

PANHANDLE  
REGIONAL  
PLANNING  
COMMISSION

2023

# 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 more than 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 434,216 people in 2022 per the U.S. Census. The Panhandle Regional Planning Commission has 94 member governments – including all 26 counties, 62 incorporated cities, 64 Independent School districts and 6 special districts.



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

## Population

The U.S. Census estimates the Panhandle’s population at 434,216 people in 2022. 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 164,797 in population by the U.S. Census bureau estimates. The chart to the right illustrates the break down for each county’s 2022 population estimates.

Since the 2020 US Census, the region has seen an overall decrease in population of 0.03%. Even though there has been an overall decrease, it has been a small decrease. In past years, only two counties have seen an increase. In 2022, there was an estimated increase in six counties, Armstrong, Childress, Dallam, Donley, Randall and Sherman. This is according to the US Census.<sup>i</sup>



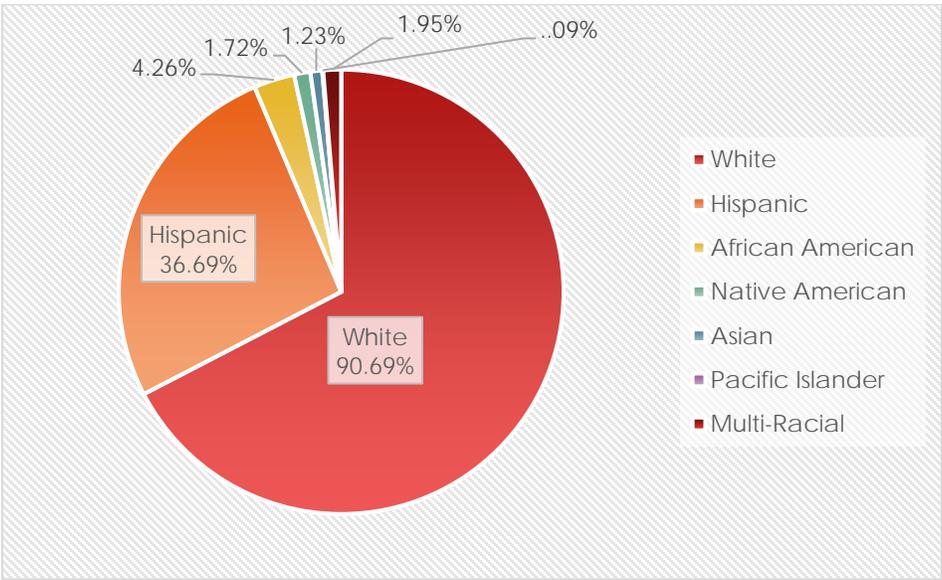
Figure 2: Deaf Smith County, photo courtesy of Lori Gun

### Population

<i>Armstrong</i>	1,850
<i>Briscoe</i>	1,431
<i>Carson</i>	5,784
<i>Castro</i>	7,298
<i>Childress</i>	6,809
<i>Collingsworth</i>	2,568
<i>Dallam</i>	7,241
<i>Deaf Smith</i>	18,377
<i>Donley</i>	3,339
<i>Gray</i>	21,015
<i>Hall</i>	2,810
<i>Hansford</i>	5,151
<i>Hartley</i>	5,208
<i>Hemphill</i>	3,217
<i>Hutchinson</i>	20,215
<i>Lipscomb</i>	2,854
<i>Moore</i>	20,996
<i>Ochiltree</i>	9,606
<i>Oldham</i>	1,752
<i>Parmer</i>	9,620
<i>Potter</i>	115,645
<i>Randall</i>	146,140
<i>Roberts</i>	803
<i>Sherman</i>	2,799
<i>Swisher</i>	6,881
<i>Wheeler</i>	4,807
	<b>434,216</b>

# 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 434,216 residents as of the 2022 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 3.22% which is below the national average of 3.7% as of May 2023.



# 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 chart<sup>ii</sup> 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 \$69,021.

	<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>	2.80%	\$ 71,136.00	5.67%	3.06%
<i>Briscoe</i>	3.50%	\$ 38,469.00	-42.86%	-44.26%
<i>Carson</i>	3.10%	\$ 76,786.00	14.06%	11.25%
<i>Castro</i>	3.10%	\$ 53,551.00	-20.45%	-22.41%
<i>Childress</i>	2.80%	\$ 53,092.00	-21.14%	-23.08%
<i>Collingsworth</i>	3.50%	\$ 42,446.00	-36.95%	-38.50%
<i>Dallam</i>	2.40%	\$ 61,069.00	-9.29%	-11.52%
<i>Deaf Smith</i>	3.00%	\$ 49,611.00	-26.31%	-28.12%
<i>Donley</i>	3.60%	\$ 52,888.00	-21.44%	-23.37%
<i>Gray</i>	4.50%	\$ 50,635.00	-24.79%	-26.64%
<i>Hall</i>	4.20%	\$ 41,467.00	-38.40%	-39.92%
<i>Hansford</i>	2.40%	\$ 47,500.00	-29.44%	-31.18%
<i>Hartley</i>	2.00%	\$ 61,196.00	-9.10%	-11.34%
<i>Hemphill</i>	3.30%	\$ 54,867.00	-18.50%	-20.51%
<i>Hutchinson</i>	4.50%	\$ 57,288.00	-14.90%	-17.00%
<i>Lipscomb</i>	3.10%	\$ 66,250.00	-1.59%	-4.01%
<i>Moore</i>	2.60%	\$ 55,543.00	-17.50%	-19.53%
<i>Ochiltree</i>	3.40%	\$ 57,413.00	-14.72%	-16.82%
<i>Oldham</i>	3.00%	\$ 68,077.00	1.12%	-1.37%
<i>Parmer</i>	2.40%	\$ 62,885.00	-6.59%	-8.89%
<i>Potter</i>	3.20%	\$ 45,096.00	-33.01%	-34.66%
<i>Randall</i>	2.80%	\$ 70,544.00	4.79%	2.21%
<i>Roberts</i>	3.80%	\$ 62,717.00	-6.84%	-9.13%
<i>Sherman</i>	2.80%	\$ 55,667.00	-17.31%	-19.35%
<i>Swisher</i>	4.00%	\$ 39,685.00	-41.05%	-42.50%
<i>Wheeler</i>	3.90%	\$ 52,138.00	-22.55%	-24.46%
<i>Regional Average</i>	3.22%	\$ 55,692.92	-17.27%	-19.31%

# Education

Across the region, we have 61 school districts and three charter schools educating over 80,000 students. The below chart<sup>iii</sup> shows each county’s school aged kids, the percentage of kids below the age of 5 as well as the 2019 graduation rate for each county.

	2022: Under 5	% School aged	School Aged	2019 Graduation Rate
<i>Armstrong</i>	5.30%	16.90%	313	100.00%
<i>Briscoe</i>	5.60%	16.40%	235	100.00%
<i>Carson</i>	4.50%	19.00%	1,099	98.80%
<i>Castro</i>	7.40%	21.60%	1,576	98.20%
<i>Childress</i>	4.40%	14.10%	960	91.60%
<i>Collingsworth</i>	6.20%	20.00%	514	92.70%
<i>Dallam</i>	10.10%	22.70%	1,644	99.20%
<i>Deaf Smith</i>	8.60%	22.60%	4,153	84.50%
<i>Donley</i>	4.70%	15.40%	514	100.00%
<i>Gray</i>	5.80%	19.20%	4,035	94.30%
<i>Hall</i>	4.00%	17.50%	492	100.00%
<i>Hansford</i>	7.10%	22.20%	1,144	97.00%
<i>Hartley</i>	6.30%	14.60%	760	100.00%
<i>Hemphill</i>	5.70%	23.10%	743	97.00%
<i>Hutchinson</i>	6.10%	18.80%	3,800	96.80%
<i>Lipscomb</i>	6.30%	18.60%	531	97.80%
<i>Moore</i>	8.60%	22.70%	4,766	99.00%
<i>Ochiltree</i>	7.30%	23.60%	2,267	97.10%
<i>Oldham</i>	3.00%	18.30%	321	97.50%
<i>Parmer</i>	6.90%	20.90%	2,011	93.30%
<i>Potter</i>	6.80%	20.10%	23,245	88.00%
<i>Randall</i>	5.80%	18.30%	26,744	97.00%
<i>Roberts</i>	4.40%	19.60%	157	100.00%
<i>Sherman</i>	7.30%	20.00%	560	100.00%
<i>Swisher</i>	5.40%	18.50%	1,273	95.10%
<i>Wheeler</i>	5.10%	19.60%	942	93.80%
<i>Regional Average</i>	6.10%	19.40%	84,797	96.49%

## 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 58 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
Steven Yeager	Hartley County Sheriff's Office
Erica Trevino	Dalhart Police Department
Leander Davila	City of Friona
Stephanie Ivey	Potter County Juvenile Probation
Kurtis Abla	Dalhart ISD
Lisa Johnson	Hemphill County
Amy Rhoades	Randall County DA's Office
Angela Holloway	Randall County DA's Office
Kathy Roth	Amarillo Police Department
Louis Sanchez	Amarillo Police Department
Amy McAfee	Swisher County
Kyle Schmalzried	Swisher County Sheriff's Office
Joe Orozco	Bovina Police Department
Ernest Amaya	Tulia Police Department
Kristopher Manuel	Canyon Police Department
Paul Brown	Tulia Police Department
Steve Brush	Canyon Police Department
Cindy Smith	Panhandle Crisis Center
Natalie McGee	Hutchinson County Crisis Center
Jennifer Foreman	Tralee Crisis Center
Angela Gamboa	Deaf Smith County Crisis Center
Mary Gamboa	Deaf Smith County Crisis Center
Norma Luginbyhl	Hutchinson County Crisis Center
Michelle Shields	Family Support Services
LaDonna Reining	Potter County CSCD
Jim Womack	Family Support Services
Sonja Cuellar	47 <sup>th</sup> DA's Office
Kori Draper	Safe Place
Kirsten Williams	Hereford Police Department
Troy Navarrette	Potter County Juvenile Probation
Roy Guzman	Borger Police Department
Aaron Price	Oldham County Sheriff's Office
Laci Reeve	Oldham County Judge's Office
Janet Long	Oldham County Attorney's Office
Judge Shawn Ballew	Oldham County Judge's Office
Jace Delgado	Moore County Sheriff's Office
Brian Massey	Pampa Police Department

## Executive Summary

As the data received from the online survey was analyzed, we were beginning to observe some patterns that crossed disciplines. There were four (4) issues identified in multiple sections. Domestic violence, substance abuse, sexual assault and mental health were on top of the list. All four recurring topics are returning from previous years.

The top four 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.

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Domestic Violence

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Substance Abuse

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Mental Health

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Sexual Assault

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Recruiting and Retention

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Human Trafficking

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Stalking

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Rise in Crime (Violent)

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Lack of Parental Support

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Lack of Funding/Training for Active Shooter

In total, the issues the region is in front of can be summed up in ten topics. Those are listed in the graphic to the left, 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 historically have had a higher rate of domestic violence than the state average and we continue to look at new approaches, for example, the Domestic

Violence Coalition was 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 ten (10) 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 recruiting and retention across agencies.
- Increase equipment and training for 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, substance abuse and mental health 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.



Figure 3: XIT Rodeo & Reunion 2022, photo courtesy of Daphne Morcom

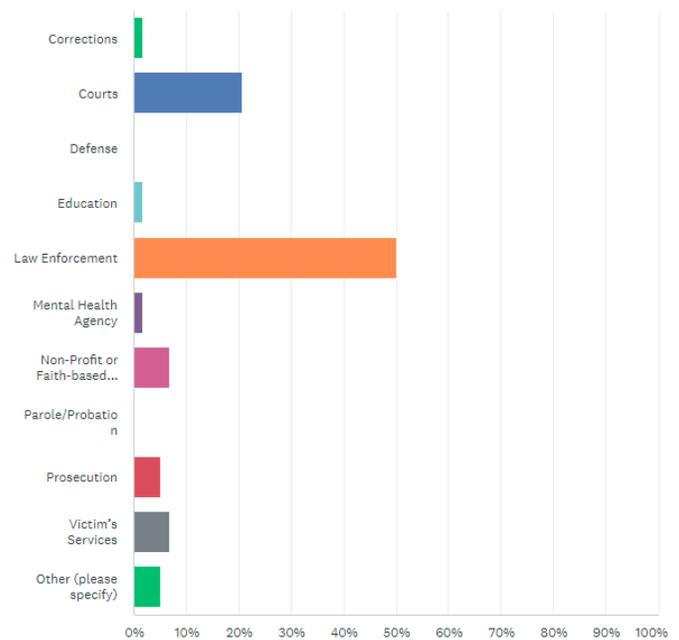
## Regional Priorities

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 58 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

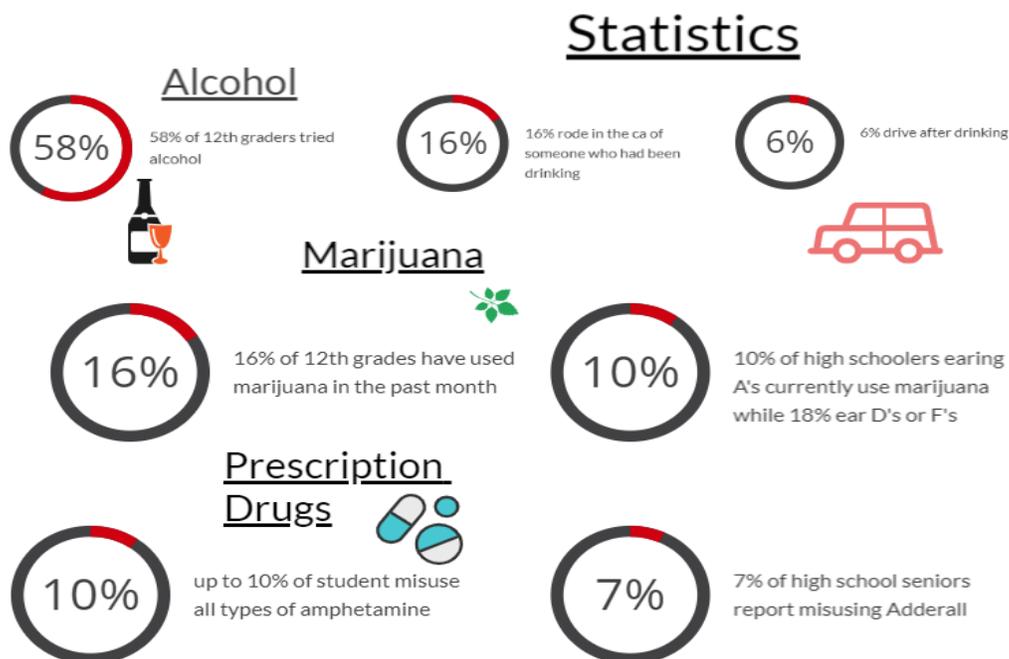
Representatives from the juvenile justice system focus daily on prevention and rehabilitation. The goal is to guide these young minds to positive life choices and self-sustainment, so that they will be well adjusted and contribute to society in a positive light. Juveniles are less motivated to make positive 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 Recovery Village.



# Juvenile Justice

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In a study by Recovery Village, they found that nearly 20% of high school students have been offered, sold or given drugs, on school property, in the past year. The study also found that 4.3% of high schoolers had used drugs in the month before being surveyed and that 4% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders have used marijuana in the past month.<sup>iv</sup> Teenagers report that peer pressure and academic pressure are two of the largest reasons for substance use. 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.

## 2) **Rise in Crime (Violent)**

Many of our respondents to the survey listed an increase in criminal activity as an issue among our juveniles. Survey responses were concerned with both the amount of crime in recent years and the types of crimes that are being committed by the juvenile populations. It was reported that there has been a noticeable increase in the amount of violent crimes.

The FBI composes violent crimes into four categories; murder and non-negligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault, and defines those offenses that involve force or threat of force. The 2019 UCR Crime in Texas does not differentiate which crimes were committed by juveniles or adults.

Several law enforcement agencies have stated that the presence of officers discourages criminals from illegal activity. Many law enforcement agencies are understaffed, leaving them with either not having an officer on all campuses or having less officers on patrol. Our region is in need of funding for School Resource Officers to help combat the rise in juvenile crime. In addition to more manpower, the jurisdictions need better resources for juveniles to obtain the best advocacy to aid juveniles in making better choices and understanding how each choice leads to consequences. Those consequences can be good or bad.

Some other suggestions on ways to deal with this growing problem are developing and implementing positive programs to teach the youth better ways to function in the community, provide in home case management to assist the family in finding better ways to deal with problems, more mentors to guide young people, allow school more latitude with discipline and find alternatives to aggressively rehabilitate young offenders.

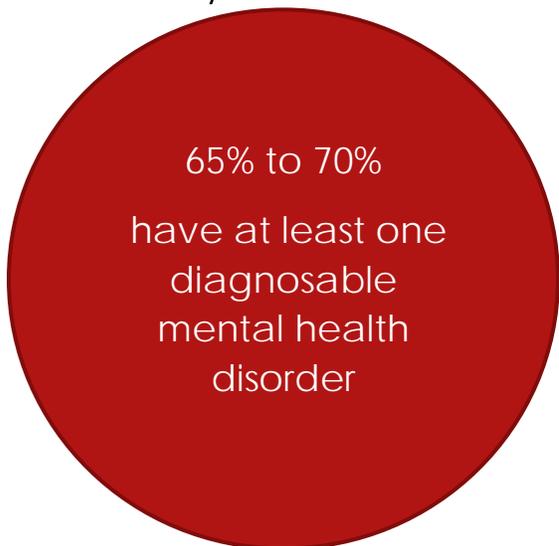
# Juvenile Justice

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## 3) Mental Health

According to the World Health Organization, one in seven 10-19 year olds experiences a mental health condition with depression, anxiety and behavioral disorders among the leading causes of illness and disability among adolescents. Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death among 15-29 year olds.<sup>v</sup> Statistics also have shown us that roughly 65% to 70% of our youth in the juvenile justice system have a diagnosable mental health disorder.<sup>vi</sup> According Most of our focus group overwhelmingly agrees that the Panhandle Region does not have the resources to sufficiently combat this issue. Anytime a case with possible mental health is handled, the majority of our departments are depleted of resources while handling the case. The number of mental health cases is on the increase. However, many departments and school systems find themselves with larger caseloads, as they do not have enough funding to provide the professional staff to meet the needs.

The region is seeing cases of severe mental health issues; such as sex offenders, defiant disorder sociopathic tendencies, psychopathic and others. These issues often lead to a student with emotions including but not limited to anger, violence, delinquency, defiance, aggression, oppositional, conduct disorders, callousness, manipulation and lack of emotions. According to research from David Rettew, M.D. those adolescents with these issues have experienced coercive family processes, lack of supervision by parents, lack of positive involvement from parents, inconsistent discipline or outright abuse. Because the students are not receiving the support from their parental figures, it leaves the schools or justice system to pick up the brunt of the problem, then work to rehabilitate the student. Many professionals believe that adolescents can outgrow the mental health issues that they are facing with the right treatment. If diverted early enough, through community-based treatments and services that are addressing the needs that the adolescent is lacking, then it is feasible for the adolescent to go on to live a health life.



The Panhandle is greatly lacking in services for mental health. A study by Texas Medical Association stated that a child living in Texas has less of a chance to receive necessary mental health treatment than children living in any other state. <sup>vii</sup>Adolescents with serious mental health issues are relegated to one option in the Panhandle. The additional strain is that this option does not always have enough beds to handle the need. Juveniles with less serious issues have a few more options for outpatient care with seven locations throughout the region. Many private counselors specialize in students with mental health, giving parents another outpatient option. According to research by the National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice, the

# Juvenile Justice

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SAMHSA's Six Key Principles of a Trauma-Informed Approach need to include safety for both staff and clients, peer support, empowerment, voice, and choice of self-healing, trustworthiness and transparency with clients, family members and staff, collaboration and mutuality to level power between clients and staff to create a partner in care, cultural, historical and gender issues must have biases removed. This illustrates that mental health issues need the care of a licensed professional or medical doctor to care for the student. Our education system is not trained to handle these issues, which could lead to furthering the trauma for the student, or putting other students and themselves in danger.

## 4) **Lack of Parental Support**

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.<sup>viii</sup> Kids from broken homes are substantially more likely to be incarcerated for committing a crime as a juvenile.<sup>ix</sup> 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

# Juvenile Justice

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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.<sup>x</sup>

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) **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. Because of the shadowy nature of the sex trafficking 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 2020 and 2021, there were only three cases of human trafficking were reported in our region, which is an increase from zero the year before.

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.

# Juvenile Justice

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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. With social media becoming more popular and now being accessed at much younger ages, the doors of access for the predators have increased substantially. Victims are being sought out via social media under a guise or hauled in from other countries. Our public is unaware of this being an issue in our communities.

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 juveniles have even less options. The closest shelter for juveniles 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 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 juveniles. 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.

# Juvenile Justice

	Substance Abuse	Rise In Crime (Violent)	Mental Health	Lack of Parental Support	Human Trafficking
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.	Juveniles are moving into more serious crimes. Overall our law enforcement is seeing an increase in the amount of crime committed. Many of these crimes can be traced back to some of our other priorities including substance abuse and mental health.	A high percentage of youth will struggle with a mental health issue in their formative years. Studies have shown that adolescents that receive mental health care will fare better than those that do not. Many can successfully complete school and contribute to society.	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.	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.
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.	Law Enforcement needs more funding for manpower and equipment in order to have properly prepared officers in the field. Educating the public would foster good working relationships with the communities in which they are serving. Officers requested tougher sentencing to deter criminals. Cross-training amongst law enforcement, courts and prosecution would provide for a better criminal justice system here in the region.	More mental health services need to be added to the Region. Not necessarily in the City of Amarillo either, these resources need to be available for those in the rural areas. By building upon the current mental health infrastructure we can better care for the needs of all the juveniles facing mental health issues through programs, training, hospitalization or education. These services will better serve the adolescents giving them a positive step towards a bright future.	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.	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.

# 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.

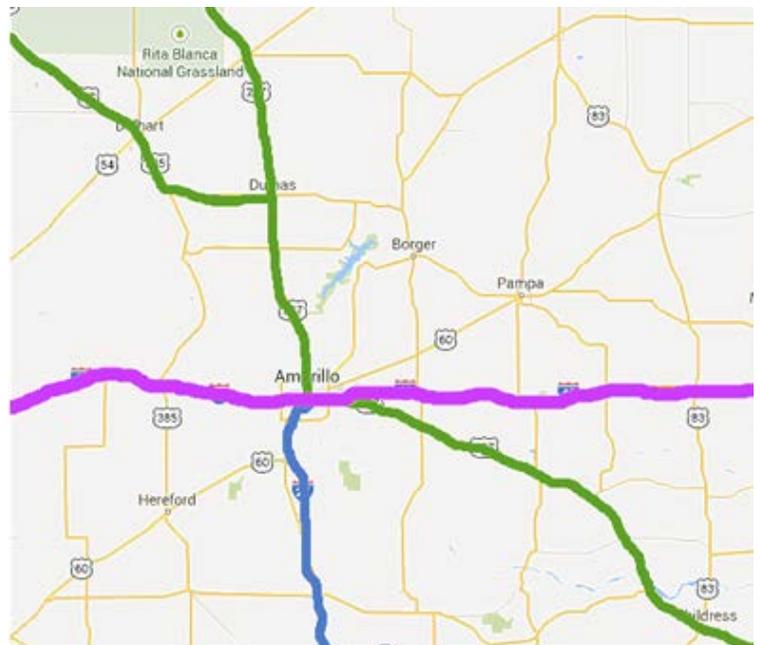


Figure 4: Major Highways in Region

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

# Law Enforcement

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 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) 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. Currently, our region has an over 80 vacant law enforcement positions.

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



Figure 5: 125<sup>th</sup> Panhandle Regional Law Enforcement Academy, photo courtesy of Amarillo College

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

# Law Enforcement

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.



126th Panhandle Regional Law Enforcement Academy  
September 27, 2022 - March 3, 2023  
Back Row (L-R): Joe Cannon (Coordinator of Law Enforcement Academy), Jeremy Rascoe, Julie O'Brien, Abelardo Carrasco, Joseph Benitez, Zachary Ray, Eric Wallace (Director of Criminal Justice Programs).  
Front Row (L-R): Yasmira Reynaga, Destiny Garza, Christian Casanova, Lacey Butler, Evelyn Townsend, Ezequiel Padilla and Clarissa Apodaca.

Figure 6: 126th Panhandle Regional Law Enforcement Academy, photo courtesy of Amarillo College

### 3) 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.

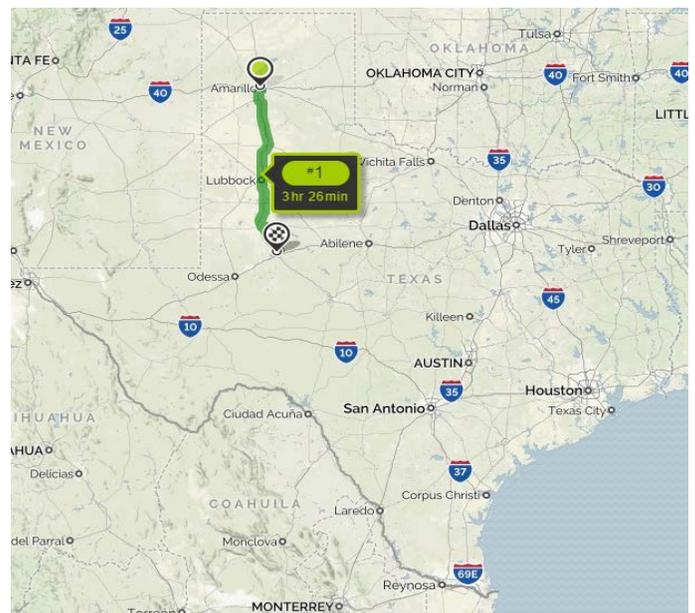


Figure 7: Distance to State Mental Hospital, courtesy of MapQuest

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

# Law Enforcement

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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 Texas Medical Association found that community based mental health treatment services in Texas cost an average of \$12 per day for adults as opposed to a jail bed at \$137, an emergency room visit at \$1,265, or a mental health facility hospitalization at \$400 per day.<sup>xi</sup> 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 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.



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

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 Psychiatric and Substance Disorders (COPSD) Program while still inside of the jail. Jail staff conduct a

# Law Enforcement

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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.

## 4) **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 2021 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 2020 and 2021 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 2021.

# Law Enforcement

	Murder	Rape	Robbery	Assault	Burglary	Larceny	Auto Theft	2021 Total	2020 Total	% of Change	Domestic Violence	Sexual Assault
<b>Armstrong</b>				5	1	3	3	12	4	200.00%	2	
<b>Briscoe</b>				5	2	7		14	6	133.33%	4	
<b>Carson</b>				10	2	4	5	21	43	-51.16%	6	1
<b>Castro</b>		2	1	43	8	15	10	79	48	64.58%	25	6
<b>Childress</b>		2	1	43	14	17	4	81	48	68.75%	26	6
<b>Collingsworth</b>				5	2	4	2	13	0	#DIV/0!	5	1
<b>Dallam</b>	1	6		94	31	75	32	239	187	27.81%	60	10
<b>Deaf Smith</b>		3	2	166	59	179	26	435	455	-4.40%	97	18
<b>Donley</b>				13	15	11	6	45	27	66.67%	4	1
<b>Gray</b>	3	9	3	277	91	276	24	684	642	6.54%	179	22
<b>Hall</b>		2		14	9	8	5	38	7	442.86%	10	2
<b>Hansford</b>				7	3	9	1	20	29	-31.03%	6	3
<b>Hartley</b>				3	5	3	4	15	3	400.00%	1	
<b>Hemphill</b>		1		5	1	13	1	22	17	29.41%	4	1
<b>Hutchinson</b>		20	2	245	91	186	35	579	478	21.13%	169	30
<b>Lipscomb</b>				5	6	17	2	30	16	87.50%	5	1
<b>Moore</b>	2	24		246	53	259	39	623	399	56.14%	142	34
<b>Ochiltree</b>		6		87	43	64	6	206	132	56.06%	66	11
<b>Oldham</b>			1	3	2	2		8	16	-50.00%	3	
<b>Parmer</b>		3		34	12	26	15	90	69	30.43%	22	8
<b>Potter</b>	21	172	189	5,656	1,327	4,733	892	12,991	9,294	39.78%	2747	154
<b>Randall</b>	1	23	5	402	81	295	56	863	509	69.55%	266	31
<b>Roberts</b>								0	1	-100.00%	3	1
<b>Sherman</b>								0	7	-100.00%		
<b>Swisher</b>		8	2	139	42	68	8	267	171	56.14%	84	6
<b>Wheeler</b>		2		18	6	6	1	33	15	120.00%	17	3
<b>Total</b>	28	283	206	7,525	1,906	6,280	1,177	17,408	12,623	37.91%	3,953	350

## 5) Lack of Funding and Training for Active Shooter

The survey and focus group discussions, again this year, gave examples of how their job is impeded by lack of funding and training. There are several subjects in which both of these applies to but one of the most talked about currently is funding and training for active shooter situations. As most of us know, active shooter situations have been in the news frequently in the past few years and law enforcement has given it much forethought with events like the Uvalde shooting occurring in Texas. On September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022, an active shooter situation took place in our own backyard. There was a teen accused of shooting a deputy, a firefighter and a bystander while at the Tri-State Fair in Amarillo.

According to the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, an active shooter is an individual who is engaged in killing, or attempting to kill, people in a confined and populated area. These types of situations are often unpredictable and evolve quickly. These situations are also chaotic and intense as they cause people’s adrenaline rises and they start to panic. Law enforcement is often over 10 to 15 minutes away from arrival once an event starts so people being mentally and physically prepared are a must.<sup>xii</sup> Law enforcement not only need training for these types of situation but they also need tools. The training and tools necessary to be prepared for active shooter situations are often expensive and most of our agencies have limited funding. Another issue our agencies face in being prepared for these types of situations are the locations of the trainings. Most of the trainings for these types of events take place in the more populated areas of Texas like Dallas, Austin or Houston, Dallas being the closest at 250 miles away from Childress, which is the Panhandle’s southeastern most town.

# Law Enforcement

Along with a need for more training in the region, we also need more training to be available all over the region. Officers want to become more sophisticated about the issues that they face while in the field and skilled at tactics such as de-escalation, interdiction and more. Most of the continuing education courses are offered in Amarillo, for small agencies it is difficult to have officers take off, especially for multiple days, for continuing education courses while still maintaining full coverage of shifts in the department. The new requirements for some courses have jumped from eight hours to forty hours. Many officers are excited to build a better skill set, however that is a lot of time away from the job and causes the department to stress in their absence.

Panhandle Regional Planning Commission (PRPC) holds a contract with Amarillo College for the In-Service courses offered via the Law Enforcement Training and Education Grant from the Office of the Governor's, Criminal Justice Division. Our contract has been in place for forty plus years. PRPC encourages that courses need to be offered at additional locations outside of Amarillo. Amarillo College does a great job of offering courses however, the class will not make if we have less than ten enrolled. That combined with Amarillo College not being able to offer classes where the other community colleges in the region have jurisdiction can become a hurdle in meeting the desires for courses throughout the region. PRPC continues to look at options while still maintaining our long standing relationship with Amarillo College.

A few years ago, Amarillo College and PRPC revamped the way that the In-Service courses are charged to the training and education grant. This has enabled us to provide more In-Service courses than in years past. Which has benefited the officers, because often times we are able to look into more specialized course offerings because the basic TCOLE course requirements have been easily accessible. Many of the peace officers have noticed these new In-Service course offerings and several have come inquiring or even asking for specific courses they would like to see come into the region. Officers are getting involved with more scenarios than in years past. They want to learn more so that they can be better prepared and handle the situations better should they arise. We will continue to ensure that the In-Service course offerings are meeting the requirements of TCOLE for the officers. We will strive to go above those basic requirements as the region's issues may deem certain course offerings to be more indispensable, while also working to have courses accessible in locations throughout the region.



Figure 8: Crime Scene Training Tulla, TX PRLEA In-Service Class, courtesy of PRLEA/AC

# Law Enforcement

	Substance Abuse	Recruiting and Retention	Mental Health	Domestic Violence	Lack of Funding & Training for Active Shooter
Data:	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Law enforcement needs to have access to TCOLE required courses which includes specialized courses. Officers are looking for more in-depth training to aid in tackling the issues that are plaguing the region. Specifically, active shooter situations. Obtaining the equipment necessary to be prepared and being able to afford to cover an officer while away at training continue to be an issue.</p>
Response:	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<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>Panhandle Regional Planning Commission (PRPC) will continue to work with Amarillo College to ensure that In-Service courses are available throughout the service area. PRPC will work with officers interested in specific In-Service courses or even specific topics to see about obtaining specialized training for the region. PRPC will also notify agencies of grants available to obtain the specialized equipment necessary for the specific situations.</p>

# Victim Services

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## 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 2022, 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 substance abuse, mental health and domestic violence and included the following classes; Coercive Control, Safe at Home, Trauma Informed Sexual Assault Investigation, Current Drug Trends and High in Plain Sight. 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, sexual assault, substance abuse, mental health, 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.<sup>xiii</sup> 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 2022, our victim service agencies assisted 1,499 victims of domestic violence. This number is actually lower than the previous year.



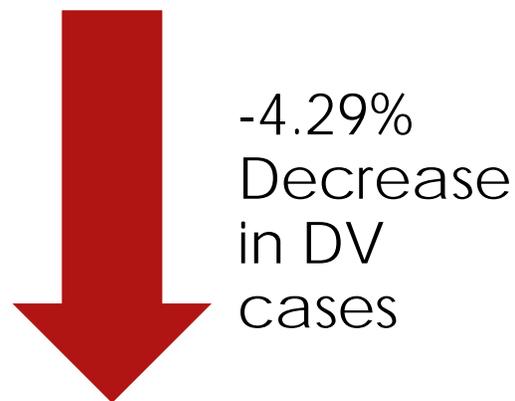
# Victim Services

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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.

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. With the domestic violence coalition working together to end domestic violence within the City of Amarillo and both Potter and Randall Counties, we experienced a decrease of -4.29% of reported domestic violence cases from 2020 to 2021 (the most current UCR statistics listed with DPS.<sup>xiv</sup> That is a dramatic change from the 3.41% increase the previous year. Some are speculating that the decrease was a result of sheltering in place with the pandemic and people not being able to leave their homes as freely as before. We will continue to watch the numbers and the trends and collaborate with the victim service agencies and law enforcement agencies to see if that was in fact the case or if there was indeed an actual decrease in the number of cases.

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.



# Victim Services

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## 2) 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.<sup>xv</sup> The United States

350 reported

1050 unreported

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.<sup>xvi</sup> 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 2022, the victim service agencies in our region provided services to 806 sexual assault victims. That is just the number of victims that sought services and not all victims chose to make a report to law enforcement. The fact remains that only 1 out of every 4 assaults are reported to law

enforcement. In 2021, the most recent statistics available from the Texas Department of Public Safety's Uniform Crime Report, the region had 350 cases reported. So if we hold that number to the statistics, that means we may have another 1050 cases, for a total of 1,400 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.

## 3) 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.<sup>xvii</sup> Each discipline within our focus groups agreed that substance abuse compounds issues for victims. Whether the violence

# Victim Services

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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.

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.

## 4) **Mental Health**

While many of us are fond of the wide open spaces across the Panhandle, it does create an added layer of difficulty when dealing with persons needing mental health assistance. The region has only two private pay facility equipped to handle emergency treatment for mental health patients. Both facilities are centrally located in Amarillo however, that still means a commute time of roughly one and a half hours for many across the region. Professionals also pointed out that often times the region's facilities may not have any beds available, leaving them to transport the individual to jail. Some of our family violence shelters in the region have found individuals claiming domestic violence issues in an effort to obtain shelter, food and counseling only to find out later this was a mental health issue.

Knowing that the stigmas associated with mental health illnesses prevents patients and their families from obtaining care, our victim service agencies expressed concern that educating the public would be a good first step. Misunderstanding causes a stalemate in the person's ability to obtain treatment, leading to further deterioration of the illness.

All boiled down, the Panhandle region must have more facilities to best care for persons with mental illnesses. While facilities such as hospitals, shelters and victim assistance agencies are not the ideal caregivers, we must have facilities with properly trained personnel to handle this growing problem, so that they are not left holding these patients in shelters. Victim Service agencies believe it would help to have cross-training, between the one (1) emergency mental health agency in the region and all of the victim service agencies, in an effort to build understanding as well as best practices.

# Victim Services

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## 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.<sup>xviii</sup>



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

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 are 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 limitation, 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.<sup>xix</sup>

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

# Victim Services

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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.

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.<sup>xx</sup>

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

# Victim Services

	Domestic Violence	Substance Abuse	Substance Abuse	Mental Health	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>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>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>The region has seen an increase in the number of mental health cases in all areas across the criminal justice system. This increase highlights the need for more accessible facilities as well as medical staff.</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>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>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>Mental Illness can take many forms and can be either short term or long term for an individual. The Panhandle needs specific mental health facilities with locations spread throughout the region making it accessible for anyone needing treatment. Ensuring that the facility has trained medical staff prepared to handle the demand for the services will help alleviate the currently stressed system.</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

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## 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, there are not many sites that are able to provide the necessary care for those afflicted with mental illnesses. Social workers do the majority of the work around the region. Out of our 26 Counties, The Texas Health and Human Services, Texas Department of State Health Services reports that Potter County has 16 Psychiatrists and Harley County has 1 Psychiatrist.<sup>xxi</sup> That gives a ratio in Potter County 7,228 to 1 and Hartley County a ratio of 5,208 to 1. However, Potter and Hartley Counties are the only counties in the region with Psychiatrists, which makes the ratio for our entire 26 county region 25,542 to 1. That is a stark reality. The lack of facilities and providers 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.

Ration of population  
**25,542**  
to Psychiatrists

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. As of June 2023, the local mental health provider has 49 vacant employment positions in which 43 of them are direct care positions. 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.

# Mental Health

## 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' 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 too. 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 to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) nearly one in five U.S. adults lives with a mental illness.<sup>xxii</sup> 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. A recent example of this is an incident that took place in Amarillo on March 21, 2023. According to KVII Amarillo, "A man with apparent rifle was "very special needs," had severe mental illness, and was shot and killed by Amarillo police." The article stated that the family of the man stated that he had run out of his medication just days before the shooting and the "tight timetable" to refill the medication caused an issue and he had been without it for several days and had only been back to taking it for a day before the



Figure 9: Crime Scene Investigation at PRLEA, courtesy of PRLEA/AC

# Mental Health

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incident. The article says that the family feels as though that being without the medication for a time period may have been related to what happened. It was also stated, “However, the family says they do not blame the police but wishes there were more resources available to deal with the mental illness before the tragedy occurred.”<sup>xxiii</sup>

### 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 people with a existing mental health illness are responsible for the consumption of 38% alcohol, 44% of cocaine or 40% of cigarettes. Also that people who have ever been diagnosed with a mental health disorder at some point in their lives have consumed 69% of all the alcohol, 84% of all the cocaine and 68% of all cigarettes.<sup>xxiv</sup> This provides an additional hurdle for caregivers and medical professionals. Unfortunately, this study shows a direct link to illegal drugs, triggering those choosing to 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.

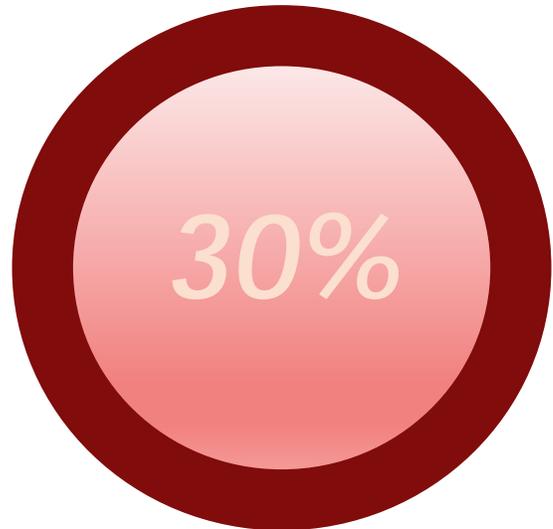
Panhandle Regional Planning Commission has seen some strides in the local mental health provider, Texas Panhandle Centers, working with the sheriff’s offices in the region to provide access to care for inmates that are in need. Texas Panhandle Centers also works with local Psychiatrists and Sheriff’s 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.

# Mental Health

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## 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 11th leading cause of death in the US, averaging 132 per day.<sup>xxv</sup> 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.<sup>xxvi</sup> 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 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.

# Mental Health

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The Panhandle is the only region in Texas without a State Hospital. According to the Amarillo Globe News, Representative Four Price has authored House Bill 2099.<sup>xxvii</sup> It is legislation that would require the State to implement a State Hospital in the Panhandle Region. The House met on March 8, 2023 and the bill was referred to Public Health Committee.<sup>xxviii</sup>

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<sup>xxix</sup> 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.<sup>xxx</sup> 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.<sup>xxxi</sup> Adults in the U.S. living with serious mental illness die on average 25 years earlier than others, largely due to treatable medical conditions.<sup>xxxii</sup> 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.



Figure 10: American Flag at Dawn, courtesy of Lori Gunn

# Mental Health

	Lack of Facilities	Lack of Resources/Services	Substance Abuse	Training/Education	Lack of Long-Term Care
Data:	With only two 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 two 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 in 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?”

<b>Courts Concerns</b>	
<b>Challenge of finding an attorney for a rural county</b>	<b>Increased substance abuse</b>
<b>Mental Health Issues</b>	<b>Awaiting beds to open in the state jail facilities</b>
<b>Assaults becoming more frequent</b>	<b>Prosecution delays</b>
<b>Lack of experienced attorneys</b>	<b>Increased jail population</b>
<b>Jail funding</b>	<b>No deputies</b>
<b>Court costs</b>	<b>Increased medical expenses for inmates</b>
<b>Funding for court appointed attorneys</b>	<b>Timely entrance to TDCJ</b>
<b>Juvenile Expenses</b>	<b>Lack of court appointed attorneys</b>

<b>Education Concerns</b>	
<b>Drug and alcohol use</b>	<b>Human Trafficking</b>
<b>Juvenile Delinquency</b>	<b>Truancy</b>

<b>Law Enforcement Concerns</b>	
<b>Very rural area, no resources</b>	<b>Budget cuts</b>
<b>Law enforcement staffing issues</b>	<b>Indigent Defense</b>
<b>Mental Health</b>	<b>Illegal drug use</b>
<b>Thefts</b>	<b>Juvenile Issues</b>
<b>Public trust</b>	<b>Public education of law enforcement</b>
<b>Alcohol</b>	<b>Casino</b>
<b>THC/Marijuana trafficking</b>	<b>Illegal Immigrants</b>
<b>Unresponsive defense attorneys</b>	<b>Violent offenders awaiting trial</b>
<b>Juvenile offenders committing shootings</b>	<b>Fentanyl</b>
<b>Mental health within the jail</b>	<b>Salaries</b>
<b>Lack of juvenile detention facilities</b>	<b>Domestic Violence</b>
<b>Child Abuse/Neglect</b>	<b>Court process is behind/moving slowly</b>
<b>Racial discrimination and bullying</b>	<b>Public perception</b>
<b>Violent crime/Juvenile</b>	<b>Funding to train/educate officers locally</b>
<b>Weapons offenses</b>	<b>Funds to assist on active shooters in all aspects from past shootings</b>
<b>State legislature negative impact</b>	<b>Homelessness</b>

# Other

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<b>Non-profit or Faith-based Organization Concerns</b>	
<b>Domestic Violence</b>	<b>Sexual Assault</b>
<b>Stalking</b>	<b>Mental health</b>
<b>Substance Abuse</b>	

<b>Prosecution Concerns</b>	
<b>Backlog from pandemic, specifically with violent felony offenses</b>	<b>High rate of domestic violence</b>
<b>Recruiting and retention of law enforcement and prosecutors</b>	<b>Increase in the number of defendants with mental health issues</b>
<b>Victim's Services Concerns</b>	

<b>Mental Health Agency</b>	
<b>Prosecution and probation for violent offenders, often lenient for offenders, with little effective prosecution for stalking and continuing harassment of victims</b>	<b>Basic needs for victims of domestic violence in terms of safe shelter and financial assistance for those escaping a violent partner</b>
<b>Mental health services</b>	<b>Therapy for victims of crime</b>
<b>Lack of beds available in State Hospital System</b>	

<b>Corrections Concerns</b>	
<b>Lack of mental health facilities that help restore competency</b>	<b>Amount of high grade meth and fentanyl that is available</b>
<b>Law Enforcement officer shortages</b>	

<b>Victim's Services Concerns</b>	
<b>Child Sexual Assault</b>	<b>Drug and Alcohol Related Crimes</b>
<b>Domestic Violence</b>	<b>Mental health commitments</b>
<b>Sexual Assault</b>	<b>Stalking</b>

<b>Other Agency Concerns</b>	
<b>Juvenile Delinquency</b>	<b>Increase in violent juvenile crime</b>
<b>Truancy</b>	<b>Parenting</b>

# Other

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## 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**

Speed Enforcement  
Mental Health Training for  
Criminal Justice Stakeholders  
Diversion Programs  
Community  
Outreach/Awareness/  
Prevention  
Counseling/Therapy  
Adequate Response Time  
Drug Enforcement  
Law Enforcement Training  
Veterans Services  
Justice Information System  
Assistance Filing Victims  
Compensation Claims  
Transportation  
Neighborhood Watch  
Alternatives to Incarceration  
Filing Protective Orders  
Adequate Arrest Rates  
Dual Diagnosis Treatment  
(Mental Health & Substance  
Abuse)  
Family Violence Investigators/  
Prosecutors  
Forensic Interviews for Child  
Abuse  
Victim Assistance Advocacy  
Residential Treatment  
Court Advocacy  
Crisis Intervention  
Filing Protective Orders  
Treatment Services for  
Offenders  
Information & Referral  
Legal Services  
Access to Medications

### **Mental Health Agency**

CIT dispatched for Mental Health  
Calls  
Law Enforcement Training  
Victim Assistance Advocacy  
Sliding Scale Services for low or  
no income individuals  
Specialty Courts  
Counseling/Therapy  
Drug Court  
Veterans Court  
Assistance Filing Victims  
Compensation Claims  
Legal Services  
Cold Case Investigations  
Dual Diagnosis Treatment  
(Mental Health & Substance  
Abuse)  
Outpatient Treatment  
Justice Information System  
Community Outreach/  
Awareness/Prevention  
Crisis Intervention  
Forensic Examinations for Sexual  
Assault

### **Non-Profit/Faith Based Organizations**

Adequate Response Time  
Lighthouse Recovery  
Assisting with Immigration  
Status Issues  
Court Advocacy  
Crisis Intervention  
Culturally Competent Services  
Developing Safety Plans  
Filing Protective Orders

Hotline Counseling  
Information & Referral  
Medical Accompaniment  
Multidisciplinary Team Case  
Coordination  
Transportation  
Crime Scene Investigation  
Drug Enforcement  
Dual Diagnosis Treatment  
(Mental Health & Substance  
Abuse)  
Counseling/Therapy  
Alternative to Incarceration  
Advocating on behalf of Victim  
for Other Service Providers,  
Creditors, Employers

### **Corrections**

Drug Enforcement  
Community Policing  
Law Enforcement Training  
Intensive Outpatient Treatment  
Programs  
Alcohol Monitoring of Offenders  
Assistance Filing Victims  
Compensation Claims  
Court Advocacy  
Information & Referral

### **Prosecution**

Family Violence Investigations  
CIT dispatched for Mental Health  
Calls  
Access to Medications  
Specialty Courts  
Family Violence  
Investigators/Prosecutors

# Other

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Diversion Programs  
Court Advocacy  
Filing Protective Orders  
Preparing Child Witnesses for Court

## **Victim's Services**

Victim Assistance Advocacy  
Sliding Scale Services for low or no income individuals  
Counseling/Therapy  
Family Court  
Crisis Intervention  
Forensic Examination for Sexual Assault  
Forensic Interviews for Child Abuse  
Information & Referral  
Legal Services  
Multidisciplinary Team Case Coordination  
Adequate Arrest Rates  
Adequate Response Time  
Family Violence Investigation  
Apprehension & Prosecution  
Culturally Competent Services  
Financial Assistance for Legal Representation & Rent/Utilities  
Community Policing  
Non-profit Faith Based Programs  
Advocating on behalf of Victim for Other Service Providers, Creditors, Employers  
Assistance Filing Victims Compensation Claims  
Community Outreach/Awareness/Prevention  
Court Advocacy  
Developing Safety Plans  
Filing Protective Orders  
Hotline Counseling  
Medical Accompaniment  
Emergency Shelter  
Transportation

## **Law Enforcement**

Community Policing  
Family Violence Investigation

Forensic Examinations for Sexual Assault  
Forensic Interviews for Child Abuse  
Information & Referral  
Neighborhood Watch  
Housing for People with Mental Illness  
Substance Abuse Prevention  
Family Violence  
Investigators/Prosecutors  
Advocating on behalf of Victim for Other Service Providers, Creditors, Employers  
Community Outreach/Awareness/Prevention  
Assistance Filing Victims Compensation Claims  
Drug Enforcement  
Access to Medications  
Dual Diagnosis Treatment (Mental Health & Substance Abuse)  
Proactive Law Enforcement  
Alcohol Monitoring of Offenders  
Filing Protective Orders  
Mental Health Counseling/Therapy  
Emergency Shelter  
CIT dispatched for Mental Health calls  
Substance Abuse Detox Services  
Residential Treatment  
Drug Court  
Crisis Intervention  
Multidisciplinary Team Case Coordination  
Emergency Shelter  
Crime Scene Investigation  
Veteran Services  
Substance Abuse Intervention  
Diversion Programs  
Assisting Victim in Recovering Property Retained as Evidence  
Law Enforcement Training  
Mental Health Training for Criminal Justice Stakeholders  
Specialized Training for Criminal Justice Stakeholders

Justice Information System  
Adequate Response Time  
Victim Assistance is Handled by the Prosecutor's Office  
Outpatient Treatment  
Specialty Court  
Alternatives to Incarceration  
GPS Monitoring of Offenders  
Treatment Services for Offenders  
Developing Safety Plans  
Legal Services  
Sliding Scale Services for low or no income individuals  
Reentry Court  
Assisting with Immigration Status Issues

## **Other**

Community Policing  
Sliding Scale Services for low or no income Individuals  
Counseling/Therapy  
Diversion Programs  
Crisis Intervention  
Culturally Competent Services  
Filing Protective Orders

# Other

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## 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

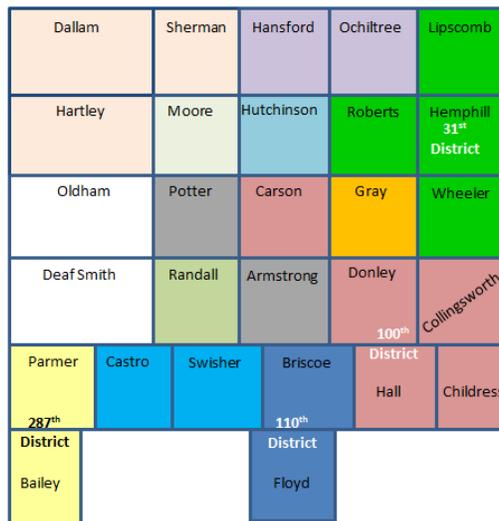
Listed below are the law enforcement-based juvenile justice programs operated throughout the region.

<b>Amarillo ISD</b>	In-School Police Department
The Amarillo ISD has its own police department that provides safety and security for 56 campuses and almost 32,000 students.	
<b>Borger ISD</b>	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.	
<b>Bushland ISD</b>	Liaison Officer Program
The Bushland Independent School District has contracted with the Potter County Sheriff’s Office to provide an on-campus officer.	
<b>Canyon ISD</b>	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.	
<b>Childress ISD Police Department</b>	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.	
<b>Dalhart ISD Police Department</b>	In-School Police Department
The Dalhart Independent School District has elected to fund a police department specifically for the school campus and properties.	
<b>Dumas ISD Police Department</b>	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.	
<b>Highland Park ISD Police Department</b>	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.	
<b>Panhandle ISD</b>	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.	
<b>Youth Center of the High Plains</b>	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:

### 31<sup>st</sup> Judicial District Juvenile Probation Department

Hemphill County, Lipscomb County, Roberts County & Wheeler County

### 100<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Juvenile Probation Department

Childress County, Collingsworth County, Donley County & Hall County

### 110<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Juvenile Probation Department

Briscoe County & Floyd County

### 287<sup>th</sup> 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

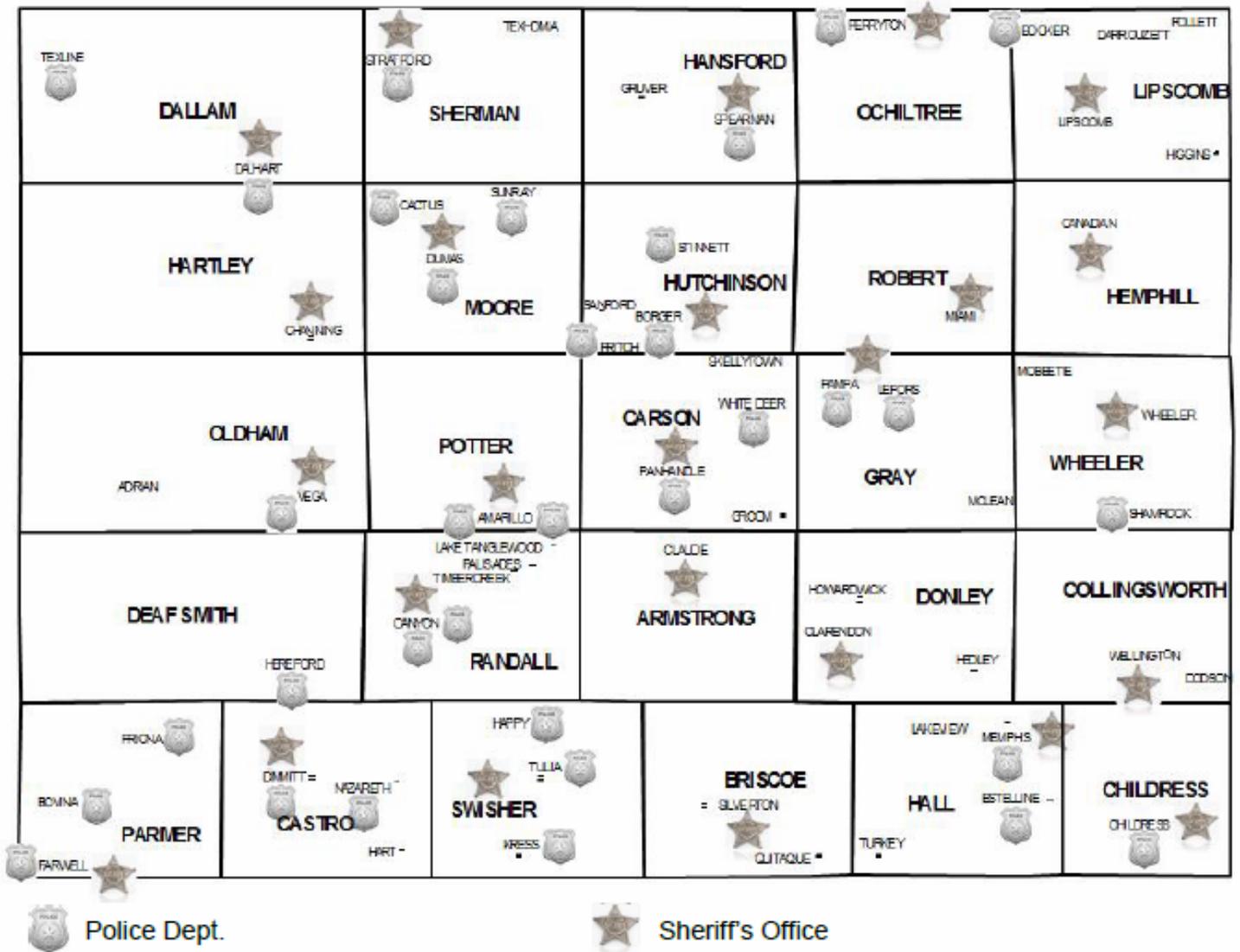
### Randall County Juvenile Probation Department

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	Population Served	Officer/ Resident Ratio	Square Miles	Officer/ Land Area Ratio
<b>Armstrong</b>	Armstrong County Sheriff's Office	6	1,850	1/308	909.11	1/152
<b>Briscoe</b>	Briscoe County Sheriff's Office	9	1,431	1/159	902	1/100
	Caprock Canyon State Park	2	Park Vistors		24	1/12
	Lake Mackenzie Police Department	1	Lake Vistors		896	1/896
<b>Carson</b>	Carson County Sheriff's Office	9	2,181	1/242	920.22	1/102
	Panhandle Police Department	4	2,337	1/584		
	Skellytown Marshal's Office	1	406	1/406		
	White Deer Police Department	1	860	1/860		
<b>Castro</b>	Castro County Sheriff's Office	7	3,131	1/447	894.43	1/128
	Dimmitt Police Department	6	4,167	1/695		
<b>Childress</b>	Childress County Sheriff's Office	4	965	1/241	696.41	1/174
	Childress Police Department	8	5,844	1/731		
<b>Collingsworth</b>	Collingsworth Sheriff's Office	3	2,568	1/856	918.44	1/306
<b>Dallam</b>	Dallam County Sheriff's Office	6	7,241	1/1,207	1,503.26	1/251
	Dalhart Police Department *	11	8,347	1/759		
	Texline Marshal's Office	5	315	1/63		
<b>Deaf Smith</b>	Deaf Smith County Sheriff's Office	10	3,598	1/360	1,496.87	1/150
	Hereford Police Department	26	14,779	1/568		
<b>Donley</b>	Donley County Sheriff's Office	6	3,339	1/557	926.89	1/154
<b>Gray</b>	Gray County Sheriff's Office	14	4,021	1/287	925.97	1/66
	Lefors Marshal's Office	1	520	1/520		
	Pampa Police Department	27	16,474	1/610		
<b>Hall</b>	Hall County Sheriff's Office	4	543	1/136	883.49	1/221
	Memphis Police Department	2	2267	1/1,134		

# Other

County	Agency	# of Comm'd Officers	Population Served	Officer/ Resident Ratio	Square Miles	Officer/ Land Area Ratio
<b>Hansford</b>	Hansford County Sheriff's Office	7	2,028	1/290	919.81	1/131
	Spearman Police Department	4	3,123	1/781		
<b>Hartley</b>	Hartley County Sheriff's Office	6	5,208	1/868	1,462.03	1/244
<b>Hemphill</b>	Hemphill County Sheriff's Office	9	3,217	1/357	906.29	1/101
<b>Hutchinson</b>	Hutchinson County Sheriff's Office	13	3,762	1/289	887.42	1/68
	Borger Police Department	32	12,419	1/388		
	Fritch Police Department	4	2,630	1/658		
	Stinnett Police Department	3	1,404	1/468		
<b>Lipscomb</b>	Lipscomb County Sheriff's Office	4	2,854	1/714	932.18	1/233
<b>Moore</b>	Moore County Sheriff's Office	19	6,706	1/353	899.69	1/47
	Cactus Police Department	12	3,252	1/271		
	Dumas Police Department	23	14,290	1/621		
	Sunray Police Department	4	2,255	1/564		
<b>Ochiltree</b>	Ochiltree County Sheriff's Office	8	1,317	1/165	917.63	1/115
	Perryton Police Department	13	8,289	1/638		
<b>Oldham</b>	Oldham County Sheriff's Office	7	777	1/111	1500.53	1/214
	Vega Police Department	1	975	1/975		
<b>Parmer</b>	Parmer County Sheriff's Office	6	2,934	1/489	880.78	1/147
	Bovina Police Department	3	1,315	1/438		
	Farwell Police Department	2	1,535	1/768		
	Friona Police Department	3	3,836	1/1,279		

# Other

County	Agency	# of Comm'd Officers	Population Served	Officer/ Resident Ratio	Square Miles	Officer/ Land Area Ratio
<b>Potter</b>	Potter County Sheriff's Office	76	103,970	1/1,368	908.37	1/12
	Amarillo Airport Police Department	13	Flying Public			
	Amarillo College Police Department	10	11,675	1/1,168		
	Amarillo Police Department**	345	201,291	1/583		
	Baptist St. Anthony's Hospital Security***	11	NA			
	Northwest Texas Hospital Security****	2	NA			
<b>Randall</b>	Randall County Sheriff's Office	83	120,125	1/1,447	911.54	1/11
	Canyon Police Department	28	15,221	1/544		
	Lake Tanglewood Police Department	8	721	1/90		
	Palo Duro Canyon State Park	1	Park Vistors		46	1/46
	Timbercreek Canyon Police Department	2	492	1/246		
	West Texas A&M University Police Dept.	19	9,581	1/504		
<b>Roberts</b>	Roberts County Sheriff's Office	7	803	1/115	924.06	1/132
<b>Sherman</b>	Sherman County Sheriff's Office	4	2,799	1/700	923.04	1/231
	Stratford Police Department	3	1,905	1/635		
<b>Swisher</b>	Swisher County Sheriff's Office	4	2,218	1/555	890.16	1/223
	Happy Police Department	1	636	1/636		
	Kress Police Department	1	871	1/871		
	Tulia Police Department	9	4,663	1/518		
<b>Wheeler</b>	Wheeler County Sheriff's Office	10	4,807	1/481	914.52	1/91

\*1/2 of Dalhart is in Hartley County

\*\*1/2 of Amarillo is in Randall County

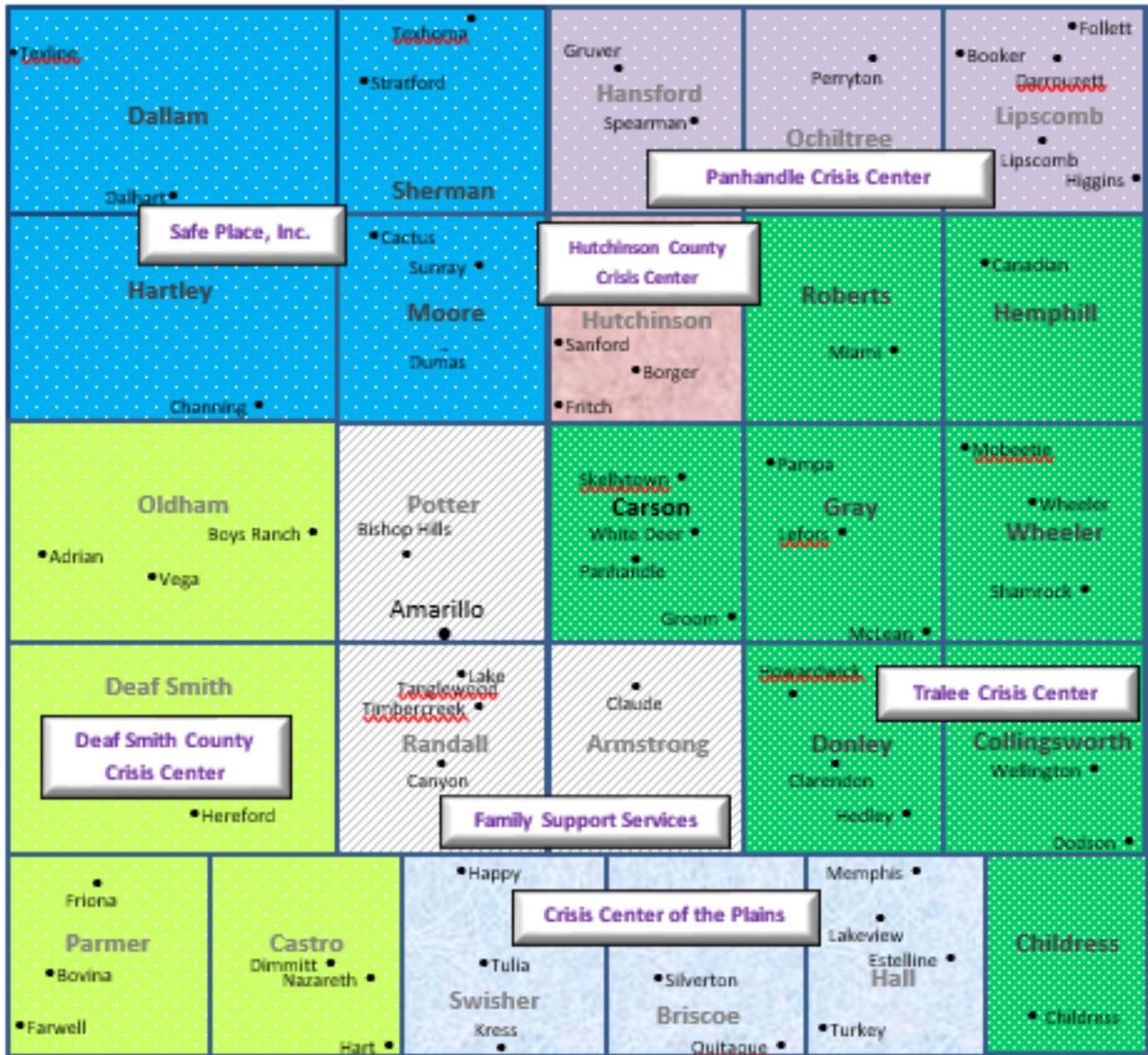
\*\*\*Baptist St. Anthony's Hospital is a 350-bed level IV Basic Trauma facility

\*\*\*\*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

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**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 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 Crisis Center**

Deaf Smith County Crisis Center 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 offers services to sexual assault and domestic violence survivors with a 26-bed emergency shelter. FSS offers counseling for victims of all types of abuse. FSS also provides services for perpetrators on crime through their counseling, BIPP, Veterans Resource Center, HOPES and Shelter Kennel programs. 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.

**Hutchinson County Crisis Center**

**Family Violence Crisis Center**

Hutchinson County Crisis Center (HC3) is a 14 bed emergency shelter 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

# Other

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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 Darrrouzett, 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.

**Safe Place, Inc.**

**Family Violence Crisis Center**

Safe Place, Inc. serves Moore County, which includes the City of Dumas, the City of Cactus and the City of Sunray, Sherman County, which includes the City of Texhoma and the City of Stratford, Hartley County, which includes the City of Hartley, the City of Dalhart and the City of Channing and Dallam County, which includes the City of Dalhart and the City of Texline. Safe Place, Inc. service area covers 4,799 square miles with 36,485 residents. The center offers 24 hour crisis intervention, a 24 hour emergency shelter and advocacy services for sexual assault and domestic violence survivors.

**Tralee Crisis Center**

**Family Violence Crisis Center**

Tralee Crisis Center is located in the City of Pampa and serves eight counties including Carson, Childress, Collingsworth, Donley, Gray, Hemphill, Roberts and Wheeler. The center’s service area is 8,090 square miles with 43,390 residents. The center provides shelter and coordinated supportive services to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and other violent crimes and works to educate the community.

# 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	18,525	3,570
Deaf Smith County Crisis Center	Castro Deaf Smith Oldham Parmer	37,047	4,773
Family Support Services	Armstrong Potter Randall	263,635	2,729
Hutchinson County Crisis Center	Hutchinson Carson	25,999	1,807
Panhandle Crisis Center	Hansford Lipscomb Ochiltree	17,611	2,770
Safe Place, Inc.	Dallam Hartley Moore Sherman	36,244	4,788
Tralee Crisis Center	Carson Childress Collingsworth Donley Gray Hemphill Roberts Wheeler	48,342	7,133

# 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	434,216	26,000
The Bridge Children’s Advocacy Center	All 26 counties in the region	434,216	26,000
No Boundaries International	Potter Randall	261,785	1,819
Potter County Victim Services Program	Potter	115,645	908
Randall County Victim Services Program	Randall	146,140	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 that provides services to adults and adolescents. 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

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## **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.

## **Ocean’s Behavioral Hospital**

## **Private Mental Health Facility**

Ocean’s Behavioral Hospital is a private emergency mental health facility located in Amarillo providing services to those individuals in the Panhandle who are 40 years of age or older. The 28 bed facility provides acute treatment for mental health disorders inpatient. It also has an intensive outpatient care program that provides services for those who are 12 years of age or older for mental health disorders.

## **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.

# Other

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**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.

**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.

# Other

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## **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.

## **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 11: Randall County, photo courtesy of Ben Bennett*

# Other

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## 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 smallest percentage, coming in at 7% put “other” on this question. Therefore, we asked them to specify. The answers included the following:

- Mental Health
- Creating more mental health facilities in the panhandle

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

# Other

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implemented elsewhere or not. We need to remove our own boundaries when looking for solutions to issues that we have yet to overcome.

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

# Other

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## 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 13: 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 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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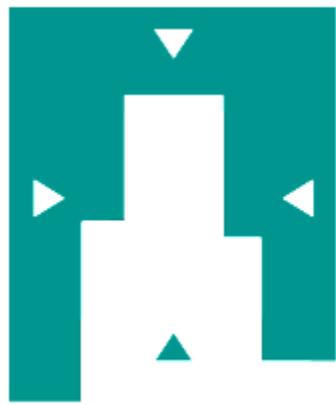
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