

North Central Texas Council of Government
Tarrant County Criminal Justice Community Plan

Community Justice Strategic Plan

September 25, 2008

Community Justice Planning Committee Membership

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An Update to the Tarrant County Criminal Justice Community Plan
North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG)

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Tarrant County Criminal Justice Community Plan

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Introduction

The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) Criminal Justice Program assists local governments and non-profit entities with the development of programs and projects designed to address particular crime related community problems. The Criminal Justice Division of the Governor's Office (CJD), State of Texas, requires community planning to assure better use and coordination of limited resources. This initiative requires individuals and organizations to identify and develop community programs to prevent, reduce, and control crime in an ongoing comprehensive planning process. All segments of the community including, but not limited to: law enforcement, community advocates, victims, prosecutors, judiciary, treatment providers, educators, corrections, and prevention specialists are included. The community justice sub-committee members are citizens of Tarrant County and each have provided their professional and private time to work on this plan. The committee strongly believes in the recommendations set forth in this strategy.

The NCTCOG requires a five-year plan in order to identify justice-related needs throughout Tarrant County so gaps in services, existing programs, new initiatives and funding opportunities may be addressed and resources increased. In addition, the planning process encourages community inclusiveness and non-justice functions such as transportation, housing, education, health, business, recreation and others having an impact on the justice system. Applicants for CJD grant funds receive assistance with the development of Community Plans, designed to allow local governments the freedom to examine their own problems and develop their own solutions with CJD funding assistance.

The Tarrant County Criminal Justice Planning Group was established in order to meet these requirements and develop a community-based criminal justice plan with the goal to address existing crime problems in Tarrant County. High recidivism rates, the ex-offender reintegration process and the need for more *community involvement* in criminal justice programs were identified as topics in need of attention. The prevalent crime control model of justice was also found suspect in complicating as well as contributing to the above issues.

The community as an environmental force has failed short of being an influence on the criminal justice system and continues to struggle to adequately meet the needs of the justice system's primary consumers; the communities that experience the crime problems on a daily basis. The mission of this community justice program is to provide a comprehensive community-based strategy that will strengthen community capacity, community justice initiatives, and develop partnerships with residents, businesses, and other social services to coordinate the way public safety problems should be addressed. This plan addresses these issues and includes the community as an added feature. This

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plan outlines the community justice concept its goals, objectives and deliverables and provides current data to support these issues.

Tarrant County
Community Justice Sub-Committee Membership

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Community Justice Concept

The community justice concept is based on three principles.¹ First, community justice selects high-impact locations where there is a concentration of crime and criminal justice activities, in order to develop special strategies designed to improve the quality of community life, especially by promoting public safety. Second, community justice approaches its tasks in these areas by working to strengthen the capacity of informal systems of social control, such as families, neighborhood groups, friends, and social supports. Third, in order to strengthen community capacity, community justice initiatives develop partnerships with residents, businesses, and other social services to coordinate the way public safety problems are addressed. Implementation of a community justice strategy should take place within the traditional criminal justice functions of law enforcement, courts, and corrections.

For police, community justice involves interacting with community institutions and representatives to tailor police and community activities to the various problems residents perceive to be undermining their quality of life.

Community justice for prosecution and courts requires that prosecutors, defense attorneys, and judges become familiar with the various public-safety problems that come to the attention of the courts. Special legal approaches can be developed to target problems specific to particular communities.

Regarding community justice in corrections, the focus has been on the use of probation, parole, and other *community-based* correctional programs for offenders. In such corrections endeavors, offenders are not only supervised and served in the community, but also draw upon community resources in order to encourage the development of positive behaviors and lifestyles for offenders.

Community justice for the community requires the establishment a local community-based criminal justice advisory group that consists of individuals and/or organizations throughout the community to address the development of system wide planning strategies for persons processed through the criminal justice system. The goal is to reduce recidivism improve reintegration and promote community safety. Many Tarrant

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County communities support the concept of community justice. For example, the Tarrant County Reentry Council is structured to facilitate the collaboration of community groups as well as governmental agencies. Groups such as public health officials, treatment providers, human services groups, housing officials, workforce development groups, faith based organizations and law enforcement agencies in order to develop a resource planning strategy for the effective reintegration of ex-offenders. The Tarrant County reentry council was considered the first step in the development of a comprehensive community justice program and signified Tarrant County's commitment to reintegration as a goal.

In November 2007, a survey addressing community justice was distributed by the Tarrant County Administrator's Office to Tarrant County community leaders and administrators within the Tarrant County Criminal Justice System. The intent of the survey was to determine the understanding and extent of support for the concept of community justice. A total of 289 surveys were mailed to Tarrant County Police Chiefs, County Government Representatives, City Council members, Mayors and City Managers. The majority of the respondents agreed with each principle of the community justice strategy.²

Problem Statements

1. There Is A Need For Formally Established Planning Committees

Local and state criminal justice systems are constantly under pressure to plan more efficiently and effectively without diminishing the quality of their services however, many lack formal planning strategies. Problems associated with backlogged dockets, crowded jails, and recidivism are becoming commonplace requiring the need to exchange information in order to address these issues. Collaborative efforts such as Criminal Justice Coordinating Committees (CJCCs) are becoming more common and important for mounting an efficient and effective response to these problems. The creation of structured partnerships of this type has emerged as one of the solutions to improve communication and cooperation among criminal justice agencies, provide clearer objectives and priorities and assist in the development of quality criminal justice programs.

At the county government level, a Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee (CJCC) is designed to assist department heads and elected officials, such as county judge, county administrator, county commissioners, Sheriff, district attorney and judiciary and corrections personnel. It is important at this level to provide an organizational climate that would be conducive to maintaining cooperation and coordination among constitutionally separate government agencies. At the community level, planning is structured by including organizations such as municipal law enforcement agencies, municipal court judges, bail bondsmen, defense lawyers and certain community representatives. Additional planning and coordination at the system wide level is occasionally required in order to coordinate issues that arise with federal, regional, or state justice agencies. There are *only ten states* in the U.S. that have established Criminal

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Justice Coordinating Committees of this type. Each of these groups has a formal governance structure that has been adopted by comprehensive criminal justice planning bodies or through community corrections legislation.³

Many coordinating groups operate informally, for example, at the request of a judge or chief administrative officer. The effectiveness of the group, however, is enhanced by the degree legitimacy accorded by formal authorization.⁴ Formal authorization also assists in the continuity of operations. The Tarrant County Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee (CJCC) is considered an informal committee and may benefit with this type of a structure. State level planning could also be improved with more formal planning strategies. For example, in order to develop a local technology program it was necessary for Tarrant County Government to structure and facilitate a state-level planning committee to address in the development of an integrated justice information system (i.e., Texas Integrated Justice Information Systems program (TIJIS)). There were no state level planning committees available to assist in this process. In other words, formal governance structure establishes *continuity of operations* and assists to minimize the risk that programs and/or projects will be derailed as the result of misunderstanding or miscommunication.

2. The Crime Control Model Has Led To High Incarceration and Recidivism Rates

As the political climate changed in the 1970's and 1980's, a renewed emphasis on the crime control model of corrections developed. The crime control model emphasizes efficiency and the capacity to catch, try, convict, and punish a high proportion of offenders; it also stresses speed and finality for the individuals processed through the system. However, criminal justice literature suggests that the components of the crime control model and its emphasis on punishing a high proportion of offenders and no mention of individually in the punishment process has also lead to an overreliance on incarceration and high recidivism rates. This correctional model, considered the dominate model, has also led to high incarceration costs, prison and jail overcrowding, and increases in recidivism rates and has not *effectively* reduced crime.⁵ In June 2002, a study released by the U.S. Department of Justice, titled *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994* found that of nearly 300,000 prisoners released in 15 States (Texas included) in 1994, sixty-seven percent were rearrested within 3 years.

As the influences of the crime control model continue to impact courts and correctional agencies, jail population continues to increase. Since 2002, Tarrant County jail population increased 12 % and from 1995 to the date of this report the Tarrant County jail population has increased approximately 50%. These actions have created the need for additional courtrooms, personnel and jails as well as the development of specialized programs such as jail task forces in order to review and analyze these issues. But specialized groups consume resources. More research personnel will be needed to maintain statistical analysis and to study the effectiveness of jail diversion programs and prison transfer polices. Many Texas counties are facing similar issues and are attempting to control jail population with limited resources. At the State level, the Texas prisons system is operating at near capacity levels. On June 30, 2008

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the Texas Department of Criminal Justice reported that the Texas prison population was 156,513 with 160,354 available beds operating at 98.6% capacity.

3. There Is a Need to Address State Level Corrections Policy

The sentencing reform movement has exerted a significant impact on the field of corrections, especially since "get tough" sentencing policies have contributed to unprecedented prison population growth in many jurisdictions; the emphasis on tailoring punishment almost exclusively to the nature of the crime has also led to poorly planned and coordinated corrections policy. These issues have also impeded the development of the community justice strategy. There are two state-level correctional policy issues that should be addressed in the decade ahead: (1) whether concern for rehabilitation and reintegration be integrated in a state sentencing model and (2) whether state parole agencies should take a more concerted effort to manage and effectively coordinate the inmate release process.

During the last decade, Texas allotted the bulk of its corrections resources on building prisons and increasing prison populations but failed to plan for the eventual return of the ex-offender population as well as community-based rehabilitation and reintegration programs. Although Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) has grown to become the United States' largest criminal justice system, it provides minimum transitional services. These issues create the need for local government to make up for these inequities and absorb the related costs.

In a report provided by Filiberto Reyna, Board Member, Texas Pardons and Parole on September 30, 2002 , it was mentioned that on-site parole "case managers" or other full time persons responsible for coordinating inmate releases are not available in the institution to assist the inmate in the development of release and /or *reintegration plans*. As a result of these deficiencies, returning inmates often have no knowledge of what services and resources are available or how to access those services and resources. Many of these individuals have adjustment disorders that vary, depending on the amount of time incarcerated and experiences while incarcerated. Many are diagnosed with a mental illness and others have histories of substance abuse and health problems. They are uneducated, unskilled and have little or no family support; no savings, no immediate entitlement to unemployment benefits with few job prospects, lack important official documents of identification such as state IDs, birth certificates, the need to apply for public assistance or obtain employment and housing and other basic necessities. These deficiencies at the State level established the need to address these issues at the local level, hence the development of the Tarrant County Ex-Offender Initiative.

4. Punishment and Sentencing Practices

There is an overall governmental and public concern about punishment and sentencing practices throughout the U.S. The overuse of incarceration and the lack of sentencing and treatment alternatives, particularly for drug crimes, were the two most frequently cited topics of discussion and concern and were also among the most frequent

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subjects of complaints from judges hearing felony cases.⁶ The National Center for State Courts (NCSC) Sentencing Project has recommended ten sentencing policies structured to improve the effectiveness of sentencing outcomes, reduce *recidivism*,⁷ reduce over-reliance on incarceration and promote community corrections and intermediate sanctions programs. The community justice sub-committee recommends the utilization of these ten sentencing policies as the *basis* for the punishment and sentencing process under the proposed community justice strategy. They are as follows:

- 1) Explicitly include risk and recidivism reduction as key objectives of effective state sentencing policy.
- 2) Ensure that state sentencing policy allows sufficient flexibility for judges to implement risk reduction, diversion and problem solving strategies.⁸
- 3) Promote the use of actuarial risk assessment instruments in assessing suitability of sentencing options.
- 4) Create offender-based data and sentencing support systems that facilitate data-driven sentencing decisions.
- 5) Develop effective community-based corrections programs that address the criminogenic needs of felony offenders.
- 6) Develop community-based intermediate sanctions appropriate to the nature of committing offenses and offender risks.
- 7) Provide judges and advocates with access to accurate and relevant sentencing data & information.
- 8) Include a curriculum on Evidence Based Practices (EBP) in judicial education programs for sentencing judges.
- 9) Ensure effective collaboration among local criminal justice agencies to reduce barriers to risk reduction.
- 10) Revise sentencing processes to support risk reduction strategies.

Goal

The goal of the community justice program is to develop programs and practices that will enhance the existing criminal justice system by introducing strategies that are community-based, will reduce criminal activity and recidivism and promote public safety by holding juvenile and adult offenders accountable for their actions in a just manner and also assisting them to correct their behavior by developing the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for rehabilitation and successful reintegration.

The objectives are as follows:

1. Promote the use of community justice strategies such as community justice councils, community policing, prosecution and problem solving courts such as reentry, drug and alcohol, mental health and substance abuse courts for community and institutional corrections programs.
2. Explicitly include risk and recidivism reduction as key objectives of effective state sentencing policy.

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3. Promote public safety and reduce recidivism through the expanded use of evidence based practices and diversion programs.
4. Conduct research to determine if diversion programs are available and utilized when necessary at each level of the criminal justice system.
5. Reduce the over reliance on incarceration for low level non-violent offenders.
6. Establish institutional rehabilitation and reintegration programs at the local level.
7. Establish state and local level ex-offender transition and reentry programs by re-defining the mission of county and state governments in order to facilitate these changes.
8. Develop community-based intermediate sanctions appropriate to the nature of committing offenses and offender risks.
9. Create offender-based data and sentencing support systems that facilitate data-driven sentencing decisions.
10. Ensure *collaboration* and information sharing among criminal justice organizations.

Target Population

Whereas the traditional justice system focuses on the offender, community justice shifts the focus on the safety and well-being of the community. This involves balancing long-term and short-term intervention and diversion strategies, focusing on *prevention* and involving citizens in the justice process. Research studies in the area of correctional programming have identified cognitive-behavioral interventions, with appropriately assessed high-risk offenders, as having positive results in changing offender thinking and behavior. The Tarrant County Community Justice program will be made available to all persons processed through the criminal justice system and be *neighborhood-focused*. Focusing on high-risk⁹ and quality-of-life offenses it will combine punishment and help, sentencing offenders to various types of diversion from incarceration and intermediate sanction type programs.

Prevention, Diversion, Institutional and Reentry Programs

The following is a general listing and *examples only* of programs that may be used to support a community justice concept. This listing is not comprehensive and further research will be needed to identify additional programs to determine if they will be relevant under a community justice model.

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Community-based Prevention

Crime and Public Health-Epidemiological Model
Nurse Family Partnership Program
Anti-Violence Program
Gang Intervention Programs
Community Wholeness Index
40 Human Developmental Assets Model

Juvenile Diversion

Available Police Dispositions
Formal Disposition Alternatives
Supervisory Caution
Deferred Prosecution Probation (DPP)
Detention Alternatives
Court-Ordered Probation Supervision
Residential Placement
Continuum of Service
Choices
Comprehensive Truancy Intervention Program
Community Services Restitution (CSR)
Community-Based Detention (CBD)
Electronically Monitored/Home Detention
Juvenile Drug Court
Tarrant County Advocate Program (TCAP)
Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program (JJAEP)
Joint Project
Female Intervention Program (FIP)
Triad
Specialized Treatment for Offenders Program (STOP)
Family Support Program (FSP)
Project ASPECT

Adult Pretrial Diversion

District Attorney's Office Deferred Prosecution Program

Pretrial Court Diversion

Domestic Violence Diversion Program
Mental Health Law Enforcement Liaison Program
Mental Health Diversion Court
Drug Court

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Diversion from Incarceration & Intermediate Sanctions

DWI Court
Treatment Alternatives to Incarceration Program (TAIP)
Intensive Day Treatment Program (IDT)
SAFPT Aftercare
IDT Aftercare
Enhanced Supervision Strategies (Electronic Monitoring)
Community Service Restitution
Intensive Day Treatment Program
Substance Abuse Counseling and Education
Victim Services
Victim Offender Mediation
Employment Services Program
Mental Health Caseloads
High Risk Youthful Offender Program (Gang)
House Arrest
Restorative Justice
Conferencing
Circles

Institutional-Related Rehabilitation & Reentry Preparation

Public and Private Reintegration Programs
Mental Health and Mental Retardation Services for Ex-Offenders
Half-way Houses
Churches and religious institutions
Prison Industries Programs
GED Program
Voluntary Jail Rehabilitation Program
Domestic Violence Intervention Program

Community-Based Reentry Coordination

County Ex-Offender Programs

Program Strategy

The Development of a Community Justice Model

Although there is no one-way to structure a community justice model, it can lead to reducing the over reliance on incarceration; encourage the use of alternatives to incarceration, minimize the disparities in sentencing, enhance judicial discretion in sentencing policy and promote the use of problem solving within the courts. The follow information is a synopsis of various points that may be considered when developing a community justice program.

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- Police to consider redefining their mission with a focus on becoming more community-based as well as providing the necessary resources to assist in the reentry process in their jurisdiction.
- Community-based prosecution programs that established long-term, proactive partnerships among the prosecutor's office, law enforcement and the community.
- Courts that are more familiar with the various community public-safety issues.
- The use of reentry courts that help reduce recidivism and improve public safety through increased use of judicial oversight.
- Community court programs that address quality of life offenses such as drug possession, shoplifting, vandalism and prostitution.
- Community corrections committed to providing services through an evidence-based practices approach.
- Prisons and State Jails expanded to provide inmates with effective reentry transition coordination and the necessary funding, tools and environment necessary to make behavioral changes in order to successfully reintegrate into the community.
- Local governments to redefine their mission to either assist or provide reentry coordination services.
- Identify the necessary training, programs, staff and equipment to implement the strategy.
- The use of integrated justice information sharing technology to support the above points.

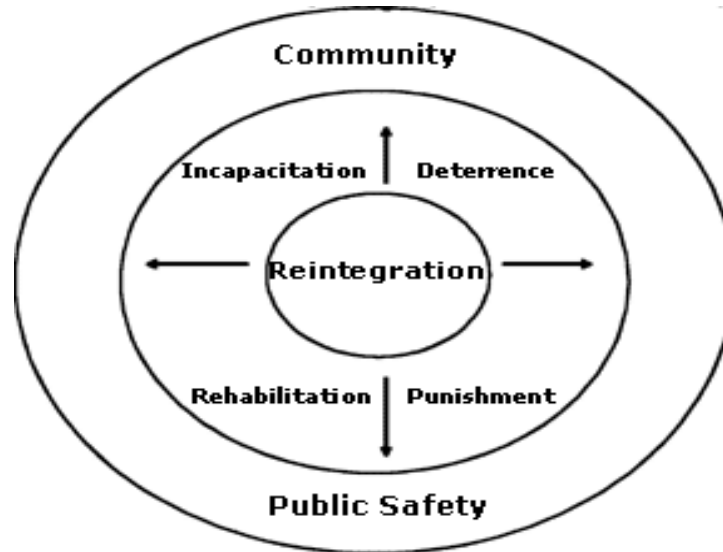
Output Measures

Develop a Community Justice Reference Model

The development of a community Justice reference model that addresses community policing, prosecution, courts and corrections with reintegration as the goal. The four traditional goals of sentencing remain incapacitation, deterrence, punishment and rehabilitation, but are all considered in the context of reintegration. Placing the goal of reintegration within the range of goals to serve by sentencing will provide a more individualized approach to the punishment process which enhances the rehabilitation process. The below illustration is a reintegrative sentencing model developed by the Center of Community Alternatives (2004) and may be used as a frame of reference for this model.

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Reintegration Reference Model



Project Outcomes

The Development of Community Justice Performance Measures

The identification and development of performance measures for this program is deemed critical for its success. Although specific performance measures have not been determined, the following are *examples* of program evaluation categories:

- The punishment and sentencing practices structured to reduce crime, incarceration rates, and recidivism in order to enhance community safety.
- The reentry case management process through improved organized and coordinated planning strategies with state and local government.
- Diversion programs structured to reduce the over reliance on incarceration recidivism.
- Evidence-based practice approaches structured to meet the criminogenic needs of individual offenders.
- Partnerships with residents, businesses, and other social services to better coordinate the way public safety problems are addressed.
- Interaction with the community in order to modify police and community activities to various problems residents, perceive to be undermining their quality of life.
- The courts becoming more familiar with the various community-based public-safety issues.
- The leadership of the community and criminal justice officials that will assure the success of a community justice program.

Needs Associated With The Development of A Community Justice Model

Training Needs

Hands-on, expert assistance and training to practitioners, judges, attorneys, criminal justice officials, and community organizations will be needed. Guidance on assessing public safety problems and crafting workable, practical solutions is critical. Criminal and juvenile justice initiatives should be addressed first-hand and steps must be taken to understand how to get new projects implemented. From using data to defining problems and reaching out to the local community to build effective multi-agency partnerships, it is necessary to help create innovative responses to crime and neighborhood disorder.

Specialized Programs/Staff

There has been no additional staff identified as of the publication date of this plan. However, it is anticipated that immediate needs will be related to the need for additional program coordinators to manage the reentry and diversion processes associated with the community justice model. The long-term needs associated with staffing for the community, police, prosecution, courts and corrections have yet to be determined.

Equipment and Capital

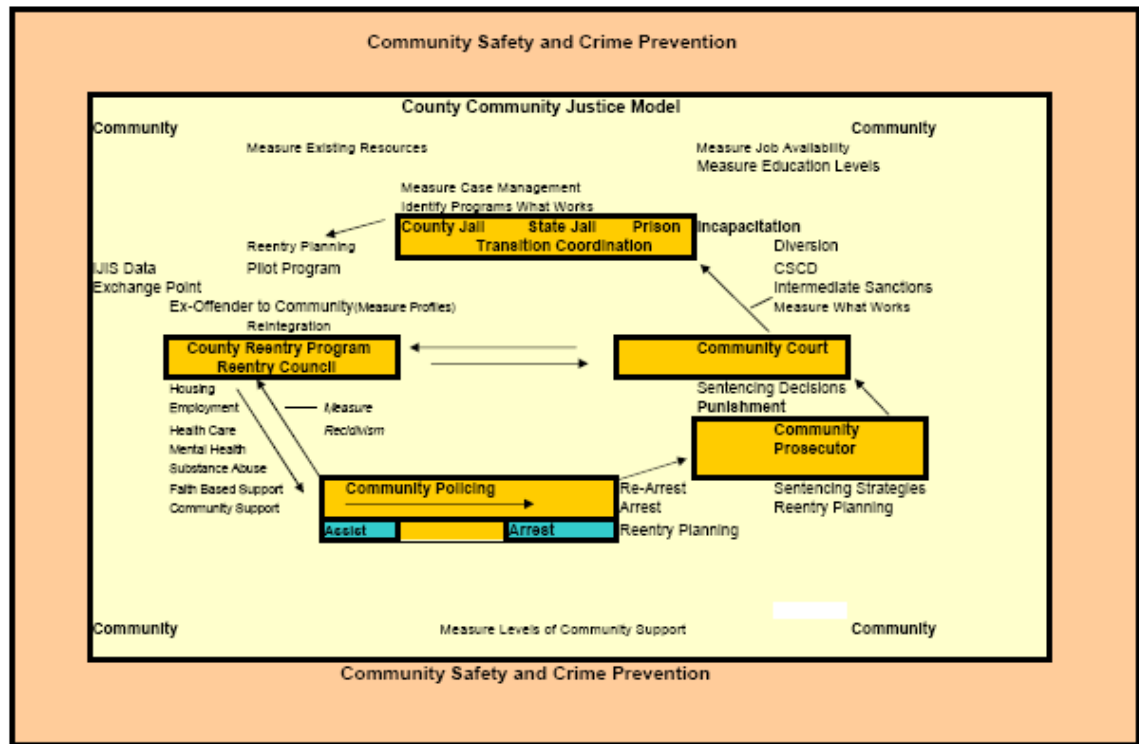
It is anticipated that the community justice strategy will require the need for decentralized criminal justice organizations such as police agencies, prosecutor offices, courts and jails. However, additional research and evaluation will be needed to address these objectives.

Research and Evaluation

A critical related issue to research and evaluation is the widespread acceptance and adoption of the community justice strategy. This activity requires state and local jurisdictions to measure their needs against the existing programs, re-use them as appropriate and add to them as needed. Through this process, the Community Justice Reference Model will grow into a valuable resource for all jurisdictions, and it will become the backbone of standards against which future criminal justice systems can be built with much greater efficiency.

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Community Justice Model



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End Notes

¹ Clear, Todd R. Eric Cadora, Sarah Bryer, Charles Swartz 2003 *Community Justice*. NCJ Number 196696. Belmont, CA, Wadsworth Publishing Co.

² Contact the Tarrant County Administrator's Office, 100 East Weatherford St. Fort Worth, Texas, for a copy of this survey.

³ U.S Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections, *Guidelines for Developing a Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee* (January, 2002) <http://www.nicic.org/pubs/2002/017232.pdf> (accessed June 2, 2007)

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Sieh, Edward W. and S. Kedrowski, "Offender Reentry and Employment", *Offender Program Report*, Vol 9. No. 3 September/October 2005 ISSN 1093-7439 pp. 33-48

⁶ National Center for State Courts (NCSC)– *Getting Smarter About Sentencing, Sentencing Reform Survey*, January 2006 pp. 4

⁷ In June 2002, a study released by the U.S. Department of Justice, titled *Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994* found that nearly 300,000 prisoners released in 15 States (Texas Included) in 1994, sixty-seven percent were rearrested within 3 years. This study, now considered a model, has revealed the *ineffectiveness* of the state criminal justice systems throughout the United States.

⁸ A survey by the Center for Court Innovation and the California Administrative Office of the Courts entitled *Problem Solving and the American Bench: A National Survey of Trial Court Judges* (February 2008) indicated there was broad support for problem solving strategies among trial court judges throughout the country.

⁹ Washington County Government Center, Stillwater, Minnesota. Research studies in the area of correctional programming have identified cognitive-behavioral interventions, with appropriately assessed high-risk offenders, as having positive results in changing offender thinking and behavior. These programs are generally classified as those that focus on the development of cognitive skills (how to think) or programs, which attempt to restructure (what to think) cognitive processes.
http://www.co.washington.mn.us/info_for_residents/community_corrections/divisions_and_programs/community_justice_programs/