Commission on Children and Youth Fact Sheet

Data Project Purpose and Uses

The Commission on Children and Youth is directed to "gather and organize information…in order to act as a source of information," to "promote the development and strengthening of effective and efficient services for children" and families, to "encourage collaborations" and to advocate for beneficial policies for children and families. To these ends, the Commission has supported this Data Collection and Analysis Project and the production of its primary analytical report: *Nueces County Juvenile Delinquency Risk Factor Data and Trend Analysis*. The report is supported by companion documents: the *Delinquency Risk Factors with Supporting Data Indicators* file, and the *Delinquency Data Indicators Graphics File*, ten short Fact Sheets on specific issues of interest, and the *Nueces County Data Profile: Selected Demographic, Health, Social, Economic, Housing, and Educational Characteristics* report with separate data file. These documents update and expand similar documents supported in 2010 and by the earlier Youth Opportunities United initiative that have had wide use in the community.

The Commission believes that all government, private, and non-profit organizations serving children, youth, and families in the community need, current, valid, and readily available information for the purposes of policy creation, program development, grant writing, and program evaluation. For agencies to adequately serve the community, they need as clear an image of the current conditions and trends among the population served as possible. Without such an image, resources, actions, and effort are often misdirected and needs are unmet, problems are not addressed, and waste occurs. The products of this project are founded on two fundamental management principles that decisions making should be evidence based and that evidence should be current, research based data. The information provided from this project will permit community decision makers to engage in strategic and program planning, policy creation, program development, grant writing, and program evaluation from a position of knowledge, of evidence.

The functions noted above were effectively performed during the YOU initiative from 1997 to 2006. Strategic planning processes occurred internally with YOU and with many community organizations, policies and procedures were changed to make services to youth and families more streamlined and effective, new programs were developed, and program evaluations were conducted which improved service delivery. Of significance was the use of the data and report products of the time for grant writing. The YOU Grant Writing Office and community partners supported by the products coming from the Social Science Research Center produced in excess of twenty-five (25) million dollars in successful grants for the community. When costs for the Office and the SSRC are compared to the result, the community received a 3,600% return on its investment. An additional 10 to 15 million dollars of grants were written by community agencies that did not utilize the YOU Grant Writing Office, but used the report, graphics, and data products. Problem/needs statements or community assessments based on well

presented, valid data are very effective in grant applications. Having such data readily available is a time and effort saving phenomena for the community's grant writing efforts.

The community is encouraged by the Commission to use the reports, fact sheets, graphics, and data. This can be done in a number of ways. The fact sheets, graphics file, and reports (or parts of reports) may be distributed to committees and decision makers engaged in strategic or program planning or policy creation-policy analysis. The reports, graphics, and data can provide a common understanding of issues and problems from which the participants may move to considerations of policy and action. Organizations may excerpt portions of any of the products to be inserted into needs assessments supporting or resulting from such decision making. Time is not lost in gaining a shared understanding of the issue, problem, or condition to be addressed. Focus can be on resolutions and solutions.

Grant writing efforts may use appropriate data from the data files to create tables, graphs, or text unique to the grant proposal. Alternatively, sections of text and graphics may be taken from the reports, fact sheets, and graphic file to be inserted as they are into grant proposals. This saves considerable time because agency staff may find the data, analysis, or graphics readily available rather than having to create these from the start. Time can be spent on focusing the grant application toward the proposal, designing logic models, and describing the actions to be taken or programs to be created with the grant funds. The grant application may benefit in scoring with the inclusion of timely data, eye catching graphics, or referenced conclusions from the Social Science Research Center (cited as an authority). The availability of multiple data indicators within the data sets permits stronger statements of need or more complete assessments of community conditions than may be available in competitive grants.

Because the data files, texts, and graphics display trends, the products may be used to assist in program evaluation. Programs designed to address particular community issues may find that appropriate data indicators are available to determine if the past 3, 5 or 10 years of effort have had desired effects. While the reports focus largely on the past several years and the graphics display 4, 5, or 6 years of data in most cases, the data sets extend back to the 1998 to 2000 time period. Thus, both long and short term trends may be observed in the data sets. Planning efforts and grant writing are both strongly supported by effective evaluation of past efforts. The products of this Project combined with internal data from the particular agency engaged in planning and evaluation can be very persuasive.

The Commission on Children and Youth encourages all government, private, and non-profit organizations serving children, youth, and families in the community to make extensive and frequent use of the products of the Data Collection and Analysis Project.

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
CORPUS CHRISTI

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Social Science Research Center
Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi
6300 Ocean Dr. #5853
Corpus Christi, TX 78412
361-825-3206