

**HEART OF TEXAS COUNCIL OF
GOVERNMENTS REGIONAL
CRIMINAL JUSTICE PLAN
2019**

**A Strategic Plan for meeting the
Criminal Justice needs of the
HOTCOG Region**



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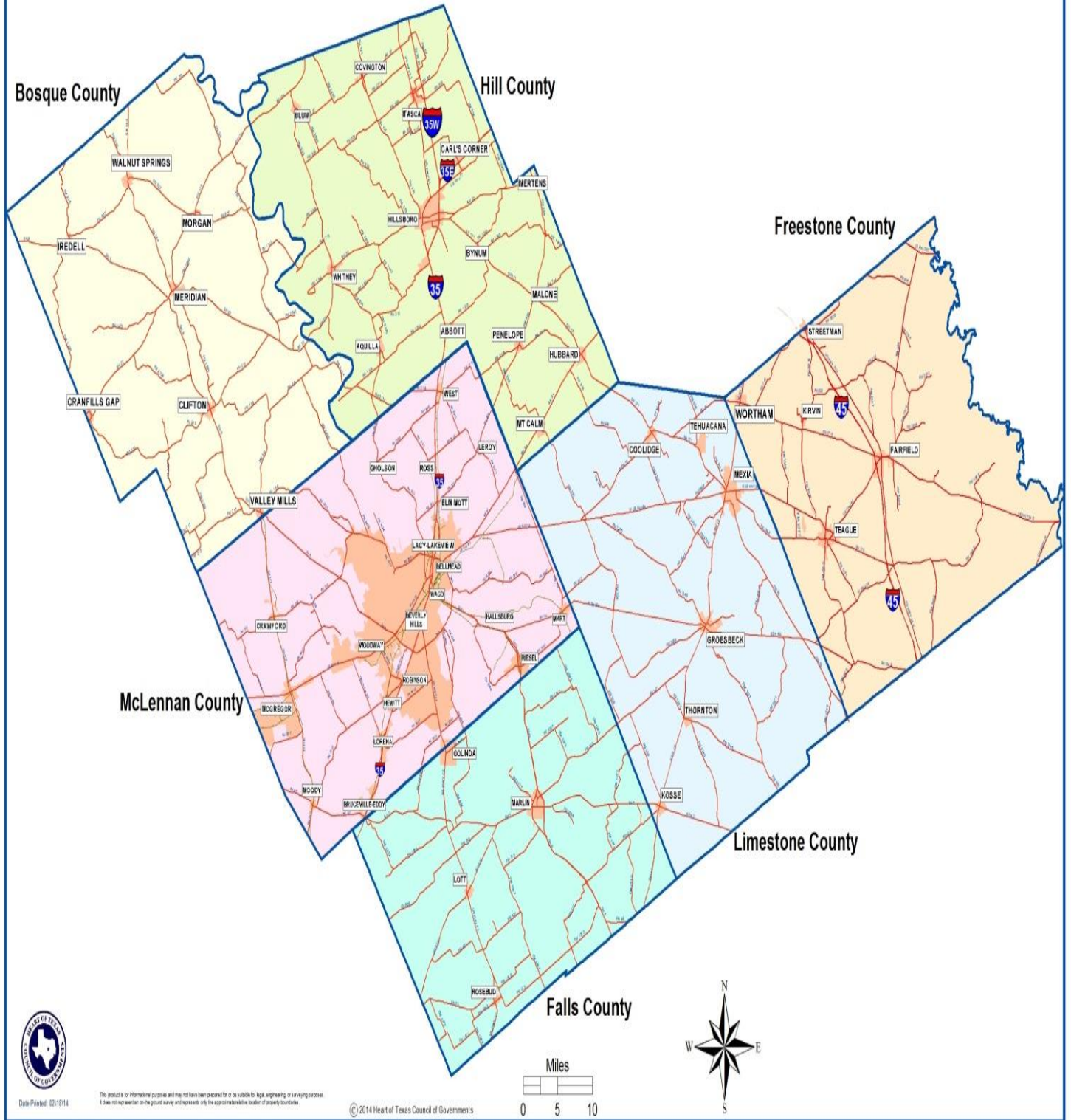
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Regional Profile

The Heart of Texas Council of Governments (HOTCOG):

- is an organization of local governments working together voluntarily to solve mutual problems and plan for the future of the six county area
- has over 80 member governments made up of counties, cities, school districts, community colleges, and special districts
- was originally established in 1966
- serves a geographic area covering Bosque, Falls, Freestone, Hill, Limestone and McLennan counties
- contains 5611 sq miles with a population of 349,273 (2010 US Census)
- contains 57 incorporated and 4 unincorporated communities
- includes 51 school districts
- two major interstates cross through our counties; I35 through Hill, McLennan and touches Falls; I45 through Freestone County

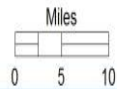
Heart of Texas Council of Governments



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Executive Summary

The HOTCOG Regional Strategic Plan encompasses the six counties; Bosque, Falls, Freestone, Hill, Limestone, and McLennan. This centrally located area contains 5611 square miles with a population of 349,273 (2010 US Census). Two major interstates cross through the counties; Interstate 35 and Interstate 45.

This Strategic Plan identifies the regional needs in the areas of Law Enforcement, Juvenile Justice, Victim Services, Violent Crimes Against Women, and Mental Health and Substance Abuse. The information is derived from an on-going community planning process conducted by the Criminal Justice Planner of the Heart of Texas Council of Governments on an annual basis. Each year, Community Planners are called together or asked for input by email with a goal of keeping the plans current with needs, gaps, and priorities identified. Each county has a Community Planning Team responsible for submitting updates and informing the HOTCOG Criminal Justice Planner of additional resources available.

A critical resource to creating this document is the HOTCOG Criminal Justice Advisory Committee (CJAC). The Committee met and reviewed the six county community plans and determined the top priorities to be addressed in this Strategic Plan. Additionally, last year the committee created a survey to further poll community planners and determine needs in the six counties. All of the information gathered will be used in determining future goals and funding needs.

In the area of Law Enforcement the following priorities were identified as needing to be addressed in this current year: Transport of Mental Health Individuals, Equipment Deficiencies or Training, Evidence Security/Storage Capabilities, Substance Abuse, and Crime Prevention or Animal Control.

The following Juvenile Justice issues were identified as regional priorities: Delinquent Behavior/Truancy, Alcohol/Substance Abuse, Counseling Services/Aftercare/Case Management, Diversion, and Mental Health Services.

Regarding Victim Assistance needs the CJAC identified the following as priorities: Support Services, On-scene Victim Services, Case Management, and Education and Training.

The Violent Crimes Against Women priorities are: Support Services, On-scene Victim Services, Case Management, Education and Training, and Increased collaboration and communication across all levels of government and among all victim services.

As for the area of Mental Health and Substance Abuse, the following priorities were drawn from the community plans: Transport of Mental Health Individuals, Limited beds for short/long-term services, Need for indigent services, and Substance Abuse.

It is the intent of the HOTCOG Regional Planning Teams to improve outcomes for families struggling with problems described in the plan's focus areas. Efforts are being made by many 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 Teams will continue to encourage agencies to provide services that address the outlined focus areas.

Victim services in all areas should continue to be a priority. The Region should continue to look for ways to expand all victim services to the rural counties to include programs that offer counseling, sheltering, victim assistance, as well as education.

The HOTCOG Region as a whole must continue to search for and obtain federal, state, and local funding to ensure that its law enforcement agencies, courts, and detention facilities are equipped with up-to-date equipment and training to provide the highest level of service to the communities served.

REGIONAL PLANNING

Biannually the HOTCOG Criminal Justice Planner meets with the Community Planners in each county to update their County Community Plan. After the plans are updated, they are posted on the www.hotcog.org website. The Community Planners are elected officials, chiefs, sheriffs, city managers, city secretaries, concerned citizens, probation officials, victim advocates and coordinators, law enforcement officers, emergency management coordinators, district attorney staff, Department of State Health Services staff, and others that are concerned about the welfare of their county.

An agency that plans to apply for criminal justice funds from the Office of the Governor Criminal Justice Division through the Heart of Texas Criminal Justice Advisory Committee (CJAC) must ensure that the need their application will address is included in the County Community Plan.

In 2018 the Criminal Justice Advisory Committee (CJAC) for the Heart of Texas Region created a survey to further gather information on the needs of the region as well as the services provided. It was sent to the Community Planners in the six counties. The results will be discussed by category in the next few pages and considered in all future planning processes.



Juvenile Justice Priorities

Priority #1	
Problem Identified	Data
Delinquent Behavior/Truancy	There is substantial evidence that youth who become truant will eventually dropout of school and put themselves at high risk of becoming disadvantaged unproductive citizens.
Potential Response to Problem	
School Resource Officers, offer full range of services to youth and parents, intervention, prevention, diversion programs, school programs, summer camps and other positive activities, First Time Offender program, Teen Court, Drug Court, DARE, and other productive programs, outpatient counseling	

Priority #2	
Problem Identified	Data
Alcohol/Substance Abuse	Lack of community based services prevention or treatment programs
Potential Response to Problem	
More funding for long and short-term treatment, early identification/diagnosis, outpatient counseling, prevention alternatives and education	

Priority #3	
Problem Identified	Data
Counseling Services/Aftercare/Case Mgmt	Most communities have to travel out of the county for juvenile or family counseling services
Potential Response to Problem	
More accessible outpatient counseling, more treatment centers for adolescents, programs for bullying, first offenders, prevention, support, families, parents, need more local counselors	

Priority #4	
Problem Identified	Data
Diversion	Lack of programs and mentors in rural communities
Potential Response to Problem	
Support for funding agencies offering services, encourage involvement in school activities, after-school programs, life skills training, vocational training, mentoring programs, Drug Court, Teen Court. Some counties are able to offer services to juveniles through Drug Court programs and their probation departments. It is the juvenile that is not in the system that may slip between the cracks because there are not enough services available to them.	

<i>Priority #5</i>	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
Mental Health Services	Lack of transitional services for youth
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
Transportation for youth needing to travel to larger services areas for services, more services in rural counties, more State and local beds	

Additional information gathered from the survey: Services important for juveniles; after school programs, bullying prevention, character building, community education, community services, diversion programs, family stability, job skills training, life skills, mentoring, parent education, substance abuse prevention, substance abuse early intervention, suicide prevention and intervention, tobacco use prevention, truancy prevention, and violence prevention.

Victim Services Priorities

<i>Priority #1</i>	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
Support Services	Direct services needed to victims of child abuse, domestic violence, sexual assault, other violent crimes, and promotion of victim restoration
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
Promote collaboration of service agencies, Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners in each county	

<i>Priority #2</i>	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
On-scene Victim Services	Limited law enforcement and public awareness of services offered, limited bi-lingual services
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
Increase awareness to all agencies, promote coordination among agencies, develop a team of on-scene volunteers	

<i>Priority #3</i>	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
Case Management	Need for long and short-term care and transportation to those services, need for local counselors and assistance coordinators
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
Identify funding sources to increase number of counselors and sustain them	

<i>Priority #4</i>	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
Education and Training	Increase public and agency awareness of services
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
Develop a team of trained on-scene volunteers	

Information gathered from the 2018 survey: What services are most important to servicing victims; assisting with immigration status issues, community awareness/outreach/prevention, forensic exams for sexual assault victims, information and referral, mental health assistance, specialized training for professionals, volunteer recruitment/training.

Violent Crimes Against Women Priorities

<i>Priority #1</i>	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
Support Services	Direct services needed to victim's abuse, domestic violence, and promotion of victim restoration
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
Promote collaboration of service agencies, increase outreach, access and availability to rural areas, increase transportation to shelters and counselors	

<i>Priority #2</i>	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
On-scene Victim Services	Limited law enforcement and public awareness of services offered, limited bi-lingual services
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
Increase awareness to all agencies, promote coordination among agencies, develop a team of on-scene volunteers	

<i>Priority #3</i>	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
Case Management	Lack of counselors in rural areas
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
Identify funding sources to increase number of counselors and sustain them	

<i>Priority #4</i>	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
Education and Training	Increase public and agency awareness of services
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
Develop a team of trained on-scene volunteers	

<i>Priority #5</i>	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
Increase collaboration and communication across all levels of government and among all victim services	Community Response and Coordination Groups meeting in each county, Networking meetings offered through HOTCOG
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
Encourage involvement in meetings, make all agencies aware of resources available	

Additional information gathered from the 2018 survey for victim services: What are the most underserved populations; Senior Citizens, non-English speaking residents, racial or ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, rural, homeless, youth.

Law Enforcement Priorities

<i>Priority #1</i>	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
Transport of Mental Health Individuals	Causes strains on law enforcement time and man power
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
Contract out transport of mental health individuals, more beds available, streamline the processing of individuals	

<i>Priority #2</i>	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
Equipment Deficiencies or Training	Restraints on officers and agencies due to lack of funds to purchase needed equipment, attending training can be hindered by inability to provide backfill or provide traveling funds, on-site training is needed
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
Locate and obtain funding streams to purchase equipment, hire officers, and provide in-house training or train-the-trainer courses	

<i>Priority #3</i>	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
Evidence Security/Storage Capabilities	Lack of space, security, technology, software, trained personnel, and equipment
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
Need sources of funding to create more space and obtain equipment, and personnel, and then to train	

<i>Priority #4</i>	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
Substance Abuse	Users setting up their own labs, transport of illegal substances, need for forensic equipment, increase in manpower needed, need for hazardous waste disposal
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
Hazardous materials training, increase in manpower, community awareness, increase in resources available to identify and treat those addicted	

<i>Priority #5</i>	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>

Crime Prevention or Animal Control	Restrains on officers and agencies due to lack of funds to purchase needed equipment, attending training can be hindered by inability to provide backfill or provide traveling funds, on-site training is needed, limited animal sheltering facilities, limited control officers
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
Locate and obtain funding streams to purchase equipment, hire officers, and provide in-house training or train-the-trainer courses, and for animal control officers and facilities	

Additional information gathered from the recent survey: List the most important pieces of law enforcement equipment needed in your county; body armor, body worn cameras, evidence/property room, in-car computers, in-car video systems, radar unit, radio systems, records management systems, surveillance. What equipment is lacking in your county; automated external defibrillators, computer forensic software, crime scene investigation equipment/supplies, live scan, mobile command unit, SWAT equipment, watch tower.

Mental Health & Substance Abuse Priorities

<i>Priority #1</i>	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
Transport of Mental Health Individuals	<i>Difficulty for persons in rural areas to access transportation to services</i>
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
More accessible transportation for mental health clients, develop resources and make them known to all counties and agencies	

<i>Priority #2</i>	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
Limited beds for short/long-term services	Shortage of space in hospitals for mentally ill clients
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
More local inpatient beds or local beds in adjacent counties, more civil beds in State hospitals	

<i>Priority #3</i>	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
Need for indigent services	Chronic homelessness, need for more shelters, and services for health care
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
Locate funding streams and agencies that will offer more services	

<i>Priority #4</i>	
<i>Problem Identified</i>	<i>Data</i>
Substance Abuse	Effective and consistent monitoring and counseling is necessary for success
<i>Potential Response to Problem</i>	
Support groups, prevention programs, court programs, long-term care, counseling and support services for individuals and families	

Results of the 2018 survey indicated: Important mental health issues within the counties; intensive outpatient treatment programs, veterans' services, sliding scale fee-based services for individuals without insurance, specialized training for court, law enforcement and victim assistance personnel.

Identify the important substance abuse issues; aftercare treatment, education programs, counseling/therapy, dual diagnosis treatment, DWI intervention, school-based prevention programs

RESOURCES

Juvenile Justice

McLennan County Youth Collaboration - works with students in schools who are at risk for dropping out, also work with students who are in juvenile detention

Education Service Center Region 12 - college preparedness for students, student leadership forum

Central Texas Youth Services Bureau - assists troubled youth and families toward development of their full potential through provision of quality community-based services

Hillcrest Baptist Medical Center - The Teen Safe Youth Traffic Safety Educational program focuses on teen traffic safety, driving responsibility, underage drinking, substance abuse and driving under the influence. The Kid Safe program is an injury prevention program sponsored by the Trauma Center at Hillcrest. It is available to parents, caregivers, children, teenagers and the community in general.

Center for Learning and Development - conducts research-based projects and provides workshops, seminars, learning tools, and group processes aimed at preventing and/or intervening with behavioral and educational difficulties

Klara's Children Center, Early Childhood Intervention - services to children ages birth to 3 years who have developmental delays

Department of State Health Services - this State governmental agency is responsible for bringing comprehensible public health services to the citizens of all regions in Texas

Boys & Girls Club - provides after school and summer activities for youth

Girl Scouts of Central Texas - staff led outreach in schools and communities, Girl Scout Beyond Bars program services for girls K-12 whose mothers are incarcerated

Road to Damascus - resource center that provides services to at-risk youth ages 13+ and immediate family members

Baylor University - Baylor Buddies

Baylor Buddies is a partnership between Baylor University and [Communities in School](#) (CIS). Through the program, Baylor students serve as mentors to children in the Waco Independent School District. Children range in age from early elementary school through middle school. Baylor Buddies allows Baylor students to act as positive role models, develop relationships with children in the community, and mature as leaders.

McLennan Community College - Upward Bound Program

The upward Bound Program is designed to prepare high school students with college potential to pursue a college degree.

Law Enforcement

Heart of Texas Council of Governments - provides in-service training to officers, court personnel, advocates, and others that have a need, there is no charge to attendees that live or work within the six-county region

McLennan Community College - offers a Law Enforcement Academy that also provides in-service training to officers

SafeCallNow.org - provides public safety, emergency services personnel and their families with a simple, confidential way to ask for help with an emotional crisis, addictions or just a desire for someone to listen

Sheriff's Offices and some Police Departments can offer their officers training.

In some cities there are Police Departments for the Independent School Districts.

Victim Services

Advocacy Center for Crime Victims and Children - 24-hour hotline, sexual assault nurse examiner, short-term counseling and case management, legal advocacy, and assistance in filing crime victim's compensation and VINE registration through its Victim Center program, Court Appointed Special Advocates are available to children in all counties

Area Agency on Aging - education events regarding prevention, education regarding Texas Law and Elder Law Assistance with filing complaints and making reports of abuse

Catholic Charities of Central Texas - homeless prevention and rapid re-housing

Hillcrest Baptist Medical Center Mature Driver Program - a traffic safety injury prevention program for drivers age 55 and up, also serves caregivers, families, and health-care providers

TX Dept of Public Safety - all crime victims in the region are eligible for services: crisis intervention, personal advocacy; assistance filing for crime victims' compensation, court accompaniment

Some counties and cities can maintain a position of Crime Victim Assistance Coordinator - provides assistance to all victims of violent crime within the county.

Aware Central Texas - parenting and anger management classes, and educational support groups for victims of violence

Violent Crimes Against Women

Family Abuse Center - 24-hour hotline, emergency shelter, counseling, case management, legal advocacy, court accompaniment, outreach, serve rural areas

Some counties and cities can maintain a position of Crime Victim Assistance Coordinator - provides assistance to all victims of violent crime within the county.

Mental Health & Substance Abuse

Bluebonnet Trails Community Services - provides outreach, screening, assessment, referrals, crisis intervention, education, support, and case management for substance and alcohol abuse

Mothers Against Drunk Drivers - alcohol and drug prevention programs to include minor in possession classes, youth in action programs, free school programs and provision of speakers for various needs or events

VOICE, Inc. - substance abuse prevention services and curriculum, programs during school breaks and after school, program for Hispanic families

Heart of Texas Mental Health Mental Rehabilitation - provides a full array of services to children and adults

Cenikor Foundation - short-term addiction treatment, detoxification

Heart of Texas Recovers! - Recovery Oriented Systems of Care (ROSC) focus on education, employment, housing, peer support, transitional support, transportation, veterans for long-term recovery

The Area Agency on Aging has a Resource Guide available through the 2-1-1 referral service. HOT 2-1-1 is the HOTCOG component of 2-1-1 Texas which is a "free" social service help line answered by trained specialists who assist callers with their social service needs and refer them to the service providers or agencies that can best assist them. The help line is answered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by Information and Referral Specialists with multi-lingual capabilities available, if needed. HOT 2-1-1 provides assistance and information to the callers of any age concerning food, clothing, shelter, utility bill payment assistance, medical assistance, affordable childcare, eldercare, disaster relief and much more.

Regional Solutions

The issues facing the citizens of our rural counties are that not all of the above-mentioned services are available within their county. Where funding will allow, the services are sometimes made available on a limited basis, such as one day a week. Therefore, travel to the larger, McLennan County, or even to an adjacent county may be necessary to obtain needed services. All rural counties mention transportation to services as a limitation to some degree.

The Heart of Texas Rural Transit District through HOTCOG and one subcontractor provide transportation to the general public including transportation from county-to-county or within a county. There is a 48 hr notice required, the fee is nominal.

HOTCOG continues to increase collaboration and communication throughout all agencies offering services and to ensure agencies and individuals needing services become aware of what is available.

It is the intent of the HOTCOG Regional Planning Teams to improve outcomes for families struggling with problems described in the Plan's focus areas. Efforts are being made by many 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 Teams will continue to encourage agencies to provide services that address the outlined focus areas.

Victim services in all areas should continue to be a priority. The Region will continue to look for ways to expand all victim services to the rural counties to include programs that offer counseling, sheltering, victim assistance, as well as education and training.

The HOTCOG Region must continue to search for and obtain federal, state, and local funding to ensure that its law enforcement agencies, courts, and detention facilities are equipped with up-to-date equipment and training to provide the highest level of services to the communities served.

SUCCESS STORIES

REPORTS FROM SOME OF THE AGENCIES THAT RECEIVE OOG CJD ANNUAL GRANT FUNDING

JUVENILE JUSTICE DELINQUENCY PREVENTION:

The Heart of Texas Council of Governments received a grant which allows reimbursement to the six county juvenile probation departments for mental health counseling. In FY 2017 the probation departments reported 123 youth were served and 112 exhibited an increase in social competencies and an improvement in family relationships.

VICTIMS OF CRIME ACT:

Advocacy Center for Crime Victims and Children provides counseling, case management and advocacy to child and adult victims of all crime, vital services which are not available anywhere else in the service area. These services are provided free of charge which is crucial for victims without resources to pay for counseling. Experiencing trauma affects the working of the brain. Chronic trauma, such as ongoing child physical, sexual or emotional abuse, can cause changes in the brain which, over time, can lead to problematic thoughts, feelings and behaviors. These types of issues will likely cause challenges throughout a person's life, even affecting how they parent & care for their own children. We work with child victims and their families as well as adult victims with trauma histories and adults experiencing acute trauma. Intervention not only helps the victim to be more functional, but potentially benefits multiple people in the victim's life. Staff has extensive training in treating trauma through various clinical methods.

One of our counselors worked with an adult female who, over the course of counseling, was able to remove herself from a domestic violence relationship & begin college. She is currently in a job she enjoys with a healthy support system there. The client has been able to terminate counseling but will return if she should need further support.

A counselor worked with a parent whose child is displaying significant PTSD symptoms following sexual abuse by an adult acquaintance. Through counseling, the parent has been able to understand the symptoms & provide nurturing support, including the services of a psychologist & psychiatrist regarding academic decisions & medication. The parent's anxiety has decreased as they now have a better understanding of the presenting issues. Client has also begun to explore how childhood relationships have had a life-long impact on all other relationships & is currently working on strengthening the marriage in order to better support their child.

Counseling was provided for approximately one year to a 60+yo individual who was referred by a faith leader due to a previously undisclosed childhood trauma history. Years of untreated anxiety led to strained relationships & health issues. Through counseling, the client was able to understand the effect the trauma has had on her life, increase self-esteem & begin to heal relationships.

Counseling was provided to a parent who found that her child's sexual abuse was triggering memories & symptoms of her own trauma history. These symptoms began to impact her work, parenting & daily life. Through weekly counseling, the client was able to learn distress tolerance & emotion regulation skills which she reported were helpful to her in all areas of her life including improved relationships. She returns periodically when she recognizes that she could benefit from "a tune up".

Long-term counseling was provided to a parent who was the victim of an extremely emotionally abusive relationship & whose children had been physically, emotionally & possibly sexually abused by the alleged perpetrator. The cumulative trauma left her children with numerous complex trauma symptoms which were difficult to understand & deal with. Counseling has helped the client to understand & respond to her children in healthy, supportive & healing ways as well as to understand how her own history has impacted her relationship choices. Multiple staff members & interns have worked with the family over time and have provided an array of support services, including case management, crisis intervention, emergency financial assistance, court advocacy & trauma focused therapy. The children's symptoms have decreased to a point that this family has been able to go from weekly therapy to an as needed basis.

Law Enforcement:

In the last ten years the Heart of Texas Council of Governments Law Enforcement Training Program has trained 7,319 individuals which include officers, prosecution/court personnel, victim advocates, dispatchers, probation officers, and jail personnel. The program's success is due to the commitment to offer classes that meet the needs of the law enforcement related issues in our region. Also, to increase the skill level of officers, court staff, advocates, coordinators, and others that work in the fields of law enforcement and victim advocacy.

Violence Against Women Act:

Waco PD

The VAWA grant partially funds the salary of two detectives of the Waco Police Department Family Violence Unit (FVU).

Bellmead Police Department

The grant partially funds a V.A.W.A. Detective

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This Plan is available online at:
<http://www.hotcog.org/regional-services/criminal-justice/>