & Girls Club of El Campo	Non-Profit	BGCEC Club offers after school and summer programs.
Boys & Girls Club of Wharton	Non-Profit	BGCW Club offers after school and summer programs.
East Bernard Little League	Non-Profit	East Bernard Little League provides summer activity for youth
El Campo Little League	Non-Profit	El Campo Little League provides summer activity for youth
Just Do It Now	Non-Profit	JDIN offers after school and summer programs
Wharton Little League	Non-Profit	Wharton Little League provides summer activity for youth
Precinct One Justice of the Peace, Jared Cullar	Government	Judge Jared Cullar, in addition to his other duties as Justice of the Peace, holds court for truancy and A & B misdemeanor charges for youth
Precinct Two Justice of the Peace, Glen Russell	Government	Judge Glen Russell, in addition to his other duties as Justice of the Peace, holds court for truancy and A & B misdemeanor charges for youth
Precinct Three Justice of the Peace, Donna Wessels	Government	Judge Donna Wessels, in addition to his other duties as Justice of the Peace, holds court for truancy and A & B misdemeanor charges for youth

Precinct Four Justice of the Peace, Timmy Drapela	Government	Judge Timmy Drapela, in addition to his other duties as Justice of the Peace, holds court for truancy and A & B misdemeanor charges for youth
Wharton County Attorney	Government	The Wharton County Attorney's office prosecute all juvenile cases
Colorado Valley Transit District	Non-Profit	CVT offers transportation at a nominal fee in Wharton County & Colorado Counties with limited service to surrounding areas.
ACE Program	Mental Health	ACE provides substance abuse, youth and family counseling services
Rural Literacy Coalition (formerly Tri-County)	Non-Profit	Unites Matagorda, Colorado and Wharton Counties to connect schools, government, business, non-profits, foundations, faith based, and service agencies to maximize effectiveness through collective impact

Law Enforcement:

<i>Name of Agency</i>	<i>Agency Type</i>	<i>Description</i>
Wharton County Sheriff's Department	Government	The Sheriff's Department provides technical support, patrol coverage, investigative support, communications support, and critical incident Coverage
Wharton Police Department	Government	Wharton Police Department provides municipal police services within Wharton
El Campo Police Department	Government	El Campo Police Department provides municipal police services within El Campo
Community Supervision and Corrections	Government	Community Supervision and Corrections provides adult probation services and a substance abuse/treatment facility for adults.

Victim's Issues

<i>Name of Agency</i>	<i>Agency Type</i>	<i>Description</i>
Crisis Center	Non-Profit	Provides crisis intervention services to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault which includes 24-hour hotline, shelter, professional counseling, transportation, accompaniment to hospitals, courts and law enforcement; assistance with protective orders in Wharton and Matagorda Counties
El Campo CDC	Non-Profit	Promotes Economic Development for the City of El Campo
Broken Chains Ministry	Non-Profit	Broken Chains Ministry is a 12 step Faith Based Alcohol and Substance Abuse and Recovery Ministry in Iago Texas
Just Do It Now, Inc	Non-Profit	Provides after school and summer programs, Alcohol and Substance Abuse Interventions and ABE/GED and Citizenship Programs
Phil Stevenson	Government	State Representative for Wharton County

Education

<i>Name of Agency</i>	<i>Agency Type</i>	<i>Description</i>
Wharton County Junior College	School	WCJC provides post-secondary education and training to area youth
Boling ISD	School	K through 12 public education
Wharton ISD	School	K through 12 public education
El Campo ISD	School	K through 12 public education
East Bernard ISD	School	K through 12 public education
Louise ISD	School	K through 12 public education

Wharton County Library System	Government	Provides Library Services throughout Wharton County
Texana Center	Non-Profit	Provides behavioral healthcare and developmental disabilities for adults and children in Wharton County.
Northside Education Center	Non-Profit	NEC provides Workforce Development, Continuing Education, Vocational and GED and ESL Training. NEC also has a public computer lab.
WED Co	Non-Profit	Promotes economic development for the City of Wharton.
Boys and Girls Club of El Campo	Non-Profit	After school and summer youth programs
Boys and Girls Club of Wharton	Non-Profit	After school and summer youth programs
Just Do It Now – Yes We Can Program	Non-Profit	After school and summer youth programs. JDIN also has a computer lab
Rural Literacy Coalition (formerly Tri-County)	Non-Profit	Unites Matagorda, Colorado and Wharton Counties to connect schools, government, business, non-profits, foundations, faith based, and service agencies to maximize effectiveness through collective impact

Interagency Cooperation

In the space below write 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:

In the past there has been relatively good interagency cooperation among the different branches of law enforcement. Law enforcement needs brought them into relationship with substance abuse counseling and mental health services as well as limited work with the school districts. However, there was little contact with the broader scope of non-profit, educational, government service and faith-based communities.

In the fall 2009 the County Judges from Wharton, Colorado and Matagorda counties came together to approve a grant to be administered by the Tri-County Coalition for Literacy and Community Services. (Renamed Rural Literacy Coalition) This innovative move has begun a process of integrating the full range of supports available by connecting all service providers.

The current directory of service providers is being updated to include a description of the service as well contact information for over 70 entities. A website with statistical information for all three counties is now available at www.ruralliteracycoalition.org The website also links organizations by providing minutes of coalition meetings and will soon be posting grant notices of available opportunities. Contact has been made with the Houston Galveston Area Council of Governments to increase the access to information and supports available through H-GAC.

Long-Range Plan Development, Monitoring and Evaluation

The Wharton County Community Planning Team works in conjunction with the Rural Literacy Coalition and 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 Wharton 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 Wharton County families struggling with problems described in the plan's focus areas. Efforts are being made by many Wharton 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 urge agencies to provide programming that addresses the outlined focus areas.

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The Wharton County Community Plan is available on-line at www.co.wharton.tx.us