

**Custer (Lead County), Blaine, Dawson, Gosper, Greeley,  
Loup, and Valley County  
Juvenile Services**

**Comprehensive Community Plan**

**July 1, 2018-June 30, 2021**

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# COMMUNITY TEAM

## Description of Team

Community Team: The Custer (Lead County), Blaine, Dawson, Gosper, Greeley, Loup, and Valley Counties Juvenile Services/Community Team (hereafter referred to as “The Team”) includes relevant stakeholders in the community, many of whom have participated in a systems analysis of the juvenile justice system. The Team, with Healing Hearts & Families as the administrative agency, functions as the development and advisory committee to assist with the implementation of the Juvenile Justice Comprehensive Plan. The Team is comprised of representatives from Healing Hearts & Families, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, local schools, the faith community, law enforcement, service providers, and community members at large. The Team has been in existence for the last 10 years. The team meets quarterly and meets more regularly during the year of developing the new three year plan than in years when we are implementing the plan. In the planning years we have in-depth discussions on what our priorities should be as well as what goals have been met. The Team also includes several individuals who serve on the various LB1184 Teams, which meets monthly to address issues of child abuse, neglect, delinquency, and treatment resources.

## List of team members/contributors with contact info (title, address, phone numbers, email)

| Name of Person                                 | Agency   | Contact Number            | Email address  |
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## **Juvenile Justice System Analysis Tool**

Healing Hearts & Families would like to review the System Analysis and undertake a Community Capacity Inventory in the next 12 months to update the Comprehensive Plan. The goal of the System Analysis and Community Capacity Inventory is to determine the gaps that need to be filled to make a seamless continuum of services for juveniles, and to make sure resources are being utilized in the most effective and efficient way possible. It should be noted that all points on the Blaine, Custer, Dawson, Gosper, Greeley, Loup and Valley Counties make an effort to work together to improve the lives of all youth.

Due to the large ethnic population in the city of Lexington, including Hispanic, Sudanese, Somali and African-based population, there are some significant cultural and language barrier issues which cause concern in Dawson County. Disproportionate minority contacts are an issue that may be addressed by training and educational resources available at a state level and The Team would welcome any additional resources that can be offered.

According to Nebraska Crime Commission, in 2017 there were 23 total juvenile arrests made in Custer County, 169 arrests in Dawson County, 4 arrests in Gosper County, 1 arrest in Greeley County, and 9 arrests in Valley County. The majority of these arrests were liquor law violations and simple assaults. Blaine County reported having no juvenile arrests in 2017.

Healing Hearts & Families Diversion Program closed 121 cases in 2017 and 101 of those were successful. The youth who were unsuccessful either had new law violations, failed to comply with the program, or refused to enroll.

In 2017, Blaine, Greeley, and Loup counties reported having zero juvenile court cases. Custer County reported having 27 juvenile court cases, Dawson County reported having 228, Gosper County reported having 6, and Valley County reported 11 juvenile court cases.

According to the Youth Rehabilitation & Treatment Center-Kearney Annual Report, the only admissions from our service area were from Dawson County. Two admissions were made in 2016, making up 1.52% of their total admissions that year.

# Community Socio-Economics

## Multi County Description

The Team comprising this plan is located in central Nebraska which is primarily rural communities, with sparse populations. The seven counties comprising this plan are similar in many ways, but also are unique and diverse. Each of the seven counties will be described individually.

## CUSTER COUNTY (LEAD COUNTY)

### Community Description

Custer County encompasses 2,576 square miles and the county seat of Broken Bow, population 3,539 is the major commercial center of the county. The other towns in the county are Anselmo (143), Ansley (580), Arnold (578), Berwyn (82), Callaway (529), Comstock (92), Mason City (170), Merna (364), Milburn (unincorporated), Oconto (149), Sargent (507), Weissert (unincorporated), and Westerville (unincorporated). \* The county is bordered by nine other rural counties. The nearest metropolitan statistical area in Nebraska is Lincoln, approximately 200 miles to the southeast. The nearest larger cities are North Platte, approximately 75 miles to the southwest, Kearney, approximately 65 miles to the southeast and Grand Island, approximately 80 miles to the east southeast. The Middle Loup River and The South Loup river run from the northwest to the southeast through the county. The county is traversed east and west by State Highways 92 and 70. State Highways 2 and 40 intersects the county from northwest and southeast. State Highways 40, 47, and 21 cross north/south through parts of the county. State Highway 183 traverses the county north/south in the eastern part of the county. The Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad runs alongside State Highway 2 and intersects the towns of Anselmo, Merna, Broken Bow, Berwyn, and Ansley.

Custer County, with 4 persons per square mile, had a total population of 10,897 in 2017. The number of people under 18 years of age in 2017 in Custer County is 23.6%. Median household income is \$47,083 which is \$7,301 below state median income. The economy of Custer County centers around agriculture (corn, soybeans, wheat, alfalfa, prairie hay), with the fourth largest beef cow inventory in the nation. The county also derives economic viability from hog operations, manufacturing, the railroad industry, trucking, education, and various retail sales.

\*Sources include: [United States Census Bureau](#) 2017

### Community Profile

There are six public school districts in Custer County. These include Broken Bow Public School, Anselmo-Merna Public School, Ansley Public School, Callaway Public School, Sargent Public School, and Arnold Public School. There are no private schools in Custer County. The Sandhills Telecommunication Education Project (STEP) is a fiber optic satellite distance learning program that is being utilized by Broken Bow, Ansley, Anselmo-Merna and Sargent Schools for cooperative learning. Special education is provided as needed to children through ESU #10.

Mid Plains Community College of North Platte has an extended Campus in Broken Bow and offers courses through the school systems in Broken Bow, Merna, Callaway, and Sargent. The University of Nebraska at Kearney is 65 miles southeast of Broken Bow and offers bachelor and advanced degrees with many courses being offered through distance learning. Central Community College at Grand Island also attracts many people

from the area for a variety of education options. Custer County Extension Office also offers a wide variety of educational programs and the 4H Program for youth throughout the area.

There are several public libraries throughout Custer County. The Broken Bow Public Library has about 30,000 books and magazines, information/education videotapes, and books-on-tape. The Brenizer Public Library at Merna and the Finch Memorial Library at Arnold also have a wide selection of books, magazines and videos. All have computers for public use with internet access, story hour for pre-school children, summer reading programs for elementary children, and art exhibits.

Custer County has a newly renovated movie theater in Broken Bow, bowling alleys in Broken Bow and Arnold, and golf courses in Broken Bow, Arnold, and Callaway. Broken Bow has indoor and outdoor tennis courts, swimming pool, baseball fields, several public parks, basketball courts, and a stocked 5-acre lake. Pressey Park is located 4 miles north of Oconto and offers camping, swimming, and picnic areas. Victoria Springs State Recreation Area is located 6 miles east of Anselmo and offers camping, fishing, picnic areas, paddle boats, and ball fields.

There are 44 churches located throughout Custer County. Most offer educational and recreational programs for youth, adults, and families. A ministerial association assists the churches in working together. The Jennie M. Melham Memorial Medical Center located in Broken Bow. This modern facility which has been renovated to include 23 private rooms is a multiphasic unit, with a long-term care facility, an Assisted Living Center, and a medical clinic attached. The Callaway District Hospital is a twelve-bed facility with two physicians and two physician's assistants on staff. Doctors are also available at clinics in Ansley, Sargent, and Arnold. Custer County also has adult day care, home health care services, and several senior centers. There are also several dentists, chiropractors, physical therapists, optometrists, pharmacists, and an occupational therapist located in Custer County.

Custer County has a local am/fm radio station, 3 newspapers, and cable television.

Law enforcement is provided throughout Custer County by the Sheriff's Office. The towns of Broken Bow, Callaway, Arnold, Ansley, Mason City, and Sargent also have City Police Departments. The Sheriff's office, located in Broken Bow, includes 6 officers, 6 patrol cars, a 28-unit jail and an active volunteer sheriff's posse. Troop D of the Nebraska State Patrol is located at North Platte and covers 23 counties. There are 52 officers headquartered in North Platte and 5 are stationed in Broken Bow.

## **Valley County**

### **Community Description**

Valley County, an exclusively rural county of 4,260 residents, encompasses 568 square miles and its seat is Ord (2,112). The county is bordered on all sides by other rural Nebraska counties. There are 3 other communities in Valley County. These communities are Arcadia (307), Elyria (50), and North Loup (293).\* The county's population has decreased 1.2 percent since 2010. The Calamus River runs through the northern part of the county from northwest to southeast, and the Middle Loup River runs through the southwest corner of the county from northwest to southeast. Davis Creek Reservoir is located in the southeast corner of the county.

State Highway 22 run east/west, while State Highway 70 traverses north/south through the center of the county. State Highway 11, a scenic byway traverses the county from the northwest corner to the southeast corner. Fort Hartsuff State Historical Park is located on the northern border of the county. The nearest

metropolitan statistical area is Lincoln, Nebraska, approximately 170 miles to the southeast. The nearest larger cities are Kearney, Nebraska, approximately 70 miles to the south or Grand Island, Nebraska, approximately 70 miles to the southeast.

Valley County, with 7.5 persons per square mile, had a total population of 4,209 in 2017. The number of persons under 18 years of age in Valley County in 2017 was 23.3% which is somewhat lower than the state statistic of 24.8%. Median household income is \$44,657 (2017) which is \$9,727 below state median income. The economy of Valley County centers around agriculture (corn, soy beans, wheat, alfalfa). The county also derives economic viability from cattle, hogs, trucking, education, tourist trade, and various retail sales.

\*Sources include: [United States Census Bureau](#) 2017

### **Community Profile**

Valley County has two public school districts: Arcadia Public School and Ord Public School. St. Mary's Elementary School in Ord is the only parochial school in the county. ESU #10 serves students in Valley County with special education needs.

Central Community College in Grand Island is located 70 miles south of the county seat and offers associate degrees. Distance learning allows students to complete a bachelor's degree from the University of Nebraska. The University of Nebraska at Kearney is located approximately 70 miles to the south and offers baccalaureate and advanced degrees with many courses offered through distance learning.

The Ord Township Library contains about 19,000 books and magazines and has computers and internet available. The library also has an active children's program and interlibrary loan service.

The Valley County Sheriff's Office provides law enforcement services throughout the county. Arcadia and Ord also have City Police Departments. The Ord Police Department has a K-9 unit which is also utilized by area communities. The Nebraska State Patrol, headquartered out of nearby Grand Island, patrols the county.

The Valley County Hospital, located in Ord, was built new in 2010 leaving the old hospital building for a nursing home. The Valley County Hospital provides a variety of services, including home health, wellness center, cardiac and pulmonary rehab, and chemotherapy. Specialty clinics include nuclear medicine, cardiology, orthopedics, gynecology, and obstetrics, among others. In 2001, Valley County Hospital became a Critical Access Hospital which gave the hospital more flexibility. There are two medical clinics in Ord and a clinic in North Loup. Other healthcare providers in the county include two chiropractors, two dentists, three optometrists and seven pharmacists.

Fort Hartsuff, located nine miles northwest of Ord, was built in 1874 and abandoned by the Army in 1881. This is a popular tourist stop and attracts a number of visitors to the area. The Happy Jack Chalk Mines, located 15 miles southeast of Ord on Highway 11, are an underground, honeycombed mines, and is the only one of its kind in North America. The Calamus Dam, located in Loup County and Sherman Reservoir, located in Sherman County, are both designated State Recreation Areas and offer outstanding recreational opportunities to the residents of Valley County. The Calamus Reservoir also is home to Nebraska's multi-million dollar fish hatchery, which is open to the public. Canoeing and tubing are also popular activities on the North Loup, Calamus, and Cedar Rivers.

The Valley County Museum, located in downtown Ord is maintained by the Valley County Historical Society. The Evelyn Sharp Airfield, located northwest of Ord, displays memorabilia of Evelyn Sharp, who was the only female commercial pilot in Nebraska in 1938.

Ord also has several parks, a golf course, swimming pool, basketball and tennis courts, camping facilities, and a fishing pond.

## **Greeley County**

### **Community Description**

Greeley County is an exclusively rural county, encompassing 570 square miles and its seat is Greeley population 434. The county is bordered on all sides by other highly rural Nebraska counties. Spalding is the largest town in Greeley County with a population of 448. The other towns in Greeley County are Scotia (291) and Wolbach (257).\* Both the Cedar and Calamus Rivers run from the northwest to the southeast through the county; the former runs through the northeast corner of the county while the latter runs through the southwest corner of the county. State Highways 91, 56, and 22 intersect the county east/west, while State Highway 11 crosses through the southwest corner of the county. US Highway 281 intersects the middle of the county traversing north and south. The nearest metropolitan statistical area is Lincoln, Nebraska, approximately 140 miles to the southeast. The nearest larger city is Grand Island, approximately 45 miles to the south.

\*Sources include: [United States Census Bureau](#) 2017

Greeley County, with 4.5 persons per square mile, had a total population of 2,374 in 2017. Persons under 18 years of age are 2% below the state average. Median household income is \$48,220 (2016), which is approximately \$6,000 below the state median household income. The economy of the area centers on agriculture and ranching.

### **Community Profile**

Greeley County now has three public schools: Greeley-Wolbach Public School, Spalding Public School, and North Loup-Scotia Public School. Greeley also has a private school, Spalding Academy, which is a Catholic school. Special education needs are also provided to Greeley County students with special needs through ESU #10.

Central Community College in Grand Island is located about 40 miles south of the county and offers associate degrees and distance learning allows students to complete a bachelor's degree from the University of Nebraska. The University of Nebraska at Kearney, approximately 75 miles to the southwest, offers baccalaureate and advanced degrees with many courses offered through distance learning.

Greeley County has 2 churches, one Catholic and one Methodist.

Spalding has a medical clinic which provides basic care. Grand Island has a large hospital and a variety of doctors to help meet the medical needs of persons of Greeley County.

The Greeley County Sheriff's Office provides law enforcement services throughout the county. The Nebraska State Patrol, headquartered in Grand Island, also patrols the county.

The towns of Greeley County each have parks, and the town of Greeley has a swimming pool, baseball fields, and parks. The Calamus and Cedar Rivers provide opportunities for water sports, fishing, and camping. Just outside the southwestern edge of the county are the Davis Creek and Sherman Reservoirs, where boating and water sports, fishing, and camping are favorite pastimes.

## **Blaine County**

### **Community Description**

Blaine County encompasses 711 square miles in north central Nebraska and its seat is Brewster (17). Other towns located in Blaine County are Dunning (104), Halsey (83), and Purdum (unincorporated).\* The county is entirely rural and is surrounded by other entirely rural counties. The county has three rivers running through it. The Dismal River merges with the Middle Loup River near Dunning, Nebraska, and the North Loup River runs through the northern part of the county, near the town of Brewster. State Highway 7 runs north from Brewster, in the middle of the county, State Highway 91 crosses the county east and west, and State Highway 2 crosses the southwest corner of the county. The nearest metropolitan statistical area is Lincoln, Nebraska, approximately 225 miles to the southeast. The nearest larger city is North Platte, Nebraska, approximately 90 miles to the southwest. The Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad runs alongside State Highway 2 and intersects the towns of Dunning and Halsey.

\*Sources include: [United States Census Bureau](#) 2017

Blaine County, with .7 people per square mile, had a total population of 482 in 2017. The number of people under 18 years of age in 2017 in Blaine County is 20.3%. Median household income is \$50,350 (2016) which is about \$4,000 below state median income. The economic base for Blaine County, which is in the Sandhills, is almost exclusively cattle. The county also derives some economic viability from the railroad industry, education, and tourist trade.

### **Community Profile**

The Sandhills Public School, located in Dunning and Halsey, serves the educational needs of the county. Additionally, ESU #10 assists students in the county with special needs.

The nearest institution of higher learning is Mid Plains Community College, located in North Platte, Nebraska, approximately 91 miles to the southwest. Associate degrees are offered through the college and distance learning allows students to complete a bachelor's degree from the University of Nebraska.

The Blaine County Extension Office offers the "CHARACTER COUNTS!" Program for youth, and also has an active 4H Program for young people.

Blaine County has abundant areas for recreational activities, given the expanse of riverfront and the Nebraska National Forest located in the county. Of note is the 4H Camp located at the Nebraska National Forest. Nestled in the Nebraska National Forest, this camp's aesthetic meshing of the scenic Sandhills with the world's largest manmade forest creates a pleasant place for many gatherings. There are also camping sites, tennis courts, and a swimming pool at the Nebraska National Forest park area.

Law enforcement is provided through the Blaine County Sheriff's Office which patrols the county. The Nebraska State Patrol out of North Platte is also available to assist county residents. The nearest office of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services is in Broken Bow, approximately 50 miles to the south of

the county. The county is situated approximately the same distance (40 miles) from two hospitals: Brown County Hospital in Ainsworth to the north and Jennie M. Melham Memorial Medical Center in Broken Bow to the south. There are two churches in the county.

## **Gosper County**

### **Community Description**

As of the census of 2017, the population of Gosper County was estimated to be 2,028. The population density was 5 people per square mile (2/km<sup>2</sup>). There were 1,281 housing units at an average density of 3 per square mile (1/km<sup>2</sup>).

There were 863 households out of which 29.90% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 69.10% were married couples living together, 3.90% had a female householder with no husband present, and 24.10% were non-families. 22.80% of all households were made up of individuals and 10.50% had someone living alone who was 65 years of age or older. The average household size was 2.42 and the average family size was 2.83.

In the county, the population was spread out with 23.80% under the age of 18, 5.40% from 18 to 24, 24.00% from 25 to 44, 26.00% from 45 to 64, and 20.80% who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 43 years. For every 100 females there were 102.00 males. For every 100 females age 18 and over, there were 101.40 males.

The median income for a household in the county was \$60,711 while the per capita income for the county was \$29,393 (2016).

### **Community Profile**

The Elwood Public School is located in Elwood, which is also the county seat. The school is a K-12 school with enrollment of 250 students. Additionally, ESU #11 assists students in the county with special needs. The nearest institution of higher learning Central Community College, located in Lexington, Nebraska, approximately 15 miles to the north. Gosper County has a very active Team Mates program.

The Gosper County Extension Office offers the "CHARACTER COUNTS!" Program for youth, and also has an active 4H Program for young people. Gosper County has the Elwood Reservoir and Johnson Lake for recreational places for people to enjoy.

Law enforcement is provided through the Gosper County Sheriff's Office which patrols the county. The Nebraska State Patrol out of Lexington is also available to assist county residents. The nearest office of the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services is in Lexington, approximately 15 miles to the north of the county. The county is situated approximately the same distance (15 miles) from Lexington Regional Center that has an office in Elwood that is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

## **Dawson County**

### **Community Description**

Dawson County is located in south central Nebraska with both the Platte River and Interstate 80 dissecting the county from east to west. Main transportation routes include Interstate 80 and State Highways 30, 40, 21, and 47. The Union Pacific Railroad runs through the county and the city of Lexington. The main economies in the

county include farming and ag-related businesses and industry. Tyson has a plant located in Lexington, and Orthman manufacturing is located just outside Lexington. Johnson Lake is a 2,500-acre lake located south of Lexington that provides recreation such as swimming, boating, fishing, and camping.

The county has a total population of 23,709 residents in 2017, where the median household income was \$49,943. The proportion of county residents who were under age 18 in 2017 was 27.4%. The proportion of 7th-12th graders who dropped out of school during the 2013-2014 school year was 2.21% compared to 1.11% statewide. Overall, Dawson County had 66.49% youth arrest rate ages 17 and younger per 1,000 young persons. The average number of thefts in Nebraska counties is four, while Dawson County had 37 thefts in 2013.

\*Sources include: [United States Census Bureau](#) 2017

### **Community Profile**

In an average month in 2014, 131 children were in out-of-home placement, and the agencies serving domestic violence victims in the county handled 1,170 crisis calls and served 548 new contacts in 2014. According to a 2013 Kids Count in Nebraska report, the percentage of children 17 and younger in poverty is 15.6% while Dawson County has 17.4% of children living in poverty. In like manner, the percentage of children 17 and under in a single parent household for Nebraska is 37.6% while that of Dawson County is 39.3%.

Racial and ethnic minority residents made up 35%-45% of the population of Dawson County compared to 10%-25% state-wide in 2013. In the Lexington Public Schools, the minority rate is 84% of all students. Dawson County has the fastest growing population of Somali immigrants in the state of Nebraska, and also has new immigrants from Liberia and Sudan. Estimates of the Somali population range from 2,500-3,000 individuals. Immigration puts a strain on the entire county as there are so many languages and dialects in the county. Thirteen different languages and/or unrelated dialects are spoken at the Lexington schools.

## **Loup County**

### **Community Description**

Loup County is an exclusively rural county, encompassing 571 square miles and its seat is Taylor, population of 190 according to the 2010 census. The only other town in Loup County is Almeria, with an unincorporated population. Both the Cedar and Calamus Rivers run from the northwest to the southeast through the county; the former runs through the northeast corner of the county while the latter runs through the southwest corner of the county. State Highways 91, 56, and 22 intersect the county east/west, while State Highway 11 crosses through the southwest corner of the county. US Highway 281 intersects the middle of the county traversing north and south. The nearest metropolitan statistical area is Lincoln, Nebraska, approximately 140 miles to the southeast. The nearest larger city is Grand Island, approximately 45 miles to the south.

Loup County, with 4.5 persons per square mile, had a total population of 632 in 2010. Median household income is \$56,750 (2016); the economy of the area centers on agriculture and ranching.

According to the Nebraska Department of Education, the number of children attending Loup County Public Schools is 66, with the largest class consisting of 8 students.

\*Sources include: [United States Census Bureau](#) 2017

## **Community Profile**

The only school in Loup County is located in Taylor.

Mid Plains Community College is located about 40 miles southwest of the county and offers associate degrees and distance learning allows students to complete a bachelor's degree from the University of Nebraska. The University of Nebraska at Kearney, approximately 55 miles to the southeast, offers baccalaureate and advanced degrees with many courses offered through distance learning.

The Loup County Sheriff's Office provides law enforcement services throughout the county. The Nebraska State Patrol, headquartered in Grand Island, also patrols the county.

Most of the Calamus Reservoir lies in Loup County. There are a variety of activities to do at the Calamus, including boating, fishing, wildlife viewing, swimming, camping, and many other activities. The Calamus Reservoir also is home to Nebraska's multi-million dollar fish hatchery, which is open to the public.

# Identified Priority Areas & Corresponding Strategies

## Priority #1: Decrease the Number of Youth involved in the Juvenile Justice System

**ISSUE 1:** The Team believes that there are actions our communities can take even after a juvenile has been accused of breaking the law, which will be beneficial to both the juvenile and the community as a whole. Team members recognize that, based on current studies swift and concise action when a juvenile has initially been caught committing a criminal act can significantly decrease the likelihood of that juvenile offending again. The Team also recognizes that and is moving toward more evidence-based practices to increase a juvenile's chances at success in the Diversion Program.

Further, the Team believes that placing a youth into detention may, in fact, increase the youth's propensity towards criminal thinking. Studies show that placing youth of different risk levels is, in fact, more harmful than good. Therefore, the Team would like to devote money and resources into a variety of ways to keep youth out of the juvenile justice system and out of detention.

**DATA:** The Diversion Program began approximately ten years ago, but has really been refocused and reorganized to meet the specific needs for the past four years. The Diversion Program serves over 75 youth annually throughout the seven counties. The current Diversion Program uses evidence-based tools such as the YLS, the MAYSI-2, and Why Try. In the last year the Diversion Program also partnered with local resources such as the Parent Child Center Program in Lexington and has encompassed the Healing Hearts & Families to create and present a Health Relationships class.

Current Diversion statistics for Custer County youth who were enrolled in Diversion from January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2017 is as follows:

Total Enrolled in Diversion from January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2017: 86 youth (100%)

### STRATEGY:

#### Year 1:

1. Hold low level and first-time offenders accountable through a locally-operated Diversion Program as an alternative to the juvenile justice system.
2. Review and improve equipment and training for Diversion personnel in areas such as mental health needs and substance abuse needs.
3. Decrease time between law enforcement contact and contact from each County Attorney's Office or Diversion Personnel with juvenile offenders to show young offenders more immediate response to law enforcement violations.
4. Seek and implement more evidence based practices and curriculum.
5. Seek out and find better assessment tools to help better assess the level of needs and strengths that youth in the diversion program have.
6. Promote healthy and respectful relationships between peers and prevent abusive dating relationships.

#### Year 2:

1. Increase the number of community resources to help families who are in crisis by finding more family supports to offer families in the seven counties and their communities.

2. Increase the number of services or resources for families who are struggling with mental health or substance abuse issues (issues of either parent, child, caregiver, or others living in the home).

Year 3:

1. Continue to seek out and find funding sources to send Diversion Officers to training and educational opportunities.
2. Have all personnel trained in the most up-to-date juvenile intake and evaluation tools.
3. Increase the knowledge of youth regarding the power of positive and negative decisions in their lives.
4. Locate and use more positive male role models in our Diversion-related programs.

Goals to be accomplished per our Community Plan:

1. Promote healthy and respectful relationships between peers and prevent abusive dating relationships (see explanation below).
2. Decrease the amount of violence between youth in the seven counties we serve
3. Increase evidence-based practices
4. Increase the amount of data collected regarding Diversion and its success

**RESOURCES REQUIRED:** Evidence-based training opportunities that are financially reasonable, cooperation from local stakeholders such as: Nebraska State Patrol, Nebraska Attorney General's Office, presenters regarding internet awareness, County Attorney's offices, schools, parents, parent child center advocate, Healing Hearts & Families advocate, community support, educational opportunities for youth to increase knowledge in areas such as bullying, healthy relationships, and responsible decision making, service providers, and local health district.

Further, The Team is also seeking new and better youth offender assessment tools, location of and funding for training and education opportunities for both youth as well as diversion officers, and seeking new and better services and resources for families who are struggling with mental health and substance abuse issues because these struggles directly affect our youth. Better communication between law enforcement, the county attorney's offices and diversion offices will be needed to decrease the time between law enforcement contact and contact with youth by diversion officers or the county attorney's offices. Finally, The Team would like any assistance possible in collecting data to show that the methods currently employed are making an impact or suggestions as to how to better make an impact among Custer County youth.

**EXPECTED RESULTS:** The Team hopes to decrease the time between law enforcement contact and then having follow up contact from the County Attorney's offices or diversion officers. Further, the Team hopes to increase the percentage of youth that successfully complete diversion and increase the number of juveniles who do not reoffend after completing diversion.

## **PRIORITY #2: Increased Youth Involvement in Positive Pro-Social Activities Outside of School**

**ISSUE 1:** The Team believes that the counties we serve have experienced a significant disconnect between the youth and the communities in which they live. This disconnect is directly affecting our youth, youth success in school, and law enforcement violations in the community. The Team believes that adding positive role models to the youth's lives would increase their sense of belonging and ability to problem solve and therefore would decrease the number of juveniles in the criminal justice system. The youth may have positive influences at home, but the Team has found that many of the youth we serve live within poverty resulting in lower parent involvement. This can be accounted due to many reasons including single-parent homes and the parents having to work long hours and/or multiple jobs. Each of the seven counties has many families living below the poverty line, which is \$25,100 for a family of four.

**DATA:** The data listed below shows the percentage of students enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program in each of the counties the Team serves.

Blaine: 50%

Custer: 39.4%

Dawson: 55.1%

Gosper: 51.6%

Greeley: 56.8%

Loup: 52.7%

Valley: 50.6%

(Source: Nebraska Department of Education: Nebraska State of the Schools Report for 2017-2018)

### **STRATEGIES:**

Year 1:

1. Provide positive family-based activities and support to single parents and children through school and other community based activities.
2. Provide family-based events where meals and child care will be provided for younger children that will allow parents to become more educated on laws, the internet, the dangers that children face such as bullying, social media, human trafficking, and other issues.

Year 2:

1. Increasing the number of community-based resources for parents by locating and making available to parents and families in crisis more immediate services to allow youth to remain in the home and to empower caretakers so that they can parent in the most successful capacity.
2. Bringing together more local resources and resources from outside of the community to inform and educate the public about youth-related issues and to help and support families in times of crisis or challenges.

Year 3

1. Develop protocol to support parents with juveniles and to help prevent the youth from reaching crisis levels.

**RESOURCES REQUIRED:** Cooperation from parents, coordination with local service providers, and support of our partners on the LB1184 Team.

**EXPECTED RESULTS:** One goal is to help youth feel supported and empowered by their community. Further, The Team hopes to provide a community of support for parents to work together and support each other to improve the lives of local youth. Finally, The Team hopes to improve the lives of our local children so that each child feels as though he or she has a network of caring and supportive adults in their lives.

## **PRIORITY #3: Increase the availability and resources for the youth who need Substance/Dual Diagnosis Treatment**

**ISSUE 1:** Substance abuse is a problem in many, if not all, of the counties we serve. In addition, many of our youth begin to experience the first onset of mental illness during their teenage years. The Team has a few service providers that are currently serving the youth in our counties, but the need surpasses what the service providers are able to take on.

**DATA:** The Community Team has had a more difficult time compiling information for this section. We requested information from District 2 Probation and District 8 Probation and they are working on updating the statistics and as their figures come in we will update our data. learned the following numbers related to juveniles on probation:

The Team would like to pursue better data collection to strengthen the amount of data that we have on this particular subject.

### **TIMELINE:**

Year 1:

1. The Community Team will research the specific needs of each county concerning mental health and substance abuse needs, the obstacles that are faced by each county, and what has been implemented in the past to evaluate how to move forward.
2. The Team will work on a public relations campaign to change and decrease the stigma of mental health illness and substance abuse.

Year 2:

1. The Community Team would like to create a voucher system that will allow school officials as well as diversion officers and other service providers a mechanism to get juveniles and families not currently involved in the juvenile justice system help with counseling, evaluations, and treatment.
2. The Team will identify translators for the youth and families that need one and figure out how to best meet the needs of both parties.

Year 3:

A. Attract and recruit former mental health and substance abuse providers back to the counties that we serve.

**RESOURCES REQUIRED:** Parties willing to provide mental health and/or substance abuse treatment services, parties willing to provide transportation for youth and parents who do not have access to their own transportation to and from evaluation and appointments, and parties willing and able to provide translation services.

**EXPECTED RESULTS:** Make families in all socio-economic areas of the seven counties aware of opportunities for treatment for mental illness and substance abuse issues, remove stigma of mental illness, and substance abuse.

Custer (Lead County), Blaine, Dawson, Gosper, Greeley, Loup, and Valley County  
Juvenile Services Comprehensive Community Plan  
July 1, 2018-June 30, 2021

Donald Olson, Vice-Chairman  
6-12-2018

Custer, County Board of Supervisors