
**RIO ARRIBA COMMUNITY
HEALTH AND JUSTICE
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
RESPONSE TEAM REPORT**

August 1999

U.S. Department of Justice / Office of Justice Programs
Office of the United States Attorney for New Mexico
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services /
National Institutes of Health - NIDA
Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration - CSAT



U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Justice Programs

Office of the Assistant Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20531

August 18, 1999

The Honorable Pete V. Domenici

United States Senate

Washington, DC 20510-3101

Dear Senator Domenici:

I am pleased to present the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) technical assistance action plan to support and sustain efforts to respond to the illicit drug and crime issues in Rio Arriba County so vividly portrayed in the field hearing on March 30, 1999 in Espanola. In testimony there I emphasized the importance of government agencies and service providers collaborating with each other, working in partnership with the community, and embracing a balanced and coordinated approach to crime prevention, control, and community empowerment. The OJP report concludes that no less an effort will be needed in Rio Arriba to address the related crime and drug problems from both a justice and public health perspective. I believe the action plan presented will enable state, local, and community leaders to move forward with a structured agenda that has high potential for success in improving the quality of life in the Espanola Valley.

Specifically, the report presents an action plan to build an infrastructure, and better use federal resources to leverage coordinated public safety and community health strategies. The centerpiece of the action plan is the proposed Community Health and Justice Council, an infrastructure that places a hallmark on shared leadership by federal, state, and county stakeholders and a premium on a unified response to crime and substance abuse problems in Rio Arriba County. OJP and its federal partners in this venture have committed technical assistance resources to the effort as described in the report. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the National Institute of Corrections, and Project SEARCH, funded by the OJP's Bureau of Justice Assistance have all indicated their support in letters that are exhibits to the report. In addition, this fiscal year OJP will award discretionary funds in the aggregate amount of \$564,795 to support two drug court expansions, regional drug free coalition building efforts, and a community prosecution planning project targeting Rio Arriba County.

I wish to recognize the work of the OJP Technical Assistance Response Team that took on this special project with zeal and dedication and delivered this report in a few short months. This was possible thanks to the cooperation and insights shared in the team's meetings with state, county, and community representatives.

We look forward to working with you in this important project.

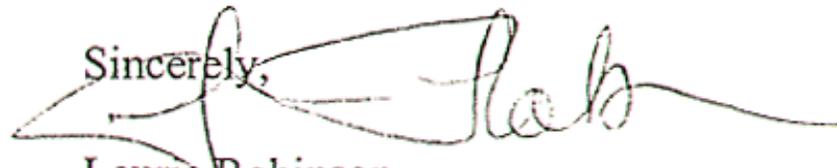
Sincerely, 
Laurie Robinson
Assistant Attorney General

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the Fall of 1998, New Mexico's Department of Health released a study indicating that the state leads the nation in numerous key indicators of substance abuse related sickness and mortality. In response to this report and to the pleas of citizens and public officials alike, U.S. Senator Pete V. Domenici, R-N.M., conducted a series of congressional hearings to examine how the federal government could assist the people of New Mexico in addressing the related problems of chemical dependency and crime.

Among those participating in the March 30, 1999 field hearing in Espanola, New Mexico was Assistant Attorney General (AAG) Laurie Robinson of the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs (OJP). AAG Robinson testified about the resources OJP has available to assist communities in preventing and controlling crime and how those resources could be used to assist the people of New Mexico in stemming the growing tide of drug-related crime. Following AAG Robinson's testimony, OJP assembled an interdisciplinary team of public health and public safety experts to assess the role that the federal government could play in helping to enhance public health and safety in Rio Arriba County, New Mexico.

The OJP team visited New Mexico twice and interviewed numerous government officials and community leaders to gain a better understanding of the nature and extent of substance abuse and crime in North Central New Mexico. The team's charter was to recommend an infrastructure that will support a comprehensive and balanced approach to reduce substance abuse, and to identify technical expertise within the federal government that could be leveraged to support ongoing efforts in New Mexico to prevent and control drug trafficking and violent crime. This report describes the team's findings and recommendations.

OJP's team agrees with the Board of Commissioners of Rio Arriba in their finding that ". . . substance and alcohol abuse and their corollary impacts are the greatest threat to the health of the residents of the county." Key indicators of substance abuse related sickness and mortality gathered by the state confirm this conclusion. Unfortunately, existing drug prevention and treatment programs in the county are not adequate to meet its residents' needs, and their effectiveness is hampered by insufficient coordination among the public agencies and private organizations providing the services.

In response, the OJP team recommends that Rio Arriba County implement an infrastructure designed to link federal, state, and local public health and safety initiatives and resources in a comprehensive, balanced approach aimed at reducing the demand for illegal substances, interdicting drug trafficking and its associated crimes, and revitalizing communities coping with the stress of widespread chemical dependency. The infrastructure recommended by OJP places a hallmark on shared leadership by federal, state, and county stakeholders and a premium on a coordinated response to crime and drugs that includes interdiction, prevention, and treatment.

The OJP team also recommends the infusion of a variety of technical assistance resources, to be delivered in different time frames by several federal agencies, to help establish the recommended infrastructure and sustain its ongoing operation.

INTRODUCTION

In the Fall of 1998, New Mexico's Department of Health released the results of a study indicating that the state leads the nation in numerous key indicators of substance abuse related sickness and mortality. In response to these disturbing statistics and to the pleas of citizens and public officials alike, Senator Pete V. Domenici, R-N.M., conducted a series of public meetings in

Espanola (Rio Arriba County, New Mexico) to examine how the federal government could assist the people of New Mexico in addressing the related problems of chemical dependency and crime. During the meetings, the senator

"It is my hope that over time, we will be able to look back on the work done here in Espanola and say that this truly was a model effort, something that other communities facing similar crisis might look to as an example to follow in addressing their own problems."

U.S. Senator Pete V. Domenici in remarks at the hearing in Espanola, New Mexico on March 30 1999.

listened to public health officials, law enforcement personnel, educators, drug prevention and treatment experts, physicians, representatives of local government agencies and members of the business and faith communities talk about the human toll taken by widespread substance abuse and illegal drug trafficking in North Central New Mexico.

Among those participating in the field hearing on the heroin problems in Rio Arriba County was Assistant Attorney General (AAG) Laurie Robinson of the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs (OJP). AAG Robinson testified on March 30, 1999 about the resources OJP has available to engage communities in

preventing and controlling crime and how those resources could be used to assist the people of New Mexico in stemming the growing tide of drug-related crime. AAG Robinson based her remarks on the lessons learned by OJP in assisting both large urban and smaller rural jurisdictions throughout the country that have faced health and safety problems similar to those confronting the residents of the Espanola Valley.

“ OJP is committed to help the Rio Arriba community clean up its drug abuse problem and put a strategic infrastructure in place to prevent and respond to future crime.”

U. S. Assistant Attorney General Laurie Robinson testifying before Senator Domenici’s hearing in Espanola, New Mexico on March 30, 1999

During her testimony, AAG

Robinson stressed the importance of government agencies and service providers collaborating with each other, working in partnership with the community, and embracing a balanced and coordinated approach to crime

prevention, crime control, and community empowerment. She pledged OJP’s commitment to work with government officials as well as the citizens of Rio Arriba County in reducing drug use and trafficking and in improving the quality of life in the county. Following her testimony, AAG Robinson assembled an interdisciplinary team representing the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Department of Justice, the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of New Mexico and non-government organizations to assess the need for strengthening and coordinating drug prevention and treatment in Rio Arriba County.¹ Specifically, the mission of the team was three-

¹ The individuals making up OJP’s Response Team are identified in the Appendix to this report.

fold:

1. To go to New Mexico and listen to government officials and community leaders in order to gain a better understanding of the nature and extent of substance abuse and crime in North Central New Mexico;
2. To recommend an infrastructure that could be established and implemented in the near future to support a balanced and comprehensive approach to reduce substance abuse and control associated crime; and
3. To identify and allocate technical expertise within the federal government that could be leveraged to support the ongoing efforts of the State of New Mexico, as well as Rio Arriba County, in reducing the demand for illegal drugs, combating crime, and improving the quality of life in communities coping with the stress imposed by widespread chemical dependency and crime.

OJP's technical assistance Response Team visited New Mexico during the weeks of April 25th and June 13th, 1999. This report reflects the insights gained by the team as a result of interviews conducted with numerous government officials, drug prevention and treatment experts, emergency room physicians, criminal justice officials and community leaders in New Mexico.²

Following this Introduction, the report is organized in five major sections. Section I describes the nature and extent of substance abuse, illegal drug trafficking, and violent crime in Rio Arriba County and the ongoing efforts within the state to combat these related problems. Section II proposes and describes an infrastructure that can be adopted by the citizens of Rio Arriba County (with assistance from the federal government) to prevent and control drug-related crime. Section III catalogs the type of technical assistance that is forthcoming from the federal government to complement the work being done by New Mexicans to enhance public health and safety. In Section IV

² A list of the individuals interviewed by OJP's Response Team is provided in the Appendix.

the Response Team provides concluding remarks regarding the challenges facing New Mexico in its campaign to prevent and treat drug addiction and to interdict drug trafficking. The Appendix identifies the members of OJP's Response Team, as well as the individuals in New Mexico who were interviewed by the team. Other relevant information is also contained in the Appendix.

It would be inappropriate to proceed further without expressing the Response Team's sincere gratitude to all the individuals and organizations in New Mexico who so freely shared their time and expertise during our visits in the state. If this report provides any insight into the problems facing the citizens of the Espanola Valley, it is due largely to the generous way in which those whom we interviewed helped us to see not only the problems, but also the rich and vibrant cultures, history, and traditions of the people who live in that northern river valley. We thank them.

I. THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM

Epidemiologists use various survey methods to "take the pulse" of a community and gauge its well being in relation to key indicators of public health. The results of a survey recently released by New Mexico's Department of Health show that the communities of Rio Arriba County are under great stress from widespread alcohol and drug abuse. New Mexico leads the nation in numerous key indicators of substance abuse related sickness and mortality, and Rio Arriba County leads the state in those same markers of a community's physical and mental health. New Mexico's alcohol related traffic mortality rate is the second highest in the nation. Rio Arriba County is

ranked among the top five counties in the state in the rate of alcohol related traffic accident fatalities. In New Mexico, mortality due to alcoholism is 97 percent higher than what should be expected based on national alcoholism mortality rates. Rio Arriba County has the highest rate of alcohol related mortality in the state and the second highest rate of drug related mortality. From 1995 to 1998 seventy-seven (77) documented deaths have been directly attributed in the county to overdoses of illegal substances.

Taken together, Rio Arriba County ranks among the top five counties in New Mexico in five indicators used to directly gauge a community's alcohol and drug related well-being: alcohol-related mortality; drug-related mortality; driving while intoxicated; alcohol-related traffic

“Many addicts are good people trapped in the throes of an addiction. Drugs are pain medication and addiction is what results from self medication. We need to get at the roots of pain in our community and root it out by whatever means necessary.”

Lorenzo Valdez, Rio Arriba County Manager
in discussions with OJP's Response Team

crashes; and alcohol-related traffic crash fatalities. The county is also ranked among the highest in the state in two key indicators indirectly related to public health: unemployment and homicide. Statewide, epidemiologists consider substance abuse to be a “particularly pervasive problem in the state.” In Rio Arriba, the Board of County Commissioners has formally resolved (in the County's Strategic Plan for Substance and Alcohol Abuse and Treatment) that “substance and alcohol abuse and their corollary impacts are the greatest threat to the health of the residents in the county.” The Commissioners go on to state that “. . . addiction has become an epidemic in Rio

Arriba County and must be addressed as an emergency using the principles of public health and epidemiology.”

Public health statistics alone do not portray the full social impact of substance abuse in any community. Like most jurisdictions coping with the crises of widespread addiction, Rio Arriba County is also experiencing an increase in drug trafficking, theft, and other crimes that come with increased demand for illegal drugs. While no comprehensive crime survey has been recently conducted in the area, state police officers believe that the county’s high rates of homicide, property crimes, domestic abuse, assault and battery, and DWI are directly attributable to the widespread demand for and abuse of alcohol and drugs. This viewpoint is shared by many officials in the state’s criminal justice system. Indeed, a representative of New Mexico’s Public Defender Office serving Rio Arriba County indicated in discussions with members of OJP’s Response Team that at least 90 percent of all criminal cases in the county are directly related to chemical dependency.

The financial/opportunity-lost cost of addiction and drug related crime is also significant, particularly for an economically poor jurisdiction like Rio Arriba County. The Board of Commissioners estimates that at least 10 percent of the County’s \$10.1 million operational budget is spent incarcerating substance abusing offenders in the county’s detention facility. This represents a significant drain on the budget of an impoverished community such as Rio Arriba. And, as the Commissioners point out in their Strategic Plan, “This is money that cannot be used for schools, economic development, health care, roads, etc.”

But in the end it may be the non-quantifiable impacts of addiction and substance abuse that have the most insidious effects on a community. Statistics cannot measure the pain felt by a family that has suffered the loss of a loved one due to the actions of a drunk driver; nor can they gauge the long term effects on children who watch their

“The long-ignored heroin problem has become generational in some families. You have the grandfather, the father, and the child. In some cases all three are addicted.”

Ben Tafoya, Director of Hoy Alcoholism Program
in discussions with OJP’s Response Team
members

parents transported to an emergency room because of an overdose of drugs. Unfortunately, what was once a habit among a minority of the population has blossomed into a chronic problem that is so widespread and pernicious that it threatens public safety in the county, as

well as the stability of public and private institutions alike, including the family itself.

One brief point illustrates the dimensions of this problem. Alcohol and drug treatment providers often include the family as an important part of the addicted individual’s relapse prevention program. But in Rio Arriba County the pattern of drug abuse and addiction has been so closely linked with intra-familial/inter-generation relationships that public health officials in the state and treatment providers in the county consider the family unit as a risk-factor that is directly related to use/abuse rather than a protective factor that can be used to fight addiction.

Clearly, the problem of addiction is widespread and elected officials and community leaders acknowledge that it is the most significant challenge confronting Rio Arriba County. Public health authorities, elected officials, and treatment providers

acknowledge that the need for prevention programs and treatment services targeted on the residents of Rio Arriba County is substantial, and that additional financial resources may be required to effectively combat drugs and crime in the County. To date, the demand for treatment has not matched the underlying need because of the community's unfortunate acceptance of substance abuse and the flagrant use of alcohol. The need for additional resources may become particularly acute when community norms change and the public's demand for treatment rises.

However, there is also agreement that significant resources are already being spent on drug prevention and treatment programs in North Central New Mexico and that more money alone will not solve the problem. The State Department of Health's Region II, the area in which Rio Arriba County is located, currently receives a preponderance of the state's prevention and treatment funds. Last year nearly \$21.00 was spent per capita in Rio Arriba on prevention, while \$44.00³ was spent per capita on treatment. This represents the largest per capita expenditure on prevention and treatment in any county in the state. These funds will be augmented by an influx of an additional \$500,000 earmarked for treatment as a result of legislation recently signed by Governor Gary Johnson. Yet the county's outcome indicators for substance abuse, as discussed earlier in this report, are among the worst in the state.

³ State Department of Health officials caution, however, that while a substantial portion of the state's treatment dollars go into Rio Arriba County, and while the county has a high concentration of residential treatment services, a majority of the beds made available by these providers serve clients from other parts of New Mexico or neighboring states. These clients, unlike many of the residents of Rio Arriba County, 55 percent of whom do not have health insurance, have the ability to pay for long-term residential treatment.

Leadership from local and state elected officials, law enforcement and public health authorities, and the community is needed along with a commitment to enhance the effectiveness of programs and to increase collaboration between and among prevention and treatment providers. Leadership, program effectiveness, and coordination are three factors cited time and again by individuals at both the county and state level as being critical to the eventual success of any comprehensive effort to reduce demand for illegal drugs in Rio Arriba County.

A government entity currently providing significantly needed leadership in the field of substance abuse prevention is the Cooperative Agreement Advisory Committee (CAAC) established by the state in response to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) State Incentive Grants, administered by HHS's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The CAAC has established state-wide requirements for science-based approaches to prevention and is requiring that providers include outcome measures as a part of their criteria for program effectiveness. The CAAC has also created incentives to encourage collaboration among providers and established mandates to increase the likelihood that providers will, in fact, collaborate with each other.

The OJP Response Team recommends that the CAAC critically examine the nature and extent of prevention programs within the school system to ensure that a proactive approach is taken, and that appropriate primary and secondary prevention programs (which are research-based and culturally sensitive) are, indeed, offered to each student. In addition, the CAAC should encourage coordination of community

mobilization efforts and the development of workplace prevention education programs in Rio Arriba County.

The state Department of Health's initiative to develop regional continuum-of-care (RCC) through service networks in each of the five geographic areas in the state is another example of leadership and coordination that the OJP Response Team endorses. This effort, led by the Health Department's Behavioral Health Services Division, is a regional approach to planning, coordinating, and delivering alcohol and other drug services. When coordinated with the emerging health and human service initiatives currently being planned by county officials in Espanola, it should prove to be a more effective approach to better address the treatment service needs of the residents of Rio Arriba County.

The OJP Response Team recommends that the RCC request-for-proposals include the following specifications:

- provision of comprehensive alcohol and other drug treatment services including the range of services needed in addition to specific alcohol and drug treatment such as health care, legal services, transportation, child care, job training and others;
- provision of a continuum-of-care for pre-adolescents, adolescents, and adults to ensure that individuals receive the types of treatment corresponding with their culture, backgrounds, extent and durations of substance abuse and other factors as determined by assessment;
- outreach, aftercare, and follow-up to be included as integral parts of services provided in Rio Arriba County's RCC; and
- provision of pharmaco-therapy as part of an overall treatment approach that includes counseling and structured treatment. (Information on the efficacy of pharmacal-therapy is available from the National Institute on Drug Abuse).

After implementation of the RCC program, the OJP Response Team recommends a review of treatment availability and accessibility, and the organization and financing of programs to meet service needs within Rio Arriba County. Part of this recommended review should include the identification of any gaps in service and the development and implementation of an organized approach to fill any gaps that do exist. In this regard and in all phases of the implementation of the RCC concept, we encourage the Behavioral Health Services Division to continue to work with the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, to address technical assistance needs.

We encourage ongoing and enhanced coordination between and among the Department of Health's Behavioral Health Services Division, its Public Health Division, and Rio Arriba County's newly created Department of Health and Human Services to improve the types and quality of substance abuse prevention and treatment services in Rio Arriba County.

New Mexico also has the benefit of forward thinking leaders in the criminal justice arena. There is a consensus among both policy makers and implementers in the state's criminal justice system that substance abuse is a significant contributor to the state's crime rate and that additional steps must and can be taken to enhance coordination between the public health and public safety sectors within the state. The OJP Response Team has the following recommendations for leaders within New Mexico's criminal justice system:

- ❑ include the New Mexico Department of Health in the decision making process that allocates Edward Byrne Memorial State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance Program funds within New Mexico.
- ❑ consider reallocating a portion of Byrne funds to support substance abuse prevention and treatment initiatives within the state.
- ❑ expand the Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee (JJAC) to include representation from the Department of Health or by a health care professional familiar with juvenile health and mental health issues.
- ❑ consider allocating a portion of the recently appropriated state community corrections funds to support treatment services for juvenile offenders.
- ❑ fund a drug court in Rio Arriba County to service the treatment needs of juveniles with substance abuse problems.
- ❑ study the treatment needs of youth who come into contact with the criminal justice system who can be safely diverted to treatment without the need for institutionalization.

We encourage New Mexico's Children, Youth, and Families Department (CYFD) and the JJAC to accelerate and enhance their ongoing efforts to expand the Communities That Care approach to the coordination and expansion of risk-based prevention strategies that are tailored to local circumstances, and to maintain state-wide compliance with the Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act. In particular, we endorse the CYFD/JJAC's "Restoring Justice" initiative aimed at [a] reducing minority over-representation in the juvenile justice system, [b] supporting innovative community policing approaches that empower local police to directly cite eligible juveniles into alternative sanctions rather than detention facilities and [c] promoting community protection, juvenile offender accountability and rehabilitation, family strengthening and victim/community restoration.

Substance abuse and crime are the most visible symptoms of a constellation of underlying social and economic problems in Rio Arriba County. Reducing the demand for illegal drugs and improving the quality of life in the county will require a multi-dimensional strategy that includes a wide range of interventions aimed at enhancing public health and safety, revitalizing neighborhoods, improving schools and opportunities for youth, spurring and sustaining economic development and strengthening and supporting healthy, functional families. The next section of this report describes an infrastructure that can be used to coordinate initiatives in each of these areas in Rio Arriba County.

“Our response to illicit drug use must be like a three legged stool. The first leg is interdiction. The second leg must be a well coordinated and financed prevention strategy to employ with our youth. The third leg is treatment. If we do not treat the drug user, he or she will continue to present a demand for drugs. As long there is a demand, the drug user will continue to commit crimes and bring harm to the citizenry.”

New Mexico Department of Health Secretary Alex Valdez, testifying before Senator Domenici’s hearing in Espanola, New Mexico on March 30 1999

II. A PROPOSED INFRASTRUCTURE

The infrastructure recommended by OJP’s Response Team is intended to complement and support New Mexico’s ongoing efforts to reduce the demand for illegal drugs, interdict drug trafficking, and improve the quality of life in Rio Arriba County. The proposed infrastructure, named the Rio Arriba Community Health and Justice Coordinating Council, is based on lessons learned by the Office of Justice Programs in the course of assisting jurisdictions around the country that have faced challenges

similar to those confronting the residents of Rio Arriba County. It contains constructs proven to be effective in a variety of jurisdictions participating in ongoing crime prevention and crime control programs sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice, including the Comprehensive Communities and Weed and Seed Initiatives. When implemented, the proposed infrastructure will focus the combined and coordinated efforts and resources of public health, public safety, and community revitalization agencies and organizations on targeted communities in Rio Arriba County. The infrastructure links federal, state, and local law enforcement and criminal justice initiatives with federal, state, and local service providers. Most importantly, the structure maximizes the participation of citizens and community-based nongovernment organizations (including the private sector) in the initiative. The Health and Justice Coordinating Council recommended for adoption in Rio Arriba County is designed to meet the unique needs and circumstances of the Espanola Valley.

The Mission:

The Council is designed to:

- ❑ enable key federal, state, and county officials to provide unified leadership in New Mexico's ongoing initiative to combat drugs and crime in Rio Arriba;
- ❑ coordinate the resources required to reduce the demand for illegal drugs and to interdict drug trafficking in Rio Arriba;
- ❑ encourage and support intergovernmental/interagency collaboration that will foster communications and cooperation among the government agencies working in the Espanola Valley;
- ❑ maximize participation of nongovernmental, community-based organizations in the initiative; and

- ❑ provide a structured forum in which government officials and citizens can work together to develop, implement, and sustain a balanced, comprehensive strategy to improve the quality of life in Rio Arriba County.

In the short run, the mission of the Council is to provide on-going leadership and coordination of resources in Rio Arriba County in the following critical areas:

- ❑ **Law Enforcement** – enforcement, adjudication, prosecution, and supervision efforts will be aimed at intensified narcotics investigations, targeted prosecutions, victim-witness protection, and elimination of narcotics trafficking organizations in Rio Arriba County.
- ❑ **Prevention and Treatment** – community and school based prevention efforts will be aimed at reducing the demand for alcohol and illegal drugs. The coordinated delivery of referral, assessment, and case management treatment services will be aimed at breaking the cycle of abuse and addiction.
- ❑ **Community Revitalization** – coordinated use of federal, state, and local resources (both public and private) will be aimed at revitalizing distressed areas, strengthening and supporting healthy and functional families, and improving the quality of life in targeted communities.
- ❑ **Community Crime Prevention** – proactive community policing will be the bridge that binds the critical elements into a strategic approach; police will work in partnership with citizens to mobilize the community, to strengthen traditional norms and to combat crime.

To achieve its mission the Council will need accurate, complete and up-to-date information on the status of resources available to the Rio Arriba community in each of the four areas outlined above. With this in mind, the OJP Response Team calls on the appropriate government agencies and organizations in the State of New Mexico to provide the Council with an inventory and description (including appropriated funds and operational budgets) of all the initiatives, programs, and resources in law enforcement, alcohol and drug prevention and treatment, community revitalization and community crime prevention that can be used in Rio Arriba. When the Council receives this resource inventory it should task its relevant working groups to analyze the information and recommend strategies for an equitable and rational distribution-redistribution of resources based on the needs of the Rio Arriba community. In undertaking this action, the Council will be initiating an important aspect of its proposed coordination function.

The OJP Response Team also has the following specific recommendations for the Council's consideration:

1. The Council should articulate the respective roles and responsibilities of the individuals, public agencies, and private organizations participating under its auspices through a written letter-of-agreement or memorandum-of-understanding. The Weed and Seed initiative in Albuquerque has a tested process for the development of interagency, intergovernmental agreements, and the Council should examine this process for adaption to meet its needs.
2. The Council should play a leadership role in assisting Rio Arriba County to access Community Development Block Grant funds available from the federal government. An independent assessment of Rio Arriba County's economic status and needs conducted under the auspices of OJP finds that "The County of Rio Arriba has been at a great disadvantage, due to the county's inability to complete projects previously funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, funds from this program have been suspended since 1996." The county is currently reapplying for CDBG funds. The OJP-sponsored economic

assessment identifies a number of obstacles to develop a comprehensive economic development strategy for Rio Arriba, including;

- ❑ lack of a coordinated effort between local government agencies, the enterprise community and the non-profit sector, and
- ❑ lack of a vision or strategy to access needed socio-economic resources.

The OJP Response Team recommends that the Council provide the needed leadership to overcome these and other existing obstacles that currently prevent Rio Arriba from accessing CDBG funds and other economic development resources.

3. The Council should initiate a series of practical steps that will bring the community and the criminal justice system closer together. For example, the Council should explore the feasibility of establishing a community prosecution liaison program in Rio Arriba County.

4. The Council should identify and initiate actions that can be taken by state and county government agencies that will increase the availability, accessibility, and effectiveness of alcohol and other drug treatment programs for individuals who are under criminal justice supervision.

5. The Council should identify and initiate actions that can be taken in the near future to assure access to treatment for addicted residents of communities in Rio Arriba County in which the supply of drugs is disrupted/interdicted by law enforcement actions. These actions should include the establishment of protocols that will facilitate the referral of individuals by hospital emergency units and other primary health care providers to treatment in a timely manner.

6. The Council should take steps to assure that its actions complement the ongoing activities of the CAAC and the Region II CRC by including representatives of these groups on the Council's prevention and treatment working groups.

7. The Council should hold periodic public meetings in Rio Arriba County to provide progress reports to the community and to receive the community's input.

The Strategy:

The Council recommended by OJP is designed to support and sustain a comprehensive strategy that will foster collaboration among government agencies and community participation in the effort to reduce the demand for illegal drugs and to stop

drug trafficking in Rio Arriba County. Interdiction, prevention, and treatment agencies and interest groups are included as part of the infrastructure. Key figures in the private sector and community-based organizations, as well as policy makers and “implementers” from local, state, and federal government agencies can use the Council

“Law enforcement alone cannot arrest itself out of the addiction problem. We’ve got to work with the community to identify and arrest the traffickers. The users have to receive treatment, and we’ve got to find ways to prevent our youth from taking drugs.”

New Mexico Department of Public Safety
Secretary Darren White, speaking at the Chimayo
Crime Prevention Organization meeting on June
16, 1999.

to work together and to leverage resources to meet commonly defined goals. The ongoing participation of citizens representing the business community, the faith community, and other local perspectives is recommended as a way to assure that the area’s unique cultural, historical and traditional values

are represented in the development and implementation of a strategic approach to crime control and drug abuse prevention/treatment.

The Organization:

The organizational structure of the Council is specifically designed to provide the leadership required to address the challenges that lie ahead, the staff necessary to carry out the Council's routine business, the variety of perspectives and expertise needed to advise the Council as it undertakes its mission and an organized set of work groups that will implement a balanced and comprehensive approach to crime control and crime prevention in Rio Arriba County. The proposed organizational structure is described below.

Leadership – The complexity and dimensions of the social and economic problems in the Espanola Valley are significant, and extraordinary leadership is needed to commit the resources required to address the challenges that lie ahead and to coordinate the talent that will be assembled to employ those resources. Fortunately, such leadership exists in New Mexico. The OJP Response Team has requested the participation and secured the commitment of three key leaders in the state who will co-chair the Rio Arriba Community Health and Justice Council. John Kelly (United States Attorney for the District of New Mexico) will bring the federal government’s perspective to the Council’s leadership as well as the voice of the law enforcement community. Alfredo Montoya (Chairman, Board of Commissioners of Rio Arriba County) will provide the local leadership, which is critical to the Council’s development, implementation, and success. Alex Valdez (Secretary, New Mexico Department of Health) will represent state government at the highest level in the Council and bring the perspective of the prevention and treatment communities to the Council’s leadership.

Staff – The OJP Response Team recommends that two full-time staff positions be created to provide the staff support that will be needed to carry out the Council’s routine business. These positions should report to the Council Co-Chairs. A program manager should be hired to provide daily coordination of the Council’s activities. The individual hired for this position should have credibility with key stakeholders in the community revitalization, law enforcement and public health sectors, and should be able to balance these three perspectives when implementing the Council’s work. The person hired as the program manager must possess experience and expertise in the design and facilitation of productive meetings and must be able to communicate across agency/

organizational boundaries (and with the community's representatives) in order to achieve the Council's mission. An evaluator (with experience and expertise in epidemiology) should be hired to coordinate the development and use of both *intermediate measures* to gauge the Council's progress in achieving its mission and *outcome measures* to assess the value of the Council's accomplishments. The evaluator should be capable of organizing, collecting, and reporting on quantitative and qualitative indicators that can be used to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of the comprehensive strategy employed by the Council to address the social and economic problems in Rio Arriba County. The evaluator's efforts should be closely coordinated with ongoing evaluation, research, and survey efforts being sponsored by the New Mexico Department of Health's Behavioral Health Services Division.

The United States Attorney's Office/Law Enforcement Coordinating Council has agreed to provide technical assistance to the Council in the development and implementation of its mission. The SEARCH Group, Inc., an OJP contractor with extensive experience in the design and implementation of management information systems, is prepared to (1) conduct an information systems assessment to guide the design of the infrastructure's recommended research/evaluation component, (2) provide ongoing technical assistance to enhance existing criminal justice information systems and (3) study ways in which justice information systems can be integrated with relevant public health information systems to provide useful data/information for decision-makers. Integration and access to complete and accurate information will, for example,

allow drug court judges at the bench to make more informed decisions about an individual's treatment and to evaluate the continued success of that treatment.

Variety of Perspectives – The OJP Response Team recommends that the Council include a wide range of perspectives to provide advice to both the co-chairs and the working groups. The individuals and organizations acting in this advisory capacity should constitute the Executive Committee of the Council along with the Co-Chairs. The following perspectives should be represented on the proposed Executive Committee:

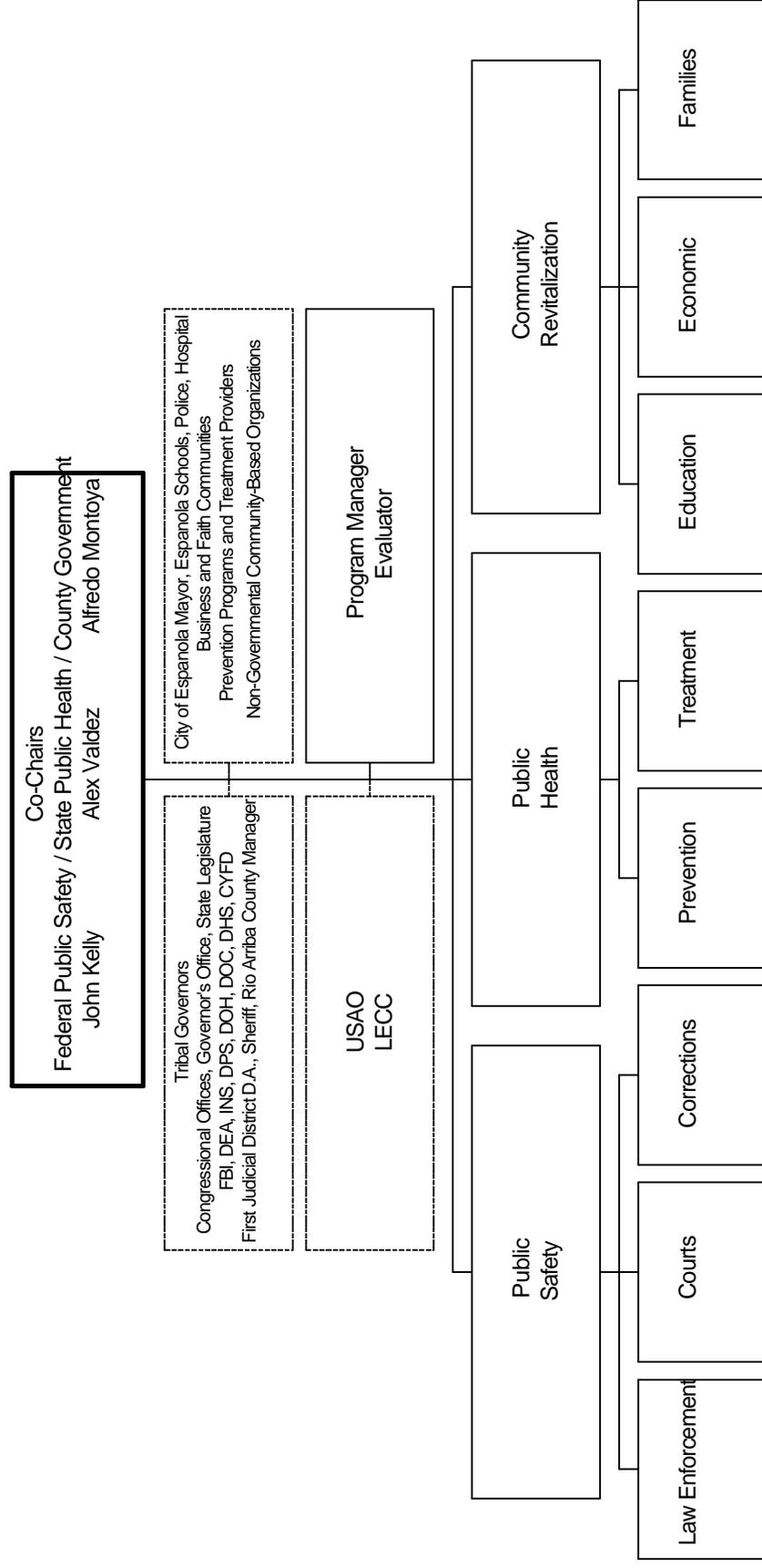
- the tribal Governors of the Pueblos in the Espanola Valley,
- the congressional officials and staff representing New Mexico,
- the Federal Bureau of Investigation,
- the United States Drug Enforcement Administration,
- the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service,
- the Office of the Governor of New Mexico,
- the New Mexico State Legislature,
- the New Mexico Department of Public Safety,
- the New Mexico Department of Corrections,
- the New Mexico Department of Health / Behavioral Health Services Division,
- the New Mexico Department of Human Services,
- the New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department,
- the Court Administrator for the First Judicial District,
- the Santa Fe County District Attorney,
- the Rio Arriba County Manager,
- the Rio Arriba County Sheriff's Office,
- the City of Espanola,
- the Espanola School District,
- the Espanola Police Department,
- the Espanola Hospital,
- the business community in Rio Arriba County,
- the faith community in Rio Arriba County,
- Nongovernmental, community-based organizations in the Espanola Valley,
- substance abuse prevention programs in Rio Arriba County, and
- substance abuse treatment services in Rio Arriba County.

Work Groups – The OJP Response Team recommends that an integrated set of work groups be established to carry out the Council's mission. The work groups should

report directly to the Co-Chairs and the individuals directing the work groups should be appointed by the Co-Chairs after consultation with the advisors on the Executive Committee. The work groups should be organized into three sectors: public safety, public health, and community revitalization. The public safety work groups should be composed of representatives from corrections, law enforcement and the courts (including the public defender). The public health work groups should include both prevention and treatment resources and expertise. The community revitalization work groups should include individuals and organizations with experience in strengthening families, enhancing education, and creating jobs.

The organization chart on the following page shows the Council's programmatic elements and the key agencies and organizations that will be critical to its success.

Rio Arriba Community Health and Justice Coordinating Council



III. Technical Assistance Resources

The Office of Justice Programs and its partners in the federal government, the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment [CSAT], the National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDA], and the National Institute of Corrections [NIC] have identified technical assistance that is to be made available from their respective agencies to support the recommendations in this report. The technical assistance is organized into three categories based on the time frame of its availability:

- IMMEDIATE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE – available within 3 months
- SHORT RANGE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE – available within 9 months
- LONG RANGE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE – available within 12 months.

| Technical Assistance Area | Agency | Time Frame |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|
| Municipal DWI Court in Espanola | OJP | Immediate |
| Adult Felony Drug Court | OJP | Immediate |
| Assessment of Jail Inmate Tracking System | NIC Jail Center | Immediate |
| Rio Arriba Substance Abuse Treatment Services Needs Assessment | CSAT | Immediate |
| Economic Development Assessment | OJP/Executive Office of Weed and Seed | Immediate |
| Information Systems Assessment and Design | OJP/SEARCH GROUP | Immediate ⁴ Short Range Long Range |

⁴ Additional information about Information Systems assistance is provided in the Appendix to this report.

| Technical Assistance Area | Agency | Time Frame |
|--|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Community Epidemiology | NIDA | Short Range ⁵ |
| What Works Publications and Materials on Drug Abuse | NIDA | Short Range |
| State Wide Needs Assessment on Alcohol and Drug Abuse Services | CSAT/SAMSHA | Short Range |
| Develop Proposed Infra-Structure | OJP/Executive Office of Weed and Seed | Short Range |
| Implement and Sustain Proposed Infra-Structure | OJP/U.S. Attorney for New Mexico | Long Range |

IV. CONCLUSION

The problems confronting the citizens, elected officials, government workers, and private sector employees dealing with addiction and its associated crimes in North Central New Mexico are both substantial in extent and complex in nature. They have been chronicled briefly in this report and more thoroughly in recent newspaper articles in the state, including the special report published by the *Santa Fe New Mexican* on June 13 of this year⁶. On the face of it, the challenges that lie ahead must often seem insurmountable to those individuals who have to cope with them on a daily basis. Indeed, a physician who treats drug users who was interviewed for this report indicated

⁵ A brief explanation of NIDA's community epidemiology technical assistance program is provided in the Appendix to this report.

⁶ Stories by Barbara Ferry / Photos by Abel Uribe, "Heroin: The Damage Done", *The Santa Fe New Mexican*, June 13 1999, Section E.

that he was discouraged by the sheer dimensions of the problem after reading the special supplement in *The New Mexican*.

“We are determined and ready to heal the sick and to confront the drug dealers. We have to work together. We have to rely on our faith, our history, and our traditions. If we do these things we will be walking in the right direction.”

Reverend Ron Carillo, Pastor Holy Cross Church and board member of Hands Across Cultures, Espanola, New Mexico in discussions with the OJP Response Team.

But as visitors to the state, the OJP Response Team has been impressed as much by New Mexico’s assets and strengths as we have been struck by its problems and challenges. The leadership in the state is equal to the task. “Implementers” in the public and

private sectors are talented and committed to their work. And most importantly the community in the Espanola Valley is coming forward and saying “basta!” - enough. Community organizations in small hamlets are working with police to rout drug traffickers, and are finding innovative ways to productively engage youth. Ordinary citizens and traditional spiritual mentors in the community (Los Hermanos de Penitentes) have joined hands with religious leaders to pray for an end to addiction and violence. These are all necessary prerequisites for the tasks that lie ahead. But, in the end, the challenge will be made all the more difficult if people cannot continue to put aside special interests and find ways to work together.

The Response Team’s mission was to listen to New Mexicans and to recommend a structure that they can use to find “common-ground” in their fight against addiction and crime. We think that the proposed Rio Arriba Community Health and Justice Council is

a practical vehicle that can serve this purpose and we encourage the people of New Mexico to consider its adoption.

APPENDIX

MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Access to timely, accurate, and complete data and information on offender activities that is shared broadly within the justice and health systems will enhance a variety of tasks including complete and effective evaluation and assessment of at-risk individuals and the development of effective treatment and crime prevention strategies. Justice agencies rely on instant access to critical information on offenders and their status in the justice and health systems; indeed, public safety is dependent on judges accessing an offender's up-to-date criminal history for appropriate review, evaluation and sentencing.

The SEARCH Group is prepared to conduct a review and assessment of Rio Arriba's public safety information systems, the data and information they capture, maintain, and share, as well as an analysis of those systems' individual and system-wide functionality. A report of findings and recommendations about those systems will be issued to the Council based on this review. SEARCH recommends that this review be conducted as soon as possible. Following this review, SEARCH could provide on-going assistance to the Council and to public health and public safety agencies in Rio Arriba with information system planning efforts or new systems planning and implementation.

COMMUNITY EPIDEMIOLOGY SURVEILLANCE NETWORKS

Community Epidemiology Surveillance Networks are multi-agency work groups with a public-health orientation. They study the spread, growth, or development of drug abuse related problems. The primary objective of these networks is to identify patterns of drug abuse in defined geographic zones, as well as changes in such patterns. Other

objectives include the detection of emerging substance abuse, and the dissemination of the information obtained about such abuse to the appropriate agencies and organizations. These organizations may use this information in the development of policies, prevention strategies, research studies, etc.

The primary purpose of a local surveillance network is to share timely and reliable information about drug abuse. These networks may contribute to one or more elements of a need assessment.

The surveillance network model has many advantages for planning purposes including its:

- low cost,
- use of existing resources,
- proven effectiveness,
- ability to provide immediate feedback,
- flexibility to work on many different levels,
- ability to produce information which is useful to many agencies and organizations,
- ability to gather input from different perspectives, and
- its ability to build an infrastructure for further research.

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References

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JUL 22 1999

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Mr. Arnold Hopkins Special Assistant to the Assistant Attorney General
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810 Seven Street, NW
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Dear Mr. Hopkins:

On behalf of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), I am pleased to provide more detailed information about the role that NIDA can play in offering technical assistance to the response team for the Rio Arriba, New Mexico, Community Health and Justice project.

As I discussed at the field hearing on March 30th, NIDA conducts and supports over 85 percent of the world's research on the health aspects of drug abuse and addiction. NIDA's mission of bringing the power of science to bear on drug abuse and addiction is accomplished through a dedicated cadre of scientists who are working to understand and find solutions to the Nation's drug abuse problem. NIDA's scientific research program addresses the most fundamental and essential questions about drug abuse, ranging from its causes and consequences to its prevention and treatment.

NIDA is committed to joining with our colleagues from other federal agencies and with local community members and service providers to combat drug use and addiction in this region, particularly the increasing use of black tar heroin. In particular, NIDA will provide technical expertise and leadership in the areas of community epidemiology and in ensuring that reliable science based information is used in all efforts.

NIDA has a large prevention and epidemiology research portfolio to help in this endeavor. The Community Epidemiology Work Group (CEWG), for example, is the type of mechanism that NIDA supports to detect and monitor changing drug patterns and emerging problems. The CEWG is a NIDA-sponsored network of epidemiologists and researchers from 21 U.S. metropolitan areas who meet semiannually to monitor community-level trends in drug use and abuse.

The CEWG provides frontline surveillance of the nature and extent of the drug problem based on reports of data of several types including drug abuse treatment admissions, drug-related medical emergencies seen in hospitals, drug-related deaths certified by medical examiners, drug seizures by law enforcement agencies, price and purity data based on street buys, trafficking patterns, and ethnographic information from researchers in direct contact with user networks. Building on the work of the CEWG, NIDA has recently developed a publication, "Assessing Drug Abuse Within and Across Communities" that helps communities understand their local drug abuse problems. This in turn allows communities to tailor their prevention and treatment efforts to meet local needs.

NIDA will use tools such as the CEWG and the research-based guidebook to research the spread, growth or development of drug abuse related problems in the region. NIDA will also call upon its prevention research experts to help develop effective interventions and programs for the communities in the region.

NIDA will also continue to develop research-based publications such as one of our most popular publications, "Preventing Drug Use Among Children and Adolescents." This user-friendly guide of principles summarizes our knowledge gleaned from over 20 years of prevention research. Over 200,000 copies have been circulated to communities throughout the country. The prevention booklet is just one example of how we are bringing research to local communities, both rural and urban, to reduce drug use.

NIDA is also concerned about educating communities on research and prevention. NIDA takes a comprehensive public health approach in this regard, one that includes extensive education and prevention efforts, adequate treatment and aftercare services, and research. NIDA has an active information dissemination program that develops and disseminates science based materials on a continuous basis. Publications such as our Research Report Series and our fax on demand service, NIDA INFOFAX, which is available on ' the world wide web or by calling an 800 number, present the latest information on drugs of abuse in a concise manner that is understandable to members of the general public. Infifax provides fact sheets on drugs of abuse that can be faxed, mailed or read over the phone in English or Spanish to the requestor. Since we debuted this system in December 1997, we have distributed more than 250,000 fact sheets. NIDA is also in the final stages of developing and disseminating a new research-based guide, "Principles of Drug Addiction Treatment" to debut this Fall.

We also have a strong science education program to ensure that our Nation's youth have accurate science-based information to make healthy lifestyle choices. For example, we have developed award winning materials such as our "Mind Over Matter" series that was sent to every middle school in the Nation. "Mind Over Matter" is a series of drug education brochures for students in grades five through nine to spark their curiosity and to inform them with the most up-to-date scientific research findings on the effects of drug abuse.

All of these NIDA-supported resources, as well as any new materials or research findings, will be readily available to members of the proposed Rio Arriba Community Health and Justice Council. NIDA is committed to working with all involved in this project to help alleviate the drug abuse and addiction problems in this County. Please contact me if you have any questions or would like to discuss NIDA's role in any more detail. I look forward to working with you and all the others involved in this very worthwhile and important endeavor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tim Condon" with a small circular mark at the end.

Timothy P. Condon, Ph.D.
Associate Director, NIDA



July 21, 1999

The Honorable Laurie Robinson
Assistant Attorney General
U. S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
810 7th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20531

Dear Ms. Robinson:

I am writing to update you on the activities undertaken by the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, in conjunction with the Office of Justice programs, in response to our commitment to Senator Pete Domenici to assist the people of New Mexico in addressing the related problems of chemical dependency and crime. We are pleased to participate with you in this important effort.

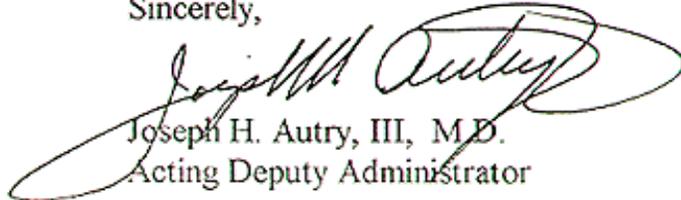
On April 30, 1999, Ms. Mary Schumacher, Director of the Behavioral Health Services Division, New Mexico Department of Health requested of the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) technical assistance for Rio Arriba County. The purpose of the request is related to the widespread illicit drug and alcohol abuse in that County. As you know, heroin use, in particular, has come to the attention of the New Mexico congressional delegation and Federal agencies following a series of articles in the local (Espanola, Santa Fe and Albuquerque) media as well as the national press.

CSAT organized a team of national substance abuse treatment and service delivery experts led by Andrea Barthwell, M.D., President of the Encounter Medical Group, Oak Park, IL. The team met with approximately 50 advocates and providers of substance abuse treatment services in the Espanola County Annex Building on Monday, July 19, 1999, and with staff of the New Mexico Behavioral Health Services Division on Tuesday, July 20, 1999.

The primary objectives of the technical assistance team were to perform: a County-specific needs assessment; identify gaps in alcohol and other drug abuse treatment services; discuss opportunities to enhance community resources; and most importantly, to plan, design and implement a comprehensive continuum of treatment services for the substance abusing/dependent residents of Rio Arriba County. We anticipate that a report of the technical assistance team's work including a practical plan of action should be ready by mid-August. CSAT will continue to work with the New Mexico Department of Health to provide technical assistance to the County in implementing the plan.

I look forward to continuing to work with you on this worthwhile and critical initiative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseph H. Autry, III, M.D.", written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Joseph H. Autry, III, M.D.
Acting Deputy Administrator

July 22, 1999
Mr. Arnold Hopkins
Special Assistant to the
Assistant Attorney General
Office of Justice Programs
U.S. Department of Justice

Dear Mr. Hopkins:

I am responding to your request regarding the services we could contribute to the Rio Arriba County, New Mexico, Community Health and Justice Project. Our agency would be pleased to participate in this effort. This letter gives a brief overview of our services and the help we could offer to Rio Arriba County, The National Institute of Corrections (NIC) was created in 1974 to be a center for correctional knowledge and provide leadership and assistance to corrections. We are unique as a federal agency because we provide direct service, rather than financial assistance, as the primary means of carrying out our mission. Our services respond directly to the needs identified by practitioners in state and local corrections. At NIC, each primary constituent group in adult corrections jails, prisons, and community corrections is served by an NIC division. All adult corrections agencies are further served by the Academy Division, the NIC Information Center, and the Office of Correctional Job Training, and Placement. NIC's primary service delivery strategies include short-term technical assistance, training, and information dissemination. Technical assistance responds to an issue that an individual correctional agency identifies. NIC sends someone experienced in the subject area to work with agency staff to assess management and operations related to the issue and develop recommendations for addressing the issue. This visit to the agency requesting assistance is usually no longer than 3-5 days and is followed by a written report.

The Jails, Prisons, and Community Corrections Divisions of NIC also offer training specific to their constituent groups. For example, the Jails Division conducts training on direct supervision jails, inmate classification in jails, planning for new jails, developing mental health services for jail inmates, and other topics related to local detention. The NIC Academy Division, on the other hand, offers training pertinent to all components of corrections, such as courses in correctional leadership and management development and courses designed to build the training capacity of correctional agencies. Finally, the NIC Information Center provides information on the full range of management and operational issues in jails, prisons, and community corrections agencies. Corrections specialists are available to discuss the specific information needs of practitioners, researchers, and others. Information Center staff assemble and ship materials to each client at no charge.

NIC could most immediately serve Rio Arriba County by providing short-term technical assistance related to the development of a management information system. Although the scope of NIC's services precludes us from the actual development of an information system, we could send someone to the Rio Arriba County Jail to:
review the current information system, including the types of information collected, the way in which it is collected, and how the information is used;

help local officials and jail practitioners determine what they want to achieve with an expanded or improved management information system;

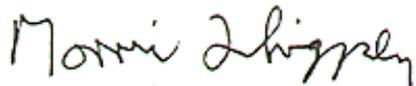
help local officials and jail practitioners determine the types of information they need to collect and collection strategies that will produce the reports that will best serve their goals;

help local officials and jail practitioners identify strategies for collaboration among agencies that will ensure the information system effectively contributes to broader criminal justice and public health goals.

NIC understand that the SEARCH group is prepared to do extensive work with Rio Arriba's public safety information systems and can provide services well beyond the scope of what NIC can offer. However, NIC can contribute expertise and services specifically as they relate to the jail component of the information system. Also, as Rio Arriba County explores its information system needs, it may identify areas of jail management and operations that need improvement. In that case, NIC will offer its full array of technical assistance, training, and information services to the County.

If you have questions about this letter or our services, please call me at (800) 995-6423, ext. 101. We look forward to working with you on this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Morris Thigpen". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Morris Thigpen, Director
National Institute of Corrections

SEARCH

The National Consortium for Justice Information and Statistics

Kenneth E. Bischoff
Chairman



Gary R. Cooper
Executive Director

July 14, 1999

Mr. Arnold Hopkins
Special Assistant to the
Assistant Attorney General
Office of Justice Programs
U.S. Department of Justice

Dear Mr. Hopkins:

Per our conversation on July 8, 1999, I am responding to your request regarding SEARCH's participation as a member of the technical assistance response team for the Rio Arriba, New Mexico, Community Health and Justice project. SEARCH would be pleased to provide information systems technical assistance to public safety organizations in this community.

As you know, SEARCH's National Technical Assistance and Training Program, funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice, has, for over 12 years, provided specialized technical assistance to local and state justice agencies in assessing existing automated information systems, and planning for, acquiring, developing, upgrading and integrating both existing and new automated systems. Assistance is provided to all justice components of a state or local jurisdiction, including law enforcement, prosecutor, public defender, courts, jails, corrections, probation/parole, juvenile justice and other related organizations. SEARCH assistance also aids local, State and Federal justice agencies integrate and share information with one another.

In addition, SEARCH and OJP, through the Drug Courts Program Office, are providing technical assistance to Drug Courts across the nation in their efforts to plan for, design, develop, procure and/or implement drug court evaluation and management information systems, as well as integrate those systems with the entire justice community. Integration and access to complete and accurate information will allow judges at the bench to make the best decisions about an individual's treatment and to evaluate the continued success of that treatment. Expertise in this area and the knowledge gained from this project will no doubt be of assistance to Rio Arriba.

Given our long-term and wide-ranging nationwide experience in these areas, it would be appropriate for SEARCH to provide justice information system technical assistance to Rio Arriba. I have enclosed a package of materials that describes the SEARCH and the National Technical Assistance Program for your review.

Justice agencies rely on instant access to critical information on offenders and their status in the

justice system; indeed, public safety is dependent on judges accessing an offender's up-to-date criminal history for appropriate review, evaluation and sentencing, a police officer obtaining a suspect's outstanding warrant history real-time via computer in the patrol car, and a jailer establishing positive identification of an inmate at booking and release. Information systems are the cornerstone of successful public safety and crime prevention efforts. Information systems planning and implementation, however, is rarely a short-term project, and to maximize the success for technical assistance in this area, I would suggest that SEARCH could be of assistance to Rio Arriba in the immediate, short and long-term technical assistance categories defined for this project. Within the first three months of the project ("immediate technical assistance"), SEARCH could assist by conducting a review and assessment of the community's public safety information systems, the data and information they capture, maintain, and share, as well as analyze those systems' individual and system-wide functionality. From this review and analysis, SEARCH will issue a report of findings and recommendations about those systems.

Given the objectives of this project, we feel it is key that an information systems assessment take place early in the process, as it will impact and need to be considered when crafting the vision, mission, goals and objectives for the planned infrastructure that would support a "balanced and comprehensive approach to reduce substance abuse and control associated crime".

In the short- and long-term technical assistance categories that span the next 9-12 months,

SEARCH could be available to provide assistance to the public safety agencies as they move forward with any number of public safety information system planning and enhancement efforts or new systems planning and implementation.

Access to timely, accurate and complete data and information on offender activities that is shared broadly within the justice system will enhance a variety of efforts that Rio Arriba and ON have planned for this project, including complete and effective evaluation and assessment of at-risk individuals and the development of effective treatment and crime prevention strategies. Indeed, information systems will be a core component of the ON recommendation that Rio Arriba implement an "infrastructure designed to link Federal, State and local public health and safety initiatives and resources in a comprehensive, balanced approach aimed at reducing the demand for illegal substances, interdicting drug trafficking and its associated crimes, and revitalizing communities coping with the stress of widespread chemical dependency."

Please call me if you have any questions about this letter, the technical assistance program, or would like to discuss any of these issues further. I look forward to working with you and SEARCH is pleased to be part of this critical and worthwhile effort.

Sincerely,

Kelly J. Harfis
Director, Justice Information Technology Services