

Nicic.org
g.w

LOA



U.S. Department of Justice
National Institute of Corrections
Jails Division
1960 Industrial Circle
Longmont, Colorado 80501

Local System Assessment of the Vigo County Criminal Justice System

**Technical Assistance Provided
to the**

**Vigo County Sheriff's Office
Terre Haute, Indiana**

by
NIC Consultants
Michael R. Jones
Robert C. Cushman

February, 2005

NIC Technical Assistance #05J1071

Table of Contents

Disclaimer	3
Introduction.....	4
The Request for Technical Assistance from the NIC	4
Coordination of the Visit and Selection of Consultants.....	4
The Consultant Approach to the Assignment	5
Group Meeting	6
1. A Review of Essential Planning and Coordination Concepts.....	6
A. The Jail Population Dynamic	6
B. The Purpose of the Vigo County Jail	8
C. The Types of Planning	8
D. The Seven Criminal Justice Decision Points	9
E. The Jail in the Continuum of Sanctions and Services	9
2. Findings and Recommendations	10
Findings.....	10
1. There are many local strengths.	10
2. The jail and the rest of the system are overloaded.....	10
3. There is a lack of a coordinated continuum of sanctions and services.	10
4. There is a conflict between fiscal conservatism and justice conservatism.	11
5. Most change has been in response to outside pressures.	11
6. There is a lack of a long-term, strategic planning process.....	11
7. There are assumptions about what the public thinks and wants.	11
8. There is a Meth problem, with little anticipated relief in sight.....	11
9. There are no zero-cost options.....	11
Recommendations.....	11
1. Create a policy planning, criminal justice coordinating committee.	11
2. Establish a jail population analysis capability.....	13
3. Create a coordinated system of sanctions and services.	14
4. Look for ideas in other jurisdictions.....	14
5. Develop partnerships outside of the county's criminal justice system.....	14
6. Decide on issues and methods for the criminal justice coordinating committee..	15
Conclusions.....	16
Action Planning	17
Appendix A: Letter Requesting Technical Assistance	18
Appendix B: Meeting Schedule	19
Appendix C: Group Meeting Agenda.....	21
Appendix D: Vigo County Jail Population Dynamics.....	22
Appendix E: 1999 Vigo County Jail Use.....	37
Appendix F: Purpose of the Vigo County Jail.....	39
Appendix G: County to State Jail Comparison.....	40
Appendix H: Policy Planning in Criminal Justice	41
Appendix I: Seven Key Criminal Justice Decision Points.....	43
Appendix J: A Continuum of Sanctions	48

Disclaimer

Re: Technical Assistance #05J1071

This technical assistance activity was funded by the Jails Division of the National Institute of Corrections. The Institute is a Federal agency established to provide assistance to strengthen state and local correctional agencies by creating more effective, humane, safe and just correctional services.

The resource person who provided the on-site technical assistance did so through a cooperative agreement, at the request of the Vigo County Sheriff's Office and through the coordination of the National Institute of Corrections. The direct on-site assistance and the subsequent report are intended to assist the Vigo County Sheriff's Office in addressing issues outlined in the original request and in efforts to enhance the effectiveness of the agency.

The contents of this document reflect the official views of Robert Cushman and Dr. Michael Jones. The contents do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the National Institute of Corrections.

Local System Assessment of the Vigo County Criminal Justice System

Introduction

National Institute of Corrections (NIC) consultants Mike Jones and Bob Cushman provided technical assistance to the Vigo County Sheriff's Office February 15 through 17, 2005. This technical assistance was provided in response to a November 23, 2004, written request to NIC by Vigo County Sheriff Jon R. Marvel.¹

The Request for Technical Assistance from the NIC

The letter requesting technical assistance from NIC asked that the assessment focus on identifying factors causing jail crowding and on offering recommendations to help reduce the jail population.

Subsequent to the request letter, Sheriff Marvel and Mike Jones discussed the jail crowding problem in more detail. Sheriff Marvel reported that the County jail has been crowded for many years. Three years ago, the number of jail beds was doubled to 268. However, the new beds were filled within 3 months, and the jail has continued to be over capacity ever since. In addition, the County had Federal action taken against it in which the County was ordered to get the jail population below the 268 bed capacity within 5 days. The Sheriff reported, however, that getting below capacity continues to require almost daily coordination between jail staff and judges. He also stated that he believes that the Courts are overloaded with cases and that this overload contributes to the chronic jail crowding. He concluded that he would like ideas for actions that he and other criminal justice officials can take to manage the jail population so that it is not crowded on a daily basis.

Coordination of the Visit and Selection of Consultants

Ms. Fran Zandi, Correctional Program Specialist at the NIC Jails Division in Longmont, Colorado, was the consultant coordinator for this assignment. Sheriff Marvel requested the services of NIC consultants Mike Jones and Bob Cushman. Mike Jones is the Criminal Justice Planning Manager who facilitates the policy work of a criminal justice coordinating committee in Jefferson County, Colorado. Bob Cushman is the author of an NIC guidebook for developing criminal justice coordinating committees.

Sheriff Marvel and his staff served as the onsite coordinators for the technical assistance visit. They arranged the individual and group meetings.²

¹ The letter requesting technical assistance from the National Institute of Corrections appears in Appendix A.

² The meeting schedule appears in Appendix B.

In advance of the visit, the NIC consultants were provided with three items. Sheriff Marvel provided the document, "The State of the Vigo County Jail: A Case Study of the Vigo County Jail Overcrowding Issues 1992 to 2004," prepared by James Steward and Mike Price. This document was a summary of newspaper articles that referenced jail crowding in the county from 1992 to 2004. Greg Ewing, Deputy Chief of Operations, provided the other two documents: a spreadsheet of the number of Bookings and Average Daily Population (ADP) of the jail from 2000 to 2004,³ and a spreadsheet of the inmates who were released from the jail during September of 1999. The Sheriff's Office was not able to assemble a spreadsheet of the inmates who were released from the jail during September of 2004 for comparison to the 1999 data.

The Consultant Approach to the Assignment

During the first two days of the three-day site visit, NIC consultants Jones and Cushman met with over forty officials, representatives, or practitioners involved in the local criminal justice system or general government. During these meetings, the NIC Consultants assessed the reasons for the chronic jail crowding and people's willingness to more effectively collaborate to reduce the jail population and the overall workload in all parts of the criminal justice system. For the assessment, the NIC consultants gathered information about (a) people's opinions on why the jail has been chronically crowded; (b) what information or data that decision makers have used to set criminal justice policy; and (c) which actions that decision makers have taken that have had desired and undesired effects on jail crowding. The NIC consultants sought feedback from many officials about ideas, generated both by the consultants and the officials themselves, about how criminal justice agencies could increase their capacity for increased information gathering, data driven decision making, and collaboration. Each person who participated in the individual meetings was invited to attend the group meeting on Thursday, February 17. The Sheriff also invited the media to film the group meeting.

During the third day of the site visit, February 17, the NIC consultants facilitated a group meeting with approximately thirty of the people who had participated in the individual meetings.⁴ Sheriff Marvel called the meeting to order. The first portion of the meeting was conducted in a workshop-style format involving: (a) a framework for understanding jail population dynamics and case flow through the criminal justice system, (b) a group discussion of the purpose of the Vigo County jail; (c) a model for system-wide collaboration and strategic planning in criminal justice; and (d) a perspective of the jail in the continuum of criminal justice sanctions and services. This portion of the meeting was used to help attendees to develop a common framework and language for understanding

³ The jail data were used to construct illustrations for the group meeting. The data were also used to do an analysis to begin to explain the sources of change in jail population levels over the past 5 years. This analysis appears in appendix D.

⁴ Readers of this report are encouraged to make personal contact with participants of the group meeting for a more detailed explanation of the content of the meeting. This report simply summarizes the agenda items. The graphics used in the group meeting are included in appendices to this report.

the jail crowding problem in the County and for beginning to develop the capacity to address the problem. In the second portion of the meeting, the NIC consultants presented the findings from the assessment and recommendations to address the findings, and some preliminary action planning took place. Sheriff Marvel closed the meeting.⁵

This report represents the final step in the NIC consultant approach to this assignment. The report provides an overview the topics discussed at the group meeting, including a review of essential coordination and planning concepts and a summary of findings and recommendations. Supporting materials appear in appendices to this report.

Group Meeting

The NIC consultants presented their findings and recommendations at a group meeting of all persons who participated in the individual meetings. The basic purpose of the meeting was to provide answers to the questions, “Why is the jail crowded and what can be done about it?” The meeting was structured to promote interaction among the participants and between the participants and the consultants. Questions were encouraged.

The meeting content can be summarized in two portions: (1) A Review of Essential Planning and Coordination Concepts, and (2) Findings and Recommendations.

1. A Review of Essential Planning and Coordination Concepts

A. The Jail Population Dynamic

A water barrel analogy was used to illustrate the dynamics that determine the rise and fall of the number of people in jail. Mr. Cushman explained that the number of people in jail at any given time is a function of 2 factors: (1) the rate at which persons are admitted, and (2) how long the inmates stay. This simple model illustrates the three basic strategies for decreasing jail crowding: (1) decrease the number of bookings; (2) decrease inmates’ lengths of stay; and/or (3) expand the capacity of the jail. He asked the participants to think about which strategy(s) have been primarily used in Vigo County. Participants responded by stating that the primary strategy was to build more jail beds, and that reducing lengths of stay has also been used (e.g., the daily early release of inmates by reducing their bond amounts).

This concept applies to both the total population and to the multiple sub-populations in the jail (e.g., males, sentenced inmates, compliance violators). A computer program could be set-up to track the total population numbers as well as those of the multiple subpopulations. This program would provide a rich database to better understand how changes in admissions and/or lengths of stay of specific subtypes of inmates affect the average daily population in the jail. It would provide the information that is needed to

⁵ The group meeting agenda appears in Appendix C.

better understand and manage the size of the jail population.⁶ The data to support this effort are already collected in the County jail's information system.

In addition, the jail population analysis system represents step 5 of the general planning process model (Problem identification). The ability to conduct analyses is at the heart of the problem identification step.⁷

Next, an example of how the water barrel analogy could be practically applied to Vigo County Jail data was shown. As seen in Appendix D, the Average Daily Population from 2000 to 2004, and thus the number of required beds, increased by 141 because of an increase in bookings (94.5 additional beds required) and an increase in inmates' length of stay (46.5 additional beds required.) This analysis involves data from the total jail population. Similar analyses could be performed for various sub-populations of interest (e.g., males, sentenced inmates, compliance violators). Appendix D explains the analyses in detail and provides instructions for constructing spreadsheets for additional analyses.

A chart depicting the number of persons booked and the number of bed days consumed by these persons, using information on inmates released from the County jail in September of 1999, was shown. A bed day is a mathematical concept calculated by: 1 bed x 1 day = 1 bed day. The total jail resource of the Vigo County jail for one year is 97,820 bed days (i.e., 268 beds x 365 days). As seen in Appendix E, there were a high number of persons booked who stayed for less than 3 days and very few persons who stayed for 31 days or more. However, the many persons who stayed less than 3 days consumed only a small amount of bed days, and the few persons who stayed for 31 days or more consumed many bed days.

Mr. Jones mentioned that comparisons of the 1999 data to 2004 data were not possible because jail staff were still working on collecting the 2004 data during the site visit. Nonetheless, the collection and analysis of the 2004 jail data is very important to provide officials with information on how the jail is currently being used. It is likely that most jail beds are still consumed by the relatively few persons who stay for 31 days or longer. If so, then a strategic way to manage the jail population for the present and future would be to develop policies that reduce the length of stay for persons staying for 31 days or more.

An example analysis that cross-tabulated the reason for inmate release (e.g., bail, expiration of sentence) in September of 1999 by inmates' length of stay was shown (see Appendix E). This analysis demonstrated that the majority of persons staying for 31 days

⁶ The factors that affect the jail population are further explained in the free publication: *Preventing Jail Crowding: A Practical Guide, Second Edition*. Robert C. Cushman, May 2002. NIC Accession Number 016720. 19 pages. Available for free in a downloadable PDF format at <http://www.nicic.org/pubs/2002/016720.pdf> or in printed version by calling the National Institute of Corrections Information Center at 1-800-877-1461.

⁷ The General Planning Process Model and the problem identification step are explained in pages 12-13 of *Guidelines for Developing a Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee*.

or more were released because of expiration of sentence or release to another agency. A similar analysis should be preformed for 2004 data because it would further refine the optimal target group for reducing the jail population.

B. The Purpose of the Vigo County Jail

One important discussion among criminal justice officials in Vigo County that has not yet occurred is the answering of the question, “What is the purpose of the Vigo County jail?” Once this question is answered by officials, then they will have an agreement upon which they can make decisions to collectively manage the jail population. To help begin discussion about the purpose of the local jail, Mr. Cushman and Mr. Jones facilitated a group exercise in which meeting participants began to list potential purposes of the jail. This list appears in Appendix F.

In 2004, the National Institute of Corrections produced a video, “Beyond the myths: The Jail in Your Community” in which 4 main purposes of a county jail are described. This video is helpful to officials when they are working toward defining the purpose of the local jail and to the general public for educating citizens about the basic purposes of the jail in their community. The video is available for free from NIC.

Lastly, an illustration was shown that depicts the number of beds and number of inmates in the Vigo County jail compared to the Indiana state average (see Appendix G). The number of jail beds per 1,000 citizens in Vigo County is equal to the state average, and the number of inmates per 1,000 citizens is approximately 13% higher than the state average.

C. The Types of Planning

Several graphics describing the three types of planning: (1) Policy, (2) Program, and (3) Operational, and the strategic planning process for criminal justice systems, were shown. These graphics appear in Appendix H.

Policy planning answers the question, “What should we do and why?” It produces policy guidelines expressing important values, philosophies, and judgments on which to base long-term plans. Policy planning leads to decisions that determine long-term justice goals and objectives.

Program planning answers the question, “What can we do and how?” It is concerned with assessing the feasibility of alternative courses of action, developing appropriate program and contingency plans, and constructing guidelines for action. Program planning decisions sort through available options and lead to the adoption of specific courses of action. It also involves assessing organizational competencies.

Operational planning answers the question, “What will we do and when?” It produces specific plans for the allocation of resources to implement and evaluate justice programs and services.⁸

The NIC consultants also briefly discussed the relationship of these three levels of planning to a sequence of eleven planning steps.⁹ Adopting a planning process model brings guidance to the planning process and helps policy makers reduce their reactive, crisis-oriented decision making.

D. The Seven Criminal Justice Decision Points

Illustrations depicting the seven major decision points in the criminal justice process were shown (see Appendix I). Officials can use the seven decision points as a framework for data and information gathering about the functioning of the local criminal justice system. Data and information can show efficiencies and inefficiencies at each decision point.

The workload of entire justice system is subject to the same dynamics as the water barrel that was used to illustrate changes in jail population levels. The volume of work at each key justice system decision point is determined by how fast the cases or people come in and how long it takes to process them. The workload of the system is constantly changing. The actions of any one agency have impact on all other agencies. Agencies are linked by their common interest in cases and persons passing through the justice system from arrest to final disposition.

Differences in jurisdiction in justice processing rates per 10,000 persons can be linked to differences in decision-making at the seven key justice system decision points. Any comparative analysis of jurisdictions of similar size and circumstance will reveal wide variations in workloads. Variations are the result of differences in decision-making at the seven key justice system decision points. That is, there are cost and workload consequences of differences in justice policy choices. Thus, by adopting a perspective of strategic planning around the seven decision points, officials can begin to manage the workload of the entire local criminal justice system.

E. The Jail in the Continuum of Sanctions and Services

An example analysis that shows the continuum of sanctions and services from another jurisdiction was shown (see Appendix J). This analysis shows the number of persons in each type of supervision (e.g., Pretrial, Probation, Residential, Jail, Prison), the capacity of each type of supervision, and the daily cost to supervise persons. Such an analysis shows which parts of the criminal justice system are at capacity and in need of attention. Typically, most parts of the system in most jurisdictions are at or near capacity.

⁸ Policy, program and operational planning are further detailed and explained in pages 10-12 of *Guidelines for Developing a Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee*.

⁹ The eleven step General Planning Process Model is presented at page 13 of *Guidelines for Developing a Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee*.

2. Findings and Recommendations

The final portion of the group meeting consisted of the consultants' findings and recommendations and some preliminary action planning. The list of findings and recommendations from the group meeting are presented below, with some minor editorial changes.¹⁰ Findings were synthesized from commentary provided to the consultants during the individual meetings. Recommendations represent the professional opinions of the consultants and some local officials.

Findings

1. There are many local strengths.

- There are talented, interested, and caring people in the right positions in the criminal justice system and in general government.
- There are several well respected, good leaders who will be able to build collaboration for making new policies. In particular, Sheriff Jon Marvel, Prosecutor Bob Wright, and Judge Michael Eldred were frequently mentioned as well respected officials who could guide the County in its efforts toward more collaboration.
- Officials and practitioners appear to get along well together.
- There is a harmony of ideas and philosophy about how the system should operate.
- There are good community values and creative ideas about solutions.
- There has been some coordinated efforts to work on specific issues (e.g., the Meth Task Force).
- There is a collective sense that the time is right for change, and there is a willingness to do business differently.
- There is an openness to outsiders (e.g., two consultants, the media). This is a sign of open government.

2. The jail and the rest of the system are overloaded.

- The jail, as well as the whole system, is far above capacity.
- The overloading of the jail and the system has been and will continue to worsen with time unless proactive steps are taken.
- Because of the financial situation, adding more infrastructure (e.g., more jail beds, more probation officers) is not an option.

3. There is a lack of a coordinated continuum of sanctions and services.

- There are some missing pieces (e.g., supervised pretrial release).
- Medical expenses for jail inmates are rising. There is a sense that the jail is not a good fit for persons with high medical needs.

¹⁰ This list generated some good discussion among participants. The reader is encouraged to talk with one or more of the participants for more information.

4. There is a conflict between fiscal conservatism and justice conservatism.

- There has been the desire to expand the more expensive criminal justice options (e.g., the jail), but lots of conflict around spending funds on these options

5. Most change has been in response to outside pressures.

- The Indiana Civil Liberties Union got involved in the jail crowding problem and prompted a law suit to define the jail's capacity at 268 beds.

6. There is a lack of a long-term, strategic planning process.

- There is a lack of data. The jail was not able to produce data on inmates who were in the jail in 2004. The state of Indiana's Criminal Justice Institute was not able to produce arrest and crime data for Vigo County because one or more agencies within the County did not report these data in previous years.
- There is no analytic capability to convert data to information that can inform policy decisions.
- There has been a culture of a "band aid" approach to issues in criminal justice and general government (i.e., reactive decision making vs. proactive policy planning).
- There has been a concentrated focus on program planning and little policy planning.
- There is good agreement on problems to solve, but the system is "stuck." The system has been stuck for a long time.
- There is a pervasive feeling of isolation among officials. This has led somewhat to a feeling of helplessness. This in turn has led somewhat to fewer coordinated efforts to solve problems.

7. There are assumptions about what the public thinks and wants.

- Some assumptions are accurate, whereas others are not. Information is needed about what the public wants regarding the justice system. An example of such information is in the Indiana State University report provided to Sheriff Marvel on February 16. In this report, there are results of a small survey about criminal justice.

8. There is a Meth problem, with little anticipated relief in sight.

- The County has passed a new Ordinance to regulate the ingredients used to make Meth. Similar legislation is being considered for the state.

9. There are no zero-cost options.

- Inaction to reduce the crowded jail and overloaded system is not an option.
- All remedies will cost money. The question is, "Which ones are cost effective and are officials willing to try?"

Recommendations

1. Create a policy planning, criminal justice coordinating committee.

Planning is the process of bringing anticipations of the future to bear on current decision making. Planning anticipates and prepares for alternative futures. It seeks to close the

gaps between the current situation and the way we would like the world to be. In the justice system, it is aimed at moving us from current justice practices toward our justice ideals. It is focused on fostering change as opposed to maintaining a status quo, especially a dissatisfactory status quo. It relies on analyzing problems, on developing information to better define problems, evaluating alternative courses of action, and selecting programs and projects to achieve incremental improvement. This approach is in contrast to a reactive program development style characterized by trial and error and activity supported primarily by anecdotal evidence and guess work.

Planning seeks to improve policy, program, and operational decision making. It improves system-wide communication, cooperation, and coordination. When properly executed, it recognizes the interdependencies of justice agencies while also preserving and honoring their constitutionally intended independence. In this way, it allows officials to collectively accomplish what no one agency, or official, can accomplish. For example, it can manage workload growth throughout the justice system, and reverse the more typical situation in which the workload itself seems to be in charge.¹¹

Currently, there are 2 entities that most closely resemble a criminal justice coordinating committee in the County: the Meth Task Force and the Community Corrections Advisory Board. Both of these entities have good representation of the top officials and policy makers from the justice system; however, the scope of their work is on a specific issue (i.e., Meth) or a program (i.e., community corrections). If officials in the County desire to collaboratively work to solve the many issues facing the entire justice system today and in the future, then a criminal justice coordinating committee would likely be the “state of the art” forum for doing so. If such a committee will be established, then the following tasks, among others, would be helpful in its formation:

- Decide on membership and leadership for the committee
- Hire a staff person for the committee (i.e., a planner/analyst who can collect data and convert it into information for committee members)
- Decide on the committee’s mission/purpose (e.g., to serve as an advisory and policy level board for the County’s criminal justice system)
- Commit to a structured policy-planning process for issues of interest
- Focus on issues and policies at the seven major criminal justice decision points
- Refer to the NIC publication *Guidelines for Developing a Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee* for guidance.

If officials desire to have an effective criminal justice coordinating committee, then it will need competent, neutral, and sufficient staff support. A criminal justice coordinating committee cannot work effectively without support staff with strong analytical skills.¹² A criminal justice coordinating committee needs good information to make good decisions, and an analytically skilled staff person can figure out how to assemble that information.

¹¹ For a summary of the benefits of criminal justice planning please see pages 4-5 of *Guidelines for Developing a Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee*.

¹² The type and characteristics of support staff for a CJCC are discussed on pages 29-30 of *Guidelines for Developing a Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee*.

2. Establish a jail population analysis capability.

A jail population analysis capability should be created to produce a clear picture of how jail bed space is being used.¹³ A system needs to be designed so that it explains why and how jail population occupancy levels are changing. It should provide analytic information about three views of the jail population: admissions, releases, and a “snap shot” of who is in jail at any given time. Information gathered should be shared among all officials in the justice system.

A Jail Population Analysis System is the tool jail administrators need to have so they can engage all the users of the jail in a process that will manage available bed space to maximize public safety. It will move the jail administrators from a position of being victimized by forces beyond their control, to a position in which they can have some influence over the rates of admission and lengths of stay in the facility.

Better information will eventually help assure the public that any perceived excesses have been squeezed out of the way the jail beds are being utilized. This will likely help garner public support for additional jail bed space when it is time to go back to the public for additional funds.

An analyst will need to be employed to operate and maintain this capability in coordination with Information Technology experts who understand the jail’s information system and the data in it.

Once a Jail Population Analysis System has been established at the jail, it should serve as a model for developing the same kinds of analyses within other justice system agencies. This will help each agency better understand the dynamics that drive workload growth, and allow officials to collaboratively do a better job of managing the workload and diminish the degree to which the workload, itself, is managing the system.

The Jail Population Analysis System, and any counterparts that may be established within any other justice agency, would rely on “extracts” of existing information from existing information systems. No new data should be required. This should provide justice agencies with a “work around” to the current limitations of antiquated and separate information systems serving justice agencies in the jurisdiction.

¹³ See *Preventing Jail Crowding: A Practical Guide*, NIC publication number 016720, available from the National Institute of Corrections Information Center, 800-877-1461 or send an e-mail request for the publication to asknicic@nicic.org. The publication is free. An electronic download PDF version of the publication is also available at <http://www.nicic.org/pubs/2001/016720.pdf> This twelve page publication describes the data that should be collected to create a simple jail population analysis system.

At the end of the group meeting, it was suggested that information technology students from one of the local technical universities may be able to develop such systems or applications.

3. Create a coordinated system of sanctions and services.

The central, overall challenge facing the Vigo County justice system is to find ways to manage workload growth and diminish the extent to which the workload is allowed to manage the system. Although expanding jail bed space or adding more police officers, judges, or probation officers will provide temporary relief, it will not enable the justice system to catch up or out-run workload growth. The growth must be managed, and it can only be managed collectively by officials from throughout the justice system.

One of the first steps to managing the workload of the system is to prepare a County-wide inventory of existing sanctions and services. This inventory can be in the form of a matrix that shows on one axis the number of adults who are under supervision in each of the programs or sanctions available (e.g., community service, probation, jail), and on the other axis the types of services and additional sanctions that accompany each type of supervision (e.g., drug treatment, electronic monitoring).

This information will help policy makers determine the most suitable placement for certain types of offenders (e.g., compliance violators, Meth producers and users) and for allocating additional resources when they become available.

4. Look for ideas in other jurisdictions.

One good way to learn more about the potential and actual workings of criminal justice coordinating committees is to talk to counterparts who participate in such a committee in other jurisdictions throughout the country. Taking a small contingent of local officials to visit any well-developed, well-functioning committee might also help.¹⁴ One place to start is Appendix B of *Guidelines for Developing a Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee*. It lists a number of jurisdictions that have such committees.

In addition, when attempting to address specific issues that face the County, it is often helpful to speak with neighboring counties to find out how they are or have been dealing with similar issues. It is possible that other counties in Indiana or in other states (e.g., Oklahoma) have discovered effective strategies for reducing the Meth problems in their jurisdictions. In addition, there may be research on programs or policies that address issues of interest to Vigo County at the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS; see www.ncjrs.org).

5. Develop partnerships outside of the county's criminal justice system.

When addressing issues that face the local criminal justice system, it is often helpful to obtain the assistance of other entities. (e.g., the Association of Indiana Counties, state

¹⁴ Consider putting together a well-constructed and well-planned proposal to NIC to provide partial financial support for such a visit. This might be funded under their technical assistance provision authorization.

Legislature, the media, interest groups). When the help of these entities are added, it has the effect of redefining an issue from “the jail’s problem” or the “system’s problem” to the “community’s problem.” When the community takes ownership of a problem, then a wide array of additional resources becomes available and the number of adversaries are reduced. Several officials who met with the consultants stated that they think it would be a good idea to define the jail crowding and the Meth problem as a community problem rather than the Sheriff’s problem. Moreover, several community representatives (e.g., clergy) offered that this redefinition would serve as a good first step toward solving these problems.

A strength in Indiana is the State Jail Inspector’s function. This function, in addition to providing technical assistance for jail operations, is able to provide a link to information and remedies that have been successfully implemented in other jurisdictions in the state. It is recommended that County officials coordinate with the state jail inspector to address potential problems at the County jail. Some of the inspector’s concerns/ideas are (with minimal editing):

1. The level of staffing within the jail on the day shift: Typically, approximately 6 jail staff are used for external security requirements at the courthouse, transport, etc, throughout the week. This problem was identified back around late 2002.
2. The bail matrix should support community values as well as governmental needs. The inspector recommends an evaluation to determine the point at which the community and justice officials can effectively operate, and which allows the jail to operate at a manageable capacity.
3. He strongly recommends that county officials continue to explore an inmate industries program run from the new community corrections center. This program could permit nonviolent and qualified inmates in a work-based program while incarcerated. Initial contact has been made by the county with Sauder Industries out of South Carolina to explore this option. This program would provide employment while residents’ life and job hunting skills are honed at the center.
4. Although Meth is certainly a major problem in Vigo County, an examination of the top 3 or 4 reasons for booking and detention after arraignment should be evaluated. It may be possible for other populations to be more effectively managed to accommodate the increase in the Meth-related population in the jail.

6. Decide on issues and methods for the criminal justice coordinating committee.

It is important that the criminal justice coordinating committee adopt a broad policy planning focus that is not dominated by any one specific issue or problem. The committee at any one time might focus its discussion on a pressing issue (e.g., jail crowding, Meth production and use), but it should always remain committed to taking a broad, systems perspective. It may be helpful to have one or more task forces or subcommittees that each adopt one problem or program, and the criminal justice coordinating committee coordinates the work of these task forces. Such task forces already exist in the County (e.g., Meth Task Force).

Lastly, it is recommended that the criminal justice coordinating committee utilize a structured policy planning process (discussed previously) and develop solutions that go beyond the local justice system by enlisting the assistance of state legislators, local community leaders, and representatives from the local medical, mental health, and social service systems.

Conclusions

Below are summary answers to the questions that prompted Sheriff Marvel's request for technical assistance from NIC:

Q: Why is the Vigo County jail crowded?

A: The County jail is crowded because: (1) The interagency and intergovernmental mechanism needed to manage jail population levels has not been established. In addition, the jail has not been viewed as a limited purpose facility and its purposes have not been defined. As a result, it has become crowded, and the crowding has been viewed as a "problem to solve" instead of a condition to be proactively and continuously managed. Because of the lack of an interagency mechanism, the responsibility for the problem and the solution has defaulted to the Sheriff. However, the continuous management of the jail population and remedies for jail crowding are not solely the responsibility of the Sheriff; rather, they are the collective responsibility of all officials in the criminal justice system. (2) There is little information to inform the community and entities who use the jail (e.g., law enforcement, corrections programs, courts) about how the jail is being used (e.g., what types of inmates are in jail, for what offenses, for how long, and how this has changed over time). When the current use of the jail is clearly described, then entities will be able to collectively assess whether they are using the jail for the purposes they have decided are most important (e.g., public safety), and they will be able to develop policies to govern its use.

Q: What can be done about the crowded jail?

A: The top officials and decision makers from the city's and county's general government and criminal justice system can form a criminal justice coordinating committee that can set the strategic direction purpose for all aspects of the local criminal justice system, including the jail. This committee can use data and information about current jail use to develop policies about how the jail should be used so that the population is within safe and manageable levels for years to come.

Action Planning

The following is a list of preliminary action planning steps. The list was generated by participants during the final part of the group meeting.

Action Plan

- Form a criminal justice coordinating committee
- Enlist the key policy makers
- Decide how to get organized
- Hire staff support
- Get the necessary data
- Inform the Funding folks
- Create a public forum
- Read the Local System Assessment report