

2022



Regional Criminal Justice Plan

A STRATEGIC PLAN FOR MEETING THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE NEEDS
OF THE PANHANDLE REGION

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Regional Profile

Panhandle Regional Planning Commission (PRPC) is a voluntary association of cities, counties, school districts and special districts, all located in the Texas Panhandle. Established in 1969, the Planning Commission has been assisting local governments in planning, developing and implementing programs designed to improve the general health, safety and welfare of the citizens in the Texas Panhandle for the last fifty years.

The Panhandle makes up State Planning region 1, which includes the top 26 counties. Geographically the region is the largest of the 24 planning regions, making up almost 10% of the States' total acreage. The region encompasses an enormous amount of land, nearly 26,000 square miles. The region has an estimated population of 433,971 people in 2021 per the U.S. Census. The Panhandle Regional Planning Commission has 90 member governments – including all 26 counties, 60 incorporated cities, 64 Independent School districts and 5 special districts.



Figure 1: Palo Duro Canyon, photo courtesy of Lori Gunn

Population

The U.S. Census estimates the Panhandle’s population at 433,971 people in 2021. With just over half of those located within the Amarillo Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). The MSA encompasses Armstrong, Carson, Potter and Randall counties. The remaining 22 counties have 165,985 in population by the U.S. Census bureau estimates. The chart to the right illustrates the break down for each county’s 2021 population estimates.

Since the 2010 US Census, the region has seen an overall increase in population of 1.41%. Equating to roughly 6,000 additional people living in the region. However, the majority of our Counties are seeing their numbers drop. Of the 26 counties in the region, only two counties were estimated to have had an increase in residents over this eleven-year period. With Randall County, the most populous county, having the largest gains at 19.16%. This is according to the US Census.¹



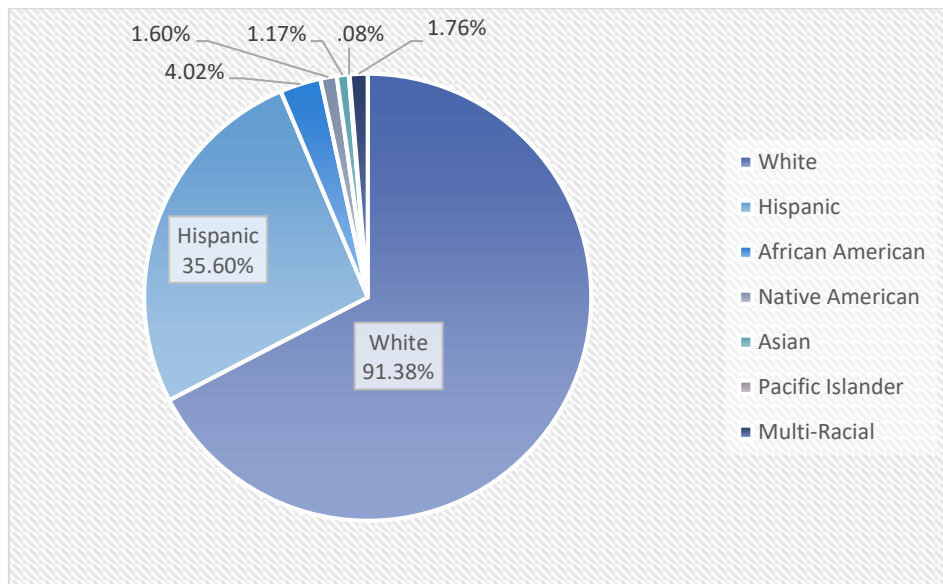
Figure 2: Deaf Smith County, photo courtesy of Lori Gunn

Population

<i>Armstrong</i>	1,839
<i>Briscoe</i>	1,403
<i>Carson</i>	5,746
<i>Castro</i>	7,374
<i>Childress</i>	6,736
<i>Collingsworth</i>	2,615
<i>Dallam</i>	7,172
<i>Deaf Smith</i>	18,329
<i>Donley</i>	3,268
<i>Gray</i>	21,030
<i>Hall</i>	2,845
<i>Hansford</i>	5,159
<i>Hartley</i>	5,397
<i>Hemphill</i>	3,271
<i>Hutchinson</i>	20,495
<i>Lipscomb</i>	2,931
<i>Moore</i>	21,118
<i>Ochiltree</i>	9,782
<i>Oldham</i>	1,717
<i>Parmer</i>	9,813
<i>Potter</i>	116,547
<i>Randall</i>	143,854
<i>Roberts</i>	797
<i>Sherman</i>	2,798
<i>Swisher</i>	7,008
<i>Wheeler</i>	4,927
	433,971

Ethnicity

The Panhandle is seeing greater diversity in our population. As a result of war, terrorism or persecution many refugees have made the Panhandle region their new home. The Region has welcomed refugees from Somalia, Iraq, DR Congo, Myanmar, Iran, Syria and Burma among others. The graph below illustrates the racial and ethnic background of the region's 433,971 residents as of the 2021 U.S. Census Bureau's estimation. The economy has encouraged many to relocate to the area and bring with them family or start a family of their own, as the area enjoys an average unemployment rate of 2.97% which is below the national average of 3.6% as of April 2022.



Economy

Whether it is crops or livestock, this area does a great deal of work to provide nutrition for Americans, their pets and people abroad. 15.3 million acres are used for agriculture. Commercially the Panhandle produces more than 25 crops, valued at an average of \$1.7 billion annually. The Panhandle is the largest beef producer in the world, in the region we have over 60 feedlots that care for anywhere from a few hundred head to several thousand head of cattle at a time. Collectively the 26 counties alone, produce more fed cattle than any other state.

While the region is known for farming of crops and producing beef, we also have thriving industries in oil and gas, wind energy, financial investments, insurance carriers, accounting services, aerospace product and parts manufacturing, mining and construction machinery, fabricated metals manufacturing, chemical manufacturing, and food manufacturing.

The Panhandle region enjoys an average unemployment rate that is well below the United States unemployment rate as a whole. However, the region is lagging in terms of income. The chartⁱⁱ on the next page indicates that the majority of the 26 counties have median incomes below the

national average, and the State of Texas. In fact only three of the twenty-six have median incomes that exceed the national average of \$64,994.

	<i>Unemployment Rate</i>	<i>Median Income</i>	<i>% of Change compared to Texas</i>	<i>% of Change compared to US</i>
<i>Armstrong</i>	2.40%	\$ 69,386.00	16.48%	15.08%
<i>Briscoe</i>	4.70%	\$ 37,875.00	-36.42%	-37.18%
<i>Carson</i>	2.80%	\$ 74,246.00	24.64%	23.14%
<i>Castro</i>	3.50%	\$ 49,900.00	-16.23%	-17.24%
<i>Childress</i>	2.90%	\$ 43,564.00	-26.87%	-27.75%
<i>Collingsworth</i>	2.80%	\$ 41,202.00	-30.83%	-31.66%
<i>Dallam</i>	1.80%	\$ 58,956.00	-1.03%	-2.22%
<i>Deaf Smith</i>	2.50%	\$ 49,790.00	-16.42%	-17.42%
<i>Donley</i>	2.80%	\$ 51,875.00	-12.92%	-13.96%
<i>Gray</i>	4.50%	\$ 54,679.00	-8.21%	-9.31%
<i>Hall</i>	3.40%	\$ 40,197.00	-32.52%	-33.33%
<i>Hansford</i>	2.20%	\$ 46,507.00	-21.93%	-22.87%
<i>Hartley</i>	1.50%	\$ 53,722.00	-9.82%	-10.90%
<i>Hemphill</i>	3.30%	\$ 59,605.00	0.06%	-1.14%
<i>Hutchinson</i>	4.60%	\$ 57,921.00	-2.77%	-3.93%
<i>Lipscomb</i>	2.40%	\$ 63,182.00	6.06%	4.79%
<i>Moore</i>	2.30%	\$ 53,967.00	-9.41%	-10.49%
<i>Ochiltree</i>	3.10%	\$ 53,431.00	-10.31%	-11.38%
<i>Oldham</i>	2.80%	\$ 64,250.00	7.86%	6.56%
<i>Parmer</i>	1.90%	\$ 58,558.00	-1.70%	-2.88%
<i>Potter</i>	3.00%	\$ 43,652.00	-26.72%	-27.60%
<i>Randall</i>	2.50%	\$ 68,186.00	14.46%	13.09%
<i>Roberts</i>	3.70%	\$ 61,964.00	4.02%	2.77%
<i>Sherman</i>	2.20%	\$ 57,130.00	-4.10%	-5.25%
<i>Swisher</i>	3.30%	\$ 36,337.00	-39.00%	-39.73%
<i>Wheeler</i>	4.30%	\$ 49,036.00	-17.68%	-18.67%
<i>Regional Average</i>	2.97%	\$ 53,812.23	-9.67%	-10.75%

Education

Across the region, we have 62 school districts and two charter schools educating over 83,000 students. The below chartⁱⁱⁱ shows each county's school aged kids, the percentage of kids below the age of 5 as well as the 2018 graduation rate for each county.

	<i>2018: Under 5</i>	<i>% School aged</i>	<i>School Aged</i>	<i>2018 Graduation Rate</i>
<i>Armstrong</i>	5.90%	16.70%	315	88.40%
<i>Briscoe</i>	5.20%	14.30%	221	86.50%
<i>Carson</i>	5.00%	18.40%	1,090	93.60%
<i>Castro</i>	7.30%	21.40%	1,611	73.80%
<i>Childress</i>	4.60%	14.40%	1,052	83.90%
<i>Collingsworth</i>	5.70%	19.30%	564	76.10%
<i>Dallam</i>	9.70%	22.20%	1,618	69.20%
<i>Deaf Smith</i>	8.70%	22.10%	4,099	73.00%
<i>Donley</i>	4.70%	14.70%	482	88.20%
<i>Gray</i>	6.60%	18.70%	4,093	80.10%
<i>Hall</i>	4.00%	18.10%	536	75.90%
<i>Hansford</i>	7.70%	22.00%	1,188	68.80%
<i>Hartley</i>	5.70%	15.20%	848	81.60%
<i>Hemphill</i>	6.70%	23.50%	897	79.50%
<i>Hutchinson</i>	6.60%	18.70%	3,915	85.50%
<i>Lipscomb</i>	5.80%	19.50%	630	82.20%
<i>Moore</i>	9.20%	22.60%	4,732	66.70%
<i>Ochiltree</i>	8.10%	22.90%	2,252	75.30%
<i>Oldham</i>	3.30%	20.10%	425	85.70%
<i>Parmer</i>	7.70%	20.50%	1,969	70.80%
<i>Potter</i>	7.40%	19.90%	23,366	77.40%
<i>Randall</i>	6.20%	17.70%	24,375	91.90%
<i>Roberts</i>	5.90%	17.30%	148	91.00%
<i>Sherman</i>	6.40%	20.30%	613	76.50%
<i>Swisher</i>	6.00%	18.70%	1,383	73.20%
<i>Wheeler</i>	6.20%	19.20%	971	81.30%
<i>Regional Average</i>	6.40%	19.17%	83,394	79.85%

Planning Team

Plan Coordinator: Daphne Morcom /
Regional Services Program Specialist, PRPC

For the development of this Regional Plan, members from our criminal justice system throughout the region contributed to the process. The contributing members were divided into groups based upon their areas of expertise in order to narrow the scope of research and data that have been incorporated into this plan. The individuals listed contributed to this year's plan. These people are a small segment of the individuals working to develop a better Criminal Justice System each day here in the region.

We are so thrilled to be able to work with them. They have allowed us to see the criminal justice system from their viewpoint, both the strengths the region continues to deliver upon and our weaknesses that we are diligently working towards correcting or better yet, eliminating the problems altogether. As these various stakeholders come together to discuss the differences, we have found an eagerness to join up and forge a better process. So that no victim is

re-victimized, our juveniles have proven projects that enable them to learn to make positive choices or offenders are able to not recidivate back into the system but become productive contributing adults in our cities and counties.

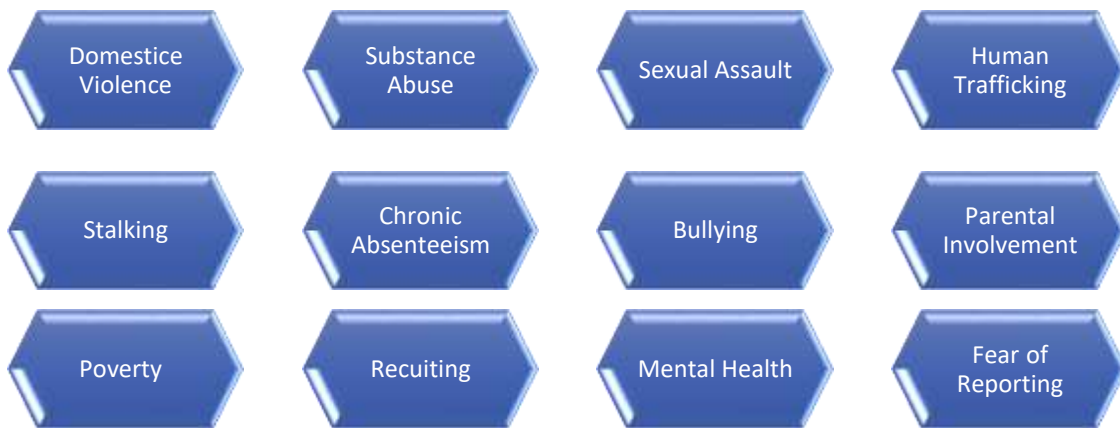
It is with great appreciation that we would like to recognize the 20 individuals that took time to respond to the regional criminal justice strategic plan stakeholder survey. Thank you for giving of your time to provide us important feedback. The contributions made by the survey respondents and the planning team have been vital to constructing the region's Strategic Plan.

Representative	Agency
Norma Luginbyhl	Hutchinson County Crisis Center
Cindy Smith	Panhandle Crisis Center
Jennifer Foreman	Tralee Crisis Center
Jim Womack	Family Support Services
Amy Rhoades	Randall County District Attorney's Office
Angela Holloway	Randall County District Attorney's Office
Robert Love	Randall County District Attorney's Office
Veronica Coffee	47 th District Attorney's Office
Sonja Cuellar	47 th District Attorney's Office
Chris Fobbs	Safe Place Inc.
Kori Draper	Safe Place Inc.
Angela Gamboa	Deaf Smith County Crisis Center
Mariana Garcia	Deaf Smith County Crisis Center
Robert Mahaffee	Hansford County Sheriff's Office
Katie Paul	Village of Timbercreek Canyon
Luke Stout	Canyon Police Department
Kristopher Marvel	Canyon Police Department
Matthew Coggins	Canyon Police Department
Brandon Junes	Moore County Sheriff's Office
Jace Delgado	Moore County Sheriff's Office
Marcel Hajjar	Hutchinson County Sheriff's Office
Joe Loftus	Amarillo Police Department
Chris Spence	Briscoe County Sheriff's Office

Executive Summary

As the data received from the online survey was analyzed, we were beginning to observe some patterns that crossed disciplines. There were three (3) issues identified in multiple sections. Domestic violence, substance abuse and sexual assault were on top of the list followed closely by human trafficking and stalking. All three recurring topics are returning from previous years.

The top three issues were listed in the survey by multiple respondents, discussed in the strategic planning meetings with the focus groups but also in conversations held with individuals throughout the region, regardless of which sector. The stakeholders in the region realize that we have been working on them over the last few years, however they continue to be some of the most common issues that we face.



In total, the issues the region is in front of can be summed up in twelve topics. Those are listed in the graphic above, with those at the top being cited more often. Some of these have been seen in years prior and the region continues to struggle, such as substance abuse, domestic violence, and sexual assault. Each of these are important. Many of these happen in tandem and few of them are at the root of the issue for those that we serve.

The region knows that we have a higher rate of domestic violence than the state average and we are looking at new approaches, for example, the Domestic Violence Coalition formed in Potter and Randall Counties, with multiple sectors of the criminal justice system at the table, to discuss the best option for prosecuting offenders. We have also seen the victim service agencies offer courses on parenting best practices or refer people to classes, to aid them in navigating and rebuilding broken families. The region is also witnessing a group of mental health partners come together to flesh out options for building a better system for both those inside of the jails or those working to manage health issues in day to day life.

As our victim services agencies have known for years that understanding the trauma and thought processes of victims and their perpetrators aids in the recovery, we are now seeing that this same information needs to be dispensed to the public. Multiple victim service personnel spoke to the value of friends, co-workers and families who have a grasp on victimology, are much more equipped to be an ally to a victim as they process and recover. This understanding gives a much more accurate picture to those indirectly affected, giving way to empathy.

The focus groups were eager to find avenues to overcome the issues that we are facing. As we brainstormed, each discipline contributed to looking outside the box for new or old innovative methods at combating the issues to make the region an even better location to live and work. The following were identified as the steps needed to take to start overcoming the twelve (12) issues plaguing the region.

- Acquire affordable access to facilities and services for both adults and juveniles struggling with substance abuse and mental health.
- Make available more services, whether it is prevention and intervention programs for juveniles, programs to teach and promote increased positive parental involvement for their parents, or if it is for victims getting access to life skills, counseling.
- Offer training and education, such as life skills and avenues for success with the juveniles. Access to In-service courses for officers to expand skills such as de-escalation, mental health tools for use in the field, or understanding the brain functions of victims and the offenders.
- Educating friends, family and employees about victimology. Understanding the signs of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking as well as offering tools to assist a victim as they both emerge and recover.
- Increase funding for staffing to ensure proper manpower across agencies.
- Increase staffing of law enforcement so that they are a fully equipped, well trained group of officers.
- Provide more public education for the full spectrum of the criminal justice system, providing awareness of domestic violence, sexual assault and substance abuse and how it affects everyone in the region, to help change the stigmas currently associated with them.

As we have begun working across disciplines, agencies are seeing positive outcomes from those relationships. The Domestic Violence Coalition is building a stronger relationship across agencies but they also found that in years prior they were not holding offenders to the higher misdemeanor or felony charges that it should have been. Other counties are watching the coalition hoping to duplicate a similar program in their county, if it is successful.

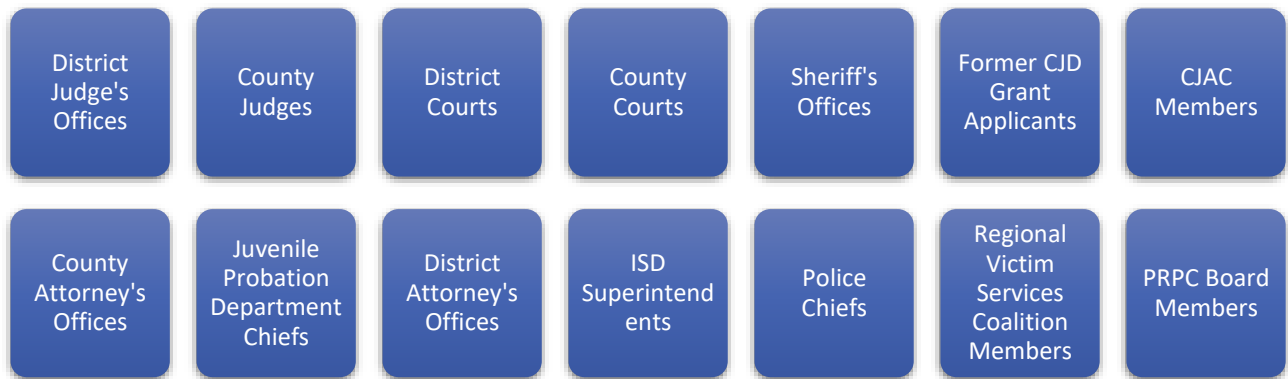
We are building a better system, we are continuing to learn from our missteps and working to not just overcome the issues but also have a region that is thriving. As a whole we are evolving, we are continuing to work towards reducing those gaps and enabling the growth of our region and our residents. We will strive together as we are accustomed too and bring about change through new ideas and programs. We will gather up the public to assist from their vantage point so that all the players can press on to the goals set before us.



Regional Priorities

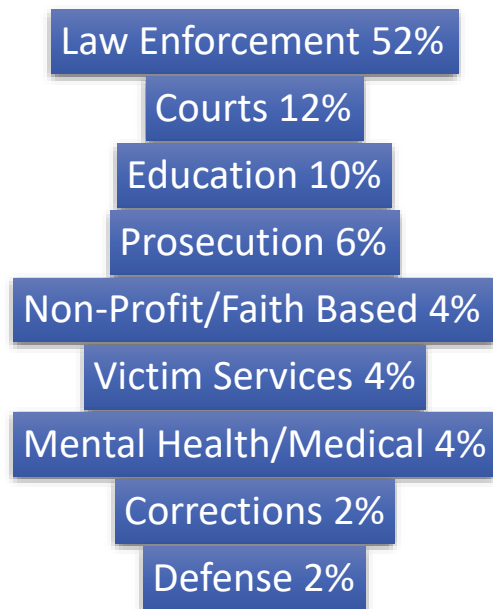
In each of the areas on the following pages, problems are identified and data is included that supports both the existence and severity of gaps as they are found in the Panhandle Region. Below the description and data is a brief discussion of the problems, the manner in which the problems are being addressed,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

We began the research by sending out an electronic survey to 527 of the region’s criminal justice stakeholders. The survey was mailed and/or emailed out to the following groups:



As the survey went out, we encouraged any respondent to forward or share the survey with any other agency or contact that was not included in the initial list sent out. Our region had 143 respondents coming from various criminal justice backgrounds. The graphic below illustrates the disciplines represented on the survey responses received along with the percentage of folks from that discipline that completed the survey.

The responses received provided a new point of reference to begin discussing the Region’s issues, among the various focus groups. The responses differed from last year in some ways, giving way to new conversations. Those responses that remained unchanged, allowed us to ask deeper probing questions about those issues that remain. The focus groups are more than willing to learn from each other, and build relationships to foster a better Criminal Justice System for our Region.



Juvenile Justice

Juvenile Justice

Representatives from the juvenile justice system focus daily on prevention and rehabilitation. The goal is to guide these young minds to positive life choices and self-sustainment, so that they will be well adjusted and contribute to society in a positive light. Juveniles are less motivated to make positive choices when they do not fully understand the consequences behind each choice. The biggest issues that rose to the top from the survey results are substance abuse, chronic absenteeism, bullying, parental involvement and poverty. Countless studies have shown that juvenile brains are not fully developed and this group needs assistance as they navigate into adulthood.

Region's Juvenile Justice Issues

1) **Substance Abuse**

From our Criminal Justice Strategic Plan survey, the biggest issue that our region's juveniles face is substance abuse. Survey respondents are seeing juveniles struggle with either alcohol or drugs. Respondents stated that many times the juveniles that were arrested were either intoxicated during the criminal act or the criminal deed was conducted in order to get their hands on money to obtain more drugs and/or alcohol.

Over the last several years, our criminal justice stakeholders have seen an increase in the number of juveniles accessing and abusing substances. Designer and synthetic drugs still in use by our adolescent generations despite widespread media warning of the harmful effects. The chart below shows statistics gathered from Prevention Resource Center, Region 1.^{iv}



In a study by Recovery Village, they found that 44% of high school students know a classmate that sells drugs. With the types of drugs including marijuana, prescription drugs, cocaine and ecstasy.^v Unfortunately, juveniles do not always get the substance abuse issues addressed even after they have committed a crime. The sentencing will cover the juvenile's punishment for any crimes committed but often that punishment will see most offenders released back into society without ever providing proper treatment for substance abuse addictions.

Juvenile Justice

2) Chronic Absenteeism

Chronic absenteeism has become a major problem across the nation and in Texas. Chronic absenteeism is defined as a student missing ten percent or more of school days for any reason. Truancy is defined as a student missing ten percent or more of days of school for unexcused reasons.^{vi} Chronic absenteeism and truancy have become a major problem in this country that negatively influences the future of the students. Chronic absenteeism and truancy is a stepping stone to delinquent and criminal activity. Truant students are at a higher risk of being drawn into behavior involving drugs, alcohol or violence. A California deputy assistant attorney who handles truancy cases says he has “never seen a gang member who wasn’t truant first.” A report from the University of Maryland found that 51 percent of female juvenile detainees not in school at the time of their arrest tested positive for drug use. Another study by the U.S. Department of Justice’s Drug Use Forecasting (DUF) program reported that more than half (53 percent) of a group of 403 male juvenile arrestees in San Diego, California, tested positive for drug use when taken to juvenile hall.^{vii}

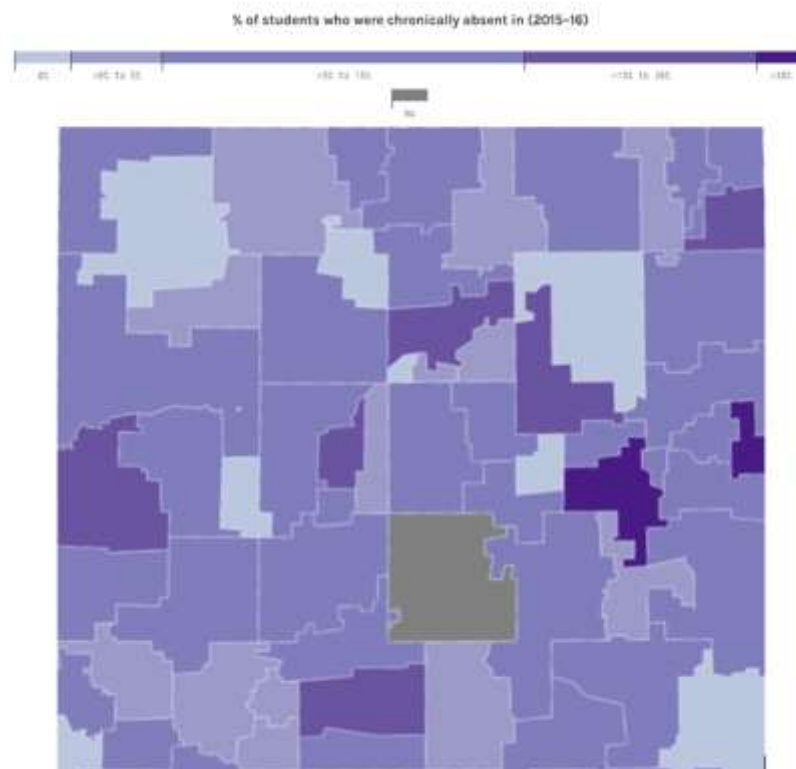


Figure 3: Students who were chronically absent in (2015-16), from Department of Education

The chart above shows the independent school districts in the panhandle region of Texas and the percentages of students who were chronically absent in the 2015-2016 school year in those sixty-one school districts. There were two school districts in the >30% range, six school districts in the 15% to 30% range, thirty-one school districts in the 5% to 15% range, thirteen school districts in the >0% to 5% range, eight school districts in the 0% range and one without data. The region had an average of 4.11% chronically absent during the 2015-2016 school year as compared to the 16% average for the nation.^{viii}

Juvenile Justice

3) Bullying

According to the American Psychological Association, bullying is defined as “a form of aggressive behaviors in which someone intentionally and repeatedly causes another person injury or discomfort. Bullying can take the form of physical contact, words, or more subtle actions.”^{ix} Bullying negatively impacts all who are involved, the ones being bullied, the ones who are bullying and the ones who are observing the bullying. Bullying is linked to many negative outcomes including impacts on mental health, substance use, and suicide.

Children who are bullied may experience negative physical, social, emotional, academic, and mental health issues such as:

- Depression and anxiety
- Increased feelings of sadness and loneliness
- Changes in sleep and eating patterns
- Loss of interest in activities they used to enjoy
- Health complaints
- Decreased academic achievement and school participation
- Missing, skipping or dropping out of school

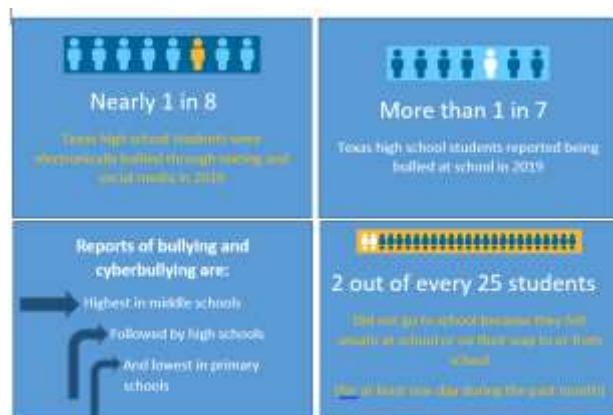
Children who bully others can also engage in violent and other risky behaviors into adulthood such as:

- Abusing alcohol and other drugs
- Getting into fights
- Vandalizing property
- Dropping out of school
- Engaging in early sexual activity
- Have criminal convictions as a teen and/or adult
- Initiating domestic violence towards partners and loved ones

Children who witness bullying are at an increased risk for:

- Use of tobacco, alcohol or other drugs
- Mental health issues such as depression or anxiety^x

Recent finding from the National Youth Risk Behavior Survey (2019) show that:^{xi}



Juvenile Justice

Statistics from the 2008 Indicators of School Crime and Safety show that only 20% of school bullying incidents are reported. Children do not tell adults for many reasons, such as bullying can make a child feel helpless. Children want to handle the situation on their own to feel in control again. They may fear being seen as weak or a tattletale. Children may also fear backlash or retaliation from the person who had been bullying them. Bullying can be a humiliating experience and children may not want adults to know what is being said about them, regardless of whether or not it is true. They may also fear that the adults will judge them or punish them for being weak. Children who are bullied may already feel socially isolated. They may feel like no one cares or could understand. Children may fear being rejected by their peers. Friends often help provide some type of protection from bullying and children fear losing their support.

Some examples of the types of bullying include cyberbullying, verbal bullying, social bullying and physical bullying. Some warning signs of bullying include unexplained injuries, lost or destroyed clothing, books, electronics or jewelry, frequent headaches or stomachaches, changes in eating habits, difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares, declining grades, loss of interest in schoolwork, or not wanting to go to school, sudden loss of friends or avoidance of social situation, feelings of helplessness or decreased self-esteem and self-destructive behaviors such as running away from home, harming themselves or talking about suicide.

Our stakeholders have identified that bullying is a major area of concern for our region and it is a problem that needs to be addressed. Many area schools have bullying policies in place at the schools and teachers attempt to address any concerns of bullying but like it was stated earlier, it is not always reported or witnessed by adults. Many steps can be taken to prevent bullying and help those who have been bullied, are bullying others, or who have witnessed bullying. It takes a community wide effort to treat and prevent. Parents, school staff and other caring adults have a role to play in treatment and prevention. Four main steps can be taken by all involved with children which include help children understand bullying, keep the lines of communication open, encourage children to do what they love and model how to treat others with kindness and respect. The Texas Anti-Bullying Coalition has reported that school-based bullying prevention programs decrease bullying by up to 25%.^{xii}

4) **Parental Involvement**

Year after year, a lack of parenting has been brought up during the conversations about our juvenile population. Families no longer have the strong support system they once had. Students are impressionable so it only stands to show that if a parent is not involved a child will interpret that as indifference. Former President Obama has said, "Children who grow up without a father are more likely to live in poverty. They are more likely to drop out of school. They're more likely to wind up in prison." It is estimated that children will spend roughly 70% of their time outside of the classroom. Decades of research show that when parents are involved students have higher grades, graduation rates, attendance and self-esteem. All of which lead to lower rates of suspension, use of drugs and/or alcohol and less violent behavior.

According to Family Structures, Parental Practices and High School Completion, children from broken homes suffer academically, they experience behavioral problems, their grades suffer and they are less likely to graduate from high school.^{xiii} Kids from broken homes are substantially more likely to be

Juvenile Justice

incarcerated for committing a crime as a juvenile.^{xiv} This feeling of abandonment is an underlying issue for many of the more obvious troubles that a teen will face.

Children learn a great many things from the house in which they are raised. Whether those things are positive or negative learned behavior, is dependent upon the parental figures in that child's life. Children do not have a benchmark in which to hold their situation up against and measure their own situations. What they see, hear, feel and do in their homes becomes the "right way" simply because this is the only technique that they have observed. Studies have shown repeatedly the importance of a child having both parental figures in their lives throughout their impressionable growing up years will have a positive impact on that child. A firm family foundation will give way to a student with a strong self-esteem who is able to not only resist the peer pressures of their adolescence but can also be the catalyst for change among their peers to do the right thing.

These findings shed light on the issues that adolescents from broken homes experience what others do not. Unfortunately, we are seeing more and more family units' breakdown. It will be even more important to educate parents and children on how to navigate this territory in an effort to put our juveniles on a path to success.

Some families are salvageable; however, the lives affected by the break are forever scarred. It is important for the parents to seek to put the children first even though the parents may not get along anymore. For single parents they should actively seek out the help of friends, family, church and their community. It is within these boundaries that a child begins to feel loved, understand love and sense that they are not abandoned. Parents need to get involved, according to Joanne Kraft, the "meanness" I am talking about is found in those situations where we take the tough, loving road, not the comfortable one where life proceeds without confrontation. Mean is what your children may feel about you when you make them write a thank-you card, enforce daily chores or thwart their Friday night plans. Mean is when you push to know their friends and the parents of those friends, when you instill dinnertimes, bedtimes and curfews.^{xv}

Our stakeholders all agreed that juveniles need to be held accountable by their parents. Parents who are feeling overwhelmed should reach out and get help from those around them, through classes, churches or their friends. Many of the stakeholders reminisced about how they could not get away with the slightest prank or ornery joke because the entire community was watching, and would put them back in line, then proceed to talk with their parent about these ill thought out actions. They felt like they were getting in trouble twice...but it worked.

As a community, we also need to support any parents who are struggling. Anyone can tell you what you are doing wrong, but when you get support and encouragement, it fuels the tank, allowing you to continue the fight. We need to embolden and encourage these parents to continue loving their children. Juveniles and their parents are in need of support.

5) **Poverty**

Poverty is a major concern across the United States and in Texas. According to Every Texan, when looking at the multi-year averages for Texas, the state's official poverty rate for 2018-2020 is 12.9% (3.7 million people) which is above the national average of 11.2% (36.5 million people) for the same time period.

Juvenile Justice

However, the poverty rates for Texas have decreased recently as it was at 15.6% in 2016. There are multiple contributing factors for poverty in the state of Texas such as unemployment, unevenly distributed poverty rates and cuts regarding government programs.^{xvi} Poverty has negative effects on children. According to Ending Child Poverty, nearly one in five children were poor in 2016 which is more than 13.2 million children in the United States and over 45% of those children lived in extreme poverty at less than half the poverty level.^{xvii}

“Poverty is a reoccurring factor in juvenile delinquency that is progressively getting worse in the United States. Youth living in poverty are pressured to survive in low socioeconomic communities that lack resources such as job opportunities, financial support, mental health services, medical services, and education. The lack of resources in these communities impedes these youth from becoming successful in a society that favors those with money. Those without money are more likely to lead down a path of crime.” Children at every age and developmental stage are impacted by poverty. They experience the daily impacts such as hunger, illness, insecurity, and instability. They are more likely to experience low academic achievement, obesity, behavioral problems, and social and emotional developmental difficulties. These children who are experiencing hunger, limited education and fewer work opportunities when they get older may find it challenging to break the cycle of poverty. They are also at greater risk for adverse effects to their mental health because of these obstacles.^{xviii}



The next tables provide a summary of the Panhandle’s Juvenile Justice System’s court referrals and the disposition activities. The last chart provides the supervision workload by each county from the beginning of the period to the end. All data provided from Texas Juvenile Justice Department for calendar year 2017^{xix}; the most recent report available.

Juvenile Justice

Texas Juvenile Justice Department
Juvenile Probation Referral Activity by County
1/1/2017 thru 12/31/2017

	Alleged Delinquent & VOP Behavior					Alleged CINS Behavior*		Total Referrals	Referral Rate/1,000	Children Referred
	2017 Juvenile Population	Violent Felony	Other Felony	Misd. A & B	VOP	Status	Other			
ARMSTRONG	152	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
BRISCOE	136	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CARSON	628	0	0	5	0	0	0	5	5	5
CASTRO	991	0	3	2	0	0	0	5	5	5
CHILDRESS	573	0	10	5	2	0	0	17	30	13
COLLINGSWORTH	323	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DALLAM	832	2	5	5	2	0	0	14	17	12
DEAF SMITH	2,526	6	16	37	13	2	12	86	34	75
DONLEY	260	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
GRAY	2,357	3	1	22	4	7	1	38	16	33
HALL	334	1	0	7	2	0	0	10	30	7
HANSFORD	701	2	6	4	0	0	0	12	17	12
HARTLEY	548	2	6	7	0	0	0	15	27	12
HEMPHILL	483	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	4	2
HUTCHINSON	2,226	6	13	21	19	15	0	74	33	48
LIPSCOMB	334	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	6	1
MOORE	2,903	11	18	30	24	1	0	84	29	71
OCHILTREE	1,472	2	3	6	2	0	0	13	9	13
OLDHAM	205	0	6	0	0	0	0	6	29	5
PARMER	1,318	2	0	1	0	0	0	3	2	3
POTTER	13,776	52	43	210	77	50	9	441	32	341
RANDALL	12,895	60	29	101	51	12	1	254	20	187
ROBERTS	95	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SHERMAN	354	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	6	2
SWISHER	817	3	7	13	6	0	2	31	38	24
WHEELER	542	2	0	2	4	0	0	8	15	7
TOTAL	47,781	156	166	480	206	88	26	1,122	404	878

*VOP - Violation of Probation CINS - Conduct Indicating a Need for Supervision

Juvenile Justice

Texas Juvenile Justice Department
 Juvenile Probation Disposition Activity by County
 1/1/2017 thru 12/31/2017

	Dismissed	Consolidated	Other	Supervisory Caution	Deferred	Probation	Commitment	Certified as Adult	Total Dispositions	Total Dispositions
ARMSTRONG	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
BRISCOE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
CARSON	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	4	4
CASTRO	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	4	4
CHILDRESS	3	0	0	1	5	8	0	0	17	17
COLLINGSWORTH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DALLAM	0	1	0	4	2	7	0	0	14	14
DEAF SMITH	6	0	0	13	17	40	5	1	82	82
DONLEY	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
GRAY	7	0	0	11	11	10	0	0	39	39
HALL	4	0	0	2	1	2	0	0	9	9
HANSFORD	4	0	0	0	4	2	0	0	10	10
HARTLEY	2	0	0	2	6	3	0	0	13	13
HEMPHILL	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
HUTCHINSON	22	3	0	3	22	15	0	0	65	65
LIPSCOMB	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	2
MOORE	22	0	0	11	15	32	5	1	86	86
OCHILTREE	5	0	0	0	3	4	0	0	12	12
OLDHAM	0	0	0	1	5	0	0	0	6	6
PARMER	1	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	5	5
POTTER	40	3	0	292	41	58	6	0	440	440
RANDALL	64	2	0	97	34	52	4	0	253	253
ROBERTS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SHERMAN	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
SWISHER	3	3	0	1	17	7	1	0	32	32
WHEELER	1	0	0	4	0	0	1	0	6	6
TOTAL	186	12	0	444	188	247	22	2	1101	1101

Juvenile Justice

Texas Juvenile Justice Department
 Juvenile Probation Supervision Workload Activity by County
 1/1/2017 thru 12/31/2017

	Cases Added to Supervision				Cases Leaving Supervision			Unsuccessful Termination		
	Beginning of Period	Adjudicated Probation	Deferred Prosecution	Pre-Disposition	Adjudicated Probation	Deferred Prosecution	Pre-Disposition	End of Period	Adjudicated Probation	Deferred Prosecution
<i>Armstrong</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Briscoe</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Carson</i>	2	0	1	1	2	1	1	0	0	0
<i>Castro</i>	4	1	2	2	3	0	2	4	0	0
<i>Childress</i>	12	9	5	2	8	5	3	12	2	0
<i>Collingsworth</i>	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Dallam</i>	3	6	2	2	2	2	2	7	0	0
<i>Deaf Smith</i>	54	38	19	50	34	21	45	61	7	5
<i>Donley</i>	6	0	0	0	4	2	0	0	1	0
<i>Gray</i>	16	9	11	0	11	10	0	15	0	0
<i>Hall</i>	4	1	1	4	2	1	5	2	0	0
<i>Hansford</i>	4	2	4	12	3	5	9	5	0	0
<i>Hartley</i>	3	3	6	4	2	3	3	8	0	1
<i>Hemphill</i>	3	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	0
<i>Hutchinson</i>	15	14	21	24	7	16	15	36	2	8
<i>Lipscomb</i>	2	1	1	0	2	2	0	0	1	0
<i>Moore</i>	58	26	15	40	34	14	37	54	15	3
<i>Ochiltree</i>	11	2	3	9	3	7	7	8	0	0
<i>Oldham</i>	0	0	5	0	0	5	0	0	0	0
<i>Parmer</i>	5	4	0	0	3	1	0	5	0	0
<i>Potter</i>	216	57	40	136	102	44	126	177	8	3
<i>Randall</i>	127	45	35	73	76	36	69	99	11	7
<i>Roberts</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>Sherman</i>	2	1	1	0	2	1	0	1	0	0
<i>Swisher</i>	13	6	16	3	5	14	3	16	1	2
<i>Wheeler</i>	6	0	0	0	3	1	1	1	2	0
Total	567	225	188	362	310	193	328	511	51	29

Juvenile Justice

	Substance Abuse	Chronic Absenteeism	Bullying	Parental Involvement	Poverty
Data:	Substance Abuse is a growing problem with the Region’s juveniles, whether it is illegal drugs, prescription drugs, alcohol or the new synthetic drugs. The abuse of these substances is believed to be linked to other crimes committed in the juvenile population.	Chronic absenteeism and truancy have become a major problem in this country that negatively influences the future of the students. Chronic absenteeism and truancy is a stepping stone to delinquent and criminal activity. Truant students are at a higher risk of being drawn into behavior involving drugs, alcohol or violence.	Bullying is a problem that affects children of all ages but mostly in junior high and high school. Bullying leads to an increase in mental health issues, substance abuse, and academic achievement decline and attendance.	The family has been breaking down more and more over the years. This fracturing has enabled parents to let go of their duties to love, care for and teach consequences to their children. The juvenile justice system links poor or non-existing parental units as a large contributing factor to the rise in juveniles entering the justice system.	Many families in the panhandle live at or under the poverty level. This leads to difficulties obtaining necessities such as food, adequate housing and medical or mental health treatment. It also can impact attendance at school and academic achievement. All of which are believed to contribute to juvenile delinquency.
Response:	Education Institutions, juvenile justice professionals and prosecution all agree that more needs to be done to stymie this issue among all age levels especially the juveniles. More access to programs that educate the young on the abuse and options to avoid returning to the substance. Resources available to the juveniles struggling that enable them to overcome the addiction or avoid becoming addicted.	Stakeholders agree that continued truancy intervention programs are necessary and effective in reducing the amount of educational time a child misses. More access to these programs and the means to implement these programs in our region are needed. Providing these programs in our region has decreased the number of chronically absent students and keeps the children in school learning and less time to engage in negative behaviors.	More focus on bullying education and prevention need to be implemented in our region. Prevention and education should not start and stop at just the schools. Parents and individuals that provide care for children or interact with children need to be educated on bullying and prevention. Keeping the lines of communication open, encourage children to do what they love and model how to treat others with kindness and respect will help pave the road to decreasing bullying.	Providing parents access to training and resources allowing them to obtain education on proper parenting techniques. Across agencies they agree wholeheartedly that parents need accountability for their children’s behaviors. Courts have had success using parents alongside themselves while attempting to resolve truancy issues.	Obtaining more resources for families below the poverty line, especially in the rural areas outside Amarillo/Canyon would greatly benefit the youth struggling with poverty. Access to more food programs over the summer and mental health treatment for juveniles in the more rural areas would be beneficial.

Law Enforcement

Law Enforcement

Our law enforcement responses to the survey were greater than any other area, at over 73%, giving us a uniform understanding of what these heroes are dealing with each day. The focus group was eager to hear from other perspectives in the criminal justice field. As they told me, they entered the profession to help people and if they can still do their job and help others across the criminal justice spectrum, they are happy to do that. Because our law enforcement is on the front lines, they are usually the first ones on the scene, giving them numerous issues that may come across their caseload. The issues cited most often in our research was substance abuse, domestic violence, recruiting and retention, sexual assault, and mental health. Some of these issues can overlap during an incident, causing more hurdles as they work through the case to find resolutions.

Region's Law Enforcement Issues

1) **Substance Abuse**

The Panhandle region has several major corridors in which drugs move through the area. Many drug traffickers are attempting to move the drugs from Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico and Oklahoma to other states via Interstate 40, and Highway 87/287. Interstate 27, highlighted in blue, extends south further into the state of Texas. Interstate 40, highlighted in pink, and Highway 87/287, highlighted in green, shows the north, south, east and west corridors in which narcotics travel into the region.

This issue continues to be the biggest problem that law enforcement faces. Since a person's mind is temporarily debilitated due to the substance of choice, it causes additional issues for officers as they work a case.

Some of our jurisdictions have had an increase in the number of narcotics cases, simply because of their location, in relation to traffic leaving Colorado. Colorado's legalization of marijuana has increased the amount of drugs trafficked into Texas, for both the drug business as well as among recreational users. Our focus groups stated that in many of these cases, the defendant assumes that because they were legally able to purchase marijuana in Colorado, they thought that they can bring it across state lines without breaking any laws. They are quickly corrected, when drugs are seized and charges get added to the case.

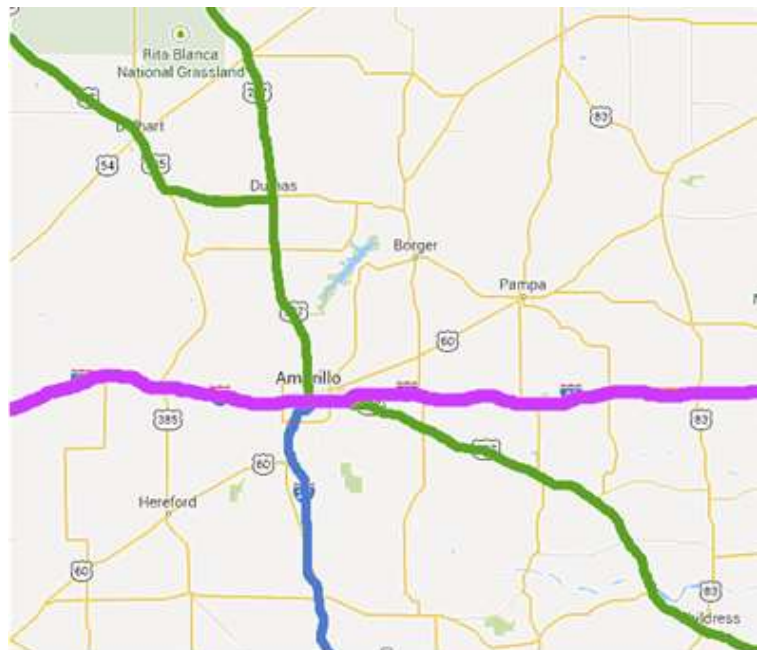


Figure 4: Major Highways in Region

Marijuana and methamphetamine continue to lead the seizure logbooks of our law enforcement agencies. Behind marijuana and methamphetamines are cocaine, heroin, fentanyl, prescription drugs, dangerous drugs (includes ecstasy, LSD and designer drugs), synthetics, scheduled or controlled substances and mushrooms. The region's officers are reporting a rise in the amount of heroin being seized. Some cases investigated have found heroin laced with fentanyl. Many officers express concern that we are only removing a small fraction of the drugs throughout the region. As

Law Enforcement

the United States struggles with drugs everywhere, we are seeing it affect demand. Amarillo Police Department mentioned an increase in the amount of guns seized during narcotics busts.

The region has few facilities and/or programs available to provide the proper treatment for persons with substance abuse addictions. Additional facilities to provide treatment, for both adults and juveniles spread throughout the region would benefit law enforcement, as well as those seeking sobriety on their own. Additional long-term resources to encourage folks to maintain their sobriety would help. Educating young student populations about substance abuse, addiction and the consequences would assist in curbing potential users from ever starting.

2) **Domestic Violence**

Domestic violence is defined as behaviors to maintain power and control over an intimate partner including physical harm, arouse fear, preventing a partner from doing what they wish or forcing them to behave in ways they do not want. Abuse includes physical and sexual violence, threats and intimidation, emotional abuse, economic deprivation and spiritual abuse. Typically law enforcement is the first line of defense when a victim is trying to escape from a domestic violence situation. Law enforcement has the difficult task of ensuring that all parties are safe while assessing what occurred in the situation that they were called to. This issue has been on the radar of law enforcement for a while. Each law enforcement agency across the region works with prosecution and victim service agencies to ensure that victim's cases are fully processed through the criminal justice system.

Many officers struggle to understand why victim's return to their abuser and why on average it takes multiple attempts for a victim to completely leave and sever ties. Officers want to serve and protect these victims while also providing them with much needed resources that may be available to assist them through the process. Law enforcement is seeing that the public has the same struggles with understanding. Much effort has been given to cross training for law enforcement and victim services with better working relationships that have been to the benefit of the victims.

The community needs to come alongside the law enforcement to obtain a better understanding of the situation. Through understanding we will see attitudes toward domestic violence change. These changes will come through education of young adults on what love really is, education to abusers that this behavior is not tolerated. Victims will feel empowered as they see a community that is fighting for them, juries that are holding offenders accountable and victim service agencies that are helping them heal the wounds and deal with the trauma and triggers.

The chart below shows the numbers of crimes that have occurred in each of the region's 26 counties for the year of 2020 as it was reported by the Texas Department of Public Service's Uniform Crime Report. The chart also shows the total number of crime for each county in 2019 and 2020 along with the percentage of change. The two far right columns show the numbers of domestic violence and sexual assaults in each county for the year of 2020.

Law Enforcement

	Murder	Rape	Robbery	Assault	Burglary	Larceny	Auto Theft	2020 Total	2019 Total	% of Change	Domestic Violence	Sexual Assault
Armstrong						3	1	4	19	-78.95%	3	2
Briscoe				1		2	3	6	3	100.00%		
Carson				14	10	14	5	43	79	-45.57%	8	2
Castro				4	10	26	8	48	101	-52.48%	32	3
Childress		1		7	11	22	7	48	46	4.35%	18	1
Collingsworth								0	0	#DIV/0!	4	1
Dallam	1	4	1	20	43	103	15	187	206	-9.22%	36	5
Deaf Smith			11	109	79	212	44	455	459	-0.87%	63	18
Donley		1		3	10	10	3	27	34	-20.59%	4	2
Gray		15	4	67	108	409	39	642	855	-24.91%	257	16
Hall					3	3	1	7	22	-68.18%	2	
Hansford		1		9	5	10	4	29	23	26.09%	14	2
Hartley					1	1	1	3	10	-70.00%		
Hemphill		6		1	2	8		17	15	13.33%	7	
Hutchinson		11	1	35	123	266	42	478	426	12.21%	185	16
Lipscomb				1	9	5	1	16	4	300.00%	2	
Moore		12	1	32	52	248	54	399	379	5.28%	119	21
Ochiltree		4		19	17	82	10	132	137	-3.65%	49	3
Oldham				2	5	6	3	16	6	166.67%	1	2
Parmer		1		12	14	35	7	69	53	30.19%	35	2
Potter	15	143	241	1,300	1,440	5,034	1,121	9,294	18,663	-50.20%	3032	173
Randall	3	24	8	36	106	295	37	509	513	-0.78%	153	30
Roberts						1		1	2	-50.00%	1	
Sherman		1			1	4	1	7	8	-12.50%		1
Swisher		3	2	40	17	102	7	171	198	-13.64%	95	7
Wheeler		1	1	1	3	9		15	16	-6.25%	10	1
Total	19	228	270	1,713	2,069	6,910	1,414	12,623	22,277	-43.34%	4,130	308

3) Recruiting and Retention

Historically the staffing of police departments has been a continual challenge. With the onset of reduced funding and negative perceptions in the public, the police administration has found it even more difficult to find highly qualified individuals interested in the profession. Adding to the difficulty, is that our jurisdictions don't have as much in resources, leading many of our trained officers with a few years of experience to often relocate to a department offering higher salaries.

We have two academies in the region. The first is the Amarillo Police Department Academy, which serves to staff officers for the Amarillo Police Department. The second is the Panhandle Regional Law Enforcement Academy, which serves to staff the sheriff's offices and police departments throughout



Figure 5: 124th Panhandle Regional Law Enforcement Academy, photo courtesy of Amarillo College

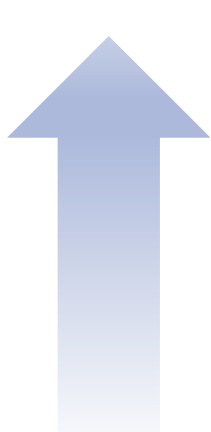
Law Enforcement

the 26 county region. Both academies do a fabulous job of training officers for the profession.

Many things can occur as an officer sets out about their shift. With the realization that the officer does not know what will occur on any given day at work, they must have a heightened sense of awareness throughout the shift. Our focus groups felt that with more workers on the force, they would be able to more adequately patrol a territory or provide resources to the scene of a crime. Continually having peace officers in areas known for crime, aids in dropping the crime rates as many do not see that the payoff of the crime is worth the risk. Repetitively being in the public eye creates a sense of peace, and a recognizable face to turn to when something goes awry. Departments need to stress to their City and County officials the importance of paying a fair salary to ensure quality candidates stay employed. In addition, to voice the need to have a fully staffed agency that can provide the coverage of law enforcement that is necessary to serve and protect the public.

4) Sexual Assault

Every 68 seconds, an American is sexually assaulted. And every 9 minutes that victim is a child. Meanwhile only 25 out of every 1,000 perpetrators will end up in prison.^{xx} The United States Department of Justice defines sexual assault as any nonconsensual sexual act proscribed by Federal, tribal, or State law, including when the victim lacks capacity to consent. Many different types of agencies in the region, including law



14.5%
Rise
in SA
cases

enforcement, have been speaking out against sexual assault for years. They have complained about the high rate of assaults plaguing our region. The fact remains that only 1 out of every 4 assaults are reported to law enforcement. In 2020, the most recent statistics available from the Texas Department of Public Safety's Uniform Crime Report (UCR), the region had 308 cases reported. So if we hold that number to the statistics, that means we may have another 924 cases, for a total of 1,232 sexual assaults. According to the UCR, our region has seen a 14.5% increase in the amount of sexual assault cases reported from 2019 to 2020.

There are many factors that play into why a person who experiences a sexual assault will not report it to law enforcement. One being that many perpetrators will not go to jail or prison. According to RAINN, out of every 1,000 sexual assaults, 975 perpetrators will walk free, 310 are reported to the police, 50 reports lead to arrest, 28 cases will lead to felony conviction, and 25 perpetrators will be incarcerated. Survivors have listed fear of retaliation, belief that the police would not do anything to help, belief that it is a personal matter, belief that it was not important enough to report, not wanting to get the perpetrator in trouble, and belief that law enforcement could not do anything to help.^{xxi} Officers want to serve and protect these survivors while also providing them with much needed resources that may be available to assist them through the process. As seen in other issues in other sectors, much effort has been given to cross training for law enforcement and victim services with better working relationships that have been to the benefit of the survivors.

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Educating the community about how the law enforcement process works in regards to sexual assault cases and programs that are available are important. Two major issues law enforcement deals with in regards to sexual assault is survivors not reporting and survivors not reporting within the timeframe to collect important evidence. To combat survivors not reporting within the timeframe to collect important evidence, the Non-Reported Sexual Assault Evidence Program was created in House Bill 2626 by the 81st Legislature in 2009. This program allows survivors of a sexual assault to obtain a forensic medical exam and have evidence collected, without cost to the survivor, even if they do not wish to involve law enforcement at the time of collection. The evidence is secured while giving the survivor time to consider if they want to report the assault. The Department of Public Safety is required to transfer and preserve the evidence for either five years or until the survivor releases the evidence, whichever comes first.^{xxii} A few important things for survivors and the community to know about the law enforcement process are proving lack of consent is a priority, law enforcement have been trained on the impact of trauma, law enforcement is trying to counter the defense, and things that go into the report. The majority of sexual assaults are committed by someone known to the survivor so the difficulty in prosecution is rarely about identifying the suspect, it's about proving lack of consent. Law enforcement are trained to anticipate common defenses use by perpetrators in sexual assault cases and use strategies when interviewing, documenting and collecting evidence to counter those defenses.^{xxiii} With providing more education to our region and increasing community support of survivors and law enforcement in our region, we can come together as a community to increase the number of sexual assault cases that are reported and the number of cases that are prosecuted. Once that happens, the goal is that perpetrators will know that they are more likely to be reported and convicted which will reduce the number of sexual assaults being committed.

5) Mental Health

The survey and focus group discussions, again this year, gave examples of how their job is impeded. Due to a lack of resources, whether it is the long travel time to transport a person with mental health issues or if they are required by medical personnel to stay at the hospital or clinic for the mentally ill to be tested and admitted.

On more than one occasion, our law enforcement have attempted to get a person admitted to the mental health facility, only to be told there are not enough beds. The officer then has no choice but to place the person in jail, so that they do not harm themselves and/or someone else. The map to the right highlights the distance from the City of Amarillo to the closest adult state mental health hospital in the City of Big Bend. The over three-hour trip is only an average for the multiple cities within the region that have made this journey.

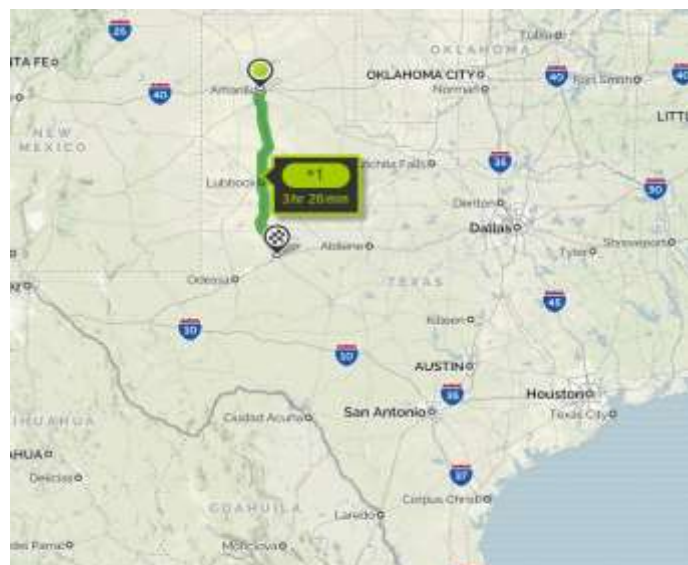



Figure 6: Distance to State Mental Hospital, courtesy of MapQuest

Law Enforcement

Our local mental health provider has facilities available for 21 of the 26 counties of the Panhandle region. These facilities do not handle emergency treatment through a planned accommodation, leaving our law enforcement with little option in the region, when dealing with an individual who poses a threat to himself/herself or the public. It is not the officer's expertise to determine whether an individual is in fact mentally ill or not.

A study by Health Management Associates found that community based treatment services in Texas cost an average of \$12 per day for adults as opposed to a jail bed at \$137 or an emergency room visit at \$986.^{xxiv}

Many studies support these findings. Our law enforcement officers also agree that there are much better options for the mentally ill than placement in a jail. They also fully understand that the other options are more beneficial to the tax payers, as it leaves more officers available for assistance, more monies to use to protect the public and enables the mentally ill a much better chance at re-entering society as a positive healthy contributor. The sheriffs have been speaking to us about the additional costs of caring for inmates with mental health issues. The increase in costs has long been estimated, by those items listed in the graphic to the right; however we are seeing an interest locally to determine a better idea of what that increase really is. What is often



- telemed contract
- forensic evaluation
- transport
- medication
- damaged uniforms
- damaged equipment
- bedding/mattress replacement
- biohazard waste/cleanup

overlooked is the inordinate amount of time that an inmate with mental health issues spends in jail versus someone else. Over and over again, we see those with mental health issues wait for representation or evaluation for more serious cases, or wait for placement at a mental health facility. Randall County Sheriff's Office is now collaborating with the Texas Panhandle Centers to track numbers on those residing in the jail that have a mental health issue. The statistics will give a clearer picture of the cost to the county.

Unfortunately, the region is truly lacking in resources, there is one option for persons with serious mental health issues or who pose a threat to themselves or others. The facility is a 106-bed operation, offering treatment for several types of patients. When the facility is full, they no longer accept new incoming patients. It is a private facility, which serves a region much broader than 26 counties, meaning it is often at capacity. When there are no beds available, officers then transport the mentally ill over three (3) hours to the next closest mental health hospital. This is well outside of the region. Officers have made this long trip, only to be told at that facility that they are not admitting the person for treatment or that they too are out of bed space.

Officers want to be able to transport a potentially mentally ill person to a facility with trained medical professionals, who can and will admit the person to the facility for testing and possible treatment. The law enforcement officer then needs to be able to turn around quickly to get back to their jurisdiction ensuring that enough personnel are available and patrolling.

It would be beneficial for the Region to have other options, for facilities or programs. Jail diversion programs, crisis intervention teams or even specially trained police responses are all training that our law enforcement would be willing to explore. Combined training for law enforcement and the mental health staff would go towards better understanding for both sides of the patient's issues.

Over the past couple of years, we have seen some new partnerships emerge with the local mental health provider and the jails. This pilot program self-enrolls inmates at the county jail into a Co-Occurring

Law Enforcement

Psychiatric and Substance Disorders (COPSD) Program while still inside of the jail. Jail staff conduct a warm hand-off to the Texas Panhandle Centers counselor that the inmate has been meeting with. Upon their release from the jail, the client is enrolled into the same program so as not to disrupt the continuum of care.



Figure 7: Windmill and rainbow in the panhandle, photo courtesy of Lori Gunn

Law Enforcement

	Substance Abuse	Domestic Violence	Recruiting and Retention	Sexual Assault	Mental Health
Data:	Drug trafficking creates a safety problem on the roadways as traffickers attempt to curtail the authorities in order to move the drugs across the state. Substance abuse is widespread across the region and we do not have enough resources or facilities to best provide treatment.	Domestic Violence showed up again this year proving that it is an issue the region deals with regularly. Because domestic violence will go on to perpetually harm generation after generation unless the cycle is broken all agencies see the issues resulting from the behavior.	Departments struggle to find interested parties that are eligible for hire. Low salaries lead to officers looking at others areas across the state or new fields to work in. Lack of training renders officers without the knowledge base to handle the myriad of issues at play.	Sexual assault happens 75% more often than what is reported to law enforcement. Unfortunately we see victim blaming occur from the very pool of people who could land in a jury. The amount of misinformation on sexual assault is a problem.	With only one emergency facility, the Panhandle lacks both available beds and mental health workers to accommodate the need in the region. Officers are kept with the possible mental health patient during testing. Officers may travel to admit the person to the facility but if there are not any available beds the person is then transported back and placed into the local jail.
Response:	Creating a drug task force to cut off the issues faced with both drug trafficking and abusers would help tremendously. Building more facilities that are spread out across the region would enable addicts to receive treatment to get sober as well as have access to resources to maintain their sobriety. Educating the public on the negative aspects of substance abuse will curtail younger populations from starting the practice as well as encourage the public to be proactive in becoming a positive change.	To treat the whole family, counseling services need to be available enabling victims whether abused or witnesses to the abuse to deal with the trauma and learn healthy family behaviors going forward. Including the public through education will help empower victims to leave the situation through accountability.	Law Enforcement needs more funding to fully staff their force and provide officers with the equipment to be appropriately prepared in the field. Having more officers will enable task forces to be formed to target specific areas with experts in that field. More officers in the communities reduce crime rates as criminals see that the possibility of getting caught increases.	The public may hear sexual assault and not fully understand the high level of suffering that was inflicted upon a victim. We need to see attitudes towards victims change. Information opens up a person’s perspective and helps them to empathize with others. We need to start that dialogue early and keep having it often.	We need more facilities that are spread across the region to serve everyone. The additional facilities need to have sufficient beds available to accommodate the area they serve. Facilities need to provide their own security to stand by while a potentially mentally ill person is being tested so that officers can return to the field.

Victim Services

Victim Services

The Victim Service agencies are providing greatly needed services across our vast plains every day, to anyone that may walk into their door. In 2018, the Victim Services agencies and Law Enforcement came together for joint training on issues that cross both of their paths, in an effort to better understand the why, what and how of the other, as they go about their tasks to best serve victims. The training series was on violence against women and included information on brain functions, prosecution best practices and how law enforcement can change the outcome. Educating, both the public and victims, is still of paramount importance for our agencies. The public is the eyes and ears for victims who need encouragement to leave the situation. The gaps found in victim services are domestic violence, substance abuse, sexual assault, human trafficking, and stalking. As we see some of the same issues, we have faced in years prior and some new ones, it just illustrates that work is being done but we still need to continue.

Region's Victim Services Issues

1) **Domestic Violence**

Domestic Violence is defined by the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence as the willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and/or other abusive behavior as part of a systematic pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another.^{xxv} The victim service agencies in the region are no stranger to dealing with family violence. The majority of the staff across the region works with family violence more than any other issue. However, well the staff understands the issues the public still seems to be missing the magnitude at which this issue is affecting our residents. The public can directly play a role in the outcome for victims, as they become aware of the signs of family violence and learn of the resources available for assistance. In 2021, our victim service agencies assisted 1,654 victims of domestic violence. This number is actually lower than the previous year.

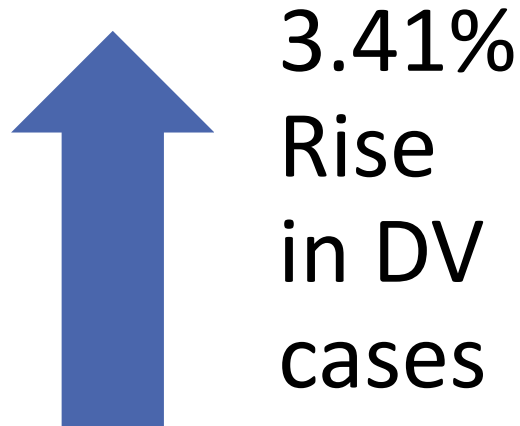


In recent years, Potter and Randall Counties have made changes in how law enforcement approaches family violence situations and victim support. Their approach which mirrors that used by the Children's Advocacy Centers, gathers all of the criminal justice stakeholders to discuss trends, cases and how to better support the victims.

Victim Services

However, because of the cross training among victim service agencies and law enforcement, both groups are beginning to understand the various perspectives better, giving way to more empathy for victims during these highly emotional, often tumultuous times. Both sides agree that the public still needs to come to grips with the reality of family violence. Despite the domestic violence coalition working together to end domestic violence within the City of Amarillo and both Potter and Randall Counties, we still had an increase of 3.41% of reported domestic violence cases from 2019 to 2020 (the most current UCR statistics listed with DPS.^{xxvi}

The community as a whole needs to understand the cycle of abuse that occurs within a family, when even just one person experiences family violence. If not treated with counseling, in a safe, loving, warm environment the victim may not be able to understand what true love is. Without that understanding, they will often go on to re-create the only form of “love” that they know. Therefore the cycle continues, leading to abuse of their own spouse and/or children. Many professionals agree that the first step to breaking the generational cycle of abuse, is to begin with counseling. Victims can then confront the trauma head on, learning to both grieve for their relationship and to control their own emotions and actions. Children typically repeat what they have learned. Regardless of whether that is good or bad. With proper counseling, our victims can not only receive love, but also provide love to their friends and significant others in a healthy respectful way.



2) **Substance Abuse**

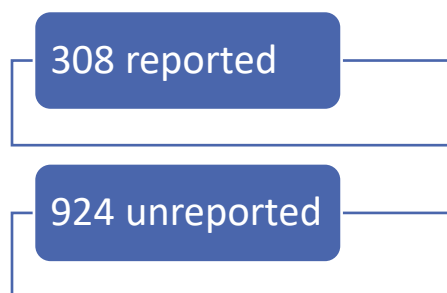
Our focus groups all discussed substance abuse, as it is an issue that spans across all levels of the criminal justice system. Our victim service agencies express regret, that they are not able to best serve persons needing help to overcome these addictions. The region has limited resources available, leaving many who are seeking help to turn to shelters. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, addiction is a chronic, often relapsing brain disease that causes compulsive drug seeking and use, despite harmful consequences to the addicted individual and to those around him or her. Although the initial decision to take drugs is voluntary for most people, the brain alterations that occur over time challenge an addicted person’s self-control and hamper his or her ability to resist intense impulses to take drugs.^{xxvii} Each discipline within our focus groups agreed that substance abuse compounds issues for victims. Whether the violence increased due to abuse of drugs and/or alcohol, or if a victim is self-medicating in an attempt to deal with the trauma they have experienced. Fortunately, treatments do help persons with addiction counter the need to venture back into using again. While there are resources available, there are not a lot. All are located in the Amarillo MSA and many have a high costs associated with them. This leaves roughly half of the region’s population to travel long distances or seek resources out of state to obtain assistance.

Victim Services

The region needs resources available to combat this problem. The National Institute of Drug Abuse states, “Drug Addiction is a preventable disease. Results from NIDA-funded research have shown that prevention programs involving families, schools, communities and the media are effective in reducing drug abuse. Thus education and outreach are key to helping youth and the general public to understand the risks of drug abuse.” This statement echoes the statements in our focus groups as well. Education, as a prevention tool and a treatment tool, enable persons to begin choosing to make sober decisions. The holistic approach, involving education and medical professionals, will enable the Panhandle to treat those suffering from addiction currently. We need more facilities, with medical professionals, to get us moving towards recovery.

3) Sexual Assault

Every 68 seconds, an American is sexually assaulted. And every 9 minutes that victim is a child. Meanwhile only 25 out of every 1,000 perpetrators will end up in prison.^{xxviii} The United States Department of Justice



defines sexual assault as any nonconsensual sexual act proscribed by Federal, tribal, or State law, including when the victim lacks capacity to consent.^{xxix} The victim service agencies in the region have been speaking out against sexual assault for years. They have complained about the high rate of assaults plaguing our region. In 2019 our victim service agencies reported 879 cases. The fact remains that only 1 out of every 4 assaults are reported to law enforcement. In 2020, the most recent statistics available from the Texas Department of Public Safety’s Uniform Crime Report, the region had 308 cases reported. So if we hold that number to the statistics, that means we may have another 924 cases, for a total of 1,232 sexual assaults. That is a lot of trauma left to the

victim to attempt to reconcile on their own. Also of note, our victim service agencies have advised that the majority of the victims of sexual assault that they are serving are juveniles.

While the world stills harbors incorrect attitudes toward victims of sexual assault we see how this only adds to the trauma a victim receives. Often referred to as rape culture. We need to reframe the information to empower the victim. The public needs to understand that a victim is not to blame and that it is going to take time for healing. More resources need to go into educating the public. In public schools, universities as well as workplaces, we would benefit from correcting ill-learned information or garnering factual information from the start.

4) Human Trafficking

With a profit in the billions, it is no wonder that criminals are continuing to promote sex trafficking, making it the fastest growing crime in the world. From a survivor of sex trafficking, they found the criminal justice system lacking in their ability to provide the assistance needed. This survivor stated that, “it is a hush-hush industry; law enforcement looked at me as if it was my choice. Victim Service agencies looked at me as if it was rape or domestic violence. It was not.” Because of the shadowy nature of the sex trafficking

Victim Services

industry, our victim service agencies find that victims don't come forward as easily. In fact, according to the Texas Department of Public Safety's Texas Crime Report for 2019 and 2020, no case of human trafficking were reported in our region.

Thanks to efforts by law enforcement, the region had a BIG wake-up call in 2015. Not only did a Department of Public Safety investigation lead to the recovery of juveniles believed to be victims of human trafficking, but the location was well outside the areas that so many believe to be the "common" areas that this type of crime would occur. For years many people would be quick to state that Amarillo Boulevard or the I-40 corridor would have such despicable crimes such as these, but not in the other more modern or residential portions of the City.

The Panhandle is home to several victims who are stuck in the human trafficking traps, many of which may not even realize the depth of their victimization. This victimization is at the hands of so called boyfriends, family, father figures and the "johns" who wickedly search out sex acts. Unbeknownst to many, the consumers of the sex acts are stereotypically middle aged successful men, with at least some college education. Many of them may be in church on Sunday, but then searching the internet, to seize upon the innocence of a child for sex acts at any time of the week. Many of these "johns" are described as hobbyists, who see this gross obsession as another form of success, convincing themselves that their own gruesome desires as acceptable, rather than what it should be which is, active involvement in the slave trade.

Unfortunately for the numerous victims across the region and the nation, there are hardly any facilities available to treat the specific type of victimization that they have experienced. The needs of human trafficking victims differ from that of family violence victims. Many professionals also agree that genders should not be mixed in shelters while healing from the abuse, as many of them have triggers based solely upon the gender, making it crucial that those assisting the victims have a good understanding of how their roles are established to best serve. The closest shelter for sex trafficked victims to the Panhandle is about a 5 hour radius for adults and the minors have even less options. The closest shelter for minors is in Dallas, but with only 32 beds available, there is a small chance that a victim will be admitted. As law enforcement works to remove these victims from this torture, they need to find placement, but because of the very few options many of them are sent to jails, youth detention centers or sent back to their homes, which could put victims into the very hands of their tormentors, if family was the original trafficker.

The region would be better able to serve the many needs of these victims by having shelters for both adults and minors. Studies, although new, are proving to be promising as many victims who have received care are now able to heal, grow and lead healthy lives. The key to this success is that the victim is able to heal in a non-judgmental, warm, safe, caring environment, away from their oppressors.

Victim Services

5) Stalking

The legal definitions of stalking vary between jurisdictions however, the Stalking Prevention, Awareness, and Resource Center (SPARC) states that “a good working definition of stalking is a pattern of behaviors directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to fear for their safety or the safety of others, or suffer substantial emotional distress.” According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV), 19.3 million women and 5.1 million men have been stalked in their lifetime. A 2011 survey found 5.1 million women and 2.4 million men had been stalked in their lifetime. Almost three out of four stalking victims know their stalker in some capacity. The most common relationship between the victim and perpetrator is a current or former intimate partner. 60.8% of female stalking victims and 43.5% of male stalking victims reported being stalked by a current or former intimate partner. Stalking is often an indicator of other forms of violence. 81% of women who are stalked by a current or former husband or cohabitating partner were also physically assaulted by that partner, while 30% were sexually assaulted. One in seven women and one in eighteen men in the United States have been stalked by an intimate partner during their lifetime to the point in which they felt very fearful or believed that they or someone close to them would be harmed or killed. Adults aged 18-24 have the highest rate of stalking victimization.^{xxx}

Stalking is a crime in all 50 states however, less than one third of states classify stalking as a felony in all circumstances, including on the first offense. Around one half of all stalking victims report their stalking to the police. Out of those cases reported to the police, around one fourth result in suspects being arrested. While there is some evidence that anti-stalking laws have increased reports to the police, more research is needed to determine anti-stalking laws full effect on reports to the police. About 12% of all stalking cases result in criminal prosecution, and about 25% of female stalking victims and about 10% of male stalking victims obtain restraining orders against their stalkers. Of all victims with restraining orders, 69% of the women and 81% of the men said their stalkers violated the order. 20% of stalking victims are physically attacked by the stalker. Americans who experience stalking are at least 200 times more likely to be murdered than Americans who are not stalked. Due to many data limitations, the true magnitude of this increased risk is likely to be much higher. More research and data collection is needed on stalking in general, treatment and prevention and the effectiveness of formal and informal justice system interventions in stalking cases.^{xxxi}



19.3 million women
and 5.1 million men
have been stalked in
their lifetime.

Stalking is a serious crime that affects millions of people every year. Stalking can negatively affect the victim’s mental health, physical health, work and school, social life, and finances. A victim of stalking can live with the fear and anxiety for years after the behavior was exhibited. They might struggle with the fear of death, violence or pain, and live through years of PTSD. 30% of female stalking victims and 20% of male stalking victims seek psychological counseling as a result of their victimization. Stalking victims are significantly more likely than non-stalking victims to live in fear for their personal safety and to carry something to defend themselves.

Victim Services

Now that we are living in a highly digital age, more than one out of every four victims of stalking report being stalked via electronic devices or through the internet, including cell phones, email, GPS systems, online databases, cameras and through social media. Stalking presents unique challenges in the criminal justice system because there generally isn't much evidence to investigate, law enforcement must rely heavily on the victim to investigate and collect evidence, and when stalking occurs after a romantic relationship, it often becomes a battle of he said/she said. As a result, a 2003 study found that most stalking cases are dismissed by authorities. With that being said, advancements in technology has created an opportunity for more evidence to be able to be collected through avenues such as social media and text messages.^{xxxii}

Our victim services centers have identified stalking as a prevalent issue in our region. Agencies in our region take stalking serious and provide as much advocacy and resources as possible. According to the NCADV, women in rural areas were more likely to experience intimate partner stalking and also gun threats than women in urban and suburban areas. Our region being mostly rural, does not have the amount of resources that are available in more urban areas especially in areas such as stalking. Mental health resources are especially important for victims of stalking. To better meet the needs of stalking victims, the mental health community should continue to receive comprehensive training on appropriate treatment for stalking victims.



Figure 8: Family Support Services, Amarillo, TX, photo courtesy HomelessSheltersDirectory.org/city/tx-amarillo

Victim Services

	Domestic Violence	Substance Abuse	Sexual Assault	Human Trafficking	Stalking
Data:	<p>Family Violence showed up again this year proving that it is an issue the region deals with regularly. Because family violence will go on to perpetually, harm generation after generation unless the cycle is broken all agencies see the issues resulting from the behavior.</p>	<p>All agencies across the criminal justice system are dealing with substance abuse, whether it is drugs or alcohol does not matter. Also common across all agencies is the fact that substance abuse aggravates criminal issues causing additional problems.</p>	<p>Sexual assault happens 75% more often than what is reported to law enforcement. Unfortunately we see victim blaming occur from the very pool of people who could land in a jury. The amount of misinformation on sexual assault is a problem.</p>	<p>Victims are being sought out via social media under a guise or hauled in from other countries. The region does not yet have the resources or professionals in place to aid victims in escaping. The public is unaware of this being an issue in our communities.</p>	<p>Stalking is a serious crime that affects millions of people every year. Stalking can negatively affect the victim’s mental health, physical health, work and school, social life, and finances. A victim of stalking can live with the fear and anxiety for years after the behavior was exhibited. They might struggle with the fear of death, violence or pain, and live through years of PTSD.</p>
Response:	<p>To treat the whole family, counseling services need to be available enabling victims whether abused or witnesses to the abuse to deal with the trauma and learn healthy family behaviors going forward. Including the public through education will help empower victims to leave the situation through accountability.</p>	<p>All areas of the criminal justice system need more convenient and improved access to treatment and resources. All agencies agree that educating the juvenile population is the best avenue to long-term prevention.</p>	<p>The public may hear sexual assault and not fully understand the high level of suffering that was inflicted upon a victim. We need to see attitudes towards victims change. Information opens up a person’s perspective and helps them to empathize with others. We need to start that dialogue early and keep having it often.</p>	<p>Educating and training all agencies throughout the criminal justice system about the unique nature of human trafficking to better enable each agency to provide assistance. Public education about what to look for and how to report the issue to the appropriate authorities without causing further harm to the victims. Understanding that this is different from rape or domestic violence. Victims need resources to move into a healthy position in society without being plagued by any stigmas.</p>	<p>All areas of the criminal justice system need more education, training and resources regarding stalking. More awareness and education needs to be brought to the public so that more victims will come forward and report earlier. The mental health community should continue to receive comprehensive training on appropriate treatment for stalking victims.</p>

Mental Health

Mental Health

Mental Health is a topic that is on the forefront of every focus group member’s mind of the criminal justice system. As the topic is brought up during a case investigation, or resources are sought for assistance, or the courtroom is evaluating a person’s state of mind we see more and more that it is touching everyone. The issues cited in the mental healthcare pointed to a lack of facilities, lack of resources, substance abuse, education/training and lack of long-term care.

Region’s Mental Health Issues

1) **Lack of Facilities**

The region’s local mental health provider has seven facilities that are able to care for mental health patients in non-emergencies on an outpatient basis. They serve 21 of our 26 counties. The region also has the Veteran’s Hospital, which offers mental healthcare for veterans. Unfortunately, that about sums up the available options, are able to provide the afflicted with mental the majority of the work 26 Counties, The Texas Health Department of State Health County has 14 Psychiatrists. population to doctor.^{xxxiii} only county in the region with the ratio for our entire 26 That is a stark reality. The lack extends to resources for those with mental illnesses, whether it is access to education about the illness, classes on managing the illness or access to gainful employment to be a positive contributor to our communities.



there are not many sites that necessary care for those illnesses. Social workers do around the region. Out of our and Human Services, Texas Services reports that Potter Giving a ratio of 9,407.1 However, Potter County is the Psychiatrists, which makes county region 31,215 to 1. of facilities and providers

After speaking with the local mental health provider, we found that they have struggled with getting quality employees to stay in the region or to recruit from other areas. The lack of facilities is also due in part to a lack of funding. While many organizations desire to have more locations and better access, they are not willing to provide a match to assist in making those resources available.

The region has been experimenting with telemedicine to obtain access to psychiatrists or counselors when the distance is too much or the care is needed quickly. Because the region does not have very many active psychiatrists, the telemedicine option has been helpful. The region needs to see government agencies and the public put up matching funds for projects that they will be accessible to ensure better overall care and program success. The region needs to seek out providers, giving incentives to come practice in the region.

2) **Lack of Resources/Services**

The lack of facilities goes hand in hand with a lack of resources. The few number of psychiatrists in the region have a full caseload of patients in their care. The availability of telemedicine has enabled patients’

Mental Health

access to a doctor even when the consultation cannot be in person. The region's local mental health provider, Texas Panhandle Centers, provides various services to roughly seven thousand patients or their family members each year. Texas Panhandle Centers has satellite offices in addition to the main office in Amarillo. They serve the top 21 counties in our region. Four of the region's southern counties, Parmer, Castro, Swisher and Briscoe, are all in the Central Plains Center's service region. To round out the 26, Childress County resides in the Helen Farabee Center's region.

The majority of the survey respondents hail from the law enforcement side of the criminal justice field. As we spoke about the various services needed, law enforcement continued to mention that they do not feel adequately prepared to interact with the growing number of mental health calls that they respond to. TCOLE has increased the number of hours an officer must take of Crisis Intervention Training (CIT), to maintain their peace officer licensure. Many officers are hopeful that this will provide better training for them in the field as well as give them actionable resources that they can utilize to de-escalate a situation and provide a more appropriate resource for folks rather than jail. Law Enforcement typically gets called simply because family may be scared or unsure of how to assist a person with a diagnosed mental illness. Others worry that people are taking advantage of the system or that family members refuse to do their part, so they just call the police. Law enforcement and the local mental health providers agree that jail is not the appropriate location for treatment. It does not set the patient up for success on managing their illness. It is also very costly to taxpayers and it fills up the jails unnecessarily.

Better training for the law enforcement on what is available in their part of the region is needed. Building a strong working relationship with the local mental health providers will begin to heal the fractured relationship that we have in some locations. We all need to learn about mental health, enabling a better understanding of how an illness typically affects a person will add a much-needed layer to the many skills that officers already have in their tool belts. Better training for the public is also a need. Unfortunately, many people have a negative view of mental illness and are ashamed to discuss it, seek treatment or even admit that we all have a role to play. According the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) nearly one in five U.S. adults lives with a mental illness.^{xxxiv} Based on our population, this statistic would mean that we have over 86,700 people in our area that are currently living with a mental illness.

3) **Substance Abuse**

Substance Abuse came up over and over again while discussing the region's issues with the stakeholders. This continues to hold true with the mental health sector as well. In fact, the focus groups expressed concern that folks in the mental health sector dealt with substance abuse issues more often than others did. It is common knowledge that persons with diagnosed mental health issues struggle to manage their diagnosed illness when they stop taking prescribed medications and in turn self-medicate with drugs and/or alcohol.

The National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) reports a definite connection between mental illness and the use of addictive substances. Reporting that mental health disorder patients are responsible for the consumption of 38% alcohol, 44% of cocaine or 40% of cigarettes. With people that have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder at some point in their lives have consumed 69% of alcohol, 84% of cocaine or 68% of cigarettes.^{xxxv} This provides an additional hurdle for caregivers and medical professionals. Unfortunately, this study shows a direct link to illegal drugs, triggering those choosing to

Mental Health

self-medicate with these illegal drugs to commit crime. Often these folks will end up in jails due to getting caught with illegal drugs, public intoxication, or even committing other crimes to get their hands on the illegal drug that is being used to self-medicate. Leading many of our jails and prisons to require having staff trained on substance abuse to either work with folks while serving their sentence/awaiting sentencing or to have resources at their ready to get inmates into the care of a professional.

Panhandle Regional Planning Commission has seen some strides in the local mental health provider, Texas Panhandle Centers, working with the sheriff's offices in the region to provide access to care for inmates that are in need. Texas Panhandle Centers also works with local Psychiatrists and Sheriff's Offices to get inmates seen either in person or via telehealth to begin the care that is needed much more quickly than we have seen in years past. Currently a pilot program is underway to begin care for dually diagnosed mental health and substance abuse for inmates in both Potter and Randall County jails. This pilot program will build upon the work that has already been occurring but they will begin the Co-Occurring Psychiatric and Substance Disorders (COPSD) Program inside of the jail. Upon release, they will conduct a warm hand-off to the Texas Panhandle Centers counselor that the inmate has been meeting with, upon their release from the jail so as not to disrupt the continuum of care. The goal is that inmates will maintain their scheduled program visits outside of the jail and stick to the medication provided via prescriptions rather than illegal substances or alcohol.

4) **Education/Training**

The public struggles with understanding mental illness. Whether it is someone that is trying to seek out help for his or her personal struggles or it is a discussion of the reality of mental health in America, we see a general lack of understanding. According to the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the US, averaging 123 per day.^{xxxvi} New data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are showing that the rate of suicide rose by 30% in the US between 2000 to 2016.^{xxxvii} The CDC recommends that we take a comprehensive public health approach, requiring coordination from every sector of society: government, public health, healthcare, employers, education, media and community organizations.



While the stakeholders agree that these sectors of society need to do their part, they agree that each individual is also responsible for learning about mental health and what the signs are. Most importantly, to begin talking about mental health the same as we discuss physical health. No shame, no judgement just information, and an eagerness to point someone in the direction of a professional. Every life is important and each illness can have a profound influence on an individual's own life as well as those around them, good or bad.

The region's main local mental health providers, Texas Panhandle Centers, is trying to do their part by changing the dynamic of a conversation about mental illness from negative to positive. A group approach is being undertaken in the region. Whether it is with the local mental health provider, the one emergency

Mental Health

mental health facility, the Veterans' Hospital or the victim service agencies we are seeing more awareness being spread to each of the folks that these organizations meet.

5) **Lack of Long-Term Care**

We have a lack of long-term care for anyone seeking long-term in-patient care for mental illnesses. The region does not have a state hospital for long-term care for mental health patients. The closest adult hospital is 224 miles away from Amarillo, and 346 miles from the northern counties of the region. The closest adolescent state hospital is 231 miles from Amarillo. This leaves a 3-hour drive one-way on average for agencies or individuals trying to get someone into care. On top of that, the state hospital in Big Spring, Texas is often full. Many of the folks deemed in need of intensive long-term care are left with no choice but to wait until a bed opens up. This lasts for months on average. In those months, a person is left to "figure it out." Oftentimes that means they become a danger to themselves or someone else so they end up in jail. Law enforcement is great at their job however, they are not the best fit for an individual needing long or short-term psychiatric care. The region is accustomed to traveling to get to our destinations. However, with the closest state hospital for adults being up to 362 miles away this leaves a one-way travel time of over 5 ½ hours.

This becomes a major hurdle for persons trying to get a loved one into a facility that is capable of providing the care necessary to treat a serious mental illness. It is still important that anyone with a mental illness continue to have relationships and social networks that provide support^{xxxviii} according to the US Department of Health and Human Services. This is the last of the four dimensions of recovery, behind health, home and purpose. Underlining the importance of a patient to continue to have people that they love and love them to be present and active in their recovery and management of the illness. The large distances make it quite difficult for the family and friends to stay in the region, be gainfully employed and still be an active part of their loved one's life.

While serious mental illness is not as prevalent, it still affects a larger number of the population than many people believe. Approximately 1 in 25 adults in the U.S., or 4% experience a serious mental illness in a given year that substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities, according to the National Alliance on Mental Health.^{xxxix} Based on that statistic we would have an estimated 17,492 people in the region that would be in need of more comprehensive care than the region can currently offer.

Many mental illnesses, if treated, can be managed allowing an individual to lead a long healthy life. The key being treatment. According to a study, individuals living with serious mental illness face an increased risk of having chronic medical conditions.^{xi} Adults in the U.S. living with serious mental illness die on average 25 years earlier than others, largely due to treatable medical conditions.^{xii} Without having long-term care facilities in the region, we are making it more difficult to overcome the stigma of mental illness. The region would benefit from a state facility being placed in the region for both adults and juveniles. Just like we have hospitals for physical health, we need long-term facilities for mental health in our region's backyard.

Mental Health

	Lack of Facilities	Lack of Resources/Services	Substance Abuse	Training/Education	Lack of Long-Term Care
Data:	With only one emergency facility, the Panhandle lacks both available beds and mental health workers to accommodate the need in the region. Officers are kept with the possible mental health patient during testing. Officers may travel to admit the person to the facility but if there are not any available beds the person is then transported back and placed into the local jail.	With only one emergency facility, the Panhandle lacks both available beds and mental health workers to accommodate the need in the region. Officers are kept with the possible mental health patient during testing. Officers may travel to admit the person to the facility but if there are not any available beds the person is then transported back and placed into the local jail.	Substance abuse was identified in mental health as a priority again. All agencies across the criminal justice system are dealing with substance abuse, whether it is drugs or alcohol does not matter. In the mental health sector, the use of substances goes against the effects of prescribed medication rather than aid.	There continues to be a stigma with mental health. The overall attitude is contrary to what is healthy.	With only one emergency facility, the Panhandle lacks both available beds and mental health workers to accommodate the need in the region. Patients and their families may travel to admit the person to the facility but if there are not any available, beds or the long distance results in less support from family members.
Response:	We need more facilities that are spread across the region to serve everyone. The additional facilities need to have sufficient beds available to accommodate the area they serve. Facilities need to provide their own security to stand by while a potentially mentally ill person is being tested so that officers can return to the field.	We need more facilities that are spread across the region to serve everyone. The additional facilities need to have sufficient beds available to accommodate the area they serve. Facilities need to provide their own security to stand by while a potentially mentally ill person is being tested so that officers can return to the field.	All areas of the criminal justice system need more convenient and improved access to treatment and resources. The stakeholders agree that we need better access to care and our jails need to work better with the local mental health provider on a continuum of care for post release success.	We need to change the conversation; we need to discuss both mental health and physical health to treat the whole person. Public education is needed. But also education for law enforcement, government, public health, healthcare, employers, education systems, media and community organizations.	We need more facilities that are spread across the region to serve everyone. The additional facilities need to have sufficient beds available to accommodate the area they serve. Facilities need to provide holistic care for not just the patient but also the family, as studies have shown this moves a patient to a better outcome when they have a strong collective support group around them. At the very least, the facility that is currently utilized needs to stop reducing the number of available beds.

Other

Other Agency Contributions

While conducting the strategic plan survey we reached out to various groups not just those listed above. This section includes the contributions of other agencies. Many of the same issues that were brought up by our other focus groups came up with these respondents as well. Therefore, no statistics are provided; we are simply looking at the concerns and priorities for these contributors.

Respondents provided the below feedback when asked, “What are the three areas of concern in the Criminal Justice System based upon your area of involvement?”

Courts Concerns	
Drugs and alcohol	Theft
Assault – family violence	

Education Concerns	
Shortage of law enforcement officers	Distance from law enforcement center
No random, periodic law enforcement presence	

Law Enforcement Concerns	
Prosecution of drug users at the DA level	Illegal drug use
Prosecution of repeat offenders	Juvenile crime and incarceration
Prosecution of theft of private property	Sexual assault of child
Theft	Domestic violence
Mental health issues	Staffing issues
Drug induced mental health issues	Drug related crime (theft & burglary)

Non-profit or Faith-based Organization Concerns	
Increase in domestic violence	Mental health issues
Substance abuse issues	Increase in violent crimes

Prosecution Concerns	
Staffing/Personnel	COVID-19 pandemic
State Policy/Legislation	Overcrowded jails
Reporting/Technological problems	Increased homicide
Rise in mental health issues	

Victim’s Services Concerns	
Criminal justice contacts with individuals having mental health/substance abuse issues	Substance abuse related crimes (trafficking drugs & burglaries)
Domestic violence	Substance abuse
Mental health	

Other

Regional Partnerships

We also asked respondents based on their area of involvement in the region’s criminal justice system, “Which Programs currently existing in your area are having the most positive effect on the criminal justice system locally?” We received the following responses:

Courts

Adequate Arrest Rates
Drug Enforcement
Family Violence Training for Criminal Justice Stakeholders
Alcohol Monitoring of Offenders
Legal Services
Mental Health Counseling and Therapy
Emergency Shelter
Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Programs
Law Enforcement Improvement Projects
Smart Probation

Education

Adequate Response Time
Family Violence Investigation
Uniformed Officers On Campus
Dual Diagnosis Treatment
Mental Health Training for Criminal Justice Stakeholders
Mental Health Counseling and Therapy
Substance Abuse Intervention

Non-Profit/Faith Based Organizations

Community Policing
Access to Medications
Non-Profit Substance Abuse Support
Parole Officers
Crisis Intervention
Filing Protective Orders
Hotline Counseling

Prosecution

Adequate Response Time
Speed Enforcement
Law Enforcement Training
Interlocal Potter UNK
Assistance Filing Victims Compensation Claims
Community Outreach, Awareness, and Prevention
Filing Protective Orders
Law Enforcement Improvement Projects
Specialty Courts
Crime Scene Investigation
Family Violence Investigation
Crisis Intervention Team
Veterans Services
Family Violence Investigators/Prosecutors
Diversion Programs
Forensic Examinations for Sexual Assault
Forensic Interviews for Child Abuse
Direct Victim Services
Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Programs

Victim’s Services

Adequate Arrests Rates
Adequate Response Times
Victim Assistance Advocacy
Sliding Scale Services for Low or No Income Individuals
Family Court
Crisis Intervention
Legal Services
Emergency Shelter
Transportation

Law Enforcement

Adequate Arrest Rates
Crime Scene Investigation
Victim Assistance Advocacy
Veterans Services
Family Violence Investigators and Prosecutors
Advocating on behalf of Victim for Other Service Providers, Creditors, Employers
Assisting with Immigration Status Issues
Legal Services
Direct Victim Services
Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Programs
Law Enforcement Training
Housing for People with Mental Issues
Residential Treatment Programs
Substance Abuse Detox Services
Substance Abuse Intervention
Outpatient Treatment
GPS Monitoring of Offenders
Crisis Intervention
Filing Protective Orders
Mental Health Counseling/Therapy

Other

	Mental Health	Domestic Violence	Substance Abuse	Staffing/Manpower
Data:	<p>The other sectors involved in the survey and focus groups see the ways that mental health is touching their sector too. They need to have referrals that will work, or training that will de-escalate and assist. The other sectors also want to see more facilities offering both In-Patient and Outpatient mental health care that is affordable in the region.</p>	<p>Domestic Violence is a big problem in our region and happens far too often. The region needs to do more to affect change, to eliminate family violence.</p>	<p>Substance abuse was identified in most of the sectors as a priority. All agencies across the criminal justice system are dealing with substance abuse, whether it is drugs or alcohol. Courts, Law Enforcement, Non-Profits, and Victim’s Services all see that substance abuse is a problem.</p>	<p>As mentioned previously, the region is below the state and national average in income. This can lead to losing strong employees to better salaried positions elsewhere. We are understaffed in several sectors of the criminal justice system.</p>
Response:	<p>We need to expand the mental health care to ensure that a person’s whole health is addressed. We need additional funding to open long-term care facility in the region that is affordable and provide high quality medical care. We need to educate the public about the importance of mental health and work towards eliminating the stigma.</p>	<p>The stakeholders would like to see better public education about the explosive situations of family/domestic violence. We need to help the public understand that it is a community’s problem. The public needs to report abuse they need to believe a victim and understand that resources are available. Encourage survivors to obtain counseling to stop the cycle of abuse from continuing. The region also wants to hold offenders accountable.</p>	<p>We need treatment programs for both In-Patient and Out-Patient to treat those affected. The region has a big need for affordable programs within our own counties. While some may choose to go out of the region to a treatment program due to the stigma, others do not have that option and we need to enable positive treatment and healing.</p>	<p>We need to retrain great employees and pay them what they are worth. We need to review budgets to ensure that the right resources are used and that pay is commensurate with the rest of the state and nation. We need to be fully staffed to ensure that everyone touched by the criminal justice system is served properly.</p>

Other

Regional Partnerships

Included below are the resources identified by the Panhandle Regional Planning Commission Team that are available to provide services that could potentially help in closing criminal justice gaps. The services listed that are available are broken up by discipline to illustrate who is doing what.

Juvenile Justice

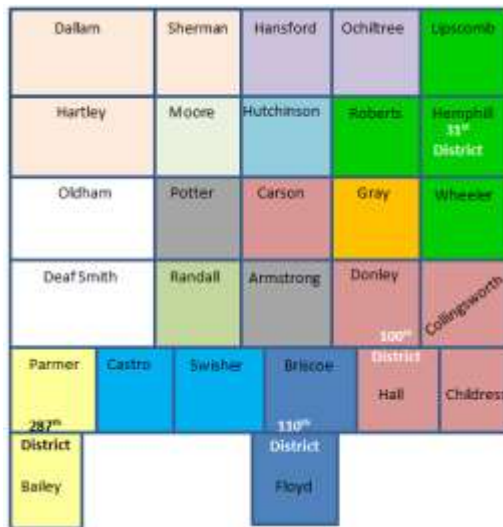
Listed below are the law enforcement-based juvenile justice programs operated throughout the region.

Amarillo ISD	Liaison Officer Program/In-School Police Department
The Amarillo ISD has an in-school Liaison Officer Program to serve as a law enforcement component at the campuses of AISD and is also starting to build their own police department.	
Borger ISD	Liaison Officer Program
The community of Borger has an in-school Liaison Officer Program to serve as a law enforcement component at all campuses of the BISD.	
Bushland ISD	Liaison Officer Program
The Bushland Independent School District has contracted with the Potter County Sheriff's Office to provide an on-campus officer.	
Canyon ISD	Liaison Officer Program
The Canyon ISD has an in-school Liaison Officer Program to serve as a law enforcement component at the campuses of CISD.	
Childress ISD Police Department	Liaison Officer Program
The Childress Independent School District has contract with the Childress Police Department to provide a School Resource Officer on the ISD campuses.	
Dalhart ISD Police Department	In-School Police Department
The Dalhart Independent School District has elected to fund a police department specifically for the school campus and properties.	
Dumas ISD Police Department	In-School Police Department
The Dumas Independent School District deals in 38 languages due to the refugee population that has migrated to the county to work at the meat packing plant.	
Highland Park ISD Police Department	In-School Police Department
HPISD is a rural school district that serves students from the unincorporated areas of Potter and Carson Counties. HPISD is located near the Potter County Detention Center, a large meat packing facility, inter-state railroad tracks and two major highways.	
Panhandle ISD	Liaison Officer Program
The community of Panhandle has an in-school Liaison Officer Program to serve as a law enforcement component at the three campuses of PISD.	
Youth Center of the High Plains	Detention Center
The Youth Center of the High Plains is located just south of Amarillo in Randall County. It serves the 26 counties of the 26,000 square miles of the Texas Panhandle. The Center provides mainly detention services but also offers specialized services in substance abuse and mental health services.	

Other

Juvenile Probation Departments

The map below depicts the areas served by the Panhandle Region's 13 Juvenile Probation Departments.



The list of Probation Departments in the region includes the following:

31st Judicial District Juvenile Probation Department

Hemphill County, Lipscomb County, Roberts County & Wheeler County

100th Judicial District Juvenile Probation Department

Childress County, Collingsworth County, Donley County & Hall County

110th Judicial District Juvenile Probation Department

Briscoe County & Floyd County

287th Judicial District Juvenile Probation Department

Parmer County & Bailey County

Castro/Swisher County Judicial District Juvenile Probation Department

Castro County & Swisher County

Dallam/Hartley/Sherman County Juvenile Probation Department

Dallam County, Hartley County & Sherman County

Deaf Smith County Juvenile Probation Department

Deaf Smith County & Oldham County

Gray County Juvenile Probation Department

Gray County

Hutchinson County Juvenile Probation Department

Hutchinson County

Ochiltree/Hansford County Juvenile Probation Department

Hansford County & Ochiltree County

Potter/Armstrong County Juvenile Probation Department

Armstrong County & Potter County

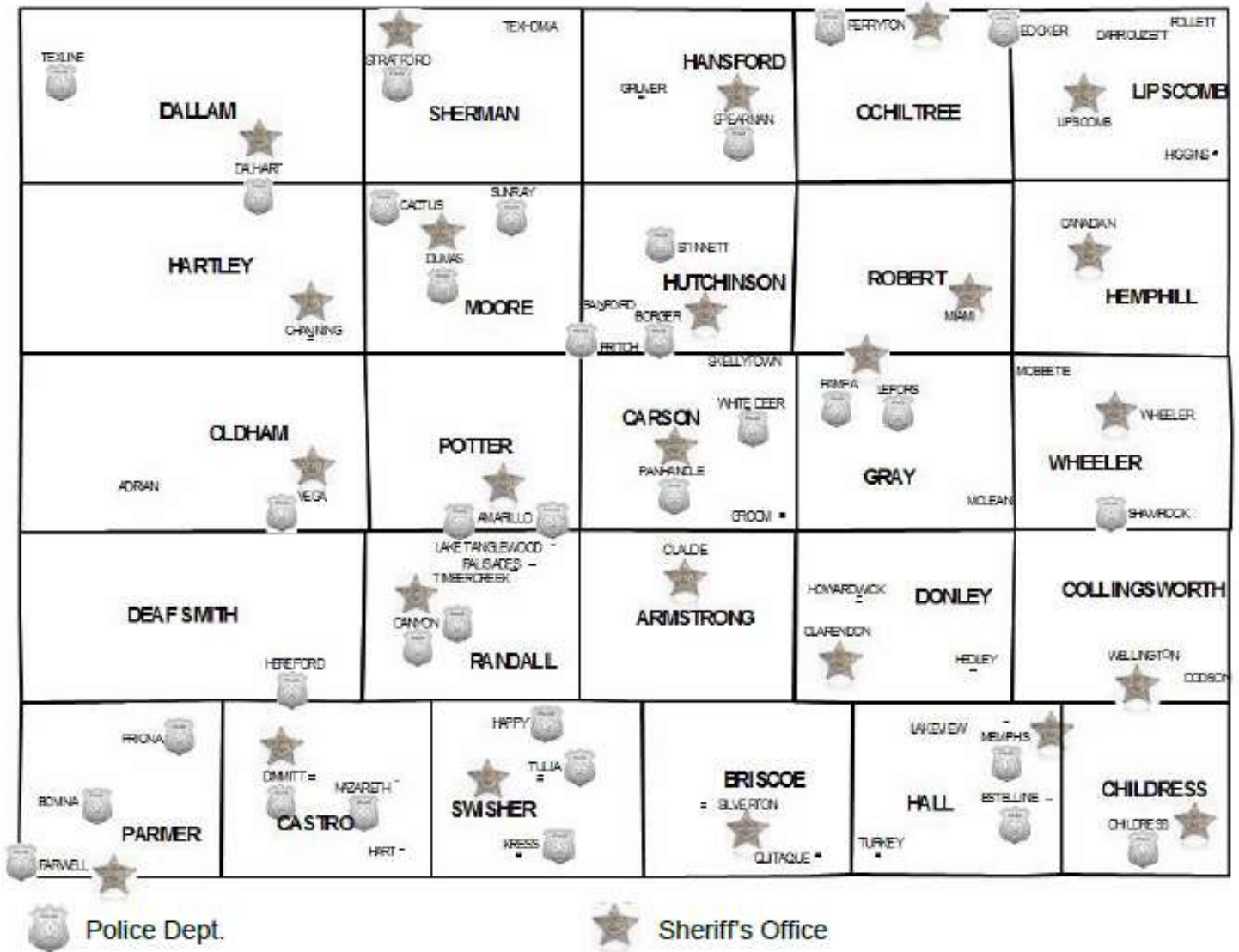
Randall County Juvenile Probation Department

Randall County

Other

Law Enforcement

The map below depicts the geographic distribution of municipal and county law enforcement agencies within the region.



Other

The list of Sheriff's Offices and Police Departments in the region includes the following:

County	Agency	# of Comm'd Officers	# of Comm'd Dispatchers	# of Other Personnel	Population Served	Officer/ Resident Ratio	Officer/ Land Area Ratio
Armstrong	Armstrong County Sheriff's Office	4	3	0	1,839	1/460	1/227
Briscoe	Briscoe County Sheriff's Office	4	0	0	1,403	1/351	1/225
	Caprock Canyon State Park	2	0	8	Park Visitors		1/12
	Lake Mackenzie Police Department	1	0	4	Lake Visitors		1/896
Carson	Carson County Sheriff's Office	10	12	2	1,766	1/177	1/92
	Panhandle Police Department	3	0	0	2,714	1/905	
	Skellytown Marshal's Office	1	0	0	406	1/406	
	White Deer Police Department	1	0	0	860	1/860	
Castro	Castro County Sheriff's Office	7	6	11	3,268	1/467	1/128
	Dimmitt Police Department	7	1	1	4,106	1/587	
Childress	Childress County Sheriff's Office	5	4	13	892	1/178	1/139
	Childress Police Department	9	0	1	5,844	1/649	
Collingsworth	Collingsworth Sheriff's Office	2	5	0	2,615	1/1308	1/459
Dallam	Dallam County Sheriff's Office	6	0	1	7,172	1/1195	1/251
	Dalhart Police Department *	10	0	4	8,347	1/835	
	Texline Marshal's Office	8	0	0	315	1/315	
Deaf Smith	Deaf Smith County Sheriff's Office	9	3	31	3,550	1/394	1/166
	Hereford Police Department	28	5	1	14,779	1/528	
Donley	Donley County Sheriff's Office	6	5	0	3,268	1/545	1/154
Gray	Gray County Sheriff's Office	12	0	1	4,036	1/336	1/77
	Lefors Marshal's Office	1	0	0	520	1/520	
	Pampa Police Department	28	11	2	16,474	1/588	
Hall	Hall County Sheriff's Office	4	4	1	578	1/145	1/221
	Memphis Police Department	4	0	0	2,267	1/567	

Other

County	Agency	# of Comm'd Officers	# of Comm'd Dispatchers	# of Other Personnel	Population Served	Officer/Resident Ratio	Officer/Land Area Ratio
Hansford	Hansford County Sheriff's Office	7	6	0	2,036	1/291	1/131
	Spearman Police Department	4	0	0	3,123	1/781	
Hartley	Hartley County Sheriff's Office	6	0	3	5,397	1/900	1/244
Hemphill	Hemphill County Sheriff's Office	6	6	1	2,271	1/545	1/151
Hutchinson	Hutchinson County Sheriff's Office	13	0	22	4,042	1/311	1/68
	Borger Police Department	23	9	2	12,419	1/428	
	Borger City Marshal's Office	1	0	0	12,419	1/12,419	
	Fritch Police Department	4	1	0	2,630	1/658	
	Stinnett Police Department	3	0	1	1,404	1/468	
Lipscomb	Lipscomb County Sheriff's Office	4	5	0	2,931	1/733	1/233
Moore	Moore County Sheriff's Office	19	9	6	1,321	1/70	1/47
	Cactus Police Department	11	0	3	3,252	1/296	
	Dumas Police Department	22	0	4	14,290	1/650	
Ochiltree	Sunray Police Department	4	0	1	2,255	1/564	
	Ochiltree County Sheriff's Office	5	5	11	1,493	1/299	1/184
Oldham	Perryton Police Department	13	7	2	8,289	1/638	
	Oldham County Sheriff's Office	6	5	0	1,717	1/286	1/250
Parmer	Vega Police Department	1	0	0	975	1/975	
	Parmer County Sheriff's Office	6	5	7	3,127	1/521	1/147
	Bovina Police Department	3	0	0	1,315	1/438	
	Farwell Police Department	1	0	0	1,535	1/1,535	
	Friona Police Department	5	5	0	3,836	1/767	

Other

County	Agency	# of Comm'd Officers	# of Comm'd Dispatchers	# of Other Personnel	Population Served	Officer/ Resident Ratio	Officer/ Land Area Ratio
Potter	Potter County Sheriff's Office	107	15	13	116,547	1/1,089	1/8
	Amarillo Airport Police Department	13	0	0	Traveling Public		
	Amarillo College Police Department	11	2	0	11,675	1/1,061	
	Amarillo Police Department**	366	59	67	201,234	1/550	
	Baptist St. Anthony's Hospital Security***	11	0	0	NA		
	Northwest Texas Hospital Security****	2	0	18	NA		
Randall	Randall County Sheriff's Office	189	10	17	120,725	1/639	1/5
	Canyon Police Department	22	0	3	15,221	1/692	
	Lake Tanglewood Police Department	10	0	0	721	1/72	
	Palo Duro Canyon State Park	1	0	0	Park Visitors		1/46
	Timbercreek Canyon Police Department	2	0	0	492	1/246	
	West Texas A&M University Police Dept.	17	6	2	9,581	1/564	
Roberts	Roberts County Sheriff's Office	4	1	0	797	1/199	1/231
Sherman	Sherman County Sheriff's Office	4	7	0	2,798	1/700	1/231
	Stratford Police Department	2	0	0	1,905	1/953	
	Swisher	Swisher County Sheriff's Office	2	0	6	1,709	1/855
	Happy Police Department	1	0	0	636	1/636	
	Kress Police Department	1	0	0	871	1/871	
	Tulia Police Department	9	5	1	4,663	1/518	
Wheeler	Wheeler County Sheriff's Office	10	14	0	4,927	1/493	1/91

*1/2 of Dalhart is in Hartley County

**1/2 of Amarillo is in Randall County

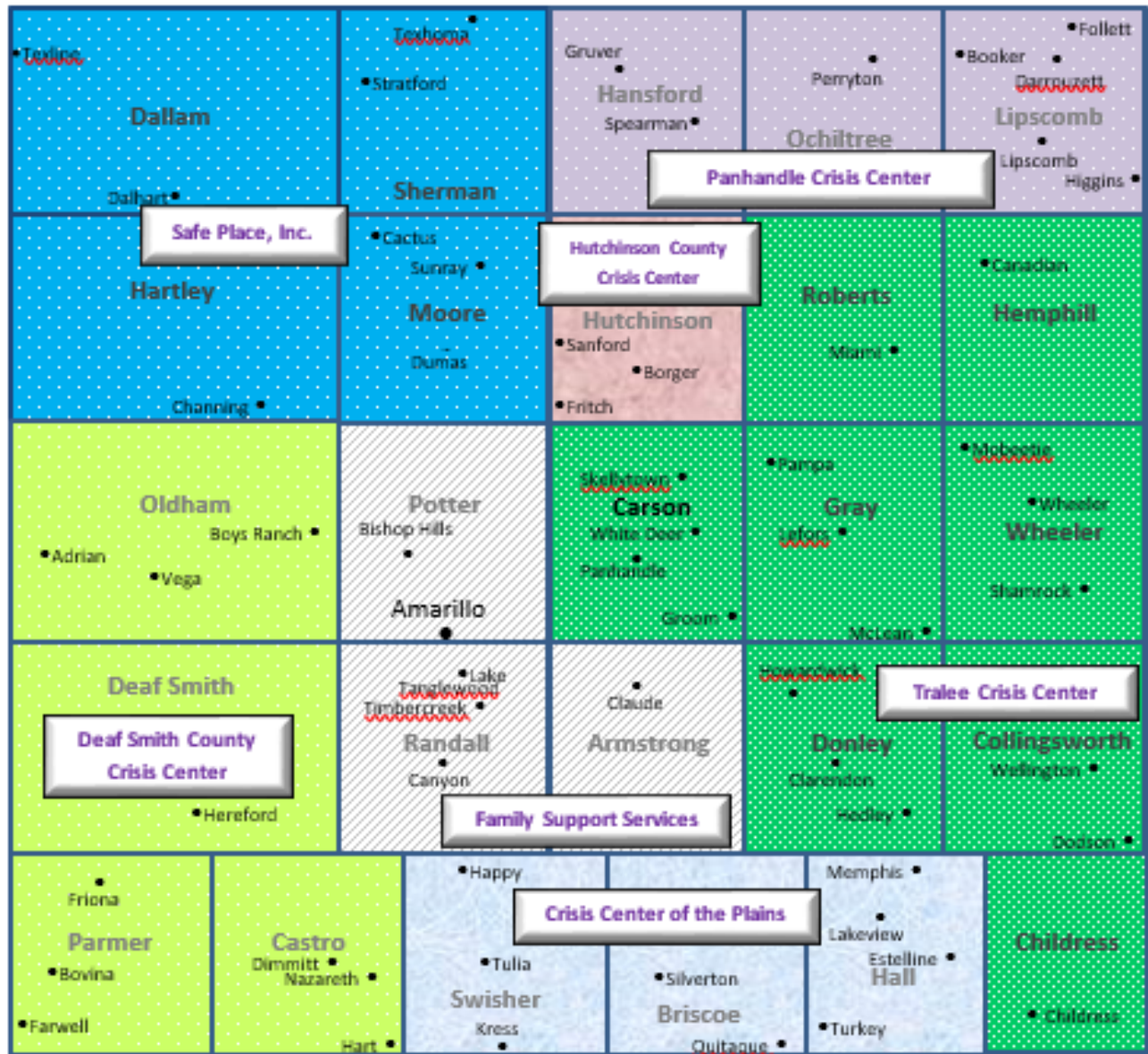
***Baptist St. Anthony's Hospital is a 350-bed level IV Basic Trauma facility

****Northwest Texas Hospital is a 459-bed level III Advanced Trauma facility

Other

Victim Services

The map below depicts the service areas of the domestic violence programs in the region. Several of the programs listed below serve the entire 26-county area.



Other

Arrow Child and Family Ministries

Family Violence Center

Arrow Family Ministries is located in Amarillo and serves the 26-county area of the Panhandle region. Arrow offers emergency shelter and foster placement services for victims of family violence. Arrow provides long-term counseling services and case management.

The Bridge Children's Advocacy Center

Children's Advocacy Center

Serving all 26 counties of the 26,000 square miles of the Texas Panhandle, The Bridge offers legal assistance and forensic interviewing services to children who become victims of family and sexual violence. Currently offering classes for law enforcement and victim service agencies on cross training of how everyone fits into child abuse.

Crisis Center of the Plains

Family Violence Crisis Center

The Crisis Center of the Plains is a 25-bed facility with 11 fulltime staff members located in Plainview, Texas, which is outside the PRPC service area. However, it serves three Panhandle counties: Briscoe County, which includes the City of Quitaque and the City of Silverton, Hall County, which includes the City of Estelline, City of Lakeview, the City of Memphis and the City of Turkey, and Swisher County, which includes the City of Happy, the City of Kress and the City of Tulia. Combined these counties have 11,256 residents and cover 2,707 square miles.

Deaf Smith County Crisis Center

Family Violence Center

Deaf Smith County Crisis Center has a staff of four that serves 37,233 residents of a multi-county area covering 4,738 square miles. Deaf Smith County Crisis Center offers legal advocacy and counseling to victims of family violence. Deaf Smith County Crisis Center serves Castro county, which includes the City of Dimmitt, the City of Hart and the City of Nazareth. As well as Deaf Smith County which includes the City of Hereford and Oldham County which includes the City of Adrian, the City of Boys Ranch and the City of Vega and Parmer County which includes the City of Bovina, the City of Farwell and the City of Friona. The crisis center does not have an emergency shelter.

Family Support Services

Family Violence Long-Term Service Agency

Family Support Services (FSS) is located in Amarillo and has 53 fulltime and 14 part-time staff members along with four volunteer staff members and four interns who offer services to victims with a 26-bed emergency shelter. FSS also provides services for perpetrators on crime through their counseling, BIPP, Veterans Resource Center, HOPES and Shelter Kennel programs. FSS offers counseling for victims of all types of abuse. FSS will serve any resident of the 26,000 square miles of the Panhandle region; however, their main focus is on three (3) Counties. Those three are comprised of Armstrong County, which includes the City of Claude, Potter County, which includes the City of Bishops Hills and the City of Amarillo, and Randall County, which includes the City of Canyon, the Village of Lake Tanglewood and the Village of Timbercreek Canyon. These three counties span 2,758 square miles and have 262,240 residents within their boundaries.

Other

Hutchinson County Crisis Center

Family Violence Crisis Center

Hutchinson County Crisis Center (HC3) is a 14 bed emergency shelter with a staff of eight based in Borger, Texas. The center serves the residents of Hutchinson County with includes the City of Borger, The City of Fritch, the City of Sanford and the City of Stinnett and Carson County, which includes the City of Groom, the City of Panhandle, the City of Skellytown and the City of White Deer. HC3 covers a service area of 1,819 square miles and serves 20,495 residents. The center provides emergency housing for women and children as well as legal advocacy, intervention, peer services and information and referral, transportation and advocacy.

No Boundaries International

Sex Trafficking Violence Advocacy Group

No Boundaries International is located in the City of Amarillo. As an outreach organization, the all-volunteer staff of eight is working to respond to the needs of those within the human trafficking industry. No Boundaries works with victims who are ready to get out of trafficking by placing the victims in shelters. They serve the entire 26 county area of the Panhandle.

Panhandle Crisis Center

Family Violence Crisis Center

Panhandle Crisis Center (PCC) serves Hansford County, which includes the City of Gruver and the City of Spearman, Lipscomb County, which includes the City of Booker, the City of Darrouzett, the City of Follett, the City of Higgins and the City of Lipscomb and Ochiltree County, which includes the City of Perryton. The PCC service area is 2,770 square miles with 17,872 residents. It is an eight-bed emergency housing facility with a staff of 19. The center offers job training at their on-site retail thrift store as well as victim advocacy services.

Potter County Victim Services Program

Legal Advocacy

The Potter County Victim Services Program offers legal and emergency assistance to victims of crime and family violence. Offices are located in Amarillo and serve the 116,547 residents of the 922 square miles of Potter County.

Other

The table below provides a listing of the service areas currently served by the family violence programs in the region.

Agency	Counties Served	Population	Square Miles of Service Area
Crisis Center of the Plains	Briscoe Castro Hall Swisher	18,630	2,707
Deaf Smith County Crisis Center	Castro Deaf Smith Oldham Parmer	37,233	4,783
Family Support Services	Armstrong Potter Randall	262,240	2,758
Hutchinson County Crisis Center	Hutchinson	20,495	887
Panhandle Crisis Center	Hansford Lipscomb Ochiltree	17,872	2,770
Safe Place, Inc.	Dallam Hartley Moore Sherman	36,485	4,799
Tralee Crisis Center	Carson Childress Collingsworth Donley Gray Hemphill Roberts Wheeler	48,390	8,090

Other

The table below provides a listing of other victim service agencies in the region.

Agency	Counties Served	Population	Square Miles of Service Area
Arrow Child & Family Ministries	All 26 counties in the region	433,971	26,000
The Bridge Children’s Advocacy Center	All 26 counties in the region	433,971	26,000
No Boundaries International	Potter Randall	260,401	1,819
Potter County Victim Services Program	Potter	116,547	908
Randall County Victim Services Program	Randall	143,854	911

Mental Health

Amarillo Area Mental Health Consumers – Agape Center

Advocacy

The Agape Center is an independent peer support recovery center working to organize, educate and train people with mental illness to advocate for themselves and support each other in their recovery.

Amarillo Veteran Affairs Health Care System

Veteran Health Care Facility

The Amarillo VA Health Care System has 164 inpatient beds to serve veterans. The mental health service provides care for seriously mentally ill, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, homeless veterans and substance abusing veterans through collaboration with other community agencies.

The Pavilion

Private Mental Health Facility

The Pavilion serves as the only emergency mental health facility in the 26,000 square miles of the Texas Panhandle. The facility has 90 beds to provide treatment for mental health disorders for inpatients however; the facility also provides outpatient services for substance abuse. It is a private facility and admission is based on a patient’s ability to pay unless it is a life-threatening situation.

Other

Texas Correctional Office of Offenders with Medical or Mental Impairments

Provides a formal structure for criminal justice, health and human service, and other affected organizations to communicate and coordinate on policy, legislative, and programmatic issues affecting offenders with special needs. Special needs include offenders with serious mental illnesses, intellectual and developmental disabilities, terminal or serious medical conditions, physical disabilities and those who are elderly.

Texas Panhandle Centers

Mental Health Services

Texas Panhandle Centers provides services to individuals with mental illness, intellectual, developmental disabilities, and children with developmental delays. The Texas Panhandle Center serves the upper 21 counties of the region.

Substance Abuse

Amarillo Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (ACADA)

Outpatient Counseling Services

ACADA offers counseling services on a sliding-cost-scale as well as Medicaid. Services are offered at their location and include group-counseling sessions.

Amarillo Recovery from Alcohol and Drugs (ARAD)

Homeless Outpatient Program

ARAD is a comprehensive outpatient program for not just the person struggling with addiction, but also their family. ARAD provides individualized treatment for addiction to drugs or alcohol.

Dailey Recovery Service

Outpatient Substance Abuse Treatment

Dailey Recovery provides substance abuse treatment and education for recovery. The service also offers relapse prevention tools and techniques to encourage a client's independence in sobriety. Dailey Recovery Service now offers COPSD services in addition to other counseling and recovery programs.

Life Challenge of Amarillo

Men's Inpatient Substance Abuse Recovery Program

Life Challenge is a faith-based residential treatment program for men with substance abuse issues. There is a one-time fee of \$750.00 for the program. Residents would complete their detox stage at a medical facility (i.e., The Pavilion). The program coordinates with the court and probation departments.

Panhandle Mamas

Advocacy

A Chapter of Mothers Against Methamphetamines whose goal is to significantly reduce methamphetamine use in the Texas Panhandle through community action. They are focused on drug use prevention, community awareness and education.

Other

Potter and Randall Intervention and Drug Education

Adolescent Outpatient Counseling Services

P.R.I.D.E. Potter and Randall Intervention and Drug Education provides free services including; individual counseling, group counseling, case management, parenting programs, diversion programs and prevention programs on an outpatient basis for adolescents.

Professional Counseling and Biofeedback Center

Outpatient Substance Abuse Treatment

The Professional Counseling and Biofeedback Center provides professional counseling, biofeedback and addiction treatment to persons in the Amarillo area. The center provides treatment for children, adolescents, adults, individuals, couples and families. The program is based on private insurance payments.

Other

Amarillo Activity Youth Center

The Amarillo Activity Youth Center is working with the City's youth to provide a safe, fun, and affordable place for recreational activities. The youth and families can enjoy various programs in an alcohol/drug free environment.

Arrow Child & Family Ministries

A nonprofit corporation that provides emergency shelter and foster placement for abused and abandoned children in Child Protection Services (CPS) custody.

Domestic Violence Coalition

Law Enforcement in Potter and Randall Counties along with the District and County Attorneys offices have formed a coalition to better fight against the high rate of family violence that is plaguing the region.

Impact Futures!

Impact Futures! provides awareness and leadership toward education of professionals, parents, youth and community members regarding substance abuse prevention, intervention, and treatment in the Texas Panhandle. The ultimate mission of Impact Futures! is to ensure a healthier community by building assets and protective factors in the community.

Martha's Home

Located in Amarillo, Martha's Home provides homeless women and their children with shelter and support while guiding them towards a lifestyle of self-sufficiency.

Panhandle Council for the Deaf

Offers certified sign language interpreters and have an equipment demonstration room for specialized telecommunication devices for anyone with difficulty using a telephone.

Other

Panhandle Electronic Warrant System (PEWS)

A system for the electronic execution and delivery of certain warrants and related court documents to automate the complaint – to – warrant service processes. PEWS is a joint effort by law enforcement, courts, district attorneys and dispatch to create a safer public and more efficient execution of documents.

Samaritan Pastoral Counseling Center of Amarillo, Inc.

Samaritan Pastoral Counseling Center provides faith-based counseling services to individuals, couples, families, and children in the Panhandle area. Samaritan Pastoral Counseling Center is an extension of the Church’s pastoral care ministry. Services provided by licensed counselors trained to deal with various issues such as depression, grief, abuse, divorce, family issues, and many additional problems. The center offers monetary assistance for those unable to pay the full fee.

The High Plains Children’s Home and Family Services, Inc.

The High Plains Children’s Home is fundamentally committed to the physical, emotional and spiritual health of society’s youth who are orphaned, outcast, homeless, neglected, abused or otherwise taken advantage of; the Home nurtures each child in an environment of love, security, productivity, social maturity and trust in God.

Texas Workforce Center

Youth program connects people ages 14 to 21 including those with disabilities, with work experiences and training for basic skills.



Figure 9: Randall County, photo courtesy of Ben Bennett

Other

Regional Solutions

From the survey respondents we received the following answers when asked, “Which criminal justice programs or initiatives should be the focus for the region in the coming year?” The responses illustrate the region’s view as to the types of programs needed to meet the current gaps in the Panhandle’s Criminal Justice system as to who can work with whom to provide the best regional solutions to meet our biggest issues for the Panhandle region.



The information along with the feedback obtained during the focus group conversations gives us our new starting point to begin molding the criminal justice system into what we endeavor to have. Agencies continue to look for avenues that allow them to work with others across the system. We have had successes in the past when we have gone across the system to other agencies to resolve a case. This has led to better teamwork and an expanded view of how the entire criminal justice system can come together for the good of the community and the residents that we serve.

During the focus groups, Panhandle Regional Planning Commission encouraged officers to reach out to us when they find courses or subject matter that would be beneficial for training efforts. The focus groups were told to think outside of the box, to talk about anything regardless of whether it had been implemented elsewhere or not. We need to remove our own boundaries when looking for solutions to issues that we have yet to overcome.

Other

Several people committed to adding public education into their everyday activities. A quick conversation in passing with a person at the grocery store or sporting event can begin to spark a change in attitudes from the public. That includes mental health awareness, positive perception of law enforcement, struggles faced by victims, and the community's duty in assisting those around them.

In 2017 a group consisting of county commissioners, Judges, Attorneys, Jail Administration, Criminal Justice Scholars and PRPC staff formed an exploratory subcommittee to look at the Indigent Defense System currently in place in Potter and Armstrong Counties. The group tried to add Randall County because of the way that the City of Amarillo lies as well as the structure of the District Attorney's Offices. This committee continued to meet as they knew that the region needs a better system for indigent defense. After studies conducted through the Sixth Amendment Center, the Texas Indigent Defense Commission and DOJ Indigent Defense System Evaluation, the committee was able to put together a path for the creation of a Public Defender/Managed Assigned Council office. This committee then created bylaws and appointed the PD/MAC Advisory Committee to oversee the Directors. In February, 2022 the PD/MAC Advisory Committee then interviewed and hired a Director for the Public Defender office and a Director for the Managed Assigned Council office. As these two offices work both separately and jointly to ensure that indigent defendants in Potter and Armstrong Counties receive the representation that the Constitution promised, we know that we are moving in the right direction. As this office grows and works out its kinks, we anticipate that other counties within the region will join. Proving that regionalism and a steady focus on what is right will continue to be strengths that the Panhandle is known for.



Figure 10: Caprock Canyons State Park, Briscoe County, photo courtesy of Lori Gunn

Other

Future Steps and Implementation

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

The Panhandle Regional Planning Commission Planning Team strives to meet periodically to review the Strategic Plan and make necessary additions and deletions. At least one formal meeting of the entire group is held each fall, but agency and community representatives typically submit suggestions and changes via telephone and e-mail throughout the year to the Planning Coordinator to establish where we go from here.



Figure 11: Palo Duro Canyon State Park, Randall County, photo courtesy of Lori Gunn

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

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

As we work towards reducing crime and the impacts that criminal activity have on the well-being of the Panhandle's residents we are striving to meet both our short and long-term goals. Agencies are continuing to build teams to address the issues in a holistic method. Whether

meetings are held in person or via group teleconferences, we are promoting a continuous and open dialogue with various agencies to begin a best practices outline for their staff. Successes and failures alike can be discussed to construct new programs/services or build upon the current ones. As the criminal justice system's landscape changes, we will be adapting alongside of it to best serve the residents of the Panhandle region. We are already building upon the issues that we pinpointed in years prior. We are working towards making the panhandle region an even better place to live, work and play.

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