Atascosa County Community Plan

2010 - 2012

Date approved by Atascosa County Commissioner's Court:
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Mission Statement

The Mission of the Atascosa County Community Planning Committee is to work towards filling any gaps in related local services by identifying issues and developing a set of prioritized responses that address the needs of the citizenry in the areas of juvenile justice, criminal justice, victim's issues, health/mental health services and homeland security.

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Goal Statement

It is the Goal of the Atascosa County Community Planning Committee to expand, improve, refine and increase the availability of necessary resources for the residents of Atascosa County in an effort to continually improve the overall quality of life of the residents.

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Geographic Areas Represented

Incorporated Communities:

Charlotte	Lytle	Poteet
Christine	Pleasanton	Somerset
Jourdanton		

Unincorporated Communities:

Campbellton	Leming	Primrose
Blackhill	McCoy	Rossville
Fashing	Peggy	Verdi

Independent School Districts:

Charlotte	Lytle (portion)	Poteet
Jourdanton	Pleasanton	Somerset (portion)

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County Demographics:

The 2000 Census lists the population of Atascosa County at 38,628, up 26.5% from 1990. Atascosa County population for 2008 is an estimated 43,877, an increase in overall population in the county of 13.6% from 2000 to 2008. * Population demographics show that about 61% are persons of Hispanic or Latino origin, 38% are persons of White/Non-Hispanic or Latino origin*.

The average person-per-household number is 2.99 (2000). In addition, the median household income is $34,699 (2004). About 78% of the population in Atascosa County owns their own homes which have a median value of $52,900 (2000). Slightly over 65% of Atascosa County residents are high school graduates, and only 10.5% have a Bachelor's degree or higher.
There are six school districts in Atascosa County with well over 10,000 students enrolled from Kindergarten through post-high school. Coastal Bend College operates in Pleasanton, Texas. The high school dropout rate in 1999-2000 was .5%, compared to the statewide average of 1%. In 2000-2001, it was 1%, compared to the statewide average of 1.3%+. Unfortunately, these numbers continue to grow.

The median age in Atascosa County is 33.2, with persons under 17 and under years old comprising 28.6% of the population in 2007. The median household income in 2007 is $40,186, and the per capita money income is $25,358. The average family size is 2.99.* 20% of persons in Atascosa County live below poverty level.* A very high number of people are economically disadvantaged. The unemployment rate is at an all time high, at 8.1% which is

higher than it has been in the last ten years. Atascosa County has one hospital, South Texas Regional Medical Center, which offers many features, but lacks some important services as well. This rural county's employment base is schools and government. There is no significant industry or corporation operating out of Atascosa County, although each individual community works to bring new business to the area. The Atascosa Inter-Agency Council actively brings all service agencies and non-profit organization members together for the betterment of this community on a monthly basis.

*U.S. Census Bureau, State and County Quick Facts
+Pleasanton Independent School District
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics - Last updated October 22, 2010

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Community Planning Team

In developing this Community Plan, members of the team were divided into four major taskforces for the purpose of narrowing the scope of research and data that are incorporated into the Plan. Some members served in multiple capacities and categories.

Community Planning Chairperson:

Name	Agency	Address	E-mail	Phone
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The Atascosa County Community Plan is available on-line at www.aacog.com

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Identification of Community Priorities

In each of the areas below, problems are identified and data is included that supports both the existence and severity of the problems as they are found in the County. Below is a discussion of the prioritized problems, data and statistics that explain the manner in which the problems are being reported, and strategically how responses to these community problems could be improved.

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

Priority 1:

At-risk youth in Atascosa County do not have equitable access to prevention or intervention services of after-school activities when compared to youth residing in urban and suburban areas. The one activity program that did exist through the Atascosa County Juvenile Probation Department opened in 2002. This program provided meaningful activities which included tutoring, life skills, and counseling. When the program started it did show some short term successes, however, the funding ended in 2006 and the program closed. It is a high priority in Atascosa County to have a program that will reinstate the provision of these essential services that proved successful in the past.

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Supporting Data:

1. Prior to funding, Atascosa County did not have any free boys' and girls' clubs or places for youth to actively engage in supervised after-school recreational activities.
2. According to the Atascosa County 2004 Activity Summary, there were 231 referrals to probation in 2004. Of these referrals 14.2 percent were recidivists, yet more alarming is the 71 percent of all referrals were Hispanics, yet in Atascosa County Hispanics account for only 59.4 percent of the population.
3. Since 1990, Atascosa County demonstrated an increase of 300% for Aggravated assaults and an increase of 200% for Theft. Atascosa demonstrated an increase of 200% for Felony Drug Offenses and an increase of 400% for Weapons Violations. Additionally, Atascosa demonstrated an increase of 500% for Misdemeanor Drug Offenses.
4. In 2005-2006, 63.0 percent of the youth referred and participating in the Program increased their school performance and 92.6 percent reduced their recidivism rate. 59.3 percent of Program participants experience an increase in school attendance. 92.0 percent of the youth and 100.0 percent of the parents reported they were satisfied with the Program. In addition 7.4 percent of the youth had a new offense (referral) to the Juvenile Probation Department. A total for 196 youth participated in the Program between September 1, 2005 and August 31, 2006. 61.7 percent of the participants were male and 38.3 were female. Of all the participants 71.9 were Hispanic, 23.5 percent were White, and 1.5 percent were African American and 3.1 percent "Other". The closing of this program caused a huge detriment to Atascosa County.

Proposed Objectives:

1. The Program will provide after-school recreation services for youth and their family

members.
2. The Program would also provide a place for other service providers to collaborate and work with the same at-risk population
3. Youth living in high-risk environments typically do not have access to supervised, safe and secure recreational opportunities. Providing this needed service will increase the community's protective factors by providing a safe place for recreation.
4. The Program targets youth who are truant and/or "at-risk" of dropping out of school.
5. This Program provides services to a community that is 88.8 percent Hispanic and specifically, targets Hispanic youth who are overly represent in the Juvenile Justice System.
6. By providing prevention and intervention services, combined with activities designed to reduce school dropout and increase family involvement, the program will reduce recidivism of both youth referred to the department and adjudicated youth.
7. This Program provides access to prevention and intervention services, supervised activities designed to enhance self-esteem, and promotes family involvement. Research shows that these are all key factors to reducing gang involvement.
8. This program will be located in a rural county. All participants will be rural youth and families with limited access to services.

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Priority 2:

More juvenile offenders are being diagnosed with mental or emotional health issues. Services are extremely limited in Atascosa County and Mental Health/Mental Retardation is only able to service Medicaid clients.

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Supporting Data:

1. Limited funds for multi-agency children to be eligible for respite or short-term placement.
2. No independent psychiatric services in the area. MH-MR provides a psychiatrist for only those individuals who qualify for the service.
3. Limited educational services are available for dealing with a mentally ill family member. In 2005, MH-MR completed 110 screenings, however only 36 family members participated in the family support group.
4. Lack of long-term psychiatric placement available to children and adolescents with a substance abuse problem and mental health issues.

Proposed Objectives:

1. Provide for long-term psychiatric placements available to children and adolescents who are high risk of substance abuse addiction and mental health issues.
2. Provide assistance to eligible families in need of respite or short-term placement.
3. Encourage Private Psychiatry services to move into this area.

4. Provide support services to the community for clients with mental health issues.

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Priority 3:

There are limited services in Atascosa County for substance abuse education, treatment and residential services.

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Supporting Data:

1. Juveniles must be referred out-of-county for in-patient treatment, making it impossible for family participation.
2. Long-term intensive treatment programs are not available to juveniles and their families.
3. No in-home intervention services currently exist to deal with crisis intervention and other problems in the home.
4. No after-care programs are available for those individuals that come out of in-patient treatment.
5. No Services are available to support families that are victimized by the disease of addiction.

Proposed Objectives:

1. Bring in agencies and programs to address detoxification and out-patient care, as well as programs which involve individual and group counseling.
2. Establish a drug treatment program that provides long-term care for the whole family.
3. Continue to coordinate efforts between outside agencies and all school districts for effective education in the schools and provide alternatives to drug use.
4. Hire in-home intervention specialist to assist youth and families in dealing with crisis situations relating to substance abuse.
5. Provide residential services needed for those that a diagnosed with serious drug usage.

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Priority 4:

Education of our youth in a safe and healthy atmosphere.

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Supporting Data:

1. 48.9% of the Hispanic population over the age of 25 is high school dropouts. High school freshman in this area are 32.2% more likely to drop out of school compared to their Texas peers.

2. For school year 2006-2007 there were 163 truancy referrals made to the four Justice's of the Peace. Thirty-six (36) were then referred to the Juvenile Probation Department for Contempt of Court on the Truancy cases.
3. The Atascosa County Juvenile Probation Department received 43 referrals from the schools for criminal activity, including drug charges, assaults and thefts.
4. Police calls to the six ISD's for delinquent activity.
5. The number of teen pregnancies in Atascosa County which result in the girls not returning to school. Texas ranks 50th for births to teen mothers (age15 – 19).

Proposed Objectives:

1. Initiating activities and trainings that will encourage family support.
2. Provide for Resource Officer's in the school to train and counsel students
3. Provide counseling services to those youth who are at risk of dropping out of school.
4. Set up a teen court to handle fineable offenses so youth can experience consequences from their peers.
5. Provide peer counseling and life skills training in the schools.
6. Even though there are services being pervaded in three (3) Atascosa County School District, there are another three (3) school districts that do not have these services.

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Identify all trends, problems, and gaps in resources not mentioned in this section:

Atascosa County Juvenile Services has made great strides to form collaborations within the community and with other counties. Two issues continue to be of high importance: not duplicating services and the ability to provide any services needed for each juvenile and their family. Atascosa County will continue to focus on families at-risk and juveniles that require individual treatment for drugs, mental health and education.

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Identify Achievements:

There has been more collaboration and continuity of services in Atascosa County. Three local school districts along with MH-MR, Probation, and local Police have received the Safe Schools Healthy Students grant to enable several of these needs to be met within the school structure. Local Connections continues to provide at-risk services to the local school districts and juvenile probation department.

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

Priority 1:

Family Preservation/Abuse: Data indicate that large numbers of victims with issues centered around family violence, dating violence, child abuse, elderly/disabled abuse, sexual assault, substance abuse, incest, "sexting", human trafficking, and homeless families exist in large numbers for the Atascosa County region.

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Supporting Data:

According to the Department of Family and Protective Services Data Book, there were 412 victims of family violence or sexual assault, ages 3-100, received services in 2009. For the first 10 months of 2010 there have been 122 criminal cases of Assault Causing Bodily Injury-Family Violence filed with the Atascosa County Attorney's office. Likewise there have been 16 cases filed for Violation of Protective Orders and a total of 44 Protective Order requested filed. Statistics for Atascosa County and the Police Departments for 2008 verses 2009 are:

City police & Atascosa Co. Sheriff's reports:

	Family Violence		***Sexual Assault***	
Calls.				
Totals by Entities for comparison years	**2008**	**2009**	**2008**	**2009**
Atascosa County Sheriff's Dept(rural areas)	**178**	**196**	**25**	**13**
Pleasanton Police Dept	**67**	**75**	**12**	**15**
Jourdanton Police Dept	**36**	**24**	**5**	**4**
Poteet Police Dept	**37**	**73**	**8**	**2**
Lytle Police Dept	**74**	**65**	**9**	**3**

Note: each police department is not standardized in their reporting.

306 victims of family violence or sexual assault, ages 3-100, received services in 2006. There were 65 assault calls to the ER for the first nine months of 2006; of those, 25 were women and 24 were men, with the remainder being officers injured while trying to control the assaults. The six school districts report 49 homeless children for 2006, and 67 teens who became pregnant during the 2005-2006 school year. The seven surveyed housing complexes in Pleasanton, Poteet and Jourdanton (all but one being HUD-funded), show waiting lists ranging from 2 to 77 families.

According to the Department of Family and Protective Services Data Book, there were 445 abuse and neglect investigations in 2006, marking a 26% increase from the previous year. That number increased another 31% to 628 in 2007. The number of confirmed victims of child abuse more than doubled from 78 in 2005 to 202 in 2007. Currently for 2009 there are 181 confirmed victims of child abuse or neglect in Atascosa County. CPS conducted 390 investigations of abuse.

Proposed Objectives:

Continue to increase services provided by collaboration and coordination between CASA, the Atascosa Family Crisis Center Inc., the Atascosa Inter-Agency Council, Community Resource Coordination Group for Adults, Community Resource Coordination Group for Children, Christian Alliance Ministries, Alamo Work Source Solutions, Connections, Salvation Army,

Child and Adult Protective Services and other community/faith-based organizations/resources.

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Priority 2:

Facilities & staff for long-term shelter for victims of family violence and sexual assault, additional foster care families or a facility to meet the need for children who have been removed from abusive homes and work to get a facility to support supervised visitation for families and their children.

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Supporting Data:

There is no shelter located in Atascosa County for families of family violence and zero foster care families located in the county to take abused children who have been removed from their homes by Child Protective Services. The crisis center has one or two night temporary housing until appropriate housing can be found, however there is no residential facility in the county for victims of family violence/sexual assault. There is no supervised visitation facility in this county. Parents must travel to Bexar County (San Antonio) to see their children and public transportation is non-existent in Atascosa County covering 1268 square miles.

Proposed Objectives:

Acquire funding to support the acquisition of a combination facility that would meet the needs mentioned above.

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Priority 3:

Sexual assault nurse examiners program, (SANE)

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Supporting Data:

Reported Sexual Assaults for 2008 were 272, based on the crisis center's victim numbers, although many refuse to report this to authorities. That number includes those who were family violence related. At this time, there is no type of program, such as SANE in the local hospital. Victims must be transported to hospitals in San Antonio which ranges from 30 to 60 miles from their hometown.

Proposed Objectives:

Training, with the help of Texas Association Against Sexual Assault and in coordination with South Texas Regional Medical Center's registered nurses to provide the SANE exams; while coordinating with the hospital to acquire the equipment necessary to perform the exam, thus minimizing the pain and humiliation of being transported to and enduring the ordeal of a sexual assault exam.

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Identify all trends, problems, and gaps in resources not mentioned in this section:

Victims in rural areas such as Atascosa County have been receiving fewer services due to the lack of funding to increase staff and services, yet there are more victims of crime than ever before. Crimes have become more violent, yet many victims are not reporting. Victims in Atascosa County tend to be very afraid to seek help because of the small communities and community talk. Their fear for their very lives and the lives of their children contribute to the lack of reporting, yet those numbers reported are on the rise. We see the trend of grandparents raising grandchildren growing rapidly. Judge Camille DuBose, Associate Judge for South Texas Child Protection court states, "per capita, Atascosa County has the highest incidents of child abuse out of the entire eight county regions." Additionally, immigrants are coming forward who need intensive services, with limited staff to assist. We continue to function, but with limited resources to help meet the rising numbers of victims. Yearly funding cuts make it even more difficult to make any great strides to assist the ever rising numbers of victims needing services. We also have a high incident of young mothers with multiple children, who have difficulty raising their family because they are children themselves.

Identify Achievements:

Collaboration through the Atascosa Inter-Agency Council has united the county in many ways. A team effort approach to help victims has resulted in major strides. Housing issues, food and household needs, medical treatment and counseling have coordinated to provide excellent results. The Atascosa County Law Enforcement Assn. and its officers have worked to coordinate joint trainings and open paths of communication. Constant searching and networking between agencies has enlightened the field of resources available.

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Criminal Justice Issues (law enforcement, courts, corrections)

(listed in order of priority, greatest need first)

Priority 1:

The Detecting, Curtailing and Apprehension of Criminal Activities and the Perpetrators

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Supporting Data:

Criminal Homicide - 2
Aggravated Assault - 131

Robbery - 4
Aggravated Sexual Assault - 1
Sexual Assault - 2
Aggravated Sexual Assault of Child - 3
Sexual Assault of Child - 5
Burglary - 160
Family Violence - 220
Burglary - 160
Larceny Theft - 108
Motor Vehicle Theft - 16

Proposed Objectives:

A need of additional funding for personnel (i.e. Juvenile Investigators, Sexual Assault Investigators, Homicide Investigators, Burglary Investigators, Motor Vehicle Crash Investigators and Motor Vehicle Theft Investigators). A need of new age technology (i.e. Patrol Vehicles, Mobile Data Terminals, Digital Radios - Vehicle and Handheld Project 25 Capable, Radar Units, Night Vision, Terminal Imager Cameras, Security Cameras with Night Vision, Less Lethal Weapons, Training Facility and necessary equipment, Equipment and Training for all officers for Homeland Security and the ever present danger of terrorism, attacks of public schools and unprotected hospital facilities

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Priority 2:

Electronic Security Systems for County Courthouse, Municipal courts, County and Municipal Jails.

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Supporting Data:

Unprotected government courthouses are open to criminal and terrorist who might plan attacks, hostage taking or criminal rescues. Most jail security systems are decades old and in need of repair and/or replacement. These systems are needed to help ensure the safety of all citizens, judges and employees who work in these public facilities.

Proposed Objectives:

New digital electronic security systems for all County Courthouses, Municipal Offices and County Jail Facilities are currently needed.

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Priority 3:

A need for K-9s for Narcotics Interdiction, Victim Searches and Victim Rescues

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Supporting Data:

Narcotics interdiction is at a high point and ever increasing, and officers have the added responsibility of Homeland Security and the possible interdiction of terrorists who actively plan to attack public or government facilities in the United States at anytime.

Proposed Objectives:

Funding is greatly needed by every county, city and local police departments and also for fire and search and rescue agencies to be able to acquire the purchase of K9s for training in narcotics drug interdiction, and victim searches and for victim rescues.

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Priority 4:

Law Enforcement Facilities and acquisition of state of the art technological equipment

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Supporting Data:

Computers are outdated and obsolete within two years in most cases. Wireless computer access is becoming more and more available for local law enforcement agencies and criminal prosecutors. MDT's, Wireless Access P/C's, Blackberries, better Cell Phone Operations, and training in the apprehension and prosecution of career criminals who utilize all the latest and Newest technologies to commit crimes against persons and companies.

Proposed Objectives:

Funding needs to be available to train police departments, sheriff's departments, fire and EMS officers in the use of all the newest technology in Computers, MDT's, Wireless Access P/C's, Blackberries, Cell Phone tracking and access. Local police officers need constant training and education in all new age technology. Training needs to be made available to all police officers to keep current in police training in all aspects of law enforcement work and duties.

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Priority 5:
Improving Quality of life and addressing Core Needs of a Community.

Supporting Data:

There is a lack of availability in many of the core components of a healthy community. These include, but are not limited to affordable housing for middle, lower and below lower income families, health care for all ages, public transportation, employment in all aspects of life, and career training for our youth. When these deficiencies are not addressed, this alone can lead To increased criminal activity, fear in our communities, unhealthy lifestyles, which are causes of many increased responses from all our law enforcement agencies, fire and EMS.

Proposed Objectives:

Provide funding for projects that will increase public awareness in the availability of assets to improve the core needs of all local communities, work projects, grants, loans, low interest loans, etc. Increase education benefits for all law enforcement agencies for the betterment of those who choose public service and dedicate their lives to the safety and protection of all our citizens.

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Identify all trends, problems, and gaps in resources not mentioned in this section:

Law enforcement is at the heart of communities ensuring and improving a good quality of life for its citizens and yet is faced with the reality of the current trends indicating a shortage of personnel seeking employment as police officers that will become worse by the end of 2010 and on into 2012 and following years. Cities and counties must offer challenges and opportunities for current and future police officers and sheriff's deputies to earn a living wage that compensates them fairly, gives them the ability to provide and care for their families and look to a retirement for their futures. All law enforcement agencies must offer constant and necessary, current, interesting and challenging training to insure that new officers are prepared for the challenges they will ultimately have to face. All government agencies must insure that police protection will be available to serve our local communities, protect our citizens and have the cadre of veteran police officers available to properly equip and train those less experienced police officers to properly handle the future challenges they will ultimately have to face. All law enforcement has been every-changing for the past 40 years and will continue to do so, but law enforcement will be successful only with the support of those who employ it.

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Identify Achievements:

Individuals employed in Law enforcement tend to be among the most dedicated employees. All of law enforcement is working hard at filling the gaps that retirement and changes in jobs create. All law enforcement agencies work hard at keeping police officers well trained and well prepared for the challenges of law enforcement in the future.

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Health/Mental Health/Medical/Substance Abuse (listed in order of priority, greatest need first)

Priority 1:

The lack of accessible and affordable mental health, physical health and substance abuse treatment in Atascosa County contributes to the problems of juvenile delinquency, adult criminal activity, domestic violence, and sexual assault. In addition, untreated diseases lead to an overuse of expensive emergency services. The resources that are available lack the ability to adequately treat the co-occurrence of mental health and substance abuse disorders. The Atascosa County area does not have any type of service available for individuals seeking treatment solely for substance abuse.

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Supporting Data:

1. Increase in the number of referrals made to agencies outside of Atascosa County from juvenile, MHMR, and the Family Crisis Center. All individuals requesting only substance abuse treatment from the local MH Center are referred to the nearest outpatient facility which is in Bexar County. The waiting period for inpatient rehab treatment is often months. Increase in the number of dual diagnosis patients from MHMR, Connections, Juvenile Probation, and Atascosa Health Center. Currently Camino Real MHMR serves 296 adults and children in Atascosa County. There are an additional 20 individuals on a waiting list for services. Atascosa County also sent 33 individuals to state mental health facilities and 15 of those had alcohol and/or drug problems that related to their hospitalization.
2. Camino Real MHMR currently has a child/adolescent psychiatrist available by video conference only and is only available to Medicaid children.
3. An additional 25 individuals from Atascosa County were sent to private psychiatric facilities that were screened by Camino Real MHMR.
   Substance abuse counseling abuse for adults is limited to an outpatient fee for service basis; this service is not covered under insurance. Youth have access through Connections Individual & Family Services, Inc. for brief-solution focused counseling, education and prevention services only. There are no residential facilities for youth or adults in need of substance abuse treatment within the county and very limited access to what few facilities there area that provides these services located within the AACOG Region.
4. Camino Real MHMR received 268 phone calls to their crisis hotline from September 1, 2009 to August 31, 2010. 68% required face to face contact by the local staff.

Proposed Objectives:

To expand the limited resources available in order to ensure the treatment of needy individuals at a local level; coordinate services from more than one agency in order to meet the mental health, medical and substance abuse needs of individuals. Increase networking among agencies with resources, educate community partners about services available so informed referrals are made and develop Memorandums of Understanding regarding the referral process and the coordination of services. Continue to research and develop opportunities to fund additional services for county residents. Increase public education and outreach efforts to inform the community residents about the services that are available and how those services can be accessed.

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Priority 2:

Elderly/ Safety - Limited services are available for vulnerable elderly citizens who need continuing consistent access to mental health, medical and nutritional care and a safe environment if they are not in a care facility.

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Supporting Data:

In 2009, there were 5,191 residents age 65 and over. Adult Protective Services completed 179 intakes and provided services to 92 clients. APS was called to complete 144 investigations. Many of these residents over the age of 65 are widowed women who have reduced income after the death of a spouse. Agencies providing services in Atascosa County have noted increases in elderly who lack transportation and other resources that compromise their ability to adequately care for themselves, although they do not require full time care. Persons in this (65) age group are at a higher risk of suffering accidents, injury, and illness, as well as depression and anxiety. Without appropriate assistance from an advocate to be able to participate in Medicaid or Medicare, these elderly often do not seek medical care that is needed because they cannot afford it.

Proposed Objectives:

To makes services more accessible in populated areas of the county that are remote from service locations. Educate service providers about resources available through Alamo Area on Aging, resulting in the ability to help elderly obtain case management and other services. Develop a checklist of agencies/services as informational materials that caregivers and agencies can use to refer the elderly for further services.

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Priority 3:

Incidence of Teen Pregnancy - reduce occurrence of teen pregnancy in Atascosa

County.

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Supporting Data:

Most recent statistics reflect that births to teens ages 13 -19 years of age increased from 17.9% to 21.7%. In 2006, 8.0% of live births were considered below birth weight, while 38% of women in Atascosa County received late or no prenatal care. Teen parents often struggle to remain in school contributing to the dropout rate at all Atascosa County schools. Both teen parents and adolescent children born to teen parents have a higher rate of criminal activity that involves them in the Criminal Justice System.

Proposed Objectives:

Increase education and outreach to teens and adolescents regarding family planning, pregnancy prevention services and confidential teen services available at the local Federally Qualified Health Care Center, Atascosa Health Center. Ensure that teen parents are informed on how to access medical, mental health and substance abuse services by strengthening referral partnerships between all agencies providing services to teen parents.

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Priority 4:

Support the need of a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) within Atascosa County.

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Supporting Data:

According to the Office of Victims of Crime, the services of trained, experienced SANE practitioners help to preserve the victim's dignity, enhance medical evidence collection for better prosecution, and promotes community involvement and concern with crime prevention. When violence such as rape is identified, trained staff needs to be available to provide services. Victims of sexual assault in Atascosa County are currently taken to San Antonio for assessment by a SANE practitioner. The time taken and distance traveled to receive this examination in unfamiliar facilities adds to the trauma already experienced by the victim.

Proposed Objectives:

Partner with other community agencies to continue seeking resources for a SANE Nurse for the county in order to identify and train personnel to provide SANE exams, as well as coordinate with the hospital to acquire the equipment necessary to perform the exam, thus minimizing the agony and pain of being taken over 40 miles from home to go through the ordeal of a sexual assault exam.

Identify all trends, problems, and gaps in resources not mentioned in this section:

A restricting factor in accessing mental health and medical services for county residents is the lack of current and relevant information regarding what services are available and where to refer individuals in need. A Community Resource Matrix would be a good start; even through this tool is limited by the ability to keep the information updated and current. Atascosa Inter-Agency Council is currently working toward the goal of developing this type of resource.

33 individuals from Atascosa County were sent to state mental health facilities and 15 of those had alcohol and/or drug problems that related to their hospitalization. An additional 25 individuals from Atascosa County were sent to private psychiatric facilities that were screened by Camino Real MHMR. Camino Real MHMR currently serves 296 adults and children in Atascosa County. There are an additional 20 individuals on a waiting list for services. Camino Real MHMR currently has a child/adolescent psychiatrist available by videoconference only and is only available to Medicaid children. Camino Real MHMR received 268 phone calls to their crisis hotline from September 1, 2009 to August 31, 2010. 68% required face to face contact by the local staff.

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Identify Achievements:

Camino Real obtained a contract with UTMB to provide Telemedicine to Medicaid children in the Atascosa County area.
A SAFE Schools grant is available to Atascosa County schools to provide prevention and intervention to children with emotional problems.

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Homeland Security/ Disaster Preparedness Services

(Listed in order of priority, greatest need first)

Priority 1:

Development of a singular countywide vision for interoperable public safety communications. Acquisition of completely Interoperable Communications system to allow for communication between emergency service providers, first responders, law enforcement and leadership throughout the entire county.

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Supporting Data:

Currently the county has no true system for every agency to communicate with each other. One common frequency needs to be in place along with the necessary equipment for this to happen. Disaster preparedness and the interests of homeland security plans dictate a high-level of planning and interagency cooperation for success under the omnipresent threat of a major terrorist attack.

Proposed Objectives:

Develop an interoperability strategy is to provide equipment to public safety agencies to ensure countywide and regional linkages and to provide a platform for the development of local communications frequencies allowing every agency the capability of having one common channel or frequency to communicate with all other entities.
All organizations must acquire Radio System communications with interoperability to federal, state, and local public safety agencies with capabilities for transmissions to be cross patched creating interoperability. This is ideally achieved with a system that provides robust communications capability to ensure communications interoperability at the site of a major disaster. The acquisition of interoperable communications equipment coupled with effective training will ensure first responders have the knowledge, technology, and usage skills they need to react quickly and effectively to any incident or emergency.

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Priority 2:

Acquisition of necessary **equipment** to enable emergency service providers, first responders, and law enforcement to remain viable and able to operate at maximum capacity in the event of a crisis or emergency.

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Supporting Data:

Not all agency or organizations currently have the necessary equipment to enable them to stay in operation during an emergency. At this time there is no assurance that emergency service providers possess even minimally necessary equipment such as generators and emergency lighting.

Proposed Objectives:

Eventually have all emergency organizations equipped with emergency power (diesel generators) to fuel a variety of electrical equipment and provide lighting to all fire stations and police stations and main government buildings.
Some existing examples of emergency systems are sophisticated mobile communications

packages with multiple systems that could be housed centrally in the county and will be available to deploy anywhere to enhance or replace local emergency response communications following any disaster or incident. The system would contain laptop computers, a wireless (possibly satellite) Internet system, radios and repeaters, chargers and backup batteries, a multi-line telephone system, a communications tower and 10,000 watt diesel generator.

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Priority 3:

Provision of appropriate Emergency Management Training for all emergency organizations, p ersonnel and governmental leaders within the county, most especially the National Incident Management System (NIMS) training.

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Supporting Data:

Not all emergency organizations including, governmental leaders have adequate NIMS training and emphasizing the inherent value of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) as the model for emergency planning, unified command, and response to emergencies and disasters. Currently there is no guarantee that Disaster responses, tactical operations, and training exercises executed by Atascosa public safety agencies strictly adhere to NIMS standards.

Proposed Objectives:

1. Ensure that all emergency organizations, personnel and governmental leaders have received appropriate Emergency Management Training, most especially the National Incident Management System (NIMS) training. A critical tool in promoting the nationwide implementation of NIMS is a well-developed training program that facilitates NIMS training throughout the county, growing the number of adequately trained and qualified emergency management/response personnel.
2. Ensure that 100% of all key county personnel have at least basic level NIMS training and training in the use of all emergency equipment with a high degree of leadership, planning, and collaboration among jurisdictions and disciplines with commitment to and investment in the sustainability of the safety and security of the county residents.
3. Secure the ability to direct all county responses to emergencies and disasters under NIMS through the institutionalizing of NIMS local emergency operations plans; utilizing NIMS in training and exercises as well as actual emergency and disaster responses; and demonstrating the status of NIMS compliance by all key county staff. As well as basic emergency preparedness training in whatever aspect of emergency response is needed.

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Priority 4:

Provide for the safety and security of core infrastructure (e.g. wastewater treatment facilities,

water delivery systems and electricity substations) for each community within the county.

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Supporting Data:

At present not all of the water treatment plants or electrical substations within the county are properly secured to function during a major emergency/disaster or to prevent against any type of possible terrorist attack.

Proposed Objectives:

Have all infrastructure equipped with cameras and fencing to prevent anyone from making entry into these facilities.

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Priority 5:

Create a countywide strategy that focuses acquisition and distribution of educational materials that serve to inform the public at large on all public safety agencies, plans and procedures. Culminating in a means to share emergency information and delivery of educational materials with the general public.

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Supporting Data:

The entire county is limited in resources by which to educate the general public regarding available emergency services, public safety plans, and procedures to follow during a disaster. Currently there is little or no means in place for the public to become informed about what to do in event of an emergency or disaster. Production and distribution of educational materials would be beneficial to all the residents of this rural county.

Proposed Objectives:

The development and acquisition of the necessary educational materials, presentations and li terature for dissemination to the public. Development of possible training plan as a cooperative effort by a consortium of local public safety practitioners.
Accrue a supply of educational material, pamphlets, and training materials to utilize when educating the public.

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Homeland Security/ Disaster Preparedness Services Summary:

Rural areas have always been lacking in funding for all of the priorities that have been addressed in the plan. Having these shortfalls in the plan could benefit the community and enable us to obtain needed funding in the future. There has been and will continue

to be a shortfall in the communications side mainly due to the cost of acquisition of the equipment needed to make all objectives and goals possible and to provide for the safety and security of the residents of Atascosa county.

Atascosa County emergency service organizations are, for the most part, mainly made up of volunteers (fire & EMS). This proves challenging in the way of training resources. The most precious resource being volunteer time and for this reason there is a challeng e in volunteers receiving adequate training. Having others jobs makes it very difficult to go to training. This endeavor continues to be a hardship that the county will strive to overcome. Being able to provide more training for this county's emergency service practitioners would help tremendously.

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Identify all trends, problems, and gaps in resources not mentioned in this section:

Local emergency agencies continue to function with inadequate funding necessary to acquire essential equipment and training which leaves them functioning with minimum supplies, equipment and training.

The main problems stem from the lack of adequate funding to bring about what needs to be accomplished. It is difficult for some organizations to allocate funds within tight budgets for items and actions if it is unlikely to come to fruition.

Major gaps exist in the areas of staff development training and appropriation of necessary equipment.

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Identify Achievements:

Local fire departments have acquires digital radios allowing for them to communicate on a single digital channel. Also the County is moving forward with NIMS training by ensuring that all emergency personnel and first responders are NIMS qualified.

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Resources Available

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

Alamo Area Council of Governments

Address: 8700 Tesoro Drive, Suite 700
San Antonio, Texas 78217-6228
(210) 362-5200

Counties Served: Atascosa, Bandera, Bexar, Comal, Frio, Gillespie, Guadalupe, Karnes, Kendall, Kerr, Medina, and Wilson

Services: AACOG has active programs for regional planning in the areas of aging services, economic development, 9-1-1 systems, homeland security, criminal justice, resource recovery, air quality, transportation, weatherization, andworkforce. We also administer the Bexar Mental Retardation Authority. Technical assistance is provided by the staff to local governments on matters related to a number of other program areas, including census, housing, and human services. In addition, AACOG sponsors special projects in response to local government needs or requests.

Hours: Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Juvenile Issues:

Atascosa County Juvenile Probation Department

Address: 1511 Zanderson
Jourdanton TX 78026-8026
830-769-3222

Counties Served: Atascosa

Services: The Texas Juvenile Probation Commission works in partnership with local juvenile boards and juvenile probation departments to support and enhance juvenile probation services throughout the state by providing funding, technical assistance, and training; establishing and enforcing standards; collecting, analyzing and disseminating information; and facilitating communications between state and local entities. This mission is accomplished through a continuum of services and programs that:

- include prevention, early intervention, and rehabilitative programs;
- maximize family participation and accountability;
- are community based, family oriented and as least restrictive as possible;
- include a mix of residential and non-residential services which reduce commitments to the Texas Youth Commission; and,
- are a balance of public and private services and resources.

Eligibility: A child who breaks the law in Texas may enter a complex world of procedures, places and people called the juvenile justice system.

In Texas the ages of juvenile justice jurisdiction are 10 through 16. The handling of juveniles is strictly regulated by state law, but juvenile probation is locally administered at the county level.

Connections Individual and Family Services

Address: 1010 Zanderson
Jourdanton TX 78026
830-769-3225

Counties Served: Connections' provides program services in eighteen (18) rural counties and operates thirteen (13) counseling offices and three (3) residential locations. Connections' serves the following counties: Aransas, Atascosa, Bastrop, Bee, Caldwell, Comal, Frio, Goliad, Gonzales, Guadalupe, Karnes, Lee, Live Oak, McMullen, Refugio, San Patricio, Wilson, and Zavala.

Services: Connections Individual and Family Services, Inc. (Connections), established in 1981, is a private, non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization founded by a group of community leaders to provide a safe and secure alternative from the "streets" for homeless, abused, or at-risk youth. The agency's mission is to "Provide youth, families, and communities of South Central Texas opportunities for a brighter future." www.connectionsnonprofit.org

Eligibility: Connections offers a safety net for "at-risk" youth to ensure they can look forward to a brighter future. Further, the agency collaborates extensively with schools, non-profit agencies, representatives of government agencies, and other youth-serving resources in each community.

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Victims Services

Atascosa Family Crisis Center

Address: P.O. Box 688
Pleasanton TX 78064
830-569-2001

Counties Served: Atascosa

Services: Services assist individuals in times of crisis and educate the community to be aware of and to respond to the problems of violence and abuse. Services include 24-Hour Crisis Hotline - Immediate crisis intervention, referral and information to the caller. We assess the urgency of the situation and may follow up with emergency overnight shelter and/or housing at an existing shelter facility as needed. Legal Advocacy - legal options for each client and court accompaniment as requested, Individual Support - Peer counselors are available to discuss with the client their needs and available options. Group Support - Clients gather each month to share their issues, successes and concerns, Community Awareness - Public Service Announcements through local cable TV, radio and newspaper, a Speaker's Bureau, law enforcement and volunteer training, school awareness programs and distribution of posters, flyers and other informational pamphlets. Transportation, Meals & Emergency Fund, Child Care during Sessions, Personal Advocacy.

Eligibility: Provide victims of domestic violence and sexual assault assistance and support enabling them to gain the strength to make changes in their lives

Hours: 24 Hour call number- (830) 569-2001 toll free- (877) 569-2001 or 911

Atascosa Inter-Agency Council

Address: P.O. Box 964
Pleasanton 78064
830-570-2950

Counties Served: Atascosa

Services: Local interagency council brings together all social service agencies in an effort to create a wrap-around seamless network of services within the county and among service providers.

Eligibility: Open to all service providers, stakeholders or interested persons in the Atascosa County area

CASA of South Texas (Court Appointed Special Advocates)

Address: 14 22nd St
Pleasanton TX 78064
830-569-4696

Counties Served: Atascosa, Wilson, Frio, LaSalle

Services: Court Appointed Special Advocates for abused and neglected children (CASA) volunteers are appointed by judges to watch over and advocate for abused and neglected children, to make sure they don't get lost in the overburdened legal and social service system or languish in an inappropriate group or foster home. They stay with each case until it is closed and the child is placed in a safe, permanent home. For many abused children, their CASA volunteer will be the one constant adult presence–the one adult who cares only for them.

Eligibility: CASA volunteers are appointed by judges to watch over and advocate for abused and neglected children.

Indigent HealthCare County

Address: 914 Main Street
Room 116, Jourdanton 78026
830-769-4174

Counties Served: Atascosa

Services: Physician Visits, Hospital In-patient Services, Hospital Out-patient Services, Up to 3 prescription medications per month, Payment of existing medical claims (in some cases)

Eligibility: Eligibility process does not allow for emergency services. Must provide documentation needed to determine place of residence within Atascosa County, household income, and household resources cannot exceed $2,000.00 Eligibility must be determined within two weeks. As soon as documentation is provided, eligibility is usually determined within one week. Services can begin as soon as the client is able to present eligibility documentation. The program is also open to undocumented aliens who meet eligibility requirements. Indigent Health Care is, by law, the payer of last resort, so all other responsibilities will be explored first (when medically appropriate to do so). Households with minor children need to be screened first for Medicaid eligibility.

Main Street Outreach Ministry

Address: 424Johnson Street

Pleasanton 78064
830-281-2841

Counties Served: Atascosa

Services: Emergency Services for food and shelter and outreach ministry

Eligibility: Main Street Outreach Ministry works with individuals in need of emergency food, shelter and other outreach services on a case by case basis

The Refuge

Address: Pleasanton, Texas 78065
830-569-5883

Counties Served: Atascosa, Pleasanton, Texas

Services: Christian Based Organization, Pregnancy Care Center providing education and information on pregnancy care

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Interagency Cooperation

Interagency cooperation is easily facilitated through the Atascosa Interagency Council (AIC). AIC is a well-organized group that has served the local community for over 14 years. Membership of AIC consists of agencies that provide services across all ages and socio -economic groups. The organization is composed of representatives from Community Based Organizations, Faith Based Organizations, Social Services, Healthcare, Housing, Education, Workforce Development, Economic Development, Family and Domestic Violence Prevention, Law Enforcement, Health and Human Services, Adult Protective Services and Child Protective Services, local ministers and private business all participate in the AIC group. Monthly meetings provide a forum for community partners to network, identify or relate issues and identify resources. This group provides year round opportunities to educate and update community partners on services provided in the community and how those services can be accessed for those in need.

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Historical Information

Atascosa County is nestled deep in the heart of Texas and located in the South Central region just south of the metropolitan area of San Antonio. The geographical area measures approximately 1,232 square miles of land. Jourdanton, the county seat, is located on state highways 16 and 97 in central/south Atascosa County. The geographic center point of the county is 28°50' N, 98°30' W.

Atascosa County enjoys a rich and colorful history flowing from Indians of the Coahuiltecan language group, Comanche and Lipan Apache, other indigenous peoples, Spanish explorers, and European settlers. The name Atascosa means "boggy" in Spanish and was used to describe the area as early as 1788. The area was sparsely settled by the mid-1850s, and in 1856 the county was marked off from Bexar County.

Cattle, Agriculture and Oil Production have been the predominate fields of industry. During the 1870s and 1880s corn was the principal cash crop, but during the late 1870s cotton was introduced, and by 1900 it had become the leading farm shipment. During the 1950s cotton production continued to decline, and its place was taken by new crops such as sorghum and peanuts. Commercial strawberry growing arose after World War II, and by 1960 Atascosa County was the third-largest strawberry grower among Texas counties. In the early 1990s beef and dairy cattle, peanuts, hay, corn, grain sorghums, pecans, and strawberries were the leading crops.

The mining of lignite coal, first begun in 1888, also became a major industry as the price of fuel oil and natural gas rose. Another main mineral resource of Atascosa County is silica, used in building and glass-making.

In 2000 the census counted 38,628 people living in Atascosa County. Some 58.6 percent were Hispanic. In the early twenty-first century agriculture, government services, and some light manufacturing were key elements of the area's economy. In 2002 the county had 1,539 farms and ranches covering 669,890 acres, 52 percent of which were devoted to pasture, 33 percent to crops, and 12 percent to woodlands. In that year local beef cattle, strawberries, peanuts, corn, milo, wheat, and wine were the chief agricultural products.

Source: http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/AA/hca7.html

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