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LAW ENFORCEMENT AND
CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Saunders County Three Year Comprehensive Juvenile Services Plan
January 1, 2009 – December 31, 2011

CONTACT INFORMATION

Persons Completing the Plan and Chair of the Community Team / Coalition:

Scott Tingelhoff, County Attorney
Saunders County Attorney's Office
433 N. Chestnut
Wahoo, NE 68066
402-443-8151
stingelhoff@co.saunders.ne.us

and

Pam Lausterer, Program Director
Youth Service System of Saunders County
426 N. Broadway
Wahoo, NE 68066
402-443-8169
plausterer@co.saunders.ne.us

County Board Chair:

Doris Karloff
1354 County Road 5
Yutan, NE 68073
402-625-2327
dk63931@alltel.net

COMMUNITY TEAM

The community team members for this plan were identified by the Saunders County Attorney and Youth Services because of their agencies' involvement with juveniles of Saunders County. Those present included local representatives from Probation, Diversion, the Saunders County Attorney, Saunders County Board Chair, counseling services, Youth Service System, workforce investment, the school system (including a superintendent, principle and high school students from various schools), Project Extra Mile, Sheriff's Office, Wahoo and Cedar Bluffs Police Dept., Saunders County Medical Hospital and other team members who are involved in LB1184 Team (Child Abuse/Neglect Treatment/InvestigativeTeam). The team met three times during October and November, 2008.

Name	Address	Phone	Email
Richard Chisholm, Chief Probation Officer	112 E. 7th St., Wahoo, NE 68066	402-443-4976	rich.chisholm@nsc.ne.gov
Scott Tingelhoff, County Attorney	433 N. Chestnut, Wahoo, NE 68066	402-443-8151	stingelhoff@co.saunders.ne.us
Kevin Stukenholtz, Sheriff	354 W. 4th St., Wahoo, NE 68066	402-443-3718	kstukenholtz@co.saunders.ne.us
Danielle Bauer, Therapist	Lutheran Family Services 2900 O St., Ste 200, Lincoln, NE 68510	402-	dbauer@lfsneb.org
Brian Soucie, Police Officer	Village of Cedar Bluffs, 101 S. 1st St., Cedar Bluffs, NE 68015	402-628-3115	souciebrian@gmail.com
Marjorie Woehrer, Nurse	743 N. Broadway, Wahoo, NE 68066	402-443-4389	None
Julia Robinson, Project Extra Mile Director	33 W. 4th St., Fremont, NE 68025	402-727-4473	fremont@projectextramile.org
Judy Pearson, Director of Nursing, Saunders Medical Center	668 County Road 19, Ceresco, NE 68015	402-665-3165	jpearson@saundersmedicalcenter.com
Julie Hartford, CSW, Saunders Medical Center	204 S. King, Cedar Bluffs, NE 68015	402-443-4191	jhartford@saundersmedicalcenter.com
Ray Collins, Superintendent, Prague Public Schools	Box 205, Prague, NE 68050	402-663-4388	rcollins@esu2.org
Michelle Libal, Legal Assistant, County Attorney	433 N. Chestnut, Wahoo, NE 68066	402-443-8151	mlibal@co.saunders.ne.us
Andrea Chandler, Case Manager, WIA Youth Services	1010 N Street, Lincoln, NE 68508	402-441-4921	achandler@lincoln.ne.gov
Chris Arent, Principal, Wahoo Public Schools	2201 N. Locust, Wahoo, NE 68066	402-443-4332	carent@esu2.org
Emma Bartek, Student, Wahoo Public School	1795 County Road 14, Wahoo, NE 68066	402-443-4327	ewarriors2011@hotmail.com

Darcy Thege, CFSSS, HHS,	355 E. 4th, Wahoo, NE 68066	402-443-4252	darcy.thege@dhhs.ne.gov
Dale Weis, Assistant Chief of Police, Wahoo	605 N. Broadway, Wahoo, NE 68066	402-443-4155	jackson@wahoo.ne.us
Doris Karloff, Chair County Board	P.O. Box 153, Yutan, NE 68025	402-625-2327	ck63931@windstream.net
Alexandra Norris, Student, Wahoo Public School	1939 County Road D, Ceresco, NE 68015	402-480-8756	lilalisunshine@hotmail.com
Corky Forbes, RISE Coordinator	1465 BelAire, Wahoo, NE 68066	402-443-4769	cforbes718@yahoo.com
Pam Lausterer, Program Director, Youth Service System	426 N. Broadway, Wahoo, NE 68066	402-443-8169	plausterer@co.saunders.ne.us
Amy Reynoldson, prevention specialist, Region V Systems	1645 N Street, Lincoln, NE 68508	402-441-4367	areynoldsom@rpc.region5system.net
Dan Cleveland, Principal, Cedar Bluffs Schools	Cedar Bluffs, NE 68015	402-628-2080	dclevelan@esu2.org
Fr. Brian Kane, Principal, Bishop Neumann High School	202 S. Linden, Wahoo, NE 68066	402-443-4151	Fr.Brian-Kane@cdolinc.net
Jason Libal, Principal, Wahoo Middle School	1542 N. Oak, Wahoo, NE 68066	402-429-1750	jlibal@esu2.org
C. Jo Petersen, Deputy County Attorney	Courthouse, Wahoo, NE 68066	402-443-8151	cpetersen@co.saunders.ne.us
Phil Vandevoorde, Senior Probation Officer	112 E. 7th, Wahoo, NE 68066	402-443-4976	phil.vandevoorde@nsc.ne.gov
Ken Jackson, Chief of Police, Wahoo	605 N. Broadway, Wahoo, NE 68066	402-443-4155	jackson@wahoo.ne.us

IV. Community Socio-Economics.

Main transportation routes

Saunders County's main transportation routes are Highways 92 from east to west, 77 north to south, and 79 north. There are several other hard surfaced roads and many gravel roads in the county.

Main economies

The U.S. Census Bureau Secelected Economic Characteristics from 2005-2007, shows population by occupation in Saunders County as follows:

Management, Professional, and related Occupations	32.20%
Service	18.00%
Sales and Office	22.40%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	.50%
Construction, Extraction, and Maintenance	13.00%
Production, Transportation, and Material Moving	13.901%

In 2007 retail trade was the largest of 20 major sectors. The average wage per job was $18,826.00. The per capita personal income was $25,322.00, with a median household income of $56,445. Households earning less than $25,000.00 were 7.5%. 65% of the households were married-couple familes, 10% other families, 21% people living alone, and 5% other nonfamily households. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that 11,012 workers from Saunders county commute to work with a mean travel time of 23.6 minutes.

Information from the Saunders County Extension office reflects that Saunders County is still primarily a rural area with much of its economy depending on agriculture. For example, approximately 130,000 acres are planted to corn and 17% of salaries are agriculture related.

Population

2005 U.S. Census Data shows a breakdown of the population as follows:

Total Population		20,458
Under 20 years	5,464	
20-24	1,418	
25-34	2,107	
35-54	6,120	
55-64	2,316	
65 & over	3,033	

2000 U.S. Census reported race and ethnicity as follows:

White	20,226
Black or African American	33
American Indian and Alaska native	56
Asian	56
Two or more races	87
Hispanic or Latino*	304

Hispanic ethnicity is a separate data category from race.

Educational opportunities

The K-12 public schools in Saunders County are located in the following communities:

Ashland-Greenwood
Cedar Bluffs
Mead
Prague
Wahoo
Yutan

Private schools include:

St. Wenceslaus Grade School, Wahoo
Bishop Neumann High School, Wahoo

There are no post secondary schools in Saunders County. The closest post secondary schools are located in Fremont, Lincoln, and Omaha.

Historic and natural attractions / recreational opportunities

Eugene T. Mahoney State Park, the Strategic Air & Space Museum, and Lee G. Simmons Conservation Park and Wildlife Safari are located in the Ashland area.

Hanson House and the Saunders County Historical Society Museum are located in Wahoo, Nebraska.

Interaction of dynamics presented above addresses an issue. Many families have to commute outside of the county for employment thereby resulting in children being home without parental supervision. Youth development activities are hard to come by in the smaller communities unless the youth is involved in a school sponsored sport activity. Therefore, if parent/s make a choice to have their children involved they must address transportation and economic issues.

V. Priorities

The following priorities have been identified by the Saunders County Community Team.

Priority #1

Problem: "Lack of Healthy Families"

A. Substance Use

Youth substance use continues to be prevalent in our county. According to the Nebraska Juvenile Court Report for Saunders County in YR 2006 the number of youth cited for Minor in Possession of Alcohol Offenses (19) and in YR 2007 (6). In addition, to those juveniles processed through juvenile court, one must look at the number that went through pre-trial diversion for the same offense. In YR 2006 the number of youth was (71) and Yr 2007 (66). As one can ascertain, there has been a slight decrease however, it continues to be the number one offense youth are being cited.

Existing Programs:

Youth Service System is the pre-trial diversion program for the county. Alcohol education is a part of the program in addition to conducting random alcohol and drug testing.

Region V System is currently working with the communities of Cedar Bluffs, Ashland and Mead to implement alcohol prevention efforts i.e., speakers, sticker campaigns etc.

Project Extra Mile meets monthly to bring awareness to community stakeholders about issues that relate to legislation dealing with the promotion of alcohol that targets youth. There has been a youth group established at Wahoo High School in order for youth to actively engage in the process of informing their peers of the issues.

Through the Juvenile Justice Coalition of Nebraska Crime Commission grant funding has provided alcohol testing to school dances to six schools within Saunders County to ensure a safe and drug free environment.

Gaps and Needs:

- Youth receive mixed messages from authority figures regarding alcohol use. Need to identify who those authority figures are and educate them on how to be a better role model.
- Identify what resources are available, where the gaps exist and provide education.

B. Abuse and Neglect

The quality of representation of children within the Saunders County Juvenile Justice system in abuse and neglect cases is lacking. According to data collected, the number of children entering the system is greater therefore, stretching the time that attorneys, Guardian Ad Litems, can give to the child in an already burden caseload. This burden is also reflected in the number of cases handled by caseworkers. Below are a chart that reflects three points; an increase in the number of cases filed, the number of cases handled by Health and Human Services and the number of intakes reviewed by the LB1184 Treatment Team.

	YR 2005	YR 2006	YR 2007
Referrals	86	77	87
Substantiated	24	32	39
Unfounded	50	36	48
Guardian Ad Litem – cases assigned	-	20	12
State Wards	-	83	-
HHS Wards	-	62	-
OJS Wards	-	21	-
LB1184	62	70	86

Another point, the amount of money Saunders County expends on each case in legal fees. When obtaining data for this point the county does not breakout the amount for legal fees specifically for abuse and neglect cases. However, to give you an idea, one case in the YR 2008 for two months of fees totaled $1, 087.50. So, the question is, "How can we give more representation to each child but yet not place more of a financial burden on the county?"

C. Parenting

Currently, the county does not provide Parenting classes for those who are need of the service. Blue Valley Mental Health and Lutheran Family Services provide individual and family counseling but there are no educational opportunities for those who do not need counseling but rather are in need of information. Further still, it became clear that the stakeholders need to identify what topics need to be addressed and what entity could provide such curriculum. By providing such a service, this could create a support system whereby our families would feel more connected to our community.

D. Life Skills

Youth who attended the community team meetings voiced their concern that youth do not feel comfortable asking for help. They are not always aware of the programs that exist to assist them. Programs presented as a "normal" avenue to pursue, without a stigma attached. Sometimes kids get in trouble to get help.

Currently, the Juvenile Justice Coalition of Nebraska Crime Commission provides finding for three educational classes; Full Responsibility Education, Chill Out, and Try Another Way. The classes are open to any youth who wants to attend and information is provided to the schools within Saunders County to disseminate to their students. The majority of youth who attend these classes are referrals from the legal system, therefore resulting in a stigma that was pointed out.

E. Need for Mental Health Providers

The two mental health providers, Blue Valley Mental and Lutheran Family Services are overburdened that result in long delays for clients to be seen therefore, the potential to exacerbate the problems that currently exist. Blue Valley Mental is the only agency to provide chemical evaluations. Again, this poses a problem because if the court orders an evaluation, this could mean a delay in the legal process of a case. The Juvenile Justice Coalition of Nebraska Crime Commission provides grant funding to assist youth who are in need of financial assistance in order to complete the requirement for the court/pre-trial diversion. This helps financially, but does not address the lapse in time issue.

Priority #2

Problem: Truancy

There are six public schools in Saunders County and one parochial school. Included in our data collection is Raymond Central even though it is located in Lancaster County because of the large number of Saunders County youth who attend the school. The total number of students for all schools listed is 4,105. When collecting data it became clear that the way in which each school interprets "truancy" varies. An example is that some schools defined truancy only as unexcused absences while others included both excused and unexcused. Therefore, when collecting data the graph reflects those students who were absent five days or more.

	YR 2005-2006	YR 2006-2007	YR 2007-2008
Cedar Bluffs	1	1	2
Bishop Neumann	55	49	59
Mead	84	68	71
Wahoo Public (M.S.)	68	79	92
Wahoo Public (High School)	Unavailable	-	-
Raymond Central	116	116	120
Prague	29	24	30
Yutan	Unavailable		
Ashland	Unavailable	-	-

Existing Programs:

Majority of the schools have an online information system that provides parents accessibility to view their child's grades and attendance. Accordingly, if a student is absent 10 days the school is required by state statue to report it to the county attorney. School intervention systems such as sending correspondence to the parents informing them at (5) and (7) days in order to give them the opportunity to monitor situation and address the problem with school personnel if needed before the case is referred to the county attorney for possible prosecution. Within the last year, the Saunders County Attorney has changed procedure to not file on those referred at the end of the school year until the new school year begins. This is an attempt to reduce the number of absences when a new school year begins.

District 3 Probation employs a RISE Coordinator through the AmeriCore Program. This person works with youth on probation or diversion who have been identified as having a truancy or academic problem. The coordinator works closely with the each student and reports weekly to the assigned officer as to the progress being made.

TeamMates provide a support system for those identified youth. The volunteer does not necessarily deal with the truancy issue but one of the main goals is that by providing a positive adult role model the youth will come to understand the importance of education.

Gaps and Needs:

- Lack of a consistent county-wide truancy program.
- Lack of immediate availability of counseling if mental health or family issues have been identified.
- Absence of a Truancy Officer to check on a youth when absent and have not checked in with school.

In 2006-2007 Juvenile Justice Coalition of the Nebraska Crime Commission has funded the program to get a consistent county-wide truancy program implemented. Wahoo Public High School was the first school this process was begun at being the largest school in Saunders County. Dr. Tim Robinson from the Juvenile Justice Institute at UNO assisted in the process of getting the school to look at their current policies and identify ones that were not addressing the truancy problem. Policy changes were made and staff was trained on the YLS/CMS assessment tool for the 2007-2008 school years. In the current grant cycle, we are implementing this same process at Ashland-Greenwood Public school. Eventually, the goal is to reach all schools in the county.

Priority #3

Problem: Lack of consistent and efficient assessment of a juveniles needs and the necessary interventions warranted when law enforcement encounter a youth who is cited or called upon by family.

Currently, the procedure that is currently in place is that if an officer needs an assessment a probation officer is called to process the youth. The intake when completed can either point to the youth needing secure/non-secure placement at Madison, placement at Bryan LGH CAPS, or released back to their parents. Low risk youth seem to fall through the cracks of the system. If the situation did not result in a citation, there are few alternatives the law enforcement can give them so on-going assistance is basically nonexistent. Providing family support to help identify problem areas and recommendation of possible services is needed. With medium risk youth, the county has found that many times the youth are not able to be placed with an emergency program like CAPS because they are filled to capacity. Even with "high risk" youth, getting them transported to Madison Detention Facility is labor intensive because if law enforcement is short staffed, getting them to the facility takes an officer off his/her regular patrol for at least three hours.

Law enforcement have expressed that youth with mental health issues pose another problem as they need assistance on what the best course of action is needed.

Existing Programs:

Youth Service System, a juvenile pre-trial diversion program, has implemented the YLS/CMS to do assessments for youth who have been cited. The assessment is completed only after a youth has been cited for an offense.

District 3 Probation provides intake services when called on by law enforcement. This is done on a case by case basis and generally what would be considered a "high" risk situation.

The DARE Program is provided in some of the schools in Saunders County.

Gaps and Needs:

- Juveniles served more effectively and timely.
- Determine level of service for every juvenile the law enforcement encounters.
- Need for community one-stop/assessment center.
- Law enforcement/community members/families need to be able to access a center that will determine youth's needs and implement interventions appropriate to identified problems.

Priority #4

Problem: Lack of systematic intervention for juveniles.

Juveniles who have been cited do not get an assessment until they either go through pre-trial diversion or court. There, they can be provided with an individual case management and follow-up. There is a more of a potential for this to occur in the pre-trial diversion program for low and medium risk youth than probation. Recently, a change in policy has channeled probation officers energies to focus on the "high risk" juveniles thereby leaving a gap for the low and medium risk offenders.

Existing Programs:

Youth Service System is a juvenile pre-trial diversion for the county.

Gaps and Needs:

- Need for the concept of wrap around services for all levels of youth in the legal system. Hence, Juvenile Justice Specialist.

VI. Strategies

Priority #1 Solution: Build Healthy Families

Strategy:

- Build layers into the pre-trial diversion program to include more educational classes.
- Provide Parenting classes.
- Provide Parenting forums.
- Provide scholarships for civic centers and for extra curricular activities.

Time Line:

- **1st year** – Members of the Community Coalition will research available programs and what resources they can provide. Resource list will be developed and disseminated. Gaps will be identified and agencies will be identified and contacted to provide program. Financial support will be sought from the community.
- **2nd year** – Evaluate effectiveness of programs implemented by compiling data from the programs given. Community Coalition will monitor what and if any changes need to be addressed and provide solutions.
- Evaluate years 1 and 2 and continue to obtain financial/in-kind support.

Resources Needed:

- Community Coalition members who identified this priority and verbally committed their time and resources to fulfill strategies outlined. The agencies represented are: Saunders County Medical Hospital, Region V, Lutheran Family Services, Project Extra Mile, WIA Youth Services and Youth Service System.

Expected Results:

To build a support system that bonds the community and its families by providing services that address identified needs.

Priority #2 Solution: Reduce Truancy

Strategy:

- Provide training to all Saunders County schools on utilizing a consistent policy throughout the county on truancy and absenteeism issues.

Time Lime:

- **1st year** – Survey schools as to their willingness to exam current policies.

Schools wishing to engage in informational meetings on the topic will be contacted and scheduled. Explore commitment and financial support for a "Truancy Officer" position.

- **2nd year** – Continue to hold informational meetings with identified school personnel to discuss any changes in policy and the effectiveness of such changes.
- **3rd year** – Monitor progress and provide support where needed.

Resources Needed:

- Saunders County schools.
- Dr. Tim Robinson of Juvenile Justice Institute to provide information to the schools.
- County Attorney and Youth Services will set up informational meetings and provide support throughout the process.
- Collaboration of the schools and other entities to provide financial support.

Expected Results:

Reduce absenteeism and truancy.

Priority # 3 Solution: Pre-Assessment Center

Strategy:

- **Implement a Pre-assessment center.**

Time Line:

- **1st year** – Members of the Community Coalition will research and develop plans for a center that fits the needs of the county.
  Informational and planning meetings will be held between the Community Coalition and the Saunders County Board of Supervisors to obtain financial support for the center.
- **2nd year** – Implement Pre-assessment Center. Meetings will continue to monitor effectiveness of the center. Surveys will be conducted to aid in this process.
- **3rd year** – Continue to evaluate program by collecting data and assessing effectiveness.

Resources Needed:

- Saunders County Attorney, Saunders County Sheriff and all law enforcement, Youth Services, District 3 Probation and community members will be the Community Coalition that will develop the center.
- Saunders County Board of Supervisors providing financial support.

Expected Results:

To provide a community one-stop program that not only services youth in the legal system but the community as a whole.

Priority #4 Solution: Provide systematic approach to intervene and monitor juveniles.

Strategy:

- Hire Juvenile Justice Specialist to focus on juvenile cases exclusively under the supervision of District 3 Probation.

Time Line:

- **1st year -** Community Coalition that consists of members of law enforcement, Probation, Diversion, and Saunders County Board President will develop job duties. Hiring and supervision will be done by District 3 Probation. The position will be focused on juveniles who encounter law enforcement and/or are referred by the court for supervision and monitoring.
- 2nd & 3rd year – Continue to monitor effectiveness of position by conducting surveys.

APPENDIX A

SAUNDERS COUNTY

JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM ANALYSIS TOOL

(COMMUNITY PLANNING DECISION POINT ANALYSIS)

The Juvenile Justice System Analysis Tool (Tool) was developed by the Juvenile Justice Institute at the University of Nebraska at Omaha in conjunction with the Nebraska Crime Commission to assist in County Juvenile Services Comprehensive Planning.

The Tool consists of twelve areas of decision points that make up the formal juvenile justice system in Nebraska. Various factors are present at each decision point—oftentimes changing from year to year based on state or county dynamics within the system such as changes in policies, programs, and/or personnel.

There are formal factors dictating certain decision points in the system, such as statutory authority. In addition, each county or community has unique factors surrounding certain decision points within the local county juvenile justice system. Identifying such informal factors helps to understand and assess juvenile justice needs and issues in individual locales.

Available data might also inform the factors surrounding a data point. Anecdotal data might be compared with statistical data, for example, to assess the true state of the system. County data is assessed when applying the Tool where applicable.

Saunders County

A Saunders County Comprehensive Plan meeting was held October 2008. Those present included local representatives from Probation, Diversion, the Saunders County Attorney, counseling services, Youth Services System, workforce investment, the school system (including a superintendent, principle and high school student from various schools) , Project Extra Mile, the sheriff's office, the Wahoo & Cedar Bluffs Police Department, Saunders County Medical Center and CASA.

Comprehensive, county specific data was compiled and provided by Youth Services System in order to inform the conversation.

Each of the twelve decision points were discussed as they relate to the juvenile justice system in Saunders County.

The following analysis names the decision point and states any *noteworthy* issue identified or problem acknowledged at the particular stage. Not all decision points are commented on. An assessment of the Saunders County data has been completed as part of applying the Tool. Such data is referenced throughout this report when necessary to fully analyze a certain decision point.

Decision Points:

Arrest/Citation (Police/Law Enforcement)

Whether an information report should be filed, or what offense, if any, under which juvenile should be cited or arrested

Whether to cite or arrest juvenile for juvenile or adult

Notes:

The Saunders County Attorney's office makes this determination, not law enforcement.

Whether to take juvenile into custody or to cite and release

Notes:

Like many Nebraska counties, no secure detention facility exists in Saunders County. Usually a juvenile is released to his or her parents or guardians. The county contracts with the detention center in Madison for $350 per day for secure detention. This high expense, coupled with law enforcement's lack of manpower to transport the juvenile—whether it is a week day or weekend, factors into the decision to take the juvenile into custody. Electronic monitoring is not an option at the time of arrest.

Law enforcement also recognizes that any mental health issues the juvenile has at the time of arrest often compounds the problem. Further affecting the decision is when the juvenile has an undetermined alcohol or drug issue in addition to mental health issues.

Hospital personnel, though not before experiencing juvenile detention issues, offered that the hospital could help with emergency protective custody situations when the mental health issues puts the juvenile himself in danger or those around him. The hospital could also assist for a psychiatric consultation in Omaha or Lincoln, though law enforcement's manpower would be an issue at that point.

Initial Detention (Probation)

Whether juvenile should be detained or released

Charge Juvenile (County Attorney)

Whether to prosecute juvenile

Notes:

Prosecution decisions are based on several factors such as severity of the offense, repeat offender status, age of the offender, diversion participation, and other statutory factors. Each decision is made on a case-by-case basis.

According to juvenile arrest data in Saunders County and the corresponding diversion program's referral numbers, the diversion program in Saunders County is very well utilized and is a strong option when making charging decisions. The County Attorney believes that any youth eligible for diversion should be offered the program. Youth Services and the County Attorney's office will work together to ensure this happens.

Part of the intake process for diversion is the use of the YLS as the assessment tool, which is a very positive development in Saunders County. Probation also utilities the tool and staff at Wahoo Public Schools were trained to use it. Using one assessment across various services has opened up important communication and dialogue between the school and law enforcement. Youth receive services quicker, such as in truancy cases, with the utilization of the YLS.

The County Attorney and the diversion program have implemented a policy change to require participants in diversion to sign a release that allows communication with the school.

Whether youth should be prosecuted as juvenile or adult

For the most part, if the offender is 16 or over and is charged with a felony, the case is filed in adult court with the option of transferring the case to juvenile court.

Offense(s) for which juvenile should be charged

Pre-Adjudication Detention (Juvenile Court Judge)

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

Notes:

The judge is well aware of the detention costs in Madison. Placement with a parent or guardian is strongly considered and is the preference as the specific situation warrants. Electronic monitoring is an available option when needed.

Probable Cause Hearing (Juvenile Court Judge)

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

Notes:

The only issue that exists is one of transport when the juvenile is held in detention in Madison.

Competency Evaluation (Juvenile Court Judge)

Whether juvenile is competent to participate in the proceedings

Whether juvenile is "responsible" for his/her acts

Adjudication (Juvenile Court Judge)

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

Whether to order probation to conduct a pre-disposition investigation (PDI)

Notes:

The judge does not order many PDIs. If a PDI is ordered, the YLS is conducted as part of the investigation. Probation communicates with the schools for information. PDIs have increased for school-related offenses.

Whether to order OJS evaluation

Notes:

An OJS evaluation is ordered when out of home placement is considered or when Probation does not have access to appropriate services.

When the offense is minor but red flags exist, then the juvenile may "fall through the cracks" because unless there is a more significant offense, the juvenile may not be eligible for services. In certain cases, the juvenile must reoffend, or offend at a higher level to access the services needed.

Whether to order a PDI and an OJS evaluation

Disposition (Juvenile Court Judge)

Whether to place juvenile on probation

Whether to commit juvenile to the Office of Juvenile Services (OJS)

Whether to place juvenile on probation and commit juvenile to HHS or OJS

Notes:

Saunders County, compared to the rest of the state, has very few juveniles committed to the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Centers. This would indicate that other services are being employed—most likely through HHS.

Administrative Sanctions (Probation)

Whether to impose administrative sanctions

Notes:

Probation routinely imposes administrative sanctions with technical violations to attempt to make improvements in the youth's behavior. If there is a new law violation, the case is referred to the County Attorney to file a motion to revoke probation.

Motion to Revoke Probation (County Attorney)

Whether to file a motion to revoke probation

Notes:

A motion to revoke probation is filed when there is a new offense or when there are numerous technical violations and the youth is not responding to probation supervision.

The RISE coordinator helps monitor youth on diversion or Probation if there is an education/employment component to such supervision. Schools are contacted, attendance, grades, and behaviors are monitored. If a problem arises, a progress report is sent without delay to the supervising office. This helps tremendously because probation officers or diversion can deal with any issue or problem right away.

Modification/Revocation of Probation (Juvenile Court Judge)

Whether to modify or revoke probation

Setting Aside Adjudication (Juvenile Court Judge)

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

Whether juvenile should be discharged from custody and supervision of OJS

Summary:

Saunders County juvenile justice professionals and interested community members are a very committed group, working together to address the needs of youth across the continuum of services—from prevention to diversion to sanctions. This commitment has led to greater communication and coordination to make Saunders County juvenile justice a more seamless system.

Saunders County has continued to make progress in addressing priorities by constantly re-evaluating and implementing changes for betterment of the system. For example, the use of the YLS assessment by various agencies has helped with communication and getting services to youth in a timelier manner. Wahoo Public Schools, in coordination with Youth Service and the County Attorney's Office, has implemented a new truancy process which has helped in lowering the rate of school absences this semester.

Also, pre-trial diversion is a very strong program in Saunders County. Given that 92 in 2005, 103 in 2006, and 83 in 2007 of 0-17 year-olds were arrested in Saunders County, coupled with the referral numbers to diversion, youth are being diverted from the system when possible and appropriate.

Issues surrounding youth and the juvenile justice system in Saunders County still exist.

1) There is a lack of secure detention in Saunders County, but the numbers and need is not high enough to establish a secure facility within the county at this time.

2) The RISE program is up and running and useful, but funding ends in August of 2009.

3) Lack of parental guidance can be a significant issue, especially with poor attendance at school. Certain issues can not be forced, so the schools and intervention programs do what they can to help. Rarely is just one person needing help, but those around that person as well—often the whole family.

4) It was noted that for every level of intervention implemented, the number of problem students or youth decreases. Intervention is often needed before an offense is committed, but some services can only be accessed after an offense is committed. Many programs and options do exist in Saunders County (WEBBS, YAP, SKIP), but participation can not be mandated—parents have a right to refuse participation.

5) There is a lack of services that are affordable, especially mental health services. Lutheran Family Services and Blue Valley Mental Health are the local providers. Appointments are often one or two months away, when an immediate need exists. Also, some are not able to afford mental health or substance abuse evaluations.

6) Prevention programs and appropriate services for youth, according to the discussion, are needed, before an offense is committed and an arrest is made. Engaging youth at a younger age is seen as very beneficial in the long run.

7) Re-establishing a CASA program was discussed. This program would relate to child neglect cases, specifically.

8) Students expressed the concern that youth do not feel comfortable asking for help for themselves or their peers when they know they need it. They do not have an understanding of what programs exist to help. They feel like sometimes youth purposefully get in trouble in order to get help. It was suggested that programs be presented as a "normal" avenue to pursue, without so much stigma being attached, if possible.

9) A significant obstacle is the rural nature of the county. There are around 5,000 zero to17-year-olds in Saunders County. Numbers do not always justify specific programming for juveniles, so youth must access available services in the Omaha and Lincoln areas or not receive the appropriate services at all. Transportation then becomes the solution—how to get the families to services outside of Saunders County. Saunders County continues to look for new ways to address the challenges of a juvenile justice system in rural Nebraska.