



National Institute of Justice

P r o g r a m F o c u s

COMmunity-Backed Anti-drug Tax:

COMBAT in Jackson County, Missouri



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by Gregory Mills

Throughout the 1980s, the citizens of Kansas City, Missouri, and nearby communities in Jackson County felt increasingly besieged by drug abuse and drug-related crime. "Crack cocaine had become an epidemic," recalled the Reverend James Tindall, chairman of the Jackson County Legislature. Cocaine and other illicit drugs such as methamphetamine, PCP, heroin, and marijuana were openly traded on street corners. Drug houses were springing up overnight on many blocks of Kansas City. Drug-related homicides

were on the rise. One out of every two people arrested was a drug user; 80 percent of all crime involved illegal drugs.¹

Residents felt they were losing control of their neighborhoods. These concerns pervaded not only the urban core but also nearby cities and outlying rural areas. Drug trafficking and the drug culture had become an increasingly violent and menacing aspect of daily life. Los Angeles-based

Highlights

When residents in Kansas City and other areas of Jackson County, Missouri, felt they were losing their neighborhoods to the scourge of drugs and drug-related crime, they approved a November 1989 referendum to enact a sales tax to fund a broad-based attack against drugs, becoming the first jurisdiction to pass such a measure.

The COMmunity-Backed Anti-drug Tax, known as COMBAT, was set originally to expire on March 31, 1997, but 71 percent of the voters supported a second referendum in November 1995 to renew the tax for another 7 years.

Although other States have used taxes or allowed counties the authority to use them for anti-drug programs, COMBAT has aspects that set it apart:

- A full range of prevention, treatment, and law enforcement activities.

- A centralized administrative structure; the county prosecutor has been given substantial authority and discretion to guide the anti-drug strategy.

The moneys raised through the tax support eight program areas that fall under the following three objectives as adopted by the prosecuting attorney's office:

- **"Jail dangerous criminals and drug dealers."** Money earmarked for this phase supports police investigations, prosecutions, circuit court, and corrections. The funds have been used to implement successful community policing programs in six Kansas City neighborhoods.

- **"Treat nonviolent offenders who honestly want to get off drugs."** Treatment programs, the drug court, and juvenile court receive funds to help addicts overcome their dependency.

- **"Prevent children from ever experimenting with drugs."** Funds to promote

this strategy are distributed to 33 community nonprofit organizations that provide drug prevention programs.

Indications of COMBAT's accomplishments include partnerships forged among agencies and across geographic boundaries; the promotion of greater sensitivity and responsiveness to neighborhood concerns; better coordination between treatment providers and agencies of the criminal justice system (police, courts, and corrections); and, most important, the success in gaining the cooperation and vigilance of community residents.

The prosecuting attorney's office is developing data systems to assess program clients' needs and to monitor program service effectiveness. A comprehensive evaluation of the COMBAT program will be sponsored in 1996 by the National Institute of Justice and the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation.

youth gangs were making inroads into the drug market; Jamaican drug dealers began operating, often using brutal tactics to establish their control. Perhaps most distressing, the tide of drug abuse was sweeping into schools.

By November 1989, the residents of Jackson County decided to fight back. Through a referendum, Jackson County became the first U.S. jurisdiction to enact a sales tax to fund a broad-based attack on drug abuse. (See "Profile of Jackson County, Missouri.") Administered by the Office of the Jackson County Prosecuting Attorney, the initiative was given the name COMBAT, for COMMUNITY-Backed Anti-drug Tax. In November 1995, county residents showed their continued support for COMBAT, voting more than two-to-one in favor of a 7-year renewal of the tax.

The Uniqueness of COMBAT

What makes COMBAT funding unique? Other States and localities, after all, have supported anti-drug programs with revenues earmarked from special taxes and other sources²:

- Sales taxes on alcoholic beverages have been used in some States to support drug prevention and treatment (e.g., New Mexico, Oregon, South Dakota, and Washington).

- Several States have provided counties with the authority to set aside a portion of local property tax revenues for mental health and substance abuse programs (e.g., Missouri and Ohio).

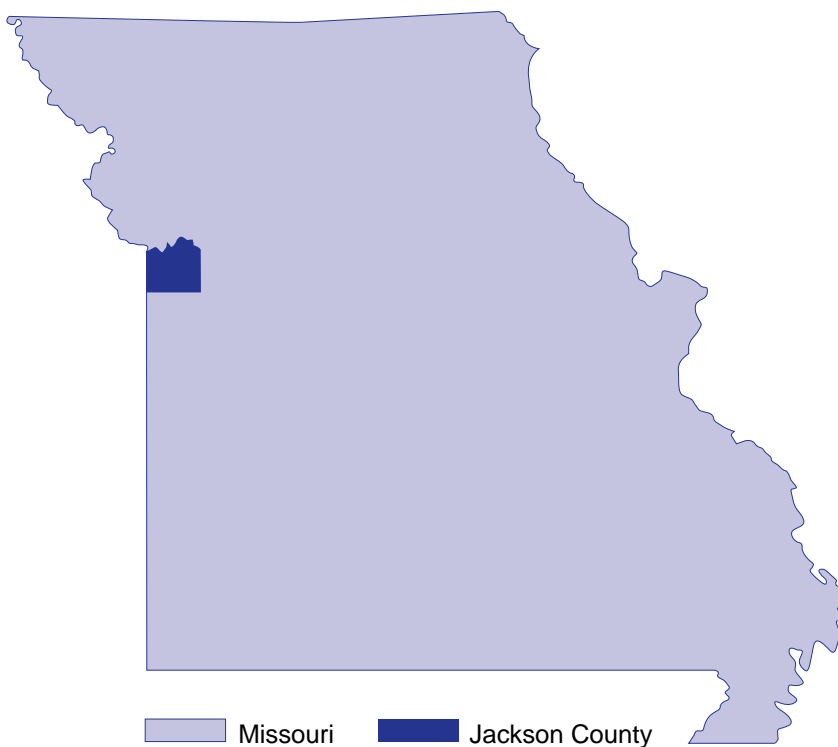
Profile of Jackson County, Missouri

Jackson County, located on the western Missouri border with Kansas, encompasses an area of 605 square miles. With 635,000 residents, it is the State's second most populous county, after St. Louis County. Two-thirds of Jackson County's population reside in Kansas City (435,000). Other cities include Independence (the county seat, with 112,000), Lee's Summit (46,000), Blue Springs (40,000), and Grandview (40,000). The county's racial mix is 76 percent white and 21 percent African American.

The county closely mirrors national conditions on such economic indicators as median family income (\$34,300 in 1989), the poverty rate (13 percent in 1989), and the unemployment rate (6.6 percent in 1990).

Major employers include AT&T, Hallmark Cards, Southwestern Bell, Sprint, and the State of Missouri. There are 12 public school districts; 98,000 students are enrolled in 175 elementary, junior high, and senior high schools. Among those 25 years and older, 80 percent are high school graduates (compared to 75 percent nationwide in 1990).

Sales tax rates differ within the county because of varying city levies. Including all State, county, and city sales tax components, plus the 0.25 percent levy for COMBAT, the sales tax is 6.475 percent in Kansas City, Lee's Summit, Blue Springs, and Grandview and 5.975 percent in Independence.



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■ Taxes on alcohol-related advertising have been used to finance public awareness campaigns on alcohol abuse.

■ Fines collected from those convicted of driving while intoxicated have been used to fund remedial classes for offenders.

■ Under asset forfeiture programs, proceeds from the sale of airplanes, automobiles, boats, and other property seized from convicted drug traffickers are commonly applied to narcotics enforcement activity.

Several aspects of COMBAT distinguish it from these other examples. First is the breadth of COMBAT's programmatic mission. COMBAT supports a full range of prevention, treatment, and law enforcement activities, tackling the consumption and sale of all commonly available illicit drugs. This expansive scope, established in the authorizing legislation, has been enabled by the scale of the tax collections. COMBAT's broad charter has made it possible to establish a substantial presence in the community, to gain the cooperation of the key organizations and constituencies, and to have a discernible impact on patterns of drug use and crime.

Another distinctive aspect of COMBAT is its centralized administrative structure. The county legislature conferred upon a single elected official, the county prosecutor, a substantial measure of authority and discretion in guiding the county's anti-drug strategy. This, coupled with the leverage provided by COMBAT's grants to

prevention and treatment providers, has allowed the prosecutor to bring anti-drug activities under a single umbrella. One notable result has been improved coordination between treatment providers and agencies of the criminal justice system, including police, the courts, and corrections. More generally, COMBAT has enabled the prosecutor's office to provide the political leadership and administrative direction necessary to mount and sustain an effective anti-drug campaign, where success requires the involvement of an array of public and private organizations.

Origins of the Anti-Drug Sales Tax

No single event prompted a public outcry in Jackson County over drug abuse. The person most instrumental in launching the idea of an anti-drug sales tax was Albert Riederer, who in November 1988 had been elected to a third 4-year term as Jackson County prosecutor. During his reelection campaign, Riederer had been confronted repeatedly by citizens angered over the seeming inability of police and the courts to control drug trafficking. These exchanges convinced Riederer that not only was better coordination necessary among community groups, the criminal justice system, and agencies of city and county government, but also more resources were needed.

At the same time, leaders in the church community, community health centers, and other civic organizations were asserting that the drug problem should be viewed not simply as a law enforcement issue but also as a public health

issue. This would require educating individuals about the hazards of drug use, thus preventing the spread of drug activity before it threatened the safety of schools, streets, and neighborhoods and became a police issue.

After the election, Riederer sought to identify a source of funds that could be dedicated solely to drug programs. An increment to the existing sales tax (about 6 percent, depending on local levies) seemed the most palatable approach. Although the sales tax was regressive (i.e., representing a higher percentage of income for low-income taxpayers), it was already in place and required no new organizational machinery. It was a straightforward, visible, and locally controlled funding mechanism. Riederer floated the idea privately among community leaders and elected officials. The reaction was favorable, reflecting the mounting groundswell of grassroots support for concerted action in the fight against drugs.

Before submitting the sales tax to county voters as a referendum issue, the first step was to obtain authorization from the Missouri State Legislature. A bill, introduced in January 1989 and enacted in April 1989, authorized a 0.25 percent increase in the sales tax, which was expected to yield about \$14 million annually. Initially, the bill was drafted specifically as a law enforcement initiative to fund additional police investigations and deferred prosecution for nonviolent drug offenders. As the legislative debate ensued, the bill was broadened to include treatment programs, corrections, and circuit court operations.

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The debate shifted to the county in August 1989, where the nine-member county legislature's approval was necessary to place the issue on the November ballot. The prosecutor's office organized a campaign called "Fight Back" to promote the tax, enlisting the support of business, labor, church, and community leaders. However, the role of the prosecutor's office was a key element in a contentious debate in the county legislature. Some legislators were wary of placing the responsibility for administering the tax entirely in the hands of the county prosecutor. The prosecutor's office itself was wary; it expected to face political pressures on the funding of local programs. As a result, the administration of the tax was split equally (\$7 million each) between the Office of the Prosecuting Attorney and a newly created Fiscal Commission. The latter consisted of the prosecuting attorney (as commission chair), the presiding judge of the circuit court, the director of corrections, the chief of the Kansas City Police Department, the chairman of the Eastern Jackson County Drug Enforcement Task Force (representing the police departments in the suburban and rural areas of the county), and the directors of two major drug treatment facilities: the Samuel Rodgers Community Health Center and the Swope Parkway Comprehensive and Mental Health Center.

The county legislature added several other provisions to the tax. A portion of the funds earmarked for drug prevention activities was to be provided under contract to established nonprofit community organizations. A sunset provision also was incorporated, calling for the tax to expire automatically

on March 31, 1997. (As noted, the recent renewal vote has extended the tax through March 2004.)

The county legislature unanimously passed the revised measure on September 12, 1989, designating it as Question No. 1 on the November ballot. In a separate supporting resolution unanimously adopted on October 17, the legislature specified the allocation of tax revenues among eight different program areas: investigations, prosecution, deferred prosecution (or drug court), prevention, corrections, treatment, juvenile court, and circuit court. The prosecutor was to administer the funds in the first four areas; the Fiscal Commission was to take responsibility for the latter four.

Although there was some opposition from taxpayer organizations that opposed any new tax levy, Jackson County voters passed the Anti-Drug Sales Tax with 63 percent approval on November 7, 1989. The tax became effective on April 1, 1990. The first distribution of tax proceeds to the county occurred in June 1990, and the first expenditure of tax funds for program activities took place in November 1990, within a year of the referendum vote.

The passage of an anti-drug tax was a major political accomplishment, given the acknowledged risks elected officials take in supporting new taxes. In this instance, the public recognized that an effective response to a large and growing problem would require more than existing available funding. The compromise engendered by legislative debates at the State and county levels assured the support of the major

institutional players by allocating tax proceeds among the key constituencies—police departments, courts, corrections, and treatment providers.

Over its first 4 years, the initiative went by the name Jackson County Anti-Drug Sales Tax, more often shortened to "drug tax." When Jackson County Prosecutor Albert Riederer decided not to run for reelection in November 1992, he was succeeded by Claire McCaskill, under whose leadership the program was renamed COMBAT, the COMMunity-Backed Anti-drug Tax.

COMBAT's Objectives and Allocation of Funds

Objectives. The November 1989 ballot question stated that the anti-drug sales tax was to be used "solely for the purpose of investigation and prosecution of drug and drug-related offenses, and the incarceration, rehabilitation, treatment, and judicial processing of adult and juvenile violators of drug and drug-related offenses."

The prosecuting attorney's office adopted the following three-part statement of COMBAT's objectives in July 1995:

- "Jail dangerous criminals and drug dealers."
- "Treat nonviolent offenders who honestly want to get off drugs."
- "Prevent children from ever experimenting with drugs."

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Exhibit 1. COMBAT's Objectives and Programs

COMBAT objective and program area	Annual funding level	Major agencies and organizations implementing programs
“Jail dangerous criminals and drug dealers”		
Police investigations	\$3.0 million	Kansas City Police Department Eastern Jackson County Drug Enforcement Task Force
Prosecution	\$1.5 million	Office of the Jackson County Prosecuting Attorney
Circuit court	\$0.5 million	Jackson County Circuit Court
Corrections	\$2.5 million	Jackson County Department of Corrections
“Treat nonviolent offenders who honestly want to get off drugs”		
Treatment	\$2.5 million	28 nonprofit treatment providers
Drug court	\$1.5 million	Jackson County Drug Court
Juvenile court	\$1.5 million	Juvenile Division of Jackson County Family Court
“Prevent children from ever experimenting with drugs”		
Prevention	\$1.0 million	33 nonprofit community organizations
COMBAT Total	\$14.0 million	

shown in exhibit 1, based on projected annual tax proceeds of \$14 million.

To the extent that the 0.25 percent tax rate designated for COMBAT has yielded annual amounts somewhat greater than \$14 million (about \$15.5 million in the most recent year), a supplementary “grant match fund” was established. (This fund also receives interest earned on tax proceeds before they are distributed and any unused program moneys.) Each year the supplementary proceeds (moneys above \$14 million) are disbursed in two equal amounts, half to the Office of the Prosecuting Attorney (primarily for additional prevention programs) and half to the Fiscal Commission.

The title “grant match fund” refers to the fact that these supplementary moneys are distributed only to grantees seeking a local financial commitment in order to obtain outside funding from

This program strategy recognizes that an effective battle against drug abuse requires not only strict law enforcement but also prevention and treatment. COMBAT’s law enforcement aim is to prosecute and incarcerate those who deal in drugs or who have committed violent offenses because of their drug use. For those already engaged in illicit drug use but who have not committed violent offenses,

COMBAT offers treatment options or other supportive services that will help users overcome their dependency. At the most fundamental level, COMBAT reaches out to young people to preempt the onset of drug use or to interrupt a potential cycle of abuse.

Allocation of funds. To serve these multiple objectives, the county legislature adopted the allocation of funds

Federal, State, or private sources. Cumulatively over the 5-year life of the grant match fund, \$6 million has been distributed, leveraging more than \$25 million in additional outside funding from public agencies and private sources, such as the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

COMBAT Management

The Office of the Jackson County Prosecuting Attorney has overall responsibility for the COMBAT initiative. The county prosecutor has direct responsibility for administering half of the tax proceeds. As chair of the original 7-member Fiscal Commission, which is now the 10-member COMBAT Commission, the prosecutor also plays a major role in administering the other half of the tax funds.

The tax-funded programs under the direct responsibility of the prosecutor have a full-time staff consisting of two administrators (the COMBAT and deputy administrators), three coordinators (for planning, development, and communications; for evaluation; and for the drug court; the drug court coordinator supervises a staff attorney monitoring the court), and two clerical assistants.

The operations of the COMBAT Commission are managed by an executive assistant to the prosecutor. Another staff person, who is supervised in part by the COMBAT administrator, monitors the commission's grants to program providers.

Soon after taking office as county prosecutor in January 1993, Claire McCaskill took the bold step of hiring as COMBAT administrator a person with strong public health credentials.³ This was to ensure a continued emphasis on drug prevention and treatment programs rather than solely on law enforcement. Indeed, more than one-third of the combined sales tax

Eastern Jackson County Drug Enforcement Task Force

COMBAT funds have enabled the 13 police departments of Eastern Jackson County, the communities outside of Kansas City, to coordinate more closely their narcotics investigations. The Eastern Jackson County Drug Enforcement Task Force dates back to 1986, but before COMBAT it had only seven assigned officers. Small grants and private donations funded the salaries and expenses of this minimal staff. Starting in 1990, with annual COMBAT funding of \$1.5 million, the task force expanded, increasing to 30 officers by April 1991. Additionally, the task force now receives \$325,000 from COMBAT's grant match fund, leveraging an additional \$325,000 in Federal funds.

The task force officers are detailed from the police departments of Independence, Lee's Summit, Blue Springs, Grandview, Raytown, and the Jackson County Sheriff's Department. The police chiefs of all 13 county departments serve on the task force's executive board, which meets weekly. An officer-in-charge directs task force activities. Staff are organized into

three units—an intelligence unit and two "buy units" that conduct undercover buy/bust operations. The task force periodically moves its confidential location to avoid surveillance.

The funding from COMBAT has enabled the task force to expand its activity, as indicated by the dramatic increase between 1990 and 1994 in new arrests and seizures of drugs, weapons, and money. (See table below.)

The task force has focused on mid- to upper-level dealers, thereby targeting larger numbers of suppliers and users and larger quantities of drugs. The group's objective is not simply to serve search warrants and issue arrest warrants but to build prosecutable cases and put drug rings out of operation. Officer-in-charge Dennie Jensen reports that the multi-jurisdictional effort has clearly established its presence in these suburban and rural communities: "We have forced dealers to change the way they do business."

	<u>1990</u>	<u>1994</u>
New defendants	133	304
Drugs seized (grams)		
Marijuana	1,588	57,174
Cocaine	210	20,383
Crack cocaine	47	10,409
Methamphetamine	57	1,699
Weapons seized	30	67
Money seized	\$25,683	\$176,650

and grant match funds is devoted to prevention and treatment programs. This represents a significant shift from the more typical program mix in which three-fourths or more of anti-drug funds are devoted to law enforcement activities.

Eight program areas that receive COMBAT funding are clustered under three major objectives (see exhibit 1), each of which has its own administrative arrangements and program activities.

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Community Policing in the Old Northeast Neighborhood

The Old Northeast area is one of six Kansas City neighborhoods in which, with COMBAT funding, the community policing concept has been implemented. Efforts to reduce drug-related crimes have become more effective by geographically concentrating the resources of the police and fire departments, the prosecutor's office, housing inspectors, and other public agencies and by enlisting the support of community groups in crime watch activities. COMBAT has facilitated this initiative by providing the resources to create Community Action Network (CAN) teams.

The CAN team in Old Northeast was established in March 1994; its focus has been on the Lykins neighborhood. Of the 34,000 Old Northeast area residents, about 6,000 live in the 81-block Lykins area. The median income of Lykins residents (\$15,454) is less than one-half of the entire Kansas City area (\$37,738).

COMBAT funding supports the following CAN team activities:

■ **KCPD officers.** The two police officers assigned to the CAN team establish a visible, uniformed presence in the neighborhood by walking the beat or riding patrol on COMBAT-purchased bicycles. These officers are based in the CAN

center, which is centrally located in the community.

■ **KCPD Street Narcotics Unit (SNU) and Drug Enforcement Unit (DEU).** The SNU personnel are assigned geographically to investigate retail-level drug operations. DEU staff target their efforts on individuals and groups involved at higher levels of drug distribution who are supplying neighborhood drug dealers. Both SNU and DEU make use of information available from Federal law enforcement agencies, drug enforcement task forces, and special investigative squads such as those that focus on gang involvement.

■ **Neighborhood prosecutor.** A single assistant prosecuting attorney has the responsibility for prosecuting the drug cases that come out of the Lykins area. By maintaining close ties to the police personnel and residents, the assistant prosecutor is better able to pursue convictions with the information obtained from residents and geographically assigned police personnel.

■ **Drug Abatement Response Team (DART).** Coordinated by another assistant prosecuting attorney, DART acts on confidential citizen reports, received through the DART telephone hotline, of

suspicious activity at drug houses. Once a target location is identified, fire and housing code inspections are conducted. The property owner is notified of any code violations, which, if not corrected, can result in the closing of the building.

■ **Mobile crime watch coordinator.** COMBAT provides the part-time salary of a citizen anti-crime coordinator, a resident who organizes block-level crime watch groups and relays information to the police and prosecutor staff.

■ **Neighborhood mobilizer.** Project NeighborHOOD, a COMBAT grantee since March 1992, assigns a trained mobilizer to serve as the link between drug-using individuals and drug treatment providers; the project provides counseling and case management services to those who need treatment.

These members of the CAN team, plus others not supported through COMBAT, meet once a week to identify target locations and plan strategies. Monthly meetings are held separately with the landlords association and with residents. In its first year of operation (March 1994–March 1995), the CAN team identified 64 targets and successfully acted on 45 of these, including 37 closings of drug houses.

“Jail Dangerous Criminals and Drug Dealers”

COMBAT's first objective has a traditional law enforcement focus, emphasizing police investigations, prosecution, and jail.

Police investigations. The \$3 million in COMBAT funds earmarked for police investigations are divided equally between the Kansas City Police Department (KCPD) and the

Eastern Jackson County Drug Enforcement Task Force. In December 1990, KCPD created 30 new positions with its allocation. COMBAT now supports 33 positions in the department, including 27 law enforcement personnel and 6 civilians. These law enforcement personnel comprise 27 out of a total of 267 positions in the Narcotics and Vice Division, most of whom are assigned to the Street Narcotics Unit (SNU), which handles the investigation of small-scale street-level drug operations. The others are

assigned to the Drug Enforcement Unit (DEU), which handles mid- and upper-level drug dealers. In addition to supporting these police personnel costs, COMBAT funds have been used by KCPD to purchase crime lab equipment and a drug dog used by DEU in interdiction activity at airport terminals and bus and rail stations.

Half of COMBAT funds earmarked for police investigations goes to the Eastern Jackson County Drug Enforcement Task Force, which includes

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the police departments of the county's 13 smaller cities and the sheriff's department. (See "Eastern Jackson County Drug Enforcement Task Force.") This is a trained multijurisdictional task force that pursues individuals and organizations engaged in the distribution of illicit drugs in the suburban and rural areas of the county.

Community policing. COMBAT funds also have enabled the KCPD to implement a successful community policing program in six selected neighborhoods of Kansas City. (See "Community Policing in the Old Northeast Neighborhood.") Community action network (CAN) centers have been established in these neighborhoods to bring law enforcement efforts and drug treatment services closer to residents and community groups. Each CAN center is staffed by two assigned police officers, city housing and fire code inspectors, and a neighborhood coordinator, who meet weekly to plan the CAN team's response to reported drug activity. The resulting increased activity in closing drug houses and arresting drug users and dealers has encouraged residents to become more vigilant, enabling police first to stabilize and then to reduce street-level drug trafficking and drug-related crime.

COMBAT funds also have supported the Jackson County Drug Abatement Response Team (DART). DART is a collaborative county-city-community effort to close drug houses. The DART team is composed of staff from the Jackson County prosecutor's office (including an assistant prosecutor and four support staff members), city

housing and fire code inspectors, members of the Kansas City Police Department, and law enforcement officers from county and municipal police agencies representing Eastern Jackson County.

Following a citizen report of suspected drug activity, the appropriate law enforcement agency first investigates the illegal operation. Housing and fire code inspections then are conducted at the property. If warranted, the property is vacated and posted as unsafe for human occupancy. The property owner is notified of any code violations and must bring the property up to code before it legally can be reoccupied. As a final remedy, DART can pursue public nuisance and forfeiture actions against a property owner.

Prosecution. The \$1.5 million in COMBAT funds allocated to prosecution enabled the creation, in November 1990, of a criminal prosecution unit that handles only drug cases. This staff unit, which includes 16 attorneys, 3 investigators, and 10 support staff, has additionally adopted a "neighborhood-based approach" to prosecution. Each assistant prosecuting attorney in the unit is responsible for cases in an assigned neighborhood, working with the neighborhood-assigned police officers, citizen crime watch groups, schools, churches, and other community organizations. By making use of information provided through these channels, prosecutors are able to prepare stronger cases and obtain more convictions. As residents have seen these results, they have become more involved in crime watch and crime reporting.

Circuit court. In April 1991, the circuit court used COMBAT funds to create "Docket O," a separate docket dedicated to drug cases. These funds have enabled the court to appoint private attorneys to represent drug defendants and have prevented the development of a case backlog. Since the 1990 inception of COMBAT, the number of drug and drug-related cases filed annually by the prosecutor's office has more than tripled. This increase would otherwise have overwhelmed the court, especially the Office of the Public Defender. Indigent defendants are represented by private members of the bar who receive appointments through a competitive selection process. COMBAT provides funding to support the salaries of these private attorneys.

Corrections. COMBAT funds earmarked for corrections (\$2.5 million annually) have accumulated in the program's trust fund while the county executive and county legislature have considered a strategy for expansion of the county's jail facilities, as mandated by Federal court order. The county legislature now has endorsed the concept of developing a new correctional facility. Plans call for construction of a 124-bed minimum-/medium-security annex adjacent to the current facility, which itself will be expanded by 70 beds. County general revenue and the earmarked COMBAT allocation will fund the estimated \$16 million construction cost.

Operations of the Jackson County Drug Court

In October 1993, Jackson County established its drug court program, funded by a \$1.5 million annual COMBAT grant. Nonviolent drug offenders can have their criminal charges dismissed by the drug court judge by successfully completing an intensive 12- to 18-month program of counseling and treatment.

Nonviolent defendants are offered the opportunity to participate in drug court on the same day as their arrest and arraignment. To be eligible, a defendant must have a substance abuse problem and generally no prior violent convictions. Those who volunteer for the program enter a 3-week assessment phase that includes meetings with a counselor and diversion manager, an addiction severity test, stress reduction sessions 5 times per week, and urinalysis tests at least 3 times per week.

Participants then enter a year-long treatment regimen. Activities include individual and group counseling, support group meetings, family counseling, and community service. Stress reduction sessions, urinalysis tests, and supervision continue on a less frequent basis, and individuals pay a small participant fee (\$5 minimum). In the latter stages, participants receive education, skills training, family support, transportation assistance, and referrals to other counseling services. Throughout this period, the

defendant appears periodically before the drug court judge for status hearings. The emphasis is on maintaining a supportive, nonadversarial approach that encourages success. Relapses, an expected and common occurrence, can lengthen the treatment period to 18 months or more. A system of graduated sanctions is used to promote compliance.

About 400 defendants currently participating in the program are at various stages of assessment, stabilization, and aftercare. Since the program's inception, about 80 defendants have graduated from drug court, with only one rearrest among them. On a monthly basis, 30 to 35 enter the program, 5 to 10 exit voluntarily, 15 to 20 must leave the program for noncompliance, and 5 to 10 successfully graduate (the compliance rate ranges from 50 to 70 percent).

The Jackson County Drug Court recently received a Justice Department enhancement grant to establish a day-report center that will offer client services in one location. This is expected to increase the client success rate by reducing transportation worries. In a separate development, the Justice Department's Director of Drug Court Programs now intends to use the Jackson County Drug Court as a model for localities that receive drug court planning grants.

funding for each provider upon reaplication and peer review. The COMBAT allocation to treatment programs includes not only the \$2.5 million earmarked funding but also \$750,000 in grant match funds. In addition to providing grant matches for direct services (such as to substance-abusing pregnant women), they also are given as research grants (on such issues as crack babies and families with drug-dependent mothers) and as training grants for substance abuse professionals and counselors.

Juvenile court. COMBAT funds have increased by about 10 percent the resources available to the Juvenile Division of Family Court (or "juvenile court").⁴ These funds have been used to support residential services, additional probation officers and other court staff, and drug testing (with referral to appropriate treatment) of all youths in detention.

With COMBAT funds, the juvenile court established a system of school-based deputy juvenile officers (DJOs) in the suburban public schools of Jackson County in April 1991. Ten schools, including junior and senior high schools, participate in the program. In each school, a probation officer becomes part of the school staff and spends 2 days a week providing onsite counseling for children on probation as well as conducting inservice teacher training, drug education to students, and parent education for caregivers of children in the schools. Five DJO positions are funded by COMBAT; each officer spends time every week onsite at two schools.

"Treat Nonviolent Offenders Who Honestly Want to Get Off Drugs"

On the other hand, to keep nonviolent drug offenders out of the correction systems, the following program objective aims to stop them from using illicit drugs.

Treatment programs. Currently 28 nonprofit treatment organizations receive COMBAT funding. The treatment funds are distributed through a competitive process administered by the COMBAT Commission. Requests for Proposals (RFPs) are issued, proposals are reviewed, and funding decisions are made on a 1-year renewable basis. In order to maintain a stable network of providers, the COMBAT Commission normally has renewed

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Drug court. Established in October 1993 with COMBAT funds, the Jackson County Drug Court has been cited as one of the most innovative and successful of approximately 40 drug court programs throughout the country.⁵ First-time offenders convicted of non-violent drug possession or a drug-related offense (e.g., shoplifting or burglary to support drug purchases) are offered the opportunity to participate in drug court as an alternative to incarceration. The aims of the program are to reduce drug usage, reserve jail space for more serious offenders, and promote public safety through reduced recidivism. After screening to ensure the participants will not represent a threat to public safety, they undergo a 12- to 18-month period of treatment, which includes counseling, stress reduction and rehabilitation sessions, community service, and periodic court appearances to monitor compliance.

For those who successfully complete the program, the charge is dismissed and removed from their criminal record. (See “Operations of the Jackson County Drug Court.”) The initiative is a collaborative effort that includes the prosecuting attorney’s office, circuit court, Missouri State Department of Corrections (Probation and Parole), Office of the Public Defender, the Defense Bar, and the Kansas City Police Department.

“Prevent Children from Ever Experimenting with Drugs”

The third objective focuses on preventing youths from ever becoming



Fifth-grade students with their police instructor in the D.A.R.E. program.

involved in the criminal justice system. COMBAT currently supports 33 community nonprofit organizations that operate drug prevention programs. These funds are distributed, like the treatment funds, through a competitive RFP process, which began in March 1991. Written proposals and, in some instances, oral presentations are made to the staff of the prosecutor’s office during the summer. Proposal evaluations are submitted to an 18-member community review panel. The panel’s recommendations go to the prosecutor, who in turn makes recommendations to the county legislature for the formal appropriation of contract funds. Grants are made on a 1-year renewable basis, with the fiscal year running from November 1 through October 31.

One of the prevention activities supported by COMBAT grant match funds is the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) program in the public schools. The Jackson County D.A.R.E. program includes all 12 county school districts. This federally

supported program, which has counterparts in school districts nationwide, involves inschool drug prevention training conducted by law enforcement officers in fifth-grade classrooms.

Early Efforts to Improve COMBAT

COMBAT has enjoyed strong and continued public support since its enactment, as evidenced by the 71 percent approval of the referendum question to renew the tax in November 1995. Nonetheless, by the time of this referendum to extend COMBAT funding, there was also a referendum to change the way COMBAT operated because of criticism the program had received. Early criticism of COMBAT involved several issues. For example, there were concerns that residents of Eastern Jackson County did not receive a commensurate share of tax-funded program services. Prosecutor McCaskill countered by noting the severity of drug problems in Kansas

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City—and the lack of resources to deal with them—explaining, “We were in triage in the urban core.” COMBAT staff also pointed out that funding for police investigations was divided equally between Kansas City and Eastern Jackson County, and nearly all proposals received from prevention or treatment providers in the eastern county area had been funded.

One ever-present risk to COMBAT, with its locally controlled revenue source and sunset provision, is that taxpayers might decide the initiative no longer deserves their continued support. For the prosecutor’s staff, this has placed a premium on ensuring program integrity and avoiding any appearance of misused funds.

A special advisory board to the Jackson County legislature was appointed by the legislature in February 1993 to review the program at the midpoint of its 7-year initial authorization. In its December 1993 report, the board commended COMBAT for implementing innovative programs and for maintaining fiscal integrity but criticized the program’s lack of a comprehensive communitywide anti-drug strategy. The prosecutor’s office took responsive action; a July 1995 COMBAT progress report to the county legislature included a clear statement of the program’s goals for law enforcement, treatment, and prevention and the program’s achievements in these areas.

The special advisory board and others also took issue with the role of the original Fiscal Commission, asserting that some commission members had

a conflict of interest in both deciding on the distribution of COMBAT funds and in receiving those same funds. Program staff responded by saying that the only discretion exercised by the Fiscal Commission was in grants to treatment providers; a potential conflict of interest thus existed only for the two commission members who represented health centers providing treatment. The special advisory board called for creation of a “community-based coalition” to formulate COMBAT’s strategy against substance abuse. The members of this coalition would include representatives from community grassroots organizations, schools, churches, youth organizations, and the bar association as well as from law enforcement officials and other government agency heads.

These concerns prompted the county legislature in September 1995 to authorize changes in the Fiscal Commission in conjunction with the November 1995 ballot question to renew the COMBAT sales tax for 7 years. The referendum question also called for appointment of a 10-member COMBAT Commission to replace the original Fiscal Commission. The new commission included seven voting members (representatives of treatment, prevention, and business organizations or agencies that neither receive nor seek COMBAT funding) and three ex-officio, nonvoting members (the prosecuting attorney, the KCPD chief, and the chairman of the Eastern Jackson County Drug Enforcement Task Force). This commission is now charged with the responsibility of making recommendations in the areas of prevention and treatment.

Monitoring Performance and Ensuring Accountability

The prosecuting attorney’s office has focused considerable attention over the past several years on developing data systems for assessing the needs of program clients and monitoring the effectiveness of program services.

Uniform assessment document.

For treatment providers, COMBAT has worked to develop an automated capability to assess the needs of each client served by a COMBAT-funded provider. For the network of treatment providers, this uniform assessment document was implemented in August 1995 after a 6-month pilot test. At the intake interview, treatment staff administer a 1-hour addiction severity questionnaire to each client. For one of every six clients, randomly selected, followup interviews will be conducted 6 and 12 months after intake. At each interview session, the addiction severity questionnaire will again be administered.

The data collected in this process will have many uses: to profile client populations, to refer clients more consistently to appropriate treatment options, to reduce duplication of effort as clients enter and reenter treatment services, to gauge the effectiveness of alternative treatment strategies, to hold providers accountable for their treatment choices, and to enable COMBAT to monitor grantee operations for contract renewal decisions. The treatment data base will comple-

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ment arrest data, the only previous source available for tracking clients.⁶

Uniform contracts. For prevention providers, COMBAT staff have worked to establish a common data collection system. Since January 1995, each COMBAT contract has required the collection of data on all clients served. The system provides a common basis for profiling the at-risk population, for identifying and targeting high-risk individuals, for coordinating prevention efforts carried out by private nonprofit providers and law enforcement agencies, and for monitoring program operations. The data base now includes more than 3,000 persons served by the network of COMBAT prevention providers.

Program evaluation. The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) is planning an evaluation of the COMBAT program, funded jointly by NIJ and a Kansas City partner, the Kauffman Foundation. An outside evaluator will be selected through a competitive RFP.

Signs of COMBAT Success

Although an objective evaluation of the program awaits completion of the NIJ/Kauffman Foundation study, and there is no empirical basis for attributing to COMBAT the recently observed downward trend in drug use and drug-related crime in Jackson County, the following descriptive statistics on COMBAT's first 5 years of operation are nonetheless noteworthy:

- More than 100,000 students have participated in drug-abuse prevention programs.



A team from the Street Narcotics Unit of the Kansas City Police Department conducts a raid on a drug house.

- Over 2,200 drug houses have been raided.
- Over 1,200 drug cases have been prosecuted through the work of the Eastern Jackson County Drug Enforcement Task Force.
- More than 700 drug-addicted individuals receive treatment each month.

A significant accomplishment of COMBAT has been the partnerships forged among agencies and across geographic boundaries. Jackson County Prosecuting Attorney Claire McCaskill refers to this as a process of “cross-pollination.” McCaskill credits COMBAT with focusing attention on community needs and “placing the prosecutor in the role of community leader.” The sales tax revenue has put the prosecutor in the enviable position of having new resources, although McCaskill sees this as a “double-edged sword”; with

the new funds has come the need to make difficult choices on which programs to fund and which not to fund. However, as McCaskill said following passage of the tax renewal question in November 1995, “Residents like the fact that the tax has local control. They don’t want to send all their money to Washington and hope that it comes back.”

COMBAT Administrator James Nunnally also notes the “cross-culturalization” that has been achieved with law enforcement agencies, the providers of treatment and prevention services, and neighborhood residents. By promoting a greater sensitivity and responsiveness to neighborhood concerns, COMBAT has served as a catalyst in bringing groups together that heretofore went about their work independently—and sometimes at cross purposes. Police would encourage citizens to report drug activity, but investigators and prosecutors

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were so backlogged, they could not act promptly on the information provided by residents. The information quickly lost its value in pursuing arrests or prosecutions, and residents became disillusioned with the police and the courts.

By increasing staff resources enough to remove the backlogs and by concentrating efforts on specific neighborhoods or other geographically defined areas, COMBAT has shown local residents that neighborhood vigilance and cooperation with the police and prosecutors can yield results. As “success breeds success,” residents have become even more inclined to report suspicious activity. As drug houses are closed and street trafficking is controlled, the incidence of drug activity and drug-related crime in the neighborhood has been stabilized as a necessary first step to improving the physical and economic conditions of the community.

Better coordination among prevention programs and treatment providers also has occurred through the bi-weekly meetings that COMBAT staff conduct with the organizations that are granted COMBAT moneys. Attendance at these meetings is monitored as a condition of receiving funds. Those providing prevention activities can better determine whether they are reaching the relevant “at-risk” populations; treatment providers can better make referrals of clients and can share information about promising treatment approaches.

Most importantly, COMBAT has succeeded in leveraging the internal resources of the community itself—the cooperation and vigilance of residents—just as the grant match funds have succeeded in leveraging external funds. The “empowerment” provided by community policing and neighborhood prosecution has paid large dividends in securing the continued support of local residents. As Reverend James Tindall, chairman of the Jackson County Legislature has commented, the ingredients most responsible for the program’s success have been the commitment and “caring attitude” that program staff, participating public agencies, and private providers have shown toward the community. Community residents demanded action and then taxed themselves to fund it. COMBAT has now delivered, protecting those at risk of using drugs, assisting nonviolent drug users in obtaining treatment, and bringing violent offenders and drug dealers to justice.

Notes

¹ “COMBAT: Progress Report to the Jackson County Legislature,” Office of the Prosecuting Attorney, Jackson County, Missouri, 17 July 1995:1.

² These examples of revenue sources earmarked for anti-drug programs were provided by Bob Anderson of the National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors and Lee Dixon of the Intergovernmental Health Policy Project at George Washington University.

³ James Nunnally, who became the COMBAT administrator in March 1993, had been a public health administrator for 27 years, most recently as chief administrator of Kansas City’s Samuel Rodgers Community Health Center. There he successfully implemented a drug treatment clinic and obtained funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for Project NeighborHOOD, a community-based outreach effort to bring substance abusers into treatment programs.

⁴ The family court handles cases in a wide range of domestic matters, including divorce, child support, custody, visitation, and domestic violence. The Juvenile Division (or juvenile court) handles delinquencies and offenses committed by minors, including illegal drug use.

⁵ One of the earliest drug courts was established in 1989 in Dade County (Miami), Florida. This initiative was described in another Program Focus prepared by Peter Finn and Andrea K. Newlyn, *Miami’s “Drug Court”: A Different Approach*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, June 1993. For a review of drug court programs throughout the country, see *Drug Courts: Information on a New Approach to Address Drug-Related Crime*, U.S. General Accounting Office, GAO/GGD-95-159BR, May 1995.

⁶ At the national level, the Health and Human Services Department’s Center for Substance Abuse Treatment has expressed interest in broader adoption of this tool, which was designed to generally be applicable under varying program services (e.g., battered women’s shelters or juvenile facilities) and varying client populations (e.g., by gender, race, and age).

About This Study

This document was written by Gregory Mills, senior associate at Abt Associates Inc. The findings and conclusions of the research reported here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

All photos courtesy of the Office of the Jackson County Prosecuting Attorney.

On the cover: A meeting of the Old Northeast neighborhood's CAN team, which includes the assistant prosecutor, uniformed police officers, and neighborhood crime watch leaders.

The National Institute of Justice is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office for Victims of Crime.

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Selected NIJ Publications About Drug Abuse and Community Policing

Listed below are some NIJ publications and videos related to issues of drug abuse and community policing. These products are free, except as indicated, and can be obtained from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service: telephone 800-851-3420, e-mail askncjrs@ncjrs.org, or write NCJRS, Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20849-6000.

These documents also can be downloaded through the NCJRS Bulletin Board System or at the NCJRS Anonymous FTP site in ASCII or graphic formats. They can be viewed online at the Justice Information Center World Wide Web site. Call NCJRS for more information.

Please note that when free publications are out of stock, they are available as photocopies or through interlibrary loan.

Drug Abuse

Blumstein, Alfred, Ph.D., *Youth Violence, Guns, and Illicit Drug Markets*, VHS videotape, 1995, NCJ 152235, U.S. \$19, Canada and other foreign countries \$24.

The Drug Court Movement, NIJ Update, 1995, FS 000093.

Drugs: Treating Offenders, NIJ Crime File Videotape, 1990, NCJ 123673, \$17 plus postage and handling.

Drugs: Youth Crime, NIJ Crime File Videotape, 1990, NCJ 123674, \$17 plus postage and handling.

Finn, Peter, and Andrea K. Newlyn, *Miami's "Drug Court": A Different Approach*, NIJ Program Focus, 1993, NCJ 142412.

Goldkamp, John, *Assessing the Impact of Dade County's Drug Court*, NIJ Research in Brief, 1993, NCJ 145302.

Hepburn, John R., Ph.D., C. Wayne Johnston, and Scott Rogers, *Do Drugs. Do Time: An Evaluation of the Maricopa County Demand Reduction Program*, NIJ Research in Brief, 1994, NCJ 149016.

Inciardi, James, Ph.D., *A Corrections-Based Continuum of Effective Drug Abuse Treatment*, VHS videotape, 1995, NCJ 152692, U.S. \$19, Canada and other foreign countries \$24.

Kennedy, David M., *Controlling the Drug Trade in Tampa, Florida*, NIJ Program Focus, 1993, NCJ 139963.

Lipton, Douglas S., *The Effectiveness of Treatment for Drug Abusers Under Criminal Justice Supervision*, NIJ Research Report, 1995, NCJ 157642.

Weingart, Saul N., Francis X. Hartmann, and David Osborne, *Case Studies of Community Anti-Drug Efforts*, NIJ Research in Brief, 1994, NCJ 149316.

Community Policing

Community Policing: Issues and Practices Around the World, 1993, NCJ 111428.

Community Policing Strategies, NIJ Research Preview, 1995, FS 000126.

Goldstein, Herman, *The New Policing: Confronting Complexity*, NIJ Research in Brief, 1993, NCJ 145157.

Managing Innovation in Policing: The Untapped Potential of the Middle Manager, NIJ Research Preview, 1995, FS 000130.

Rosenbaum, Dennis P., et al., *Community Responses to Drug Abuse: A Program Evaluation*, NIJ Research Report, 1994, NCJ 145945.

Roth, Jeffrey A., and Mark H. Moore, *Reducing Violent Crimes and Intentional Injuries*, NIJ Research in Brief, 1995, NCJ 156089.

Sadd, Susan, and Randolph M. Grinc, *Implementation Challenges in Community Policing: Innovative Neighborhood-Oriented Policing in Eight Cities*, NIJ Research in Brief, 1996, NCJ 157932.

Sherman, Lawrence W., Ph.D., *Reducing Gun Violence: Community Policing Against Gun Crime*, VHS videotape, 1995, NCJ 153730, U.S. \$19, Canada and other foreign countries \$24.

Skogan, Wesley, Ph.D., *Community Policing in Chicago, Fact or Fiction?*, VHS videotape, 1995, NCJ 153273, U.S. \$19, Canada and other foreign countries \$24. A summary of the presentation is available as a Research Preview, *Community Policing in Chicago: Year Two*, 1995, FS 000105.

Wycoff, Mary Ann, and Timothy N. Oettmeier, Ph.D., *Evaluating Patrol Officer Performance Under Community Policing: The Houston Experience*, NIJ Research Report, 1994, NCJ 142462.

Wycoff, Mary Ann, and Skogan, Wesley K., *Community Policing in Madison: Quality from the Inside Out*, NIJ Research Report, 1993, NCJ 144390.

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