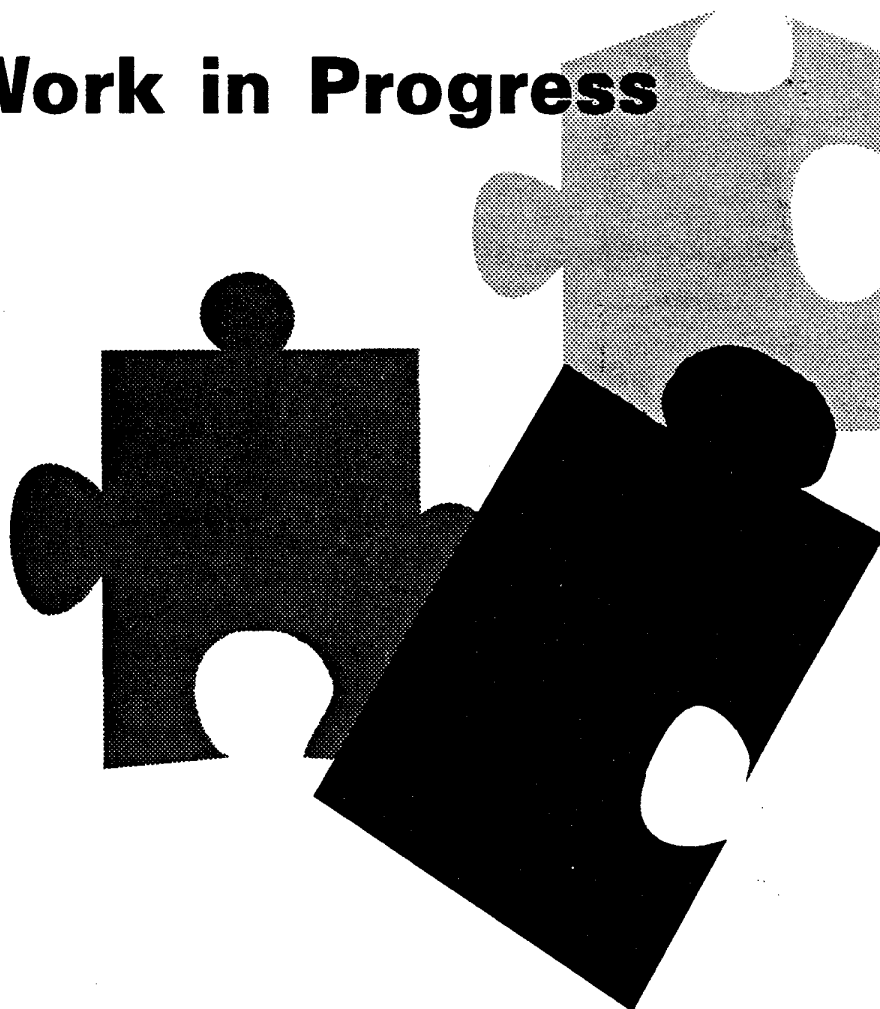




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# **Guide To A Criminal Justice System Assessment**

## **A Work in Progress**



TO: DIRECTOR  
DATE: 10/15/96

**ORIGINAL: NOT TO  
LEAVE BUILDING**

**Credits**

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# Foreword and Acknowledgments

**T**his document offers practical guidance for conducting a state or local system assessment. An assessment is a collaborative effort between a jurisdiction, NIC, and consultants to develop a shared understanding of how an existing sanctioning system works. It should provide a jurisdiction with a baseline picture or foundation from which to examine the current system, shape a common vision for the future, and pursue that vision.

A system assessment will be provided to each jurisdiction selected for participation in NIC's fiscal year 1997 Criminal Justice System Project. The project is an Institute-wide effort to help jurisdictions develop more purposeful, cost-effective, and coordinated systems of sanctions and punishments. The assessment is the first part of the multifaceted project.

This Guide pulls together the knowledge and insight of numerous individuals and organizations and draws from NIC's own experience with systems planning at state and local levels. It is a work in progress. We expect to revise and update it as we gain experience with the approach in jurisdictions. Users of the Guide are encouraged to send comments and suggestions that will help improve the Guide as a resource for practitioners. It is our hope that the Guide will be used by many other jurisdictions and projects that are seeking a framework for understanding the workings of a particular criminal justice system.

NIC gratefully acknowledges the contributions of many criminal justice professionals who willingly shared their experiences and wisdom over the past several years to shape this program. Much of the insight came from a series of focus groups—with sheriffs, state directors of corrections, pretrial service providers, parole board chairs, judges, probation and parole managers, jail administrators, and county commissioners. These meetings provided valuable input into the kinds of assistance that would be

helpful and confirmed the real need for more deliberate efforts in the design and use of a full range of correctional sanctions. The NIC team is also indebted to the three authors of this Guide and the other experts who contributed generously of their time and talent to develop this project.

**Morris L. Thigpen, Director  
National Institute of Corrections**

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NIC Criminal Justice System Project**

# Executive Summary

**T**he Criminal Justice System Project is a 1997 program initiative of the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) to assist state and local policy makers develop a more purposeful, cost effective and coordinated system of correctional sanctions and punishments. The objectives of the initiative are to work collaboratively with jurisdictions:

- To develop and implement informed policy regarding design, use, capacity, and cost of a coordinated system of sanctions.
- To establish baseline information about how the sanctioning system currently operates in each participating jurisdiction.
- To assist participating jurisdictions in developing strategies for involving criminal justice system decision makers and the broader community in understanding and creating innovative responses to crime and corrections in their communities.
- To help participating jurisdictions improve their system of sanctions by providing ongoing technical assistance and training.
- To evaluate the program initiative's effectiveness and each jurisdiction's progress towards their goals.

NIC expects to work over a several year period with up to five jurisdictions who have expressed interest in the Initiative and commitment to its goals and objectives. The Project provides support to selected jurisdictions in four complementary areas:

1. *A criminal justice system assessment.* An outside team of consultants, practitioners, and NIC staff will work collectively with each participating jurisdiction to conduct a complete on site analysis that describes their current criminal justice system.
2. *A wide range of ongoing technical assistance and training* will be available to participating jurisdictions to help them achieve their goals and objectives for managing an effective justice system.

3. *Limited funds* may be available for jurisdictions whose efforts require additional on site support.
4. *Monitoring and evaluation* will be conducted in each participating jurisdiction to clarify and document the results achieved from the program.

This handbook, *Guide to a Criminal Justice System Assessment*, is a detailed discussion of the first area of assistance listed above. The Guide defines what a system assessment and its multiple dimensions are, discusses the approach to the system assessment, and describes in detail how a system assessment can be conducted. The Guide is intended to provide specific direction and advice to all those who will be involved in a criminal justice system assessment. At the same time, however, the Guide stresses the importance of flexibility and the necessity to tailor the assessment to adequately address each participating jurisdiction's unique set of issues and to acknowledge its diverse history, culture, traditions, legal systems, and political environment. Those who will be most interested in the Guide include consultants and practitioners engaged in the conduct of system assessments, practitioners responsible for coordinating the on site work of the system assessment, and policy makers who own or operate the system being assessed.

A jurisdiction participating in a criminal justice system assessment can expect to take part in the following activities over the initial four or five month time period.

- Two, three-day site visits by an assessment team of experienced consultants, practitioners, and NIC staff to complete an analysis of existing criminal justice sanctions and resources.
- The planning and sponsorship of a full day community meeting of criminal justice officials, policy makers, community leaders, and citizens.
- The planning and conduct of a full day policy group meeting of criminal justice decision makers.

By the end of the system assessment process, a jurisdiction will have: (1) engaged in a policy analysis process, (2) articulated a vision for their criminal justice system, (3) developed preliminary goals and objectives for achieving their vision, (4) established or discussed the further development of a criminal justice policy group, (5) conducted an information meeting with the broader community, (6) participated in a thorough analysis of their existing criminal justice system, and (7) developed a better understanding of the demands on and use of their criminal justice sanctions and resources. Participating jurisdictions will receive two written reports—one at the conclusion of the first site visit and one at the conclusion of the second site visit—that, together, provide detailed baseline information and analysis about their current criminal justice system, and provide recommendations and suggested strategies for working toward their criminal justice system goals.

Jurisdictions will be eligible to receive assistance in any of the other three areas outlined above and beyond the system assessment phase of the Project. One focus of the system assessment will be to identify each jurisdiction's specific technical assistance and training needs. NIC anticipates being involved with participating jurisdictions beyond the assessment phase of the Project. It should be noted, however, that the crim-

inal justice system assessment has been designed as a stand-alone part of the Project regardless of the level of NIC's involvement beyond this initial phase. It is hoped that the synthesis of information compiled as a result of the criminal justice system assessment will be of lasting value to participating jurisdictions by providing them with much needed criminal justice system information and a blueprint for action for increasing the effectiveness of their system of sanctions.





## SECTION I

# A Criminal Justice System Assessment

**S**ection I of this Guide is an introduction to the concept of a Criminal Justice System Assessment. Its chapters explain NIC's involvement with this effort (Chapter 1) and how the Guide can be used (Chapter 2). Chapter 3 details the various components of a system assessment and Chapter 4 introduces the various dimensions of a criminal justice system that will be the focus of data collection and analysis. Chapter 5 concludes the Section with a discussion of the roles and responsibilities that can be anticipated for NIC, a participating jurisdiction, and the outside assessment team.

# Background

**T**his Guide has been prepared to support a 1997 initiative of the National Institute of Corrections, part of the U.S. Department of Justice. The primary purpose of the Guide is to assist jurisdictions participating in the Institute's Criminal Justice System Project as they take a system-wide look at their criminal sanctions. However, this Guide will also be useful for the reader who wants to know more about the NIC initiative, or who might be interested in undertaking a system assessment without the assistance of NIC.

To fulfill its legislatively-mandated mission to provide leadership and assistance responsive to the needs of corrections, NIC provides four types of services: 1) direct technical assistance, 2) training services, both at the NIC Academy and other sites, 3) Special Emphasis Programs, available in specific areas in which NIC has completed developmental work and has set up a multi-service approach to assisting agencies in successful policy development and program implementation, and 4) information services. These services are provided by NIC's four divisions: Community Corrections, Jails, Prisons, and the Academy; and by the contracted Information Center.

In 1993, NIC conducted Institute-wide strategic planning which resulted in the selection of three Institute-wide program goals. *Developing an Effective System of Sanctions* emerged as the top priority goal for a multi-year assistance effort. A defining feature of this goal area was the desire to address system-wide sanctioning needs within a jurisdiction—rather than to attempt to address jail issues separately from community corrections, or to address the issues inherent in administering a state correctional system separately from the issues of sanctions administered largely in the community. From the program development effort came several key values:

- the need to adopt a system-wide approach;
- the importance of gathering justice leadership into a policy team and developing their ability to work together effectively;

- the need to engage jurisdictions in a strategic planning process;
- improving data collection and analysis to improve decisionmaking and inform the policy development process;
- creating a continuum of graduated sanctioning options and tools for allocating resources and offenders to appropriate options;
- helping community corrections become truly community based, meaning that community corrections is clearly rooted in the community's values, demands and receives community support and involvement, and reflects the needs of the jurisdiction.

Supported by a project team drawn from all NIC divisions, the initiative commissioned nine focus groups, reflecting key stakeholders from all elements of the criminal justice system: state directors of corrections, state and local probation leadership, individuals representing county sheriff's offices, county commissioners, judges, representatives from large and small jails, individuals administering pretrial release programs, and others. Additional advice was gathered from the NIC Advisory Board, other units within the U.S. Department of Justice, experienced consultants, and state and national professional associations and organizations.

As a result, during 1997 the National Institute of Corrections will begin its Criminal Justice System Project. The program goal is to help criminal justice policy makers develop a more purposeful, cost-effective, and coordinated system of correctional sanctions and punishments.

This Guide describes and maps out the assessment phase of the program. It is designed primarily to provide guidance to the jurisdictions participating in the NIC program along with the assessment team that will go to each site.

## CHAPTER 2

# How to Use This Guide

### WHO IS THE GUIDE FOR?

**Jurisdictions participating in the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) “Criminal Justice System Project.”** A number of jurisdictions will be selected—through a competitive application process—to receive NIC assistance in developing a more coordinated, rational, and cost-effective system of correctional sanctions and punishments. The first step in that development, of course, is understanding the system as it currently operates—a system assessment. This Assessment Guide has been developed under the sponsorship of NIC to assist those jurisdictions and the NIC-supported outside assessment teams who will be working with them to complete a criminal justice system assessment. Key criminal justice policy makers, other elected and appointed officials, agency staff who might be involved in the assessment, community leaders, and members of the general public—anyone within such a jurisdiction with an interest in understanding and improving their criminal justice system is included in the audience for this guide.

**Outside assessment teams.** Part of the approach envisioned in this Assessment Guide is the involvement of an assessment team from outside a jurisdiction to carry on much of the work of the assessment in **collaboration with key stakeholders** in the jurisdiction. Members of the team are a key audience for this guide, as it outlines the major activities of the assessment team.

**Other jurisdictions interested in understanding and improving their system of correctional sanctions and punishments.** NIC resources will support the participation of only a limited number of jurisdictions in its national project. However, other jurisdictions may wish to undertake an assessment of their systems. This Assessment Guide is offered as a resource to these jurisdictions as well.

**Are you a criminal justice policy maker interested in initiating a system assessment?**

Section I will tell you what a system assessment is, what process it entails and what the outcomes might be. It will also give you some idea of the level of effort this will take across your system, and how you—as a member of a policy group—will participate in the process. The guide can help you decide whether you want to undertake a system assessment or not. If you decide to go forward, it will be a preview of what to expect. Section II will give you more details about the specific activities involved.

**Are you on the staff of an organization or agency in the system who may be expected to play a major coordinating role on site—i.e., to be an agency contact person?**

You will be particularly interested in *Section I, Chapter 5: Roles and Responsibilities*. This details what is expected of an “agency contact person” in the course of an assessment. You should read these sections carefully to understand what will be expected of you as an agency contact person should you decide to go forward. *Section II, The Criminal Justice System Assessment Process* outlines specific activities to expect. If you do play the role of agency contact person, this section will provide you with a practical guide to specific tasks. You will also find the materials in the *Section III, Tools and Resources*, to be helpful. These sample materials may assist you in notifying individuals in your jurisdiction about the assessment and various activities surrounding it.

**Are you a member of the assessment team?**

The entire body of the guide will be important for you to familiarize yourself with before going on site. But it is important to remember that this is a “guide” rather than a technical manual. Your experience and skills will be very important in “tailoring” your assessment activities to an individual jurisdiction’s situation. Use the guide as a frame of reference. Remember the goal, rather than the specific steps suggested to achieve that goal.

## WHAT’S IN THE GUIDE AND HOW IS IT ORGANIZED?

The Assessment Guide provides the following.

- **An explanation of what a system assessment is and why it is important.** *Section I, The Assessment*, is the basic “what”, “why” and “conceptual framework” of a system assessment.
- **A detailed description of the activities that an assessment team will complete and what the jurisdiction—including an agency contact person— will need to do in order to participate in the effort.** *Section II, The Process*, is the “how to” of a system assessment. It walks the reader through day to day timing, activities, and products.
- **Resource materials such as checklists and formats to be used during the assessment along with resource materials of a more general nature for those who want to do further reading or preparation for an assessment.** *Section III, Tools and Resources*, includes sample materials and tools that you may use, or may not use, as you participate in the assessment. They are sample letters, checklists, examples of meeting agendas, etc. that are designed to be practical aids and short-cuts. *Section III* also provides some additional reference materials and suggestions about other resources and where to find them, for the reader who will be more heavily involved in completing the assessment work.

## USING THE GUIDE

There are at least four ways in which to use this guide.

- **As an early decision tool.** Should you undertake a system assessment? This guide can give you information to help you make your decision. Will it address questions and issues of importance to you? Do you have the time, energy and interest necessary to go forward? What will you get out of it?
- **As a “how to” manual.** If you decide to go forward, you should use the guide as your manual of how to proceed. Depending on your specific role—see Chapter 6 following—it will help you identify specific tasks, expectations, and tools to assist you. The Guide provides materials to help you get focused on the big picture of your system in the section on “Dimensions.” It also provides nuts and bolts information about the information collection, interviewing, meeting, and writing that will be required.
- **As “work in progress.”** This guide is an attempt to pull together the experience and knowledge of numerous organizations and individuals about how best to understand the working of the criminal justice system in a particular jurisdiction—especially with respect to criminal sanctions. It builds upon extensive experience in conducting Local System Assessments and in conducting the national Intermediate Sanctions Project. Countless practitioners have been consulted. However, the Guide itself has not as yet been tested in practice. The National Institute of Corrections would be most appreciative of suggestions and comments by any readers who review and/or use this guide so that it can be updated, refined, and made into more of a resource for criminal justice practitioners.
- **As a reference.** The comprehensive approach outlined in this guide and implicit in NIC’s **Criminal Justice System Project** may be too ambitious or simply not appropriate for a particular jurisdiction. However, aspects of the Guide may be useful as you explore some part of your criminal justice system. Guidance about a policy team meeting or a community meeting might be helpful as jurisdictions address specific problems or issues, even if not undertaken in the context of a full system assessment. The authors hope that this document may serve as a reference and resource to a wide range of readers.



# Overview: What is a Criminal Justice System Assessment?

**A** great deal of attention is being focused upon the criminal justice system today, at both the state and local level. There are two primary reasons. First, fear of crime—and what to do about it—is a prominent issue. Second, the criminal justice system is growing dramatically—and apparently inexorably—claiming ever greater proportions of our public budgets. This is happening at a time when the public clamors for lower taxes and reductions in the size of government.

These two factors alone have made it critical for public officials and criminal justice decision makers, in particular, to understand precisely how their criminal justice systems—particularly those elements which we refer to as sanctioning systems—are working. What are we buying for the public dollar, how well is it working, what does it produce, how can we do a better job? In brief, this is a system assessment. It is the set of information gathering and analytic tasks that provide a clear understanding of what currently exists in our system of sanctioning, and begins to shape a vision for how it might look and work differently in the future.

In the past, reviews of criminal sanctions have often been cast as an examination of prison crowding. Many a legislative and gubernatorial study commission has been charged with examining the dynamics of the prison or jail population and how to manage that population within reasonable resource constraints. Today, we know that more than three quarters of all offenders serving criminal sentences are serving them in the community—either under probation, parole, or some other form of community corrections. This System

## **What is meant by the “system?”**

For purposes of conducting a criminal justice system assessment, the “system” is defined as “all aspects of criminal justice case processing that relate to punishment or sanctions from the time of arrest—including decisions about pre-trial custody—through the execution and completion of a sentence—whether that sentence is served in the community and/or in a correctional institution.”

## **What are criminal sanctions?**

Sanctions are the particular set of pre-dispositional and sentencing options available in a jurisdiction for both pretrial defendants and sentenced offenders.

## **A systemic approach then...**

involves an assessment or review of all the dimensions and factors within a jurisdiction that affect the demands on and use of criminal sanctions.



## **A CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM ASSESSMENT**

### **What?**

Information gathering, analysis, synthesis—to yield consensus about current practice.

### **How?**

Collaboratively, across traditional boundaries, from a system-wide perspective.

### **Why?**

To understand where we are, to shape a common vision of where we want to be.

Assessment Guide is based on the assumption that, in order to understand the system of sanctions in a state or community, it is essential to examine the full range of sanctions that are imposed upon offenders—including from restrictions of liberty prior to trial, to traditional or even unsupervised probation at the least restrictive end, and through incarceration in a secure correctional facility at the most restrictive end.

To develop such a picture, of course, is a much more complex task than simply examining prison or jail population. It involves understanding sanctions and programs administered and funded at all levels of government and in the private sector. It involves gathering information that may exist only in the individual experiences of decisionmakers. It may be best described by manual or automated information systems resident in independent entities, who have no way of communicating with one another. In short, the task is a complex and investigative one.

Lastly, a system assessment is not simply an information gathering and analytic endeavor. It is a collaborative effort to build a common understanding of the current state of practice. The problem with understanding a sanctioning system is not that no one knows about it. Many individuals know about it, it's just that no one person has the whole picture. It's like the story of the three blind men, each confronted by a different part of an elephant's anatomy and trying to come to some agreement as to what the obstacle in their path might be. One comes in contact with a tail and thinks it may be a snake. Another comes in contact with a leg and thinks it may be an exotic tree. A third comes in contact with a massive flank and thinks that it may be a wall. Unless the three men pool their experiences, it is unlikely that they will ever know what their obstacle is, or more importantly, how to deal with it.

We all come in contact with and experience different parts of the sanctioning system and see those parts from our own unique perspectives. Unless we pool our information about the system, we will never understand its true nature and dimensions, or how to move it in a more productive direction.

### **KEY POINT ►**

**In sum, a system assessment is a collaborative effort to synthesize individuals' experiences with the criminal justice system into a shared understanding of how things work now. This provides a common base upon which to evaluate the present, to shape a common vision for the future, and to make that vision a reality.**

## **ELEMENTS AND ACTIVITIES**

The system assessment approach described in this Guide involves several basic elements:

- a jurisdiction(s) in which some set of key policy makers are committed to understanding and shaping their system of sanctions to operate in a more collaborative and effective manner;

- a team of several outside consultants committed to working with the jurisdiction to complete the assessment; and
- a set of activities that emerge into a highly individualized information collection, analysis, and vision building exercise.

The assessment approach envisioned in this Guide includes several steps:

- **Getting Started (Weeks 1 to 6).** This step involves all of the activities required to prepare both the jurisdiction and the assessment team for its first site visit to the jurisdiction. It involves identifying an agency contact person within the jurisdiction, confirming the members of the assessment team, identifying the key individuals, organizations, and activities that will be involved in the first visit, and making sure all preparations are complete (see *Chapter 6: Before You Go On Site: The Initial Site Visit*).
- **Initial On Site Visit (Week 7).** This step involves roughly a three-day visit to the jurisdiction by the assessment team. The purpose of the visit is to develop a preliminary picture of how the current system is operating, to identify problematic issues, and to chart the course for the rest of the assessment. Activities will include some or all of the following: individual and group interviews, meetings with policy makers, review of information systems, review of archival data, visits to programs and facilities, and the conduct of a community meeting (see *Chapter 7: Going On Site: Conducting the Initial Site Visit*).
- **Initial System Assessment Report (Weeks 8 to 11).** During the weeks following the initial on site visit, the assessment team will synthesize their findings and generate a preliminary report that will pull together information gathered on site and identify information gaps that remain to be filled. It will also lay out the plans for the second site visit (see *Chapter 8: Preparing the Initial System Assessment Report*).
- **Second On Site Visit (Week 12).** This step involves a second two to three-day visit to the jurisdiction to gather information not gathered during the initial site visit, a discussion of the initial report, and the start of developing consensus among key policy makers about the current state of practice, problem areas, and directions for the future. It is the opportunity for the jurisdiction's policy makers to begin to develop a common understanding of the current state of affairs and a common vision of the future. Activities will include some or all of the following: interviews, a policy group meeting, a review of information systems and other sources of data, and visits to programs and facilities (see *Chapter 9: Preparing for Going On Site: The Second System Assessment Site Visit* and *Chapter 10: Going On Site: Conducting the Second System Assessment Site Visit*).
- **Second System Assessment Report (Weeks 13 to 15).** After the second on site visit, the assessment team will prepare a written report capturing the issues and discussions of the site visit as well as any agreements reached by the jurisdiction regarding their future efforts at shaping the system. It will incorporate the updated content of the Initial System Assessment Report and serve as a foundation for further efforts (see *Chapter 11: Completing the Second System Assessment Report*).
- **NIC Review of Findings (Weeks 16 to 20).** After the completion of the Second System Assessment Report, NIC will discuss findings with the jurisdiction as well as resources that will be available for technical assistance and training (see *Chapter 12: Reviewing System Assessment Findings with NIC*).

## ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL: TAILORED STRATEGIES FOR THE ASSESSMENT

The system assessment approach outlined in this document provides the “tool bag,” if you will, that a jurisdiction and its outside assessment team can use to construct the assessment approach most suitable for that jurisdiction. The goal is to provide the information, analysis, and common understanding of a criminal justice system to serve as a basis for building a vision of the future and how to get there.

This Assessment Guide offers a conceptual framework to direct the assessment, along with practical advice and tools that can be used to develop an individual assessment strategy. Some of the Guide is quite specific, other parts of the Guide are more general. Each jurisdiction and its assessment team will pick and choose those tools from the Guide that make sense, and fashion them into an effective assessment strategy. The conceptual framework of the approach has been outlined, for the most part, in earlier sections. The practical tools included in the sections which follow fall into several categories:

- **Key sources of information.** The Guide identifies likely sources of information that will contribute to a picture of the existing system. It identifies individuals to talk to, agencies and organizations to contact, location and condition of information systems to review, etc.
- **Information gathering.** These include interviews, review of documentary materials, review of management information systems and other archival sources, group interviews and discussions, on site and pre site information gathering strategies.
- **Site visit guidance.** Much of the work of the assessment will take place during the two site visits envisioned for the assessment team. *Section II: The Criminal Justice System Assessment Process* offers very specific suggestions about preparing for and organizing the site work. Keep in mind that these suggestions are a guide. The rule of thumb is that the assessment team, particularly the team leader, will negotiate a site assessment approach that makes sense in light of the jurisdiction’s needs and the experiences, skills, and personal styles of assessment team members.
- **Collaboration:** An essential aspect of this assessment approach is that it is a collaborative endeavor, at first shared by key policy makers from the site along with the outside assessment team. This collaboration will broaden as the assessment process takes place, and may ultimately include other human service systems and community involvement on a much broader scale. The Guide offers suggestions regarding working with a “policy group” as well as guidance about the use of a “community meeting.” The policy group is key to the assessment effort and may build upon the work of an existing group or may involve creation of a new group of some sort. The policy group provides the engine for the assessment and system change, the platform from which change is envisioned and implemented. A “community meeting” on the other hand, is a powerful tool when the agenda is to educate a larger group of community members as to the issues involved in an assessment, to raise the visibility of sanctioning issues in the community, and/or to create the support necessary beyond the criminal justice system to move forward on system change.

## SO WHOSE ASSESSMENT IS IT ANYWAY?

NIC will be entertaining applications from individual counties, groups of counties, or individual states to participate in this project and to receive assistance. Once selected for the project, participants will receive assistance during the assessment phase and follow-up technical assistance and training to implement system changes for up to three years. Individual sites will vary in size and complexity. For instance, the task of assessing the sanctioning system as it manifests itself in a single county is a much different task than that of assessing the system from a state-wide or multi-county perspective.

In light of these potential differences, this assessment approach makes several assumptions. They include:

- Regardless of whether a system assessment is being spearheaded by a single county, several counties, or a state, the assessment itself must include a comprehensive review of the role that all levels of government play in the sanctioning system. State sentencing statutes, funding, and the operation of state agencies certainly impact how sanctions manifest themselves at the local level. Alternatively, a state agency, sentencing commission, or legislative body interested in sponsoring an assessment must examine how sanctioning takes place at the level of the individual court, at the intersection of pretrial policies and programs, and usually at the use of resources in the community both for incarcerative (local jail) and non-incarcerative sanctions.
- Although the system assessment may be spearheaded by a particular agency or level of government, it is essential that other agencies and levels of government be committed to participating in the assessment, at least to the degree of providing information and participating in discussions. For instance, a state interested in conducting an assessment, should have the participation of representatives of county-level policy makers. Likewise, a county or counties should have the commitment of state-agency policy makers to support the effort by providing information and participation in a policy group.
- The assessment team will find that the scope of each individual assessment will depend to a great extent on whether it is a state-sponsored, county-sponsored, or multi-county sponsored effort. Clearly, where the state is sponsoring the assessment, and where one or more counties are participating in the assessment, preparation for site work and site work itself may be much more extensive than when an individual county is involved. For the most part, the specific guidance around sources of information, on site work, and collaborative strategies is written to reflect a single-jurisdictional focus. However, the assessment team should be alerted that part of tailoring this assessment to the individual case includes adapting it to reflect data collection and site work efforts in several counties, or with state executive branch agencies and legislative policy makers as well as local agencies and legislators in one or more counties.

## CHAPTER 4

# The Multiple Dimensions of a Criminal Justice System

**T**his chapter suggests a number of ways to look at a criminal justice system—a number of “dimensions” that may add to one’s understanding of the system. Why such an apparently complicated approach? The reason is fairly straightforward. The criminal justice system in the United States is complex and fragmented—partially by design and partially as a result of the nature and timing of its growth and development.

Part of the complexity and apparent cumbersome nature of the system is a result of the important **checks and balances** built into the system. For example, prosecution and adjudication of criminal cases involve an adversarial process for establishing guilt or innocence. The process is deliberately designed in this manner to balance community safety and just punishment along with the protection of individual rights.

Other aspects of the system’s complexity and fragmentation result from the very **nature of our system of government**. This system reserves various functions to various levels (federal, state, county, municipal) and branches (legislative, executive, judicial) of government. In fact, parts of the criminal justice system reside in all three branches and at every level of government.

Still other aspects of the system’s complexity grow from the fact that **the system tries to fulfill our ideals about justice** in the very untidy world of real life. This involves politics, human frailty, scarce resources, and a myriad of other conflicting and competing forces. Add to the system’s complexity and fragmentation its **sheer size, resource needs, and rate of growth**—a growth exacerbated by efforts to resolve certain social problems through the criminal justice system rather than through other human service systems (i.e., health). Factor in the further complication of an increasingly important private sector as provider of correctional services. Examine this against the backdrop of a public increasingly concerned about crime, and you have a true challenge for public policy makers intent on criminal justice system improvement. It is, however, a challenge that many feel must be met.

**KEY POINT ▶**

The "dimensions" offered in this chapter provide some "handles" for readers to grab onto as they try to better understand and shape the future of criminal justice systems in their communities. Hopefully, these "dimensions" will help build insight into our complex and growing criminal justice system.

## THE PRESENTING PROBLEM

Perhaps the most important dimension of a criminal justice system is what one might call the "presenting problem." What is the problem, issue, crisis, or impending disaster that has brought a jurisdiction to the realization that a system assessment might be helpful? What is pushing one or more of those involved in the system to come to the table? In some jurisdictions it may be a jail crowding crisis. In others it might be impending changes in sentencing legislation, reorganization of a major department, a high profile crime, or community concerns about drugs. It might be the loss of funds from a budget cut or even the opportunity to access new federal or state monies. Whatever this "presenting problem," it is a good place to start.

**KEY POINT ▶**

Perhaps the most important caution about beginning with a presenting problem is to be sure not to stop there. By definition, it is probably only one aspect of the criminal justice system. **The presenting problem may only be a "symptom" of much more complex issues at work.** And of course, since one overriding feature of this assessment approach is its attention to the whole "system," it will be important to look for what the presenting problem tells you about the system.

**Who to interview?**

Be sure to interview individuals spearheading the assessment initiative as well as any others who may not be terribly interested in the assessment but who have a perspective on the presenting problem. For a jail crowding crisis, for instance, be sure to interview those who are firmly committed to building a new jail and those firmly committed to not building a new jail. Be sure to interview those whose work affects the population—both obvious—the sheriff and/or jail administrator, booking staff, etc., and not so obvious—prosecutor, law enforcement, probation staff (regarding population held on violation warrants) etc., whether or not they are interested in an assessment. Be sure to interview individuals who can give you different perspectives on the problem. These may include private business groups, Chambers of Commerce, and those who may have other purposes in mind for the property or resources involved. Those who "pay the bills"—local legislators and citizens—should also be included. If sentencing legislation changes are impending, be sure to get both the state agencies perspective as well as the local agencies who may be expected to accommodate these changes. Sentencing commission, legislative sponsor/staff, and state professional associations affected by the change would be important sources of perspective here.

**What to review?**

Newspaper accounts of the problem. Criminal justice coordinating bodies meeting minutes. Studies or reports of the issue, especially if any committees or commissions have studied the problem.

**What to ask?**

How would you describe or define the "presenting problem?" Why is it a problem? What individuals have the power/authority/resources to be involved in a solution? What factors have led to the situation? How long has it been a problem? What are the competing interests of different system stakeholders regarding the problem?

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF DIFFERENT LEVELS, BRANCHES AND AGENCIES OF GOVERNMENT**

There is enormous variety from state to state in the way in which the typical functions of a sanctioning system are distributed among branches and levels of government. **A basic understanding of the intergovernmental dimension that should emerge from the system assessment is how criminal justice sanctioning functions are distributed among branches and levels of government.** What functions does the state perform, what functions does a special-purpose multi-county structure perform (e.g., judicial district community corrections agencies in Iowa), what functions are performed by agencies of county and municipal governments? And at each level, how are things distributed among branches? What motivates these different levels and branches of government on the issue?

### **◀ KEY POINT**

At the state executive branch level, typical actors include a commissioner of a department of corrections, the Attorney General, an executive director of a department of community corrections, probation and parole officers, officials in the Governor's Office of Criminal Justice, and the like. Is there a sentencing commission or a state-wide community corrections board that sets policy or makes decisions about distribution of resources? Some typical state functions include administration of the prison system, provision of probation and parole supervision, and funding of community corrections programs. In some states, there are hybrid versions of this with counties being able to opt in or out of state-provided community sanctions. Ohio, Oregon, and Minnesota are examples of these hybrid situations. And conversely, some states are now beginning to build and operate "state jails" which is a departure from past practice where jails were almost exclusively a county function.

Of course, executive functions are not alone at the state level. State courts are often involved in the administration of probation services and community punishments (as they are in Arizona) on an operational and a funding level. And of course, the rotation of judges around the state, and the judicial district organization will have significant impact upon sentencing practice locally as well as the distribution of resources.

Legislative responsibilities are also important to understand and document. While in the past legislatures have often limited themselves to the drafting of broad, indeterminate sentencing statutes, they are now in the business of setting more specific mandatory minimum sentences, authorizing sentencing guidelines, mandating what kinds of offenders are eligible for what types of sanctions, and investigating the impact of prison population on state resources. They are also drafting legislation on what services may or will be purchased from the private sector and what types of services will be purchased at the county vs. the state level. Understanding the types of activities and roles that legislators have set out for themselves, as well as understanding the impact that role has had in the past, will be important.

At the county level, distribution of functions may also be quite complex. The court may provide probation services at the county level, while the state funds community corrections programs overseen by a county-level advisory board. With only a few

exceptions, counties fund and operate some type of detention and secure custody facilities for pretrial and sentenced offenders, and may administer pre-release programs parallel to probation services funded and administered at a different level of government. Judges may be elected at the county level. And county legislative bodies are involved in funding and administering various sanctions.

Municipal government is also often involved in the sanctioning system; in some cases, through the provision of jail facilities and by providing their own law enforcement.

**Who to interview?**

Policy makers in all agencies involved in sanctioning activities. Judges, prosecutors, corrections officials, community corrections personnel, probation officers, private service providers; sentencing commission members and staff, legislators involved in key criminal justice legislation along with committee staff responsible for criminal justice and budgetary areas.

**What to review?**

Commission reports, sentencing guidelines, budgets, newspaper articles, annual reports, litigation/case law, relevant facility inspection reports.

**What to ask?**

How big or small is the state (geography, size, population)? What is the country structure and how many counties are there? Will this assessment be meaningful for the whole state or just to a single county? What agencies have responsibility for what elements of the sanctioning system and how do they relate to each other. Begin with basic issues of who provides probation supervision, who runs prisons and jails, how are other community sanctions administered.

## FUNDING

Closely related to the issue—Who is responsible for what?—is the question—Who pays for what? As prison populations have grown dramatically, states have sought to relieve some of the demand for expensive prison beds by encouraging counties and cities to maintain some offenders in the community in relatively less costly sanctions. By subsidizing this effort through community corrections acts and jail population reduction initiatives, some states have attempted to reduce their costs while simultaneously sharing costs with local government.

In other jurisdictions the fiscal dynamics are less well-planned. Often offenders who have been sentenced to state correctional institutions spend significant time in county jails awaiting transport to state facilities. Often there is no financial remuneration to the county, which is left with significantly fewer jail beds available for offenders awaiting trial or ordered to serve sentences in the jail. Another variation on this scenario occurs when probation violators claim significant jail space while awaiting disposition of their cases. When probation is administered by a state agency, this creates yet another opportunity for tension regarding funding between state and local government.



The dynamics of these relationships are played out every day in the newspapers of the nation as sheriffs sue states for housing state offenders in their jails, and as some states pass legislation capping taxes and expenditures for certain types of services. This dynamic will become even more critical to understand as responsibility for more and more functions (e.g., welfare, health care funding, etc.) fall into **competition** at the state government level.

**An important understanding to emerge from the system assessment, then, is how funding is provided for various elements of sanctioning, the level of such funding, whether the funding is likely to increase or decrease, and what conflicts and changes exist or are likely in the near future.** An important aspect of the financial dimension is to understand the incentives and disincentives (intended or not) it creates for the use of particular sanctions especially if capacity is created through legislative initiative.

◀ **KEY POINT**

**Who to interview?**

Certainly, every agency in which you conduct interviews regarding the distribution of criminal justice responsibilities will have some staff that is knowledgeable about their own funding as well as any funding they may provide to others. Top management will have the big picture and can provide key insights. Line staff will know what the identified funding streams do and do not allow them to do with, for, and to the offender. Administrative staff charged with preparing the budgets may also have more detailed insights. In addition, legislative fiscal analysts and other legislative staff—state and county—should be interviewed. Don't forget state and local legislators as well. Ultimately the state legislature (for state-funded initiatives), the county board or commission (for county-funded initiatives), and the city council (for municipal initiatives) pay the bills, and tend to budgetary areas. At the state level, the governor's budget staff will be key.

**What to review?**

Budgets, legislative study commission reports, analyses of funding legislation, cost per day or cost per offender where available, annual reports.

**What to ask?**

What is the history of funding streams in the state? Is there a community corrections act? For how long? At what level has it been funded and at what level of consistency? Who are the budget officers? Does the Governor prepare a budget? Is the legislature responsible? Who makes the budget recommendations each year and where does the money come from? What is the solvency of the state? Of localities? Do locals have input to state budgets? What can/cannot be paid for with state/local revenues? Is there a fiscal crisis? Are there any in-state economic think tanks that are studying state/local financing issues as they relate to corrections. Are there any private sources of funding for correctional initiatives in the state?

## **ROLE OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN SANCTIONING**

Closely related to intergovernmental and funding issues, of course, is the growing role of the private sector in sanctioning. While the private sector has, for many years, been involved in providing treatment and halfway house-type services, it is now represented in almost every aspect of the sanctioning system: Pretrial services, urine screening, electronic monitoring, probation services, offender assessments, residential programming, secure detention, and prisons are all being operated in the private sector, and funded through contract and fee-for-service arrangements. A true picture of what

sanctions are available, and what forces shape their use and success would not be possible without examining private sector involvement.

**KEY POINT ►**

**An important understanding that should emerge from the system assessment on the public/private dimension is the nature and degree of private sector involvement.** What proportion of what types of sanctions are provided by the private and public sectors? How does this distribution of sanctioning resources impact availability, targeting, funding, use, and offender performance? Does the availability of funding for purchase of specific types of services/sanctions create incentives for various kinds of sanctions over others? What is the impact of these incentives? What motivation may be driving or impeding private sector (i.e. restrictions on public sector employees, championing of a key political leader, etc.)?

**Who to interview?**

Staff in agencies that contract with private providers for correctional services—both staff that are involved in managing such contracts, but also policy makers who have responsibility for shaping the role that services providers play in the system. Community corrections board members who fund private agencies to provide services in the community. Providers themselves. Associations of private care providers. Union representatives.

**What to review?**

Standards and audit requirements for private care providers. Example statements of work that explain exactly what typical providers are expected to deliver.

**What to ask?**

What are the criteria for contracting with private providers? What do the contracts look like? What are the requirements? How accountable is the private sector to the state/local agency providing the funding? How responsive are private providers to efforts of policymakers to target appropriate offenders to particular sanctions? Is funding provided to support particular slots, or do private providers only receive funding when the slots are filled? Are contracts activity or outcome based?

## **DISTRIBUTION OF DISCRETION THROUGHOUT THE SYSTEM**

Enormous discretion is laced throughout the sanctioning system from deciding the nature of the charge and who should be in custody awaiting disposition of charges to the timing of release from prison in those jurisdictions that have parole release. Again, there is great variation from state to state in the distribution of such discretion. Nationwide, there has been a growing trend to “structure” discretion through sentencing and parole guidelines, through mandatory minimum sentences, etc. However, great variety still remains in the degree and distribution of discretion from one state to the next. **Understanding the distribution of discretion in a jurisdiction is a key part of understanding a sanctioning system.**

**KEY POINT ►**

At the broadest level, it is important to understand the sentencing statutes in terms of how discretion is assigned. This includes the typical options available to the prosecutor in charging or dismissing, the options available to a judge given particular charges and guidelines, the discretion of paroling authorities and departments of corrections in

the timing of release and the use of such pre-release activities as furlough and halfway house placements. It is important to understand how much discretion is allowed in sentencing offenders to state facilities as opposed to local sanctions and what the determining factors are. For locally-sentenced offenders, it is important to understand where decisions regarding pretrial release, length of stay in jail, and pre-release programming are made.

Are there court decisions or consent decrees that affect how local facilities can be used, or what population may be housed in a particular facility? How does discretion about probation or parole violations play out and affect the availability of resources for all offenders? Even such factors as who sets the court calendar affects the discretion available to individual system actors. Somewhat more detail may be required to understand the distribution of discretion among prosecutors, jail staff, pretrial service providers, probation officers, sentencing judges, corrections officials, paroling authorities, and others. Even the private sector has its own discretion within the criminal justice system: offenders are either accepted or not into programs; retained or not; assessed in terms of risk and needs, and sanctioned or not for violating program rules of privately-operated programs.

In the interplay between the prosecutor and sentencing judge, such issues as who is responsible for the calendar, what information is available at what stage in the sentencing process, and who is involved with various presentence assessments of offenders will influence the distribution of discretion.

**Who to interview?**

Policy makers in all agencies involved in sanctioning activities. Judges, prosecutors, corrections officials, community corrections personnel, probation officers, private service providers; sentencing commission members and staff; legislators—state and local—involved in key criminal justice legislation along with committee staff responsible for criminal justice and budgetary areas.

**What to review?**

Distribution of discretion is often hard to decipher from formal documents. Certainly sentencing guidelines, sentencing statutes generally, and criteria for admission to various sanctions as expressed in agency policies, legislative rules, etc. are relevant.

**What to ask?**

What discretion does the individual (interviewee) have with respect to determining a sentence or sanction? Who else has significant impact upon that determination, how and why? How often are the recommendations in a presentence investigation followed by the judge? What impact does plea bargaining have upon the sentence? What would a map of the sentencing process look like if you were to draw it as a flow chart, identifying key decisionmakers, alternative outcomes?

## A CONTINUUM OF SANCTIONS

One of the most basic elements of a system assessment is assembling an integrated understanding of what sanctions are currently available in a jurisdiction. Criminal sanctions will be administered and funded by varying levels of government

◀ KEY POINT

and by both the public and private sector. Some will overlap, as is the case with offenders who are on probation and also in residential facilities of some sort, or in a day reporting center or under a requirement to perform community service. The "sanctions matrix" attached in the *Section III* should be used to array information about the jurisdiction's continuum of sanctions.

Sources of information about sanctions will vary, but your investigation should be guided by the information collected as you examine the intergovernmental and public/private dimensions of the system. All of those agencies who administer or fund sanctions will be sources of information about existing sanctions. Another thing to remember is that sanctions may be punitive in nature, controlling in nature, or rehabilitative in nature. Beds in jails or prisons are certainly sanctions that you want to record and include, however, treatment slots, educational programming slots, and community service slots are also of interest. The *Section III* provides an example of how one community documented its continuum of sanctions. This information may be formatted differently but would certainly include information about each sanction and a description of what it is, along with information on the number of slots available, average length of stay, per day costs, and method of access.

#### **Who to interview?**

Anyone who knows what's available in the community that is or could be used as a sanction. Obvious sources include the sheriff or jail administrator to provide information on jail beds as well as jail-based programs such as pre-release programs, work-release, community service, etc. Probation agencies are another obvious source of information regarding their supervision function, special programs that they may administer in-house or contract for. Drug, alcohol, sex offender, and mental health treatment providers who accept—or might accept—criminal justice clients should be included. Also agencies that provide job readiness, job training, lifeskills, job development, and the like.

#### **What to review?**

Annual reports, budget documents, service directories, etc. will be helpful. This information is less likely to be published or assembled in useable form than some other topic areas. You may have to dig into unpublished, internal documents of agencies to get a sense of what is available for how many offenders over what period of time.

#### **What to ask?**

What services/sanctions are available for what types of offenders? How many offenders can be accommodated in each for what period of time? What is the likelihood that these resources will continue to be available? For what period of time?

## **POPULATION**

What should follow immediately from a description of the continuum of sanctions is documentation of the volume and, where possible, the characteristics of offenders moving through each of these sanctions. Although related, the population dimension is a different way of looking at the system. Certain types of sanctions—such as probation or fees/fines—do not have a clear capacity. Hence, it is important to examine the numbers and characteristics of offenders moving through the system in addition to the existing program capacity. **The goal here is not simply to know the numbers of**

#### **KEY POINT ►**

**offenders who move through the system or receive sanctions as a result of prosecution and adjudication; it is also to understand what types of offenders are receiving what types of sanctions.** Ultimately, an important goal of the system of sanctions is to assure that sanctioning resources are allocated most appropriately to assure that sanctioning goals are achieved. For instance, are our expensive and secure prison and jail beds being used for the types of offenders that the community agree they should be used for? Alternatively, are community sanctions being used for appropriate offenders? The only way to be able to answer such questions is to know what offenders are receiving what sanctions.

**Who to interview?**

Staff of any agencies involved in the sanctioning process that have responsibility for data collection, maintenance, generation of reports, research, statistical analysis, etc. Booking staff at the jail, MIS staff within the court, pretrial services, probation, etc.

**What to review?**

Jail booking records, court automated data systems if available, dockets, sentencing records, presentence investigations.

**What to ask?**

Profiling information includes three basic categories of data: offense characteristics (statutory category of offense, statutory penalty constraints, relevant victim information, indicators of harm done including use of weapon, physical injury, property loss); offender characteristics (e.g., gender, race, age, chemical/alcohol dependence, criminal record, criminal justice status at time of offense, employment, education, mental health and treatment); and case processing information (initial charges and plea negotiations, presentence investigation report, pretrial detention, nature of sentence imposed including conditions of probation, direct sentence to intermediate sanctions, length of incarceration).

## **THE POLICY ENVIRONMENT**

The concept of sentencing or sanctioning "policy" at an operational level is a relatively recent one to gain acceptance in the criminal justice system. Before the advent of sentencing guidelines in the 1970's and 1980's, sentencing was presumed to be wholly an individual activity undertaken by individual judges, and based on the merits of a particular case. As the desire to structure discretion and exercise some overall management of sanctioning systems became evident, states began adopting sentencing guidelines schemes. It is even more recently, however, that the concept of "policy" to guide sentencing at the local level has emerged. Even within the context of structured sentencing guidelines that channel some offenders to state prisons and others to local sanctions, determining what range of local sanctions should exist and how are they appropriately used for individual offenders is usually within the local jurisdiction's authority. However, no individual decisionmaker is equipped to develop policy that will shape the entire system. Therefore, key policy makers have found that they must come together as peers in a forum where matters of policy can be engaged and resolved. Typically these forums take the form of criminal justice coordinating councils, intermediate sanctions policy groups, community corrections advisory boards, or the like.

**KEY POINT ►**

**This aspect of the system assessment aims to gauge the readiness that a jurisdiction exhibits to engage in a policy process.** Are ingredients in place that will allow the policymaking process to go forward? Some of these include the presence of key policy makers who are committed to engaging in a policy process and willing to put the weight of their positions and the resources of their individual organizations behind such an effort. This is perhaps the most important element. Other factors, however, such as the willingness of the criminal justice community to come together; the existence of staff resources to support the effort; good information to inform decisions (or the willingness to make the effort to assemble the information); and some external pressures that make a system assessment necessary (like overcrowding in prisons or jails or new legislation mandating handling of certain offenders at the local level) are also indicators of a jurisdiction's readiness to engage in a policy process.

The political environment can also be an important factor to consider in assessing the readiness of a jurisdiction to engage the policy making process. Does the political arena allow for reasoned debate about issues or are the issues so visible and volatile as to be difficult to engage?

**Who to interview?**

Virtually everyone that you interview will provide some clue as to the readiness of the jurisdiction to engage a policy making process.

**What to review?**

News accounts of high profile justice related stories; reviews of pending litigation; minutes of criminal justice coordinating bodies' meetings.

**What to ask?**

What pressures exist for the jurisdiction to engage the policy making process? Is there leadership present in the community on this issue? Who or where is it? How actively is the bench involved? What is happening in the jurisdiction that might distract policy makers from this effort? Is there some base of support to provide staff, resources, etc. to the effort? If so, where is it? Is there a tradition for this kind of collaborative endeavor in the jurisdiction? Can willing participants identify the specific interests which might bring less interested participants (e.g. prosecutors, public defenders, etc.) to the table?

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

**KEY POINT ►**

**The historical dimension of the system assessment seeks to review where a jurisdiction has been in regard to sanctioning.** This is a somewhat difficult judgment to make, but necessary to completing the system assessment. What are the traditions in the jurisdiction regarding the use of sanctions? Is there a tradition of heavy use of incarceration, for instance? Is there an active nonprofit community that has succeeded in developing resources for offenders in the community? Are there traditions of coordination among the criminal justice system? For instance, some jurisdictions have a long tradition of cross-system interagency coordinating mechanisms and the involvement of citizens in criminal justice policy discussions, while others may not. In some jurisdictions there are recent, critical events which shape the debate about criminal jus-

tice issues. It is critical that those undertaking a criminal justice system assessment identify and understand how those events have shaped the system. Whatever the past has been, it will have an influence on the current state of the sanctioning system.

**Who to interview?**

Judges, prosecutors, sentencing commission, county commissioners, community corrections policy makers, long-time faculty at in-state law schools and university departments of public policy/criminal justice/social sciences, powerful community leaders sitting on boards of directors of private, not-for-profit organizations.

**What to review?**

Legislative commission reports, newspaper archives, criminal justice coordinating body reports/minutes.

**What to ask?**

Is there a history of litigation in the state? Have there been any lawsuits filed—what is their status and what are the issues involved? How does the current system have its roots in prior events (e.g., changes in sentencing laws, changes in prison/jail population, administration changes, traditions around community involvement)?

## USE AND AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION

One key factor influencing a jurisdiction's ability to engage in a successful system assessment is the information resources at its disposal. For some systems where information is still found mostly in manual systems, or in rudimentary automated systems that do not communicate well with one another, the assessment task will involve considerable difficulty and will suggest various accommodation strategies to overcome information limitations. On the other hand, where information systems provide good management data and a broad overview of available sanctions and offenders, the assessment task may be less difficult and will involve different strategies for analysis. **It will be important to understand just what the information situation is in order to complete a system assessment.**

◀ KEY POINT

**Who to interview?**

Court clerk, booking staff at the jail, research staff within departments of corrections, information system managers criminal justice coordinators.

**What to review?**

Regular reports, information system documentation and codebooks, booking system, court files.

**What to ask?**

Do agencies share or are they willing to share information. What information is available from each source, how is it kept, where is it? Automated or not? What individuals know best about the information system? How can one get a picture of who is moving through the system into what sanctions, and for what period of time?

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Another key dimension of the criminal justice system in any jurisdiction is the degree to which the community is involved or allowed to be involved in its operation and determining its overall direction. Lack of community involvement and support can create tension, mistrust, and difficulty. Similarly, positive community involvement can be an asset and source of resources and energy especially when it comes time to wheather the "case gone bad." **At a minimum, each jurisdiction will want to examine this aspect of their criminal justice system and then to determine if and how changes in community involvement might play a part in their vision for the future of the criminal justice system.**

### KEY POINT ►

#### **Who to interview?**

Virtually everyone interviewed will provide some insight on this. You will specifically want to reach out to identify community groups involved in the system. Service organizations, business organizations, churches, neighborhood watch groups, etc. provide a source of insight.

#### **What to review?**

Members on boards of directors and advisory boards to public agencies, community corrections plans, newspaper articles.

#### **What to ask?**

To what degree is the community involved in any aspect of the criminal justice system? What is the community attitude about intermediate sanctions? Has any public opinion polling been conducted? If so, what were the results? Who are the most vocal and active members of the community on these topics?



## CHAPTER 5

# Roles and Responsibilities

### THE NIC PROGRAM MANAGER

**N**IC has designated a Program Manager from among its staff. This individual will be responsible for overseeing a selection of sites to participate in the project, selection of assessment team members, and will be the overall coordinator and liaison for NIC with all of those jurisdictions and teams involved in the effort. The Program Manager will also have the responsibility of working with an outside evaluator to design and implement an impact evaluation of the entire **Criminal Justice System Project**, including the Criminal Justice System Assessment.

### THE ASSESSMENT TEAM

Each system assessment team will typically be composed of up to four members—three consultants and practitioners who bring complementary skills and expertise to the team and one staff person from the National Institute of Corrections. The size of the assessment team and particular expertise of its members will vary depending on the size and complexity of the jurisdiction where the system assessment will be conducted and the interests and presenting problem(s) of the jurisdiction. Consultants who are selected to participate on an assessment team will come from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. Generally speaking, assessment team members will:

- be experienced in the conduct of assessments;
- be knowledgeable about how the criminal justice system operates;
- have a practical understanding of the cultural and structural dynamics which can affect a jurisdiction's criminal justice system; and
- have an appreciation for the political environment in which the criminal justice system exists.

In all cases, it is anticipated that at least one assessment team member will have particular skills in the design and/or use of information systems to support criminal justice policy makers.

**KEY POINT ►**

**The primary role of the assessment team is to facilitate an assessment process in a given jurisdiction in order to appraise that jurisdiction's use of sanctions and their readiness or capacity to make needed changes in their criminal justice system.** The team will also be responsible for giving the jurisdiction feedback, consultation, and advice about how their current system is operating and assist them in coming to agreement on actions they can take to help them achieve their goals.

Assessment team members are expected to work closely together when conducting a system assessment and complete their assignments effectively and efficiently. All team members, including the NIC staff person, will contribute equally to the effort and share responsibility for different parts of the assessment process. As appropriate, the NIC staff person will also represent the interests of the Institute to the jurisdiction. Specifically—through a process of interviews, observations, meetings, and analyses—the assessment team will perform the following tasks.

- Review the overall functioning of the criminal justice system.
- Evaluate the use of pretrial options, diversion from adjudication and incarcerative and non-incarcerative criminal sanctions.
- Assist the jurisdiction in articulating its goals for the criminal justice system and the outcomes they want to achieve at a facilitated community meeting and policy group meeting.
- Evaluate the capacity of the jurisdiction to make changes, including a review of leadership, state and local relations, and available resources.
- Address each of the dimensions discussed in *Section 1, Chapter 4: the Multiple Dimensions of a Criminal Justice System*.
- Provide feedback, observations, and recommendations via the production of two reports.

Lastly, the assessment team will work collaboratively with the host site. It is important that the jurisdiction play an active role in the assessment process. Their level of participation will be one indication of how important they feel the effort is, how invested they are in the assessment's outcomes, or how committed they are to implementing changes. In this way, the relationship between the assessment team and the jurisdiction is really a collaboration.

## **THE ASSESSMENT TEAM LEADER**

One member of the assessment team will act as the team leader. The Assessment Team Leader will have strong organizational and facilitation skills and be responsible for managing the overall assessment process, including ongoing contact with assessment team members, the Program Manager, NIC, the agency contact person, and other on site officials. In essence, the team leader is the coordinator for the effort and must assure that assessment team members are prepared and well briefed before going on

site and kept informed throughout the entire assessment process. The team leader must also oversee the site visit itself and assure that it is conducted effectively and efficiently, and that team members' input has been solicited and incorporated into the initial and final reports.

The team leader is responsible for coordinating two assessment site visits. This will include working closely with the agency contact person to establish site visit dates, interview schedules, meeting goals and agendas, and determining and gathering materials and other information necessary to complete the system assessment. In addition, the team leader will be responsible primarily for facilitating both a community and policy group meeting on site along with other assessment team members and on site officials.

## **THE AGENCY CONTACT PERSON**

A system assessment requires considerable coordination and planning. Therefore, a contact person will be designated by the jurisdiction as the assessment team's primary contact for the assessment effort. The team leader will initiate and maintain contact with the agency contact person throughout the assessment process. The contact person's tasks include: assisting the team in identifying key decision makers and agency staff, scheduling appointments, directing the team to appropriate information, and assisting with the logistical arrangements for interviews and meetings. The contact person is key to a successful system assessment, and in fact, without the assistance of an agency contact person much of the work to be accomplished would be very difficult to complete. For a complete list of tasks to be conducted by the contact person, see *Section III: Tools and Resources*.

## **OTHER ON SITE LEADERSHIP**

It is possible that a small group of policy makers within a jurisdiction will be the initiators of the assessment effort. They may include the leadership of the bench, a county commissioner, chief probation officer, prosecutor, public defender, legislator, or corrections official. This group may be able to provide access to key individuals or information in ways that the agency contact person may not. Key policy makers can also provide additional information to the assessment team about critical actors, the political realities within which any changes will be made, the background and history of the jurisdiction, and even an in depth perception of the jurisdiction's presenting problem(s).

Such a leadership group, if it exists, may not be formally organized. That is, there may be a couple of individual policy makers who sincerely wish to make a difference in their communities or there may be a small, informal criminal justice group that meets over lunch once a month. In fact, it is possible that leadership may only be identified as a result of the assessment process. Whatever the situation, it is important to seek out and work closely with these critical actors in each jurisdiction.

This leadership group will be the most likely group to analyze and synthesize the findings and recommendations of the system assessment. They will act as the hosts for policy group and community meetings. They can help formulate a larger policy group and facilitate discussions of the policy group as it develops its shared understanding of current practice and a vision for the future. And lastly, the leadership group can articulate the technical assistance and training needs of the jurisdiction. They will most likely be the ones to carry out any actions resulting from the system assessment.

## **THE NIC PROJECT TEAM**

NIC staff involved in this effort are organized into an NIC Project Team. In addition to roles as Program Manager and as members of individual assessment teams, the NIC Project Team will have responsibility for overseeing the entire Criminal Justice System Project. They will review applications and select sites to participate in the Project. They will actively broker NIC services—technical assistance and training—for participating jurisdictions. The NIC project team will meet regularly to assess where jurisdictions are in the assessment process, the level of technical assistance and training needed, and what, in reality, can be provided. Assessment team members—most certainly team leaders—will be asked to meet with the NIC project team to debrief system assessments conducted at each participating jurisdiction. (Figure 1 depicts the organization of NIC's Criminal Justice System Project.)

# The Criminal Justice System Project

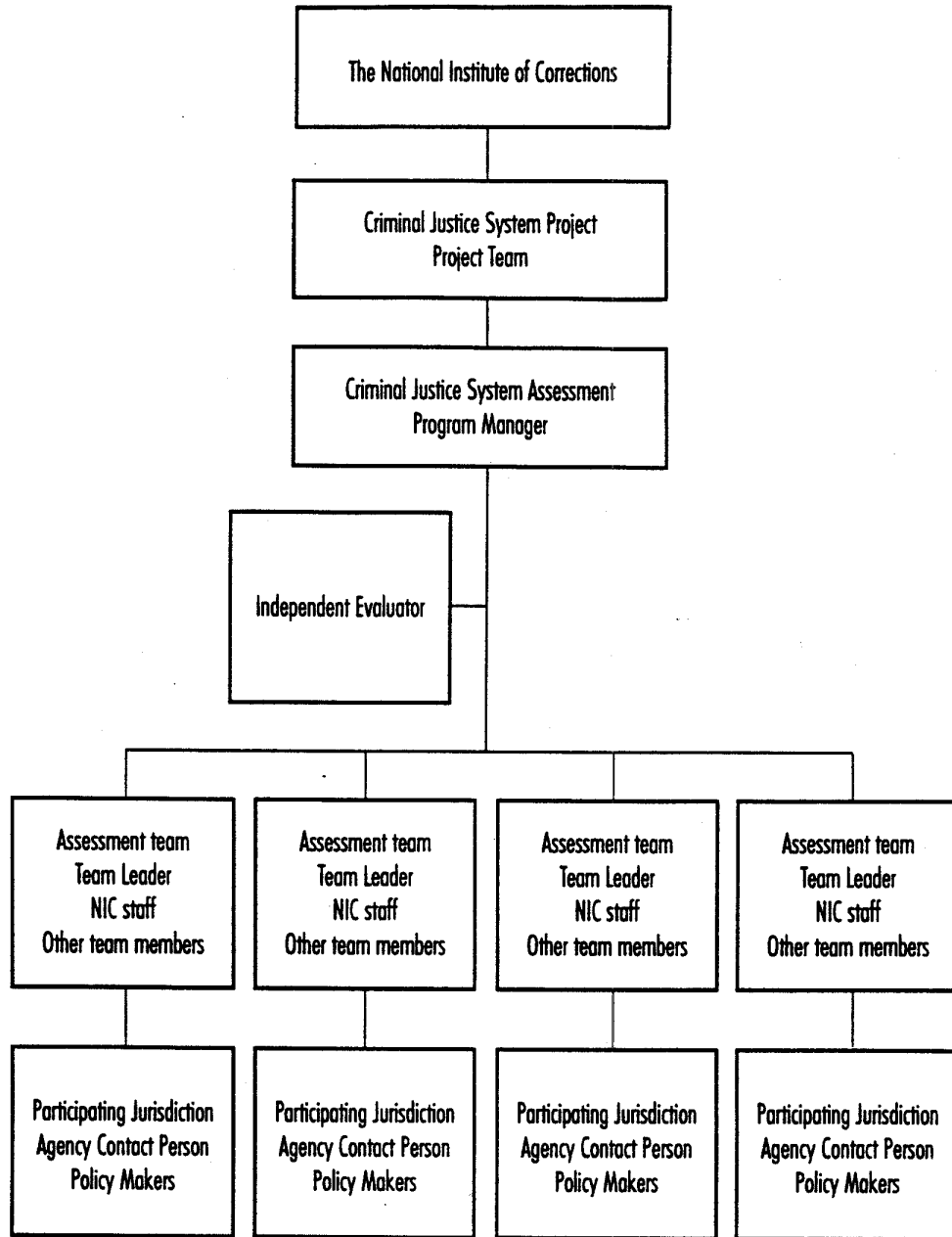


Figure 1



## SECTION II

# The Criminal Justice System Assessment Process

**S**ection II of this Guide is intended to serve as an annotated road map to pilot the assessment team through the tasks and activities involved in a typical system assessment. It should serve as a structure to draw from should members of the assessment team want or require guidance and suggestions to help plan this phase of the work. It is organized in roughly the sequence that these tasks and activities are expected to take place. Section II provides sufficient detail and typical examples so those who need these materials will have them available. Those who don't can refer to the checklists which are contained in this section that summarize the major steps in the process.

It should be noted that Section II is only one example of what a system assessment could look like. It should not be construed as the only sequence of tasks and activities that could occur. While many of the tasks and activities described herein are expected to take place, the assessment team should use its professional judgment to determine the proper sequencing of events given the unique set of circumstances that will be encountered in each site.

## CHAPTER 6

# Before you Go On Site: The Initial Site Visit

**T**he purpose of this step is to do all that is necessary to arrange the logistics, agreements, understandings and expectations that will provide the foundation for the initial on site portion of the assessment. The three most critical things to accomplish are to: (1) prepare the assessment team members and the Agency Contact Person for the initial site visit; 2) construct an interview schedule and itinerary; and 3) plan the community meeting.

### **SELECTION OF THE ASSESSMENT TEAM**

It is the responsibility of the Program Manager to select the people that will make up the assessment team. You can expect that the selection of this staff has been discussed with the host jurisdiction. The composition and respective roles of the assessment team is discussed in *Section I, Chapter 5: Roles and Responsibilities*.

The Program Manager will designate one member of the assessment team as the Assessment Team Leader. Unless otherwise instructed by the Program Manager, the Assessment Team Leader will have primary responsibility for preparing the other members of the assessment team for the initial on site visit.

### **TASKS THE ASSESSMENT TEAM CAN EXPECT NIC WILL HAVE COMPLETED**

The assessment team can assume that NIC has received, reviewed, and approved an application for assistance from the host jurisdiction. Typically a good deal of telephone and written correspondence has taken place, and an Agency Contact Person at the host site has been designated by the host jurisdiction. The assessment team can



also expect that the Program Manager has a reasonable grasp of the current situation at the host site. These activities will prepare the Agency Contact Person for a telephone contact from the team leader.

## **ORIENTATION OF THE ASSESSMENT TEAM LEADER**

The Assessment Team Leader can expect to be oriented to the Criminal Justice System Assessment by a designated NIC project team member or the Program Manager. The NIC Program Manager or team member will also provide the Assessment Team Leader with written and telephone briefings which will provide him or her with background concerning the host jurisdiction, the presenting problem or situation at the site, and a copy of the application requesting assistance.

## **CLARIFYING THE ASSIGNMENT**

The team leader has the responsibility to ask questions, ask for information, and otherwise seek clarification of the assignment. This will prepare the Assessment Team Leader to contact the Agency Contact Person and begin to inform and organize the other members of the assessment team.

## **CONTACT FELLOW MEMBERS OF THE ASSESSMENT TEAM**

This activity is directed toward keeping the assessment team informed, up to date and prepared to begin the on site portion of the work. While fellow assessment team members will have had some contact with the NIC staff and the Program Manager, it is expected that the Assessment Team Leader will be responsible for contacting other members of the assessment team to ascertain dates of availability for the initial site visit. As necessary, discussion with each member of the assessment team may also include the following: general orientation, overview of the initiative, discussion of the respective roles and responsibilities of persons and organizations involved in the assessment, goals, objectives, sharing of interview guides, sharing of copies of the application for assistance, and so forth. Later, the Assessment Team Leader will also want to distribute copies of materials which are being sent to the Assessment Team Leader by the Agency Contact Person.

## **INITIAL CONTACT WITH THE AGENCY CONTACT PERSON**

### **Confirm On Site Visit Dates**

Once having ascertained the dates of availability of the other members of the assessment team, the Assessment Team Leader will be able to contact the person at the host site who has been designated Agency Contact Person for the host jurisdiction. The Assessment Team Leader can then work with the contact person to arrange the dates for the three-day site visit. This would also be a good time to confirm arrangements for the host site to provide some level of administration and clerical support to the Assessment Team during the effort.

### **Confirm Travel Dates**

Once this initial contact has occurred, the Assessment Team Leader can confirm travel and dates for the initial site visit with NIC, the Program Manager, and other members of the assessment team. This will allow the assessment team to make airline reservations well in advance of travel dates. It will also be helpful if the Assessment Team Leader obtains advice and information about a local hotel, close to the site of most of the interviews, then passes this information on to the other members of the assessment team. Arrangements might also be made to coordinate ground travel to the site.

### **Ask for Materials**

This initial telephone contact will also provide the opportunity to initiate the exchange of information which will take place prior to the visit; e.g. newspaper articles, copies of master plans, strategic planning documents, community corrections plans, descriptions of pretrial and post-sentence options and programs, budgets, minutes of policy group meetings (if they exist), etc. The Assessment Team Leader will also want to send copies of important documents which have been received from the Agency Contact Person to the other members of the assessment team so they can become familiar with these documents prior to the site visit.

## **CORRESPONDING WITH THE AGENCY CONTACT PERSON**

It will prove to be helpful if the Assessment Team Leader can follow up the initial telephone contact with detailed written correspondence to help the contact person organize the complex logistics which will contribute to a successful initial site visit. The form and detail of this correspondence will need to be crafted by the Assessment Team Leader. Details will depend upon the work style of the Assessment Team Leader and his or her assessment of the current circumstances at the host site, however, two separate mailings are suggested here, merely to provide useful guidance. Examples of letters appear in *Section III: Tools and Resources*.

### **The First Mailing**

The first mailing would serve to handle some basic logistics, provide the contact person with biographical information about the assessment team, summarize what the Criminal Justice System Assessment involves, and help the contact person get started with making preparations for the initial site visit.

**DESCRIBE THE INITIATIVE AND THE MEMBERS OF THE ASSESSMENT TEAM:** These written materials will provide the contact person with narrative that can be "lifted" and included in correspondence from the contact person to the people at the site that have an interest in the assessment. This will make it easier for the contact person to describe the Criminal Justice System Assessment and include short biographical sketches to help communicate information about the experience and skills of the members of the assessment team. This will answer many questions and help prepare the community for the initial on site portion of the assessment.

**SUGGEST EARLY ORIENTATION:** This first letter might also indicate that the assessment team will be at the site ready to go at 7:00 or 8:00 a.m. on the first day of

the site visit and suggest that an initial orientation meeting, or a breakfast meeting, take place with the Agency Contact Person and any other key stakeholders who may be sponsoring the assessment. The purpose of this early, informal, meeting is to clarify expectations and get oriented.

**CONSIDER DOING ANY TOURS EARLY AND KEEPING THEM SHORT:** Concern about specific sanctions may make a special tour or briefing necessary. For example, if the prison or jail are a prominent part of the presenting problem, the facility might be toured early during the initial day of the visit.

**PROVIDE OVERVIEW OF SCHEDULE:** The letter would also include a brief statement of the flow of the visit. For example, the letter might say: "Usually, the assessment devotes the rest of the initial day on site and all of the second day to interviews. The third day is normally reserved for an all day community meeting. We would like to finish up by 5:00 p.m. on the third day, (include date here)."

**INCLUDE SAMPLE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE:** This first letter might include a sample interview schedule (For example, see 9. Sample Interview Schedule and List of Persons to be Interviewed in *Section III: Tools and Resources*). This will advise the Agency Contact Person of the types of people it will be helpful for the assessment team to see during the first two days of the initial site visit. Having a sample interview list in writing will reinforce discussion of the tentative list of people to be interviewed that may have been developed during the initial telephone conversation with the contact person.

**INCLUDE SAMPLE COMMUNITY MEETING AGENDA:** The letter could also include a copy of a typical agenda for the community meeting. (An example appears in *Section III: Tools and Resources*.) It will serve as a starting place for development of a more refined agenda, tailored to meet the needs of the host community.

**INCLUDE TOPICAL REPORT OUTLINE:** It may also be helpful to include a topical outline of the initial assessment report which will be written soon after the assessment team completes the initial site visit. This will give the contact person a "big picture" view of the scope and content of the report. It will help communicate what the assessment team will want to learn during the initial site visit. (A suggested topical outline for the initial report appears in *Section III: Tools and Resources*.)

**MENTION AVAILABILITY FOR DEBRIEFING:** Finally, this is also the time to mention that the assessment team could be available at the end of the third day for a short debriefing (see example text in Letter #1 in *Section III: Tools and Resources*). Ideally, this offer would be initially brought up during the initial telephone contact with the Agency Contact Person, then brought up again, in this first letter, as a reminder.

#### **Follow Up Letter #1 With Phone Contact**

This first letter should be followed up with a phone conversation. This phone call will provide the opportunity to work with the contact person to more clearly develop the goals and agenda for this first site visit. It is likely that the contact person will have

questions about who to schedule for interviews. The contact person is also likely to have questions about who to invite to the community meeting, what to include on the agenda, and so forth. This phone call will provide the opportunity to work out the details together.

### **The Second Mailing**

The second letter should be mailed within one or two days of mailing the first letter, soon enough to command attention, but separated from the already complicated initial piece of correspondence. The content of this letter will be driven by the nature of the problems being presented by the host jurisdiction as they have presented them in the application and subsequent communication with the Assessment Team Leader. Ideally, this second letter would transmit checklists and forms and also be followed up with a phone conversation. These checklists and forms would be distributed to personnel within agencies and completed prior to the initial site visit portion of the assessment. A "generic" example letter and sample forms appear in *Section III: Tools and Resources* (see Letter # 2). The actual content will need to be tailored to the specific circumstances of the jurisdiction.

## **ARRANGING THE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

Telephone conversations and correspondence should quickly establish a core list of people to be interviewed. Subsequent discussions will round out the list. (See *Section III* for an example of a core list of persons who might be interviewed.)

### **Length of the Interviews**

Typically, interviews last from one-half hour to forty-five minutes. Often, small groups of persons with similar functions can be interviewed in a group setting. For example, local police and sheriff's office law enforcement representatives can often be accommodated in this manner. Sometimes it may only be possible to meet judges during a noon hour. This, too, can be done in a small group setting. Of course, it is best to meet in small groups, no more than six.

### **Use Two Person Interviews**

Ideally, two members of the assessment team should conduct these interviews, rather than conduct them separately. Separate interviews make synthesizing and summarizing information for the report difficult, particularly when this may have to be done quickly and when the assessment team members are tired from a fast paced three-day site visit. Working together will encourage the members of the assessment team to learn from one another and allow one to think while the other poses questions.

### **Keep Your Evenings Free**

Members of the assessment team are encouraged to set limits and not conduct interviews after 5:00 p.m., as they will need evenings to unwind, summarize notes, and perhaps meet together to digest and distill information.

### **Do The Interviews at One Location**

Members of the assessment team are also encouraged to ask the Agency Contact

Person to arrange the interviews and handle the logistics. It will be preferable to conduct as many of the interviews as possible in one central location. In other words, have the persons who are to be interviewed come to the assessment team interviewers rather than transport the assessment team to many geographically separated locations. The trade-off in time saved must be balanced against advantages of meeting people "on their own turf."

## **ORGANIZING THE COMMUNITY MEETING**

The community meeting is scheduled to take place on the third or final day of the site visit. The Agency Contact Person will handle the invitations and logistics of setting up the community meeting, thus, the contact person will have many questions about the community meeting. The Assessment Team Leader can address these needs by providing the contact person with: (1) an understanding of the purposes of the meeting; (2) a sample list of persons and organizations to invite to the meeting; (3) a sample invitation or flyer; (4) sample agendas; and (5) telephone consultation to answer questions and help plan the meeting.

### **Defining the Purposes of the Meeting**

It will be helpful to discuss the objectives of the meeting with the contact person and other sponsors of the assessment. This will prepare them to pass these purposes on to other potential participants. It will also allow them to characterize the meeting as an important one, thereby increasing the number and range of participants. A typical list of objectives for a community meeting might include:

- Engage the community and key officials; orient them to the collaborative NIC initiative.
- Begin to describe the existing continuum of sanctions.
- Enhance the community's understanding of these sanctions and how they are being used.
- Help the community explore and reflect upon current sanctioning policies, and the values which they express.
- Provide a participatory forum in which major justice issues can be identified.
- Provide participants with information and options to address criminal justice system issues and needs which are identified during the interviews and the meeting.
- Help the participants identify gaps in information and increase awareness of information that is needed but not available to help frame policy choices.
- Provide a forum for participants to share in the development of strategies to deal with these justice issues and needs: Where do we need to go? What needs to be accomplished?
- Provide a forum for participants to share their concerns and ideas about the justice system and plans for change.
- Communicate the need and value of collaboration, of working together.
- Provide feedback concerning the assessment teams's preliminary observations and recommendations.
- Create an expectation and commitment to act; to create momentum for taking action.

### **Persons and Organizations That Should Be Invited**

Consider inviting all of the persons who will be interviewed by the assessment team to the community meeting. During the interviews, the assessment team can remind the persons being interviewed about how important it will be for them to attend. Other persons should also be invited; for example, persons representing agencies that provide pretrial or post supervision services in the community. Community leaders who serve as "statesmen;" that is, leaders who can provide community expectations that will require factions to work together might be included. Members of the press and media should also be considered. This is general advice. Beyond this, the assessment team must rely on their own consulting experience and work with the Agency Contact Person to fashion a proper list of persons which is tailored to each specific host site. An example potential master list of attendees appears in *Section III: Tools and Resources*.

### **Provide an Example Flyer or Invitation**

The Agency Contact Person at the host site should prepare the flyer or invitation and handle the logistics for the community meeting. The contact person may feel more comfortable if he or she is provided with samples of invitations to similar community meetings. Samples appear in *Section III: Tools and Resources*.

### **Provide a Sample Community Meeting Agenda**

Similarly, the Agency Contact Person may be more comfortable if the Assessment Team Leader provides samples of what a community meeting agenda might look like. The specifics of the agenda will vary depending upon the needs of each site. It is also important to understand that the details of the agenda may need to be changed at the last minute, based upon what the assessment team learns during the interviews. For this reason, the items on the agenda should be general statements and it should be understood that both time and content will be subject to change (see sample in *Section III: Tools and Resources*).

### **Provide Telephone Consultation to Plan the Community Meeting**

Timely, regular discussion with the Agency Contact Person will help the contact person plan and successfully negotiate the complex logistics involved in carrying off a successful community meeting.

## **ARRANGING THE ORIENTATION MEETING**

Experience suggests that the first contact at the site consist of a brief meeting between the assessment team members who will be doing the interviews, the Agency Contact Person, and perhaps one or two sponsors of the assessment process. The purpose of this meeting is to help orient the assessment team and handle any last minute logistics. Ideally, this meeting would take place first thing in the morning during the first day of the initial site visit.

## ARRANGING THE DEBRIEFING OR EXIT INTERVIEW

It is useful to offer to sit down with a small group—perhaps the same people involved in the orientation meeting—to debrief the visit. This meeting would take on the characteristics of an exit interview. It will allow the participants to ask questions, provide them with a general understanding of what will be in the Initial System Assessment Report, discuss what needs to happen to prepare for the second on site assessment visit, and allow them to think out their next steps, make assignments, and so forth.

## READ IN ADVANCE OF THE INITIAL SITE VISIT

Once on site there will be precious little time to absorb written materials; therefore, there are real advantages to having material sent to the assessment team, and for the Assessment Team Leader to screen and then forward written materials to the other members of the assessment team to read prior to the on site visit. The exact nature of these materials will depend upon the specific situation in each site, however, it will most certainly include: newspaper articles, descriptions of pretrial and post sentence programs, budgets, and system descriptions which might have been included in recent needs assessments, community corrections plans, or other planning documents.

## DATA TO PREPARE IN ADVANCE OF THE INITIAL SITE VISIT

It will be useful to prepare certain information in preparation for the initial site visit. Again, specifics must be decided upon by the Assessment Team Leader and will depend upon the nature of the assignment. Two examples which will probably be useful are discussed below:

### **Preparing a Comparative Analysis**

A comparative analysis provides a useful context which will allow the host jurisdiction to compare itself with other jurisdictions of similar size and circumstance. A comparative analysis will provide per capita rates and rankings of jurisdictions within a state, or among states, on important indicators of crime, arrests, court filings and dispositions, sentencing, expenditures and personnel (by justice function), and utilization rates for typical sanctions; for example, jail, prisons, probation, juvenile institutions, and so forth. An example of a simple comparative analysis appears in *Section III: Tools and Resources*. Ideally, the comparative analysis would be prepared prior to the first site visit. Typically, the Assessment Team Leader would prepare the comparative analysis with help from the Agency Contact Person. It may also be possible for the comparative analysis to be completed by persons from the host jurisdiction.

### **Completing the Continuum of Sanctions Matrix the Services and Sanctions Matrix**

The Continuum of Sanctions Matrix and the Services and Sanctions Matrix provide organized frameworks for capturing basic information about sanctions and services available in the jurisdiction. An example appears in *Section III: Tools and Resources*. Both can be filled in gradually, as information becomes available. Some of this infor-

mation can be recorded on the form before the initial site visit. Even in preliminary form, it will begin to provide a "picture" of how a sanctioning system currently operates in a jurisdiction.

## **PREPARING THE ASSESSMENT TEAM FOR THE INITIAL SITE VISIT**

The Program Manager and the Assessment Team Leader have an obligation to thoroughly prepare the assessment team for the initial site visit.

### **Materials to Send to Members of the Assessment Team**

It may be helpful for the Assessment Team Leader to keep a running list of materials which have been received from the host jurisdiction, especially information which needs to be duplicated and forwarded to the other members of the assessment team. This might include copies of the host jurisdiction's application, newspaper articles, copies of descriptions of pretrial and post trial programs and options, etc. It may also be helpful to provide members of the assessment team with an outline of the Initial System Assessment Report that will be prepared after the initial on site visit, a copy of the comparative analysis (if one is prepared), a copy of the Continuum of Sanctions Matrix, a copy of this Guide, etc.

### **Telephone Follow Up With Assessment Team Members**

Telephone follow up will also help prepare the other members of the assessment team for this portion of the assignment.

## **CORRESPONDING WITH THE AGENCY CONTACT PERSON**

The NIC Staff, the Program Manager, and the Assessment Team Leader should prepare a list of resource and reading materials which NIC will arrange to be mailed and distributed to the host jurisdiction. A subset of these materials will be designed to be handed out at the community meeting. Other materials may be distributed by the Agency Contact Person. Still others may be distributed by the assessment team as they conduct interviews. Suggestions for materials appear in *Section III: Tools and Resources*. Most of it comes from the U.S. Department of Justice and the NIC Information Center. The Assessment Team Leader may want to add or substitute items. This needs to be thought out well in advance of the initial site visit.

## **LAST MINUTE TELEPHONE FOLLOW UP WITH THE AGENCY CONTACT PERSON**

It may be useful to conduct a "wrap-up" telephone conversation with the contact person just prior to the visit. This will permit last minute adjustments to be made.



## **QUICK REVIEW: BEFORE YOU GO ON THE INITIAL SITE VISIT**

This step of the system assessment should serve to pilot the assessment team through all the steps typically involved in planning the initial site visit. The most important features of this step are to: (1) prepare the assessment team members and the Agency Contact Person for the initial site visit; (2) identify the people who are to be interviewed, facilities and programs to be toured, and organize a schedule; and (3) organize the community meeting.

### **Checklist: Before you go on the Initial Site Visit**

- The assessment team has been assembled and oriented to the assignment.
- The Assessment Team Leader has established a working relationship with the Agency Contact Person at each host site.
- The Assessment Team Leader has equipped the Agency Contact Person with the information needed to carry out his or her responsibilities.
- Interviews with the most appropriate people have been arranged.
- The community meeting has been considered and planned for, where appropriate.
- The Agency Contact Person has provided the assessment team with appropriate data and relevant descriptive materials well in advance of the site visit.
- An early site orientation and an exit interview has been considered and arranged for.

NOTES:

# Going Onsite: Conducting the Initial Site Visit

**T**he purpose of this step is to conduct an initial, or preliminary, on site system assessment site visit and to engage the host jurisdiction in a process of examination, reflection, and strategic planning which will result, by intention, in a more effective, more affordable system of sanctions. This chapter will outline the purpose of each of five major on site activities of the initial site visit: Getting There; The Initial Orientation; Conducting the Interviews; The Community Meeting; The Debriefing, and The Assessment Team Meeting Prior to Departure. The emphasis is on outlining *what* the assessment team will do, not how the assessment team will accomplish this work. This is left to the talent, skills, experience, and style of the assessment team and will also depend upon the unique characteristics of the host jurisdiction.

## THE REPORT OUTLINE

Sometimes it helps to begin with the end in mind. A topical outline of the assessment team report which is to be produced within two weeks of the three-day initial site visit appears in *Section III: Tools and Resources*. Assessment team activities need to be focused on producing the information the report will require.

## GETTING THERE, MEETING AT THE AIRPORT, ON SITE TEAM MEETING

It will be helpful if the members of the assessment team initially plan their schedules so they arrive at the airport closest to the host jurisdiction within a few hours of each other, usually in the late afternoon or early evening the day before the first day of the initial site visit. This will minimize the need for multiple rental cars and will serve to

provide some time together while traveling to the site; or, having arrived at the site, for the assessment team to get together at the hotel for a short meeting together. This also positions the assessment team to be ready to go first thing in the morning.

The Agency Contact Person may want to schedule a meeting on the evening of arrival. The assessment team will be more rested if this meeting takes place early the next morning.

## **THE ORIENTATION TO THE SITE MEETING**

This meeting might take place early on the first day of the initial site visit. The purpose of the meeting is to welcome and orient the assessment team, introduce the team to the contact person and key participants, serve as a bridge to get the assessment team transported to their first appointment, and make final adjustments. This is where the assessment team gets its first look at "the lay of the land." If the group is small, this meeting can often take place at breakfast.

## **TOURING PROGRAMS AND FACILITIES**

It may be necessary to physically see certain facilities and/or programs, especially if the interviews will revolve around these features of the justice apparatus. This may be especially true if the presenting problem is a crowded jail, a poor physical plant, or even overuse of a community sanction such as a day reporting center. For these reasons, it may be helpful to tour these facilities and/or programs before beginning a series of interviews which will include discussion of them. Spending more than two hours at this activity will quickly eat into the time that is needed for interviewing, so tours should be scheduled sparingly.

## **CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEWS**

The interviews have many purposes:

- to identify major justice issues;
- to identify what worries or concerns the person being interviewed;
- to identify what each person would like to see accomplished, along with major driving and restraining forces which will propel or hinder movement in the desired direction;
- to gather basic information about workload, number of staff, budget;
- to gather information on the populations affected by the current sanctioning system and desired changes;
- to gain an understanding and description of existing sanctions, including pretrial and post-sentence options;
- to ascertain possible strategies for improvement, along with indications of support or opposition to these strategies;
- to elicit opinions about where leadership exists and sources of initiative for change; and

- to listen to views about local values concerning sanctions—what's possible and what isn't.

In short, the interviews seek to extract information that will address each of the dimensions discussed in *Section I, Chapter 4: The Multiple Dimensions of a Criminal Justice System*. It may be helpful to start with open-ended questions which get at the presenting issues defined in the application for assistance. You will also be imparting information, answering questions, educating, building rapport.

Except for the detailed description of workload, number of staff, budget, which may be collected separately, these interviews are intended to be general and wide ranging in scope. It is too easy to get bogged down in detail. You want to come away with an overview—a comprehensive understanding of the jurisdiction which you can relate back to the people who were interviewed through a new set of eyes from “independent outsiders.” This feedback will take place at the community meeting and in the initial assessment report which will be completed soon after this first site visit.

This is where your skills as a consultant must take over. Except for describing *what* needs to come out of the interviews, little can be prescribed about *how* this information is best collected and disseminated. Again, refer to earlier discussion of the system assessment dimensions; they were developed to serve as boundaries to indicate extent, breadth, depth, and scope of the materials to be obtained through the interviews.

#### **Requests for Additional Information to be Forwarded**

Typically, budget, personnel, and workload counts are not readily available from persons being interviewed, even when earlier requests for this information have been made. It may be necessary to leave a structured form with instructions and ask that it be completed, turned in at the community meeting, or mailed to the Assessment Team Leader. Similarly, while the interviews may yield information that can gradually be added to the Continuum of Sanctions Matrix and the Services and Sanctions Matrix (see *Section III*), much of this information may need to be obtained through follow up to the interviews. The interviews will establish the contacts, the commitment, and the relationships which may be needed to serve as a foundation for successful follow up to obtain additional information.

#### **Revising and Adding to the Interview Schedule**

As the interviewing progresses it may become clear that additional persons should be added to the interview schedule. Difficult choices may present themselves. One alternative is to divide up and have a few one on one interviews. The assessment team is encouraged to avoid lengthening the workday into the evening to accomplish additional interviews or respond to requests for meetings. The three-day on site work is draining and demanding. Try and keep your evenings free. You will need the “down time.”

## **THE COMMUNITY MEETING**

In most cases, the initial site visit, that is, the initial phase of the Criminal Justice System Assessment, will conclude with a community meeting led by the assessment

team. The content of this section presents a sample—a suggested template—and “walk through” of a sample agenda for such a meeting. It is expected, however, that this meeting will be tailored to meet the needs of the host jurisdiction and the skills, preferences and consulting styles of the assessment team. In addition, there may be instances where a decision is made not to hold a community meeting or, where a meeting of a smaller “policy group” may be substituted for such a meeting. A candidate list of the purposes of a typical community meeting were enumerated earlier, see page 38.

#### **Introduction of the Assessment Team**

Local officials should be asked to open the community meeting. This makes it visible to all that officials from the host jurisdiction are responsible for and own the effort. It provides a form of recognition for these officials and the service being provided to them. Once the assessment team is introduced, the program can be turned over to the members of the assessment team.

#### **The NIC and the NIC Criminal Justice System Project**

The Assessment Team Leader or a member of the NIC staff, if they are present, should briefly describe NIC, the Criminal Justice System Project, and the Criminal Justice System Assessment. Background materials to assist with this responsibility appear in *Section III* (Description of the NIC and Program Announcement).

#### **The Community Meeting Resource Manual**

A community meeting resource book may have been developed to support the community meeting. It will provide text and references to important materials which will be presented during the meeting. Where a community meeting resource manual is planned, the contents should be developed during preparation for the initial site visit and tailored to fit the needs of each site. During this segment of the community meeting, a member of the assessment team should let the participants know that the community meeting resource manual is available and encourage the participants to pick up a copy.

#### **The Revised Community Meeting Agenda**

This is the time during the meeting when a revised agenda needs to be put on newsprint, discussed briefly, then taped to the wall for the participants to follow during the day. You will remember that considerable attention was devoted to working with the Agency Contact Person to develop a preliminary agenda for this meeting and that the need to prepare a revised agenda was anticipated. These revisions will be necessitated by new information coming from the interviews and by an increasingly rich and more detailed understanding of the host jurisdiction by the assessment team.

**PARTICIPANT EXPECTATIONS:** Participants should be asked to introduce themselves and give a short statement of what they would like to have accomplished by the end of the day. This short exercise will engage the participants early. It helps focus the discussion on purpose, and helps the participants think about what they want to accomplish. It is helpful to write participants' expectations on newsprint and tape them to the wall where they can be reviewed again at the end of the community meeting, and referred to during the day. The exercise provides an opportunity for the participants to express important values. It also provides an early opportunity for the assessment team

to learn more about who is at the meeting, what their values are, and what they hope to accomplish. It also helps to establish an early expectation that they participate in the meeting, not merely listen to presentations.

**WHAT ARE THE THREE MOST COMMONLY USED SANCTIONS?** This is a second, short exercise to engage the participants. In this exercise, one member of the assessment team asks the question: "What are the three most commonly used sanctions in this jurisdiction and what are their purposes?" Responses are written on newsprint and taped to the wall. Once they are all on the wall, the members of the assessment team can review them with special attention to generating discussion about which purposes the participants believe these sanctions can reasonably achieve and which they cannot attain. This will generate considerable understanding of the types of people being admitted to the entire range of existing sanctions, their length of stay, and their need for a variety of levels of supervision and services in a variety of custodial, residential and community based programs. This short exercise should lead to the introduction of the notion of the need for a continuum of sanctions, and early realization that some custodial and non-custodial options may be either missing or underutilized.

Beginning with discussion of the purposes of the sanctions which are most frequently used in a jurisdiction is one way to start the discussion of sanctioning options from where people are.† This exercise is but one example. Others might be substituted, especially if members of the assessment team are familiar with another example and have had success using it.

**THE JUSTICE SYSTEM AND THE SEVEN KEY JUSTICE SYSTEM DECISION POINTS:** This segment of the community meeting has two purposes. First, it is designed to help the participants think about the ways the various city, county and state justice organizational units are joined together to form a justice system. Secondly, it is designed to help the participants better understand the relationship between the justice policies they have implemented and the size of the workload and cost of operating their justice system.

One suggested method, described here, organizes the justice system around seven key justice system decision points (see illustrations in *Section III*). The presentation would first describe each decision point beginning, for example, with the decision to arrest. Then, using examples from the host jurisdiction where possible, the presenter would illustrate how the host jurisdiction compares to other jurisdictions of similar size and circumstance (see *Section III* for an example of a comparative analysis). In this way the presentation would help the participants recognize that these decision points are governed by policies and that localities, even though they are all working under the same statutory framework, are operating very differently from one another. This means policy choices are being exercised—policies whether deliberately or inadvertently established can be changed and modified. The justice workload, and justice expenditures are not simply the result of the behavior of the criminal population. They are at least partly explained by differences in decision making at the seven key justice system decision points—decisions which reflect differing policies about different "types" of offenders in different jurisdictions. This discussion can set the stage for the

community to make more use of structured decision making, to consider doing more to establish or set priorities, and establish or revise criteria related to justice policies which are expressed as decisions about people and cases at the seven key justice system decision points. These are the decisions which route different types of defendants to different levels of supervision and programs along a continuum of sanctions.

**WORKING TOGETHER TO MANAGE WORKLOAD AND EXPENDITURE GROWTH:** This segment of the community meeting is designed to help the participants realize that while it is difficult for any one agency to impact the justice system, much can be done collectively. This provides the motivation to form or strengthen existing justice system communication, cooperation and coordination mechanisms, and most importantly, criminal justice coordinating councils or policy boards.

**FACILITY OPTIONS/ARCHITECTURAL OPTIONS:** In this segment of the community meeting a member of the assessment team reviews facility types, explains which architecture is most appropriate for which type of offender, and explains what each type of secure, non-secure, and community-based residential facility will cost to build and operate. This allows the participants to take stock of the offenders being housed in their various facilities and to think about the most cost-effective type of housing for each type of offender. Once again, the discussion begins with custodial options. As a practical matter, many people start with the custodial options first, only to realize later that these options may be very expensive and unnecessary for some types of offenders who can be programmed and supervised in non-secure settings. This approach quickly leads to a discussion of classification, risk assessment, and placement decisions, the next topic on the agenda. This, in turn, will lead to a discussion which should produce a new understanding and appreciation for an improved continuum of sanctions.

**CLASSIFICATION, RISK ASSESSMENT, AND PLACEMENT:** In this segment the assessment team might present information and examples of classification instruments which are used to sort the great variety of offenders into logical groups, not only according to their need for varying levels of supervision in community-based programs or levels of security for persons placed in custodial settings, but to determine their needs, assess offender risk, and serve as guides to justice system personnel who will be making decisions about placing individual offenders in programs, facilities, and community-based settings. The team should take care to demonstrate how different instruments serve different purposes and to emphasize the need for integrity in their use.

**A CONTINUUM OF SANCTIONS:** This segment of the community meeting might provide the participants with a graphic representation of a continuum of sanctions, ranging from the least restrictive intervention and supervision in the community up a series of steps of increasing external controls to maximum security in prison. An example continuum of sanctions appears in *Section III*. The notion of initially placing an offender somewhere along this continuum, then graduating placement up or down, depending upon the offender's performance and circumstances, will demonstrate the flexibility, rationality, and cost-effectiveness of an improved system of sanctions.

**WORKING TOGETHER TO MANAGE WORKLOAD GROWTH AND CONTAIN JUSTICE COSTS:** This segment of the meeting might be designed to demonstrate the importance of mechanisms which will improve system-wide communication, cooperation, and coordination. Changes in justice system decision making; that is, changes in justice policies, can best be achieved by collaboration among key justice officials and officials of general government. The mental picture is one where they all sit down together at a round table where the separate branches of government and separate levels of government can function as equals. Collective examination of decisions being made at the seven key justice system decision points may lead to initiatives for change—changes which no one agency can accomplish, but which can be accomplished if agencies choose to work together. This should produce an increased sense of control over the justice system, workload growth, and its burgeoning costs. This is one useful method of empowering officials. It should demonstrate how developing clearer sanctioning goals can lead to a more effective and more affordable justice system. This may also provide the opportunity to recommit to justice in and through the system.

**PROVIDE PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:** The participants, particularly justice officials, are usually very interested in hearing a synthesis of the results of the interviews and preliminary findings of the first two days of the assessment site visit. There is an assumption that some officials may have been more candid with the assessment team than they might be with each other. Further, because of limited contact with one another, they may not know about the concerns of all the participants involved in the administration of justice. The participants will also expect some comment or observations to be offered by experienced outside observers who may see issues through a different lens. Finally, this segment will serve as a preliminary statement of the observations and recommendations to be contained in the initial report which will be completed immediately following the site visit.

**ACTION PLANNING:** Many good ideas may emerge from the community meeting. Often there is no clear sense of who is authorized or empowered to follow through. The action planning segment of the community meeting can serve to organize a short agenda of things to be done after the assessment team has completed the initial site assessment visit. It can build momentum for the subsequent steps of the initiative. The list need not be a long one, and the items which are contained on it need not be complex. For example, it may be useful for everyone to agree that the initial assessment report be distributed and studied when it is received. It may be helpful to suggest that the report be officially received and acknowledged as an agenda item at a meeting of the county commissioners, if the host jurisdiction is a locality, or by a cognizant state agency, if the host is a state. Other items may also be placed on the list as the participants are asked for their ideas.

**OPTIONAL FACILITY AND/OR PROGRAM TOUR:** Many of the participants in the community meeting may have never visited any of the sanctioning options, nor been inside a jail or prison. The community meeting can provide an opportunity for participants to visit a facility and other sanctioning options, either during the lunch hour, or after the close of the meeting, or to schedule future tours so as not to take too much time away from the community meeting. If a particular program or facility emerges as an important presenting problem, it will be best to take this tour during an



extended lunch period. This will provide an opportunity for the participants to discuss what they have observed when they return to the community meeting. A jail or prison tour may be useful if there are participants who focus exclusively on incarceration as the only, or the singly preferred sanctioning option. The tour may help these participants think about other ways to more effectively manage sub-populations now being housed in institutions. However, care should be taken not to allow such a tour to confirm earlier biases and to limit the vision of participants at this early stage of the process.

## **THE DEBRIEFING OR EXIT INTERVIEW**

The exit interview provides an opportunity for closure with the officials at the host site. These are the people that will plan and carry forward the next steps of the assessment. It will provide an opportunity for them to ask questions, provide them with a general understanding of what will be in the initial assessment report, allow them to think out their next steps, make assignments, and so forth. It should also clarify the short-term working relationship with NIC during the assessment process.

## **ASSESSMENT TEAM MEETING BEFORE DEPARTURE FROM THE SITE**

The assessment team should meet together prior to departure from the site for the purpose of pulling everything together. The most important activity will be to consolidate observations, findings, recommendations, and anything else which will be in the Initial System Assessment Report. This will require the assessment team to consolidate field notes, add detail to the Continuum of Sanctions Matrix and the Services and Sanctions Matrix Form, exchange documentation, come to agreement about what will be in the report, and so forth. Because the three-day on site work is intensive and demanding, it will be best if this meeting takes place early in the morning following the community meeting, just before departure from the site, rather than the evening of the third day, when everyone will be tired.

## **QUICK REVIEW: GOING ON SITE: CONDUCTING THE INITIAL SITE VISIT**

This section reviewed the purpose and activities of five major activities which are expected to take place during the initial site visit: getting there, the initial orientation to the site, conducting the interviews, the community meeting, the debriefing or exit interview, and the assessment team meeting prior to departure. These activities should equip the assessment team to prepare the initial system assessment report, discussed in *Chapter 8*, below.

**Checklist: Conducting the Initial Site Visit**

- The assessment team has assembled at the site and received an initial orientation to the current local situation.
- The assessment team has interviewed key participants and gained a basic understanding of the justice system, the sanctions which are in place, and the predominant issues facing the jurisdiction.
- A community meeting has taken place involving proper participants in an exploration of the sanctioning system and engaging the community in the initial phase of a strategic planning process focused on improving their system of sanctions.

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# Preparing the Initial System Assessment Report

**T**he primary purposes of the Initial System Assessment Report are to:

- diagnose and summarize the current situation;
- document the process and outcomes of the initial site visit; and
- initiate a strategic planning process which will, by intention, produce a more effective, more affordable system of sanctions.

The most important activities involve preparing the report and providing mechanisms for dissemination of the report within the host jurisdiction.

The Initial System Assessment Report will be prepared and delivered to the host jurisdiction within two weeks of the initial site visit. The report will provide immediate feedback and serve as a bridge between the initial site visit and subsequent steps in the assessment process. It will also serve as a synthesis and source document for the assessment team and the NIC Project Team that will continue working with the host site.

## THE REPORT OUTLINE

The assessment team will prepare a report that reflects the unique circumstances of the host jurisdiction and the personal style of the members of the assessment team. A general guide to the content of the report appears as a topical outline in *Section III: Tools and Resources*. Additional guidance concerning major sections of the report appears below.

### **Introductory Pages**

The report will begin with a short preface briefly telling the reader what the report is about and what the purpose of the report is. An executive summary can serve as an alternative to the preface and should be included if the report is long and/or complicated. A detailed table of contents will also be useful and should list the title and page number of each recommendation contained in the report.

### **The Request for Technical Assistance**

This section can simply document who prepared and submitted the application, which assessment team member was designated to interact with the site, when the application was approved, who contacted the assessment team members and what they were asked to do, some mention that the site participated in the selection and identification of the assessment team, who the Agency Contact Person was, and so forth. This section should also describe the circumstances which led to the request for assistance. This would characterize the situation at the host jurisdiction, as it is represented in the application.

### **Characteristics of the Jurisdiction**

This brief section should describe the geographic location, population size, community characteristics, and "personality" of the jurisdiction. It should demonstrate that the assessment team "got to know" the community, and be sufficient to give a reader who was not at the site a "picture" of the locale or setting in which the initial site work was conducted. Much of the material for this section can be obtained from the local chamber of commerce or economic development office.

### **Crime and the Justice System**

This section of the report would briefly describe the nature of the crime problem, particularly as it compares to other jurisdictions of similar size and circumstance, then profile the organization, workload, budgets, and personnel of the agencies of justice that make up the justice system: law enforcement, sheriff/jail, judiciary, prosecutor, defense, probation/parole, service providers, and community representatives. This will result in a brief system description or overview of the criminal justice system. A list of persons who were interviewed should appear in an appendix.

This section should also contain commentary about the system of sanctions that is in place in the jurisdiction. The Continuum of Sanctions Matrix and the Services and Sanctions Matrix might be presented here.

### **Discussion of Dimensions**

The text in the Crime and the Justice System section of the report can also be constructed by a discussion of each of the assessment dimensions addressed in *Section I, Chapter 4: The Multiple Dimensions of a Criminal Justice System*. For example, a discussion of the intergovernmental relations dimension might include the state and local relationship, current legislation, federal, state and local funding, and so forth. Major issues, concerns, or problems might be introduced as the justice agencies are described. This section of the report will be produced from the information collected while on site.

### **The Community Meeting**

This section of the report should summarize the community meeting and refer the reader to appendixes containing the agenda, a list of persons who attended the community meeting, copies of what was placed on newsprint, e.g. participant expectations, summaries of exercises, and so forth.

### **Observations**

This section should present the *preliminary* observations of the assessment team. The last on site assessment team meeting is the primary source for this information. The section might discuss justice system strengths and weaknesses, particularly as they affect the system of sanctions. Ideally, recommendations, which appear in the next section of the report, will be linked to these observations. The recommendations should somehow address, and suggest remedies for, the conditions which have been observed. The dimensions which were presented and discussed in *Section I, Chapter 4: The Multiple Dimensions of a Criminal Justice System* represent another useful construct for organizing the observations which could be contained in this section.

### **Recommendations**

This section should give each recommendation a number and title, then devote text to a discussion of the recommendation. It is difficult to specify examples in advance, however, it is reasonable to expect a few recommendations concerning the development or improvement of an intentional system of sanctions. The need for improved information should be a common finding. Similarly, recommendations for creating or strengthening a policy group can be expected. The report will be strengthened by any enumeration of items which need to be followed up, particularly ideas which can be attributed to local sources; that is, what came out of the interviews or the community meeting. Recommendations stated in this form will create and maintain momentum, and form a bridge to subsequent steps in the assessment process.

## **COLLECTING THE MISSING PIECES**

It will be inevitable that some information will be missing. Critical information may need to be obtained from the site after the initial site visit but prior to completing the initial assessment report. Telephone, fax, and written correspondence may make these missing materials available. Follow up telephone calls can be expected. Nevertheless, this report is an initial and preliminary one. In fact, part of the value of the exercise will be to determine just what is missing and needs to be gathered prior to the second assessment site visit. This will lead to findings, observations, and recommendations which may be discussed in the report. The point is that the report will be an interim document, prepared prior to accomplishing an in-depth understanding of the local situation.

## **GENERIC MATERIALS TO ADD TO THE REPORT APPENDIX**

The Program Manager and the NIC Project Team will work together to prepare a generic set of materials to include in the appendix of the initial site report. The Assessment Team Leader will be briefed on these materials as they are prepared. Examples might include a description of a typical continuum of sanctions or a comparative analysis. In addition, materials which have been identified elsewhere in this chapter might appear as appendixes to the report.

## **TRANSMITTING THE REPORT TO THE HOST SITE, NIC, AND THE ASSESSMENT TEAM**

The Assessment Team Leader, or the designated author of the initial site report, is responsible for sending the report to the Agency Contact Person and mailing copies of the report to the assessment team and the NIC. A letter of transmittal should accompany the document. This may be the place to encourage distribution of the report within the host jurisdiction, and formal submission of the report to the Board of County Commissioners for acceptance at one of their regular meetings, if the host site is a locality, or submission of the report to a cognizant state agency, when the host site is a state.

## **A QUICK REVIEW: PREPARING THE INITIAL SYSTEM ASSESSMENT REPORT**

The initial system assessment report will provide the jurisdiction with an impartial, independent, expert **preliminary assessment** of the justice system. This will result in a **diagnosis** in which the jurisdiction becomes involved in self-assessment and exploration of its values, justice goals and objectives, and the programs which are currently in place to accomplish these purposes. The report will also serve as a **summary** that documents the process and outcomes of the initial site visit. It will serve as a **foundation** for designing and planning the second assessment site visit, and can be used by persons and organizations who will be providing follow up training and technical assistance.

### **Checklist: Preparing the Initial Assessment Report**

The Initial System Assessment Report will provide the host community with:

- A synopsis of the activities that were carried out during the initial on site visit.
- A summary of the content of the materials reviewed, interviews and meetings which took place during the on site visit, including anonymous recapitulation of participant statements of major problems, issues, concerns, emerging ideas, strategies, and proposals.
- A description of the organization, workload, personnel, and budgeted resources of the justice system.
- A summary description of the existing continuum of sanctions.
- Observations and recommendations of the assessment team.

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# Preparing for Going on Site: Conducting the Second System Assessment Site Visit

**T**he primary purpose of the initial system assessment site visit was the establishment of a baseline of information about the criminal justice system in the host jurisdiction. By contrast, the primary purpose of the second system assessment site visit is to build upon the understanding that emerges from the baseline to engage key policy makers in the jurisdiction in a strategic planning process—to envision improvements in their system of sanctions and to plan how to achieve them. Activities during this second visit, then, will be geared more toward engaging policy makers in discussions and deliberations that will build consensus about that vision for the future and how to achieve it.

Of course, the primary goal of the first visit—a good baseline of information—may not have been completely accomplished even after the first site visit and follow-up activities. Hence, there will be some activities during the second site visit to complete and fill out the baseline understanding of current practice.

By this point in the process, the Assessment Team Leader should have established a working relationship with the Agency Contact Person and the assessment team as a whole should be fairly knowledgeable about the jurisdiction's presenting problems and existing criminal justice system. The assessment team will have prepared for and conducted an initial site visit and provided an initial report of their findings to the host jurisdiction. Further, the assessment team will have begun to identify gaps in knowledge and information on the assessment dimensions and, with NIC staff and the Agency Contact Person, will have begun to formulate possible technical assistance and training needs of the jurisdiction.

It is suggested at this point that the Assessment Team Leader review the tasks described in *Chapter 6: Before You Go On the Initial Site Visit* and *Chapter 7: Conducting the Initial Assessment Site Visit* since many of the logistical preparations for going on site are repeated in this step. A review of tasks in the previous steps will also provide a helpful checklist to the Assessment Team Leader to assure that all the tasks that should have been completed by this point in the process have actually been completed, and if they haven't been completed, there is an explicit plan for addressing those issues.

Many of the tasks described in this step in the process will have commenced during the preparation and conduct of the initial site assessment visit; thus, a primary purpose of this step as well as *Chapter 10: Conducting the Second Site Visit* is to "tie up all the loose ends." To this end, activities to be completed in this step include: (1) preparation of assessment team members and the contact person for the second system assessment site visit; and (2) identification of gaps in information and development of a plan for addressing those gaps. Specifically, develop an interview schedule with critical persons unable to be seen during the initial site visit and any others and gather remaining information necessary to analyze where the jurisdiction is on each of the assessment dimensions.

A third purpose of this step is to consider and plan for a policy group meeting. A more detailed discussion of this activity is described below.

## **CHECKING IN WITH THE AGENCY CONTACT PERSON**

### **Arranging the second assessment site visit**

It is the Assessment Team Leader's responsibility to communicate with the Agency Contact Person about the arrangements for the second assessment site visit. The dates for the second site visit should be confirmed as soon after the initial site visit as possible. Again, this will allow the assessment team to make airline reservations well in advance of travel dates, coordinate ground transportation at the site, and attend to any other logistical arrangements. In addition, the Assessment Team Leader should check in with the Agency Contact Person about the interview schedule, progress made in gathering additional materials, and the planning for the policy group meeting (if that is going to occur).

### **Reactions to the Initial System Assessment Report**

The Assessment Team Leader should also check in with the contact person about any preliminary reactions to the initial report: Have additional issues come up as a result? Does the report have implications for the policy group meeting or other activities that may be conducted during the second site visit?

### **Last Minute Telephone Follow-up**

Again, it may be helpful to conduct a final telephone conversation with the contact person just prior to the second site visit to address any last minute adjustments that may have to be made.

## **CONFERRING WITH ASSESSMENT TEAM MEMBERS**

The assessment team will have discussed their preliminary findings before departing the jurisdiction's initial site visit, determined how best to compile the initial report, identified gaps in information, determined a plan for gathering the missing pieces, and tentatively established dates for the second assessment site visit. After the initial report has been sent to the jurisdiction and assessment team members, but prior to the second site visit, the assessment team should meet (in person or via conference call) to discuss the status of the assessment process: Have additional interviews been scheduled? Have expected materials been received? Have assessment team members followed up on any individual assignments they may have agreed to do? How should additional information be incorporated into a final report? How does the jurisdiction stack up on each of the assessment dimensions? Has the jurisdiction decided to hold a policy group meeting? If so, how is the meeting shaping up? What additional work should assessment team members be prepared to do? Does the entire assessment team need to participate in the second site visit, or, is the workload such that on site work can be accomplished by fewer assessment team members?

This meeting could be a lengthy one depending on the complexity of the host site. The assessment team may wish to schedule the meeting at their debriefing session before leaving the jurisdiction's initial site visit and consider whether a couple of meetings between site visits, rather than one, is more desirable. In addition to keeping all assessment team members involved and informed, this meeting should assist the assessment team in finalizing their plan for conducting the second site visit and begin to suggest the information that may be included in a final report.

## **CORRESPONDING WITH THE AGENCY CONTACT PERSON**

Again, it may be helpful to confirm in writing the agreements or understandings between the assessment team and the host site in order to minimize the potential for misunderstandings and to help the contact person organize whatever activities may be required for a successful second site visit. This mailing may also include preliminary goals and an agenda for a policy group meeting, if appropriate. A sample of these is found on page 108 in *Section III: Tools and Resources*.

## **PLANNING FOR THE POLICY GROUP MEETING**

(For a more thorough discussion of policy groups, see *Section I, Chapter 4: The Multiple Dimensions of a System Assessment, The Policy Environment Dimension* and *Chapter 5: Establishing and Maintaining the Policy Team of the Intermediate Sanctions Handbook*.)

### **What is a Policy Group?**

A policy group is a committee or board of criminal justice policy makers, elected officials, and other key interest groups who have regular dialogue about their interests and concerns about their criminal justice system. In some jurisdictions, a formal commission or advisory board of representatives from different parts of the criminal justice system may already exist. In other jurisdictions, the notion of a policy group may be a completely new concept. Policy groups can be large or small, have far reaching authority and responsibilities, or simply be an informal discussion group.

#### **Why is a Policy Group Important?**

There are many reasons why a jurisdiction should consider forming a policy group (if they don't already have one), expanding an existing group, or consolidating a couple of existing groups. *First* and foremost, jurisdictions engaged in an assessment process who are sincere in their desire to make needed changes in their criminal justice system will require a broader perspective than a single agency or individual can provide. *Second*, if criminal justice system change is going to happen in a rational and planned manner, the development of system policy or a broader framework is critical. *Third*, without policy it is not clear who decides what particular sanctions are supposed to achieve and with whom. And *last*, policy makers who have participated in the development of criminal justice system policy are much more likely to have a stake in implementing those recommendations.

#### **When to Consider the Conduct of a Policy Group Meeting**

Obviously, if a policy group already exists, it is highly likely that assessment team members will have interviewed individual members of the group, met with a small group of policy group members, or even participated in a meeting with the full group during the initial site visit. In this situation, it is extremely desirable to conduct a full policy group meeting during the second site visit.

More likely, what will exist at a site is a small group of committed policy makers and/or agency staff who are trying to get something going in their jurisdiction. In this case, the assessment team's role may include assisting these individuals (primarily via telephone consultation) in forming a startup group of interested policy makers and staff whose responsibility it will be to identify potential policy group members.

Depending on the particular set of circumstances of the host site, how important they feel it is to establish a policy group, how quickly they feel they can move to form a group, and how advantageous they think it will be to meet during the site visit will dictate whether there should be a meeting of a startup group or even the first meeting of a larger policy group during the second site visit. The assessment team should be aware that there are implications for the length of time between the first and second site visit depending on the direction the host site chooses. For example, if there is an existing group that is meeting regularly or even an organized startup group that will meet, there could be less time between site visits than if a site decides to establish a policy group first in order to conduct a full policy group meeting during the second site visit. The assessment team should exercise its professional judgment about whether the host site is ready to form a policy group and/or hold a meeting. By the end of the initial site visit, the assessment team should have a good idea about whether the jurisdiction is prepared and ready to form a policy group or conduct a meeting. The assessment team

should also rely on their analysis of the site's Policy Environment Dimension along with the site's level of interest in planning and conducting a policy group meeting to make this decision.

### **Establishing a Policy Group**

If a policy group is to be established during the assessment process, the assessment team should work closely with the Agency Contact Person and any others who have taken a lead role in the assessment process to determine who should be invited to participate. Again, in some cases this will be the identification of a small startup group of interested policy makers and staff who have played a leadership role in the assessment process or who have been identified as a result of the initial assessment site visit. In other cases, an already organized startup group will work closely with the Assessment Team Leader to identify a representative group of policy makers, criminal justice system actors, elected officials, leaders, and community leaders be invited to a first policy group meeting.

When a startup group is considering who should be invited to a first policy group, careful thought should be given to the following types of issues: Is the group as a whole diverse? Is it representative of the criminal justice system? Does it represent different points of view? Who should be the chair? Who should invite policy makers to participate? Who is the convener of the policy group? Once these and other issues are resolved, potential members should be contacted personally by the Agency Contact Person or member of the startup group to brief them about the effort and invite them to become a member of the policy group.

A member of the start up group, or perhaps the Assessment Team Leader, should consider interviewing all members individually (if they haven't already been interviewed during the assessment process) to discuss what they want to get out of the policy group process and what their criminal justice system issues and concerns are. New members should also be provided with any written materials that may be available about the assessment program and NIC, preliminary findings of the assessment process, or other information about the criminal justice system. The assessment team, with NIC's assistance, should help the host site determine what types of materials would be appropriate for distribution and provide as much of these written materials as they can.

### **Planning for the Policy Group Meeting**

The planning and conduct of the policy group meeting is a collaborative process between the host site and assessment team members. The Assessment Team Leader should take the lead in planning the meeting along with those who will take primary responsibility for the policy group meeting at the host site. This person may or may not be the Agency Contact Person depending on what makes the most sense about who should convene the meeting, the relationship of the contact person and key policy makers, whether there is an established group with a staff, etc.

**ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:** Generally speaking, the host site will be responsible for meeting logistics—securing a meeting space, food and beverages, meeting supplies—corresponding with policy group members, and other tasks that require on site attention. The Assessment Team Leader will be responsible for the development

of the goals, agenda, and meeting materials in addition to actually facilitating the meeting on site. This planning effort will require ongoing telephone conversations with policy group leadership and staff to assure that the agenda meets their needs and expectations and that they play a significant role in shaping the policy group meeting. The Assessment Team Leader should also provide ongoing telephone consultation and support to the host site in all aspects of policy group meeting preparation.

**WHO SHOULD BE INVITED TO ATTEND:** If there is an existing policy group that has met regularly, it is evident who should attend the meeting. During the initial site visit, however, the assessment team may have discovered others who for whatever reason should be included on the group. The Assessment Team Leader should discuss the inclusion of additional members with the host site and whether they should be invited to attend the policy group meeting or whether there should be a discussion among the full policy group at the meeting about the inclusion of new members.

If a startup group is being formed, the Agency Contact Person or others who have played a leadership role in the assessment process will likely invite a small group of policy makers to attend the meeting. Each potential member should be contacted personally by the contact person or a policy maker to brief them about the effort and invite them to attend a meeting to explore the creation of a policy group and the findings of the assessment process. Of course, if the host site is in process of forming a policy group, the policy makers who have been identified as a result of that process should be invited to attend.

**DEVELOPING THE POLICY GROUP MEETING GOALS AND AGENDA:** The goals and agenda for the policy group meeting should be drawn from discussions with the Agency Contact Person, assessment team members, and policy group leadership and staff. A sample goals and agenda for a first policy group meeting can be found in *Section III: Tools and Resources*. It is strongly suggested that the Assessment Team Leader and host site plan for at least a half day, preferably a full day, meeting. There will likely be many issues to discuss as a result of the assessment process and its findings, and the group itself may have other topics to address as well. The Assessment Team Leader should take responsibility for drafting the goals and agenda and working with the host site to assure that the agenda will meet their objectives.

**CONTACTING POTENTIAL POLICY GROUP MEMBERS AND PREPARING THEM FOR THE POLICY GROUP MEETING:** If there is already an existing group, very little may be required in the way of preparing members for the meeting. Certainly a meeting date and time should be established and checked out with policy group members. Any preliminary meeting materials, including meeting goals and an agenda, should be disseminated to policy group members in advance of the meeting. If there are new members attending a policy group meeting of an existing group, the chair, staff, or other member of the group should consider meeting with new members in person prior to the meeting to brief them about the policy group and their efforts to date.

To prepare for a startup group meeting, the Assessment Team Leader should work closely with the Agency Contact Person and a few of the policy makers who have

taken a lead role in the assessment process to determine what written materials, if any, should be distributed to startup group members prior to the meeting. The assessment team, with NIC's assistance, should take primary responsibility for developing and compiling these materials for the site.

It is essential that members who are attending a policy group meeting for the first time be adequately prepared for the meeting. Much of this preparation will be in the form of verbal communication during the individual interviews as a result of the assessment process or through the process of forming a policy group. In addition, written materials, once they have been determined, should be disseminated to the policy group members along with the preliminary goals and agenda for the meeting. Again, the assessment team, with NIC, should take primary responsibility for developing and compiling these materials for the policy group.

In sum, if a meeting is going to be held during the second site visit, it is suggested that written correspondence be sent to all participants by the meeting convener prior to the meeting. Possible items to be included are: (1) a cover letter thanking participants for agreeing to attend and reminding participants of the date, time and place of the meeting; (2) the tentative meeting goals and agenda; (3) a list of other participants; (4) a copy of the Initial System Assessment Report or summary of preliminary assessment findings; (5) other materials tailored to the jurisdiction's needs, including information about NIC and the assessment program. The Assessment Team Leader should work closely with the host site to determine which items should be included and assist in the preparation of the written packet.

**POLICY GROUP MEETING LOGISTICS:** As stated above, the host site should take responsibility for the majority of the on site logistical arrangements. This includes finding an adequate meeting space for the size group expected. If possible, it is suggested that the meeting space be away from offices so that participants will not be distracted. It is also recommended that meals, break foods, and beverages be provided. Attending to the personal needs of meeting participants will help them feel more at ease and allow them to focus on the substance of the meeting. Lastly, it is suggested that social time or team building be structured into the agenda so that participants, especially new members, are provided an opportunity to get to know each other.

## **A QUICK REVIEW: PREPARING FOR THE SECOND ASSESSMENT SITE VISIT**

This most important thing to do at this stage in the process is to identify the missing pieces and develop a plan for addressing them. Obviously, the assessment team should prepare itself adequately for the second site visit and plan for the policy group meeting to assure that the site visit is conducted as effectively and efficiently as possible.



### **Checklist: Preparing for the Second Assessment Site Visit**

- The assessment team has conferred, reviewed all the work to date, and determined the status of the assessment.
- An interview schedule has been developed and a plan for gathering outstanding data, information, and materials has been agreed on by the assessment team and the host jurisdiction.
- The assessment team has discussed who among the team should participate in the second assessment site visit.
- A policy group meeting has been considered, and where appropriate, has been planned.
- The Assessment Team Leader and assessment team facilitator have had ongoing contact with the on site coordinator and others at the host site to plan for the policy group meeting, if appropriate, and to arrange the second assessment site visit.
- Assessment team members and the host site are prepared and ready for the second assessment site visit.

NOTES:

# Going on Site: Conducting the Second System Assessment Site Visit

## **G**ETTING THERE

Assessment team members should again plan to arrive at the airport at about the same time to coordinate ground transportation and to have time to meet together before beginning the on site assessment work.

## **MEETING WITH THE AGENCY CONTACT PERSON AND HOST SITE LEADERSHIP**

Generally speaking, it is always a good idea to check in with the Agency Contact Person first. This individual can alert assessment team members to any last minute adjustments or other issues that team members should know. Likewise, team members can confirm the schedule and issues to be addressed while on site.

## **TYING UP THE LOOSE ENDS**

Again, assessment team members will be engaged in the following types of on site activities to gather the missing pieces of information for the assessment.

- The conduct of interviews—both those who were identified and unable to be interviewed during the first site visit and others who were identified as a result of the assessment process.

- Gathering additional information—Assessment team members may need to visit certain programs or agencies in order to gather remaining information and data they need to complete the assessment.

## CONDUCTING THE POLICY GROUP MEETING

### On Site Preparation

The Assessment Team Leader should check in with the contact person or whoever else on site is managing the planning of the policy group meeting early on in the second site visit. Again, it is always a good idea to check in with meeting planners to assure that all the meeting arrangements have been addressed. The Assessment Team Leader may also wish to see the meeting site, make suggestions about the room arrangements, check in with the chair or leadership of the group, make sure that meeting materials have arrived, confirm the meeting attendance, and make sure that meeting materials like flipcharts, markers, notepads, and pencils are available.

It should be noted that the Assessment Team Leader may be fully engaged in preparing for the policy group meeting and unable to participate in other on site activities. The assessment team should consider how involved the Assessment Team Leader could become in meeting preparation while on site and plan accordingly so that other on site activities can be completed in the time allowed.

### When Should the Meeting Occur?

It is suggested that the policy group meeting occur on the last day of the site visit. In this way, the assessment team will have an opportunity to complete the interviews, re-acclimate themselves to the jurisdiction, and address remaining gaps in information prior to the policy group meeting. In fact, some of the information collected during the second site visit may be critical to the policy group meeting agenda. Of course, this will also give the Assessment Team Leader time to assure that the policy group meeting has been well prepared.

### Roles

Both the chair or leadership of the group, the staff (if there is any), and the Assessment Team Leader are critical to the conduct of a well run policy group meeting. The staff and chair have probably had primary on site responsibility for meeting planning and will know the most about what should happen and who will be attending. They can help new members feel at ease and address any questions that members may have. Generally, the *chair* or leadership of the group should open the meeting and welcome members, and then turn the meeting over to the Assessment Team Leader.

The *Assessment Team Leader*, of course, is responsible for running the meeting: making sure that everyone at the meeting is heard and gets an opportunity to speak, keeping the group on task within the time allowed, capturing ideas and issues on flipchart, helping the group come to consensus on issues, and generally tending to the overall conduct of the meeting.

Other assessment team members will likely play a role at the policy group meeting. For example, the NIC staff person may discuss future technical assistance and training opportunities available to the jurisdiction. Other assessment team members may play specific roles on the agenda, like presenting assessment findings or assisting the facilitator in the conduct of the meeting. An assessment team member should also take responsibility for compiling the flipcharts and meeting notes for inclusion in the final report.

### **Goals and Agenda**

Below are examples of the kinds of goals the policy group may wish to achieve at a policy group meeting during the second assessment site visit. It should be noted that these goals are illustrative; it is not likely that a policy group will be able to achieve all of these goals at one meeting.

- To review the preliminary findings of the assessment.
- To learn about the assessment program and the technical assistance and training opportunities that may be available to the jurisdiction through the NIC.
- To learn how other policy makers view the current criminal justice system.
- To learn if there are shared goals and/or dissatisfactions with the current criminal justice system.
- To discuss and agree on what the group is trying to accomplish as a whole.
- To determine who else needs to be involved in order to succeed.
- To develop a vision of success.
- To meet new members and learn more about all the members of the policy group.
- To define the goals and objectives of the group.
- To develop an action agenda for immediate next steps.
- To agree on operating principles.

An example of the agenda items that could be discussed at a policy group meeting are detailed below.

**ESTABLISHING OPERATING PRINCIPLES AND GROUP NORMS:** If the policy group is meeting for the first time, it will be important to establish ground rules and discuss how the group, as a whole, wants to operate. For example, will the group make decisions regardless of who is present at a meeting or will a quorum be required? Is the group subject to open meeting laws and must it advertise all of its meetings in advance? Will the group operate somewhat informally or will they abide by Robert's Rules? Is there a chair of the group? If not, how will a chair be selected? How often will the policy group meet?

**DISCUSSION OF THE SYSTEM ASSESSMENT AND AVAILABLE ASSISTANCE FROM NIC:** The policy group meeting affords a good opportunity to discuss the Criminal Justice System Project and its plans for the coming year. In addition, this would be a good opportunity for the NIC staff person to discuss available technical assistance and training that the jurisdiction can expect as a result of participating in the assessment process.

**EXAMINING THE CURRENT CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM: A REVIEW OF THE PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT FINDINGS:** A primary reason for the policy group meeting is to review, as a group, the preliminary findings of the system assessment. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current criminal justice system? What are key decision makers' perceptions of the system? What are the benefits and challenges to making agreed upon changes in the system? Who needs to be involved for change to occur? This is also a good opportunity for policy group members to test each other's perceptions of the criminal justice system. What does each member feel is working well in the system; what are the problems? How do these perceptions stack up against the findings of the system assessment.

**SCANNING THE ENVIRONMENT:** The purpose of scanning the environment is to make sure that the policy group does not overlook major issues in the community that could effect its work. What are the "ideas in good currency;" or the beliefs and thoughts that influence current philosophy, practice, and resource allocation? What is operating in the larger community that could really impact on the work of the group?

**DEFINING A VISION FOR SUCCESS:** Sometimes it is helpful to a group that is just getting started to figure out what their vision for the criminal justice system is. Their own perceptions, the system assessment findings, and other hard data about their criminal justice system should give them a good idea about what their current system looks like, but unless they can agree on where it is they want to be in the future, it will be difficult to develop a plan of action to bridge the gap between "where we are" and "where we want to be." One exercise to help a group define their vision for success is known as the "machine exercise." The group is asked to characterize their current criminal justice system as a machine. What machine would it be and what would it look like? Next, the group is asked to consider the future. What machine represents what they would like their system to look like? The group then discusses the differences between the two machines. This is a good way to build consensus among policy group members for building a common vision. The machine exercise is included in *Section III: Tools and Resources*.

**CONDUCTING A POWER ANALYSIS:** A power analysis is an exercise that the group may wish to conduct when they have decided to establish a larger policy group. A power analysis can help a group identify who may or may not support the effort, and why. This can help a group decide who should be on the policy group, who should be kept informed, and who may oppose the effort no matter what the group does.

**DEFINING A MISSION/SETTING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:** Again, defining a mission, goals, and objectives is always a good way for a new group to get started. What are the hopes and fears that each policy group member has for this effort? What do members think are reasonable goals for the first year of the effort? Should the group really be engaged in this work at this time?

**DEVELOPMENT OF AN ACTION AGENDA FOR IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS:** It is always a good idea to develop a concrete list of tasks to be completed before ending the policy group meeting. This will give policy group members a sense that things are moving; that this is a serious group of policy makers who intend to get things done. In

addition to listing tasks, time frames and assignments should also be discussed. Who will complete each task? When should it be done? Who will report on progress at the next meeting?

## **DEBRIEFING**

Again, it is strongly recommended that the assessment team conduct an exit interview with the Agency Contact Person and host site leadership. This will allow for discussion of the policy group meeting: what happened, did people feel it was a successful meeting, are there follow up steps that should be taken? The debriefing session will also allow for a discussion of the overall assessment process, what the jurisdiction can expect in the way of a final report and when they should expect to receive it, and what NIC can offer in the way of technical assistance and training. Lastly, the debriefing session should be used to define next steps, make assignments, and set time frames so that the host site and the assessment team continue to keep the assessment process moving.

## **ASSESSMENT TEAM MEETING**

Assessment team members should plan to meet before departing from the site in order to review the status of the assessment, discuss the findings and recommendations that should be in the final report, and to make assignments for completing the work.

## **A QUICK REVIEW: CONDUCTING THE SECOND SYSTEM ASSESSMENT SITE VISIT**

This step discussed the major issues that should be addressed while conducting the second site visit. Most importantly, the assessment team should be tying up all the loose ends: completing interviews, gathering missing pieces of data and information, and clarifying the answers to any unanswered questions. Secondly, the assessment team will conduct and participate in a policy group meeting.

### **Checklist: Conducting the Second Assessment Site Visit**

- The assessment team has arrived on site and met with the agency contact person and host site leadership.
- The Assessment Team Leader and on site meeting planners have met and attended to all policy group meeting arrangements, if appropriate.
- Assessment team members have conducted interviews and gathered what information they need to complete the assessment.
- A policy group meeting has been conducted, if appropriate.
- The assessment team, contact person and host site leadership have met to debrief the site visit and to discuss next steps.
- The assessment team has met prior to departure to discuss the status of the assessment, possible final report recommendations, and to make assignments.

NOTES:

# Completing the Second System Assessment Report

**T**he assessment team has likely discussed the content of the Second System Assessment Report at their meeting before departing the host site. This report will complement and build upon the first, but will be a separate document. At that meeting, the assessment team will have discussed any new observations or conclusions they may have discovered, and the specific recommendations that should be cited in the report. Assessment team members should also have discussed how they intend to complete the report, make assignments, and set a deadline for transmitting the report to the host site. It is suggested that the report be completed and disseminated within two to three weeks of completing the second site visit.

It is not assumed that the Assessment Team Leader will write the entire report, but certainly he or she is responsible for coordinating and compiling the report into a coherent summary of findings and recommendations that can be used by the host site as an evaluation of their current criminal justice system and as a road map for future action. The report will also serve as final documentation of the assessment phase of the Initiative for the particular site and provide much needed information to NIC and the Program Manager about their future involvement with the site.

## THE REPORT OUTLINE

The report should follow on the Initial System Assessment Report. It is not necessary to create an entirely new report from scratch. Rather, the Second System Assessment Report should be a complete appraisal (as complete as possible, that is) of the jurisdiction's criminal justice system. In this way, the second report might include already written sections of the initial report with refinements, additions, clarifications, and comments received by the site, NIC, and assessment team members.



In addition, it is assumed that several materials will be appended to the report. It is difficult to say just what those materials will be at this point. A general outline of the sections of the report are included in *Section III: Tools and Resources*.

### **Introductory Pages**

Again, the report should include a NIC disclaimer, a short preface or executive summary, and a table of contents. This should help the reader understand at a glance what the purpose of the report is and what can be found in each section of the report. A table of contents, obviously, will help organize the report and help readers find each section of the report more easily.

### **The Request for Technical Assistance, Characteristics of the Jurisdiction, Crime and the Justice System**

These sections will likely be the same that were included in the initial report (see *Chapter 8: Preparing the Initial System Assessment Report*). Of course, there may be refinements and clarifications that should be incorporated into these sections at this time, for example, a complete review of all system assessment activities including the second site visit should be added here. Any comments that the site, NIC, or assessment team members have about the initial report should also be included. A completed Matrix of Sanctions Form may also be included.

### **The Policy Group Meeting**

This section of the report should summarize the policy group meeting: major issues discussed, outcomes, and next steps. In addition, the reader should be referred to the appendix of the report for the following: goals and agenda of the meeting, list of participants, and a summary of the meeting including any information written on flipchart paper.

### **The Multiple Dimensions of a System Assessment**

*This is the crux of the final report.* Each dimension should be reported on in great detail. All of the questions that each dimension seeks to answer should be addressed, observations noted, an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the system on each dimension, and other issues related to the system assessment dimensions. If the assessment team was not successful in finding answers to some of the dimensions, for whatever reason, these should be noted as well.

This will probably be a very lengthy section of the report and possibly even a stand-alone document. The reader should walk away from this section of the report with a clear understanding of the dynamics at work in the jurisdiction and all the elements that influence and shape what the jurisdiction's current criminal justice system looks like. This section essentially serves as the baseline of information for the jurisdiction. Refer to *Section I, Chapter 4: The Multiple Dimensions of a System Assessment* for a detailed discussion of the assessment dimensions.

### **Recommendations**

This section of the report should summarize and advise the jurisdiction on issues that should be tended to and strategies that could assist the jurisdiction in achieving their vision for success and reaching the criminal justice goals and objectives they have set

for themselves. This section may include a discussion of technical assistance and training opportunities available to the site that translates into possible strategies for making identified changes in their criminal justice system.

#### **Next Steps**

This section of the report should summarize any agreements made between the site, NIC, and the Program Manager in terms of future involvement. This could include a summary of the specific technical assistance and training that NIC may have agreed to provide, or at least, a discussion of when and how technical assistance and training decisions will be made. This section should also gently remind the jurisdiction of steps they agreed to tackle on their own (i.e. holding regular policy group meetings, filling out an application for an NIC training, applying for grant funds from a different agency). It may also include any agreements or plans that NIC has discussed with the site about the evaluation component of the Initiative.

#### **Additional Resources**

This section could be included as an appendix to the final report. It should review national and local resources available to the jurisdiction. This could include a list of practitioners, their addresses and phone numbers, who are knowledgeable about a particular topic important to the jurisdiction that they could contact; a listing of all NIC Academy training opportunities; a listing of relevant grant funds available from other federal or state agencies; additional resources where the jurisdiction can locate information such as the NIC Information Center or the National Criminal Justice Reference Service.

## **TRANSMITTING THE SECOND REPORT**

The Assessment Team Leader is responsible for sending the report to the Agency Contact Person, assessment team members, the Program Manager, and NIC. A letter of transmittal should accompany the report. Again, the contact person should be encouraged to disseminate the report to others on site, such as sponsors of the system assessment, policy group members, and other policy makers.

## **A QUICK REVIEW: PREPARING THE SECOND SYSTEM ASSESSMENT REPORT**

The Second System Assessment Report will provide the jurisdiction with a complete analysis of their criminal justice system. The report also serves as documentation of the assessment process, recommendations for future action, and any agreements reached between NIC and the site.

### **Checklist: Completing the Second System Assessment Report**

- The assessment team has conferred and determined who will write which sections of the report and when the report will be completed and transmitted to the site.
  
- The report has been finalized and includes the following:
  - an overview of the activities that occurred during the assessment phase of the Initiative;
  - a detailed analysis of each of the system assessment dimensions;
  - a discussion of recommendations for change;
  - a discussion of next steps, including any agreements made between NIC and the site and any technical assistance and training that will be provided.
  
- The report has been transmitted to the site, NIC, assessment team members, and the Program Manager.

NOTES:

# Reviewing System Assessment Findings With NIC

**T**he NIC staff person, who is a member of the assessment team, will brief the jurisdiction on the training, site facilitation and technical assistance services available under the Criminal Justice System Project. This briefing may occur in several phases--at a policy group meeting, if appropriate, during the exit interview on final report recommendations and action agenda items, and in a follow-up meeting or telephone conference call. It is not a foregone conclusion that all jurisdictions will choose to proceed with expanded policy development efforts following the assessment phase.

The services which NIC is prepared to offer sites will include:

**Seminars for Policy Teams.** Following the system assessment phase, NIC will offer up to a 3½-day seminar for policy teams from 2 or 3 jurisdictions at a time. In some cases, a seminar may be offered for a single state if there are multiple local jurisdictions engaged in the work. NIC will pay the travel and per diem expenses for 6 to 8 criminal justice officials and community leaders from each participating jurisdiction (state, county, judicial district) to attend the seminar. The seminar curriculum will be geared to the specific needs of the jurisdictions. It will focus on key elements of the work needed to advance their action agendas to develop sound policy regarding the use of sanctions, further work on building productive teams of policy makers who can work together effectively to accomplish their goals, the various roles of information in developing sentencing policy, and action planning.

**Site Coordination and Technical Assistance.** Through a competitively awarded contract, NIC will provide the expertise to assist the ongoing work of the policy teams. In most cases, this will include a site coordinator who will act as a partner, facilitator, and co-strategist to the team and will arrange other critical technical assistance following the system assessment phase. An NIC staff member assigned to each site will be responsible for working with the site coordinator to ensure that other training, techni-

cal assistance, and information services available from NIC are accessed to facilitate achievement of the sites' goals.

Following are some examples of areas in which technical assistance may be provided to jurisdictions.

- Establishing, redefining, or maintaining productive policy teams.
- Strategic planning and the policy development process.
- Information development and management, which include improving the capacity to develop good baseline information on how the system operates, monitor sentencing dispositions and their impacts on offenders, identify populations for new and existing sanctions, and conduct evaluations.
- Strategies for building public support, including media relations, community relations, marketing, public opinion polls, and external communications.
- Developing and implementing correctional programs.

**Jurisdiction Support from NIC staff person on Criminal Justice System Project team.** Each jurisdiction choosing to continue in the Project following the assessment phase will be assigned an NIC manager-liaison who will work with the policy team and the contract site coordinator to assure that his or her client is aware of other training and technical assistance opportunities from throughout NIC which would contribute to the success of the overall effort.

## SECTION III

# Tools and Resources

This section is a compilation of materials which should be of assistance in completing a criminal justice system assessment. They are arranged into five chapters:

### **Chapter 13: Templates**

*These are formats for documents that you may want to adapt to use during your system assessment. They include sample letters, report outlines, invitations, agendas, etc.*

Letter #1 to the Agency Contact Person  
Letter #2 to the Agency Contact Person  
Initial System Assessment Report Outline  
Second System Assessment Report Outline  
Sample Community Meeting Invitation  
Sample Community Meeting Agenda  
Example Comparative Analysis  
Sample Goals and Agenda for a First Policy Group Meeting

### **Chapter 14: Aids to Data Collection**

*These are tools that may assist in assembling various kinds of information that you will be collecting during the course of a system assessment.*

Sample Interview Schedule and List of Persons to Interview  
Continuum of Sanctions Matrix  
Sanctions and Services Matrix

### **Chapter 15: Action Lists and Guides**

*These are checklists and to do lists to help you through various stages of the system assessment along with some specific exercises you might want to undertake as part of your policy team meeting.*

Agency Contact Person Tasks and Responsibilities Checklist

Sanctions Options Checklist

Criminal Justice System Checklist

Local Government and Community Checklist

Community Meeting Checklist

Suggested List of Persons to Invite to the Community Meeting

Example Policy Group Meeting Exercises

■ Power Analysis Exercise

■ Achieving a Vision of Success

### **Chapter 16: Presentation Aids**

*These materials may be used during presentations at a community meeting or a policy group meeting to illustrate some of the interactions within the criminal justice system.*

### **Chapter 17: General Information**

*These materials are a mixed collection of information that may be of interest as you are considering whether or not to undertake a program analysis or during its completion.*

Synopsis of Dimension Questions--This simply lists the kinds of questions you would want to explore as you understand and define each dimension of your criminal justice system.

Other Resources—This section lists a few Basic Reference Documents and identifies a few data bases and information services that might be helpful.

Program Announcement and Information on NIC

# Templates

## Letter #1 to the Agency Contact Person

The following letter has been prepared as an example of a letter which might be sent to the agency contact person to summarize initial telephone conversations between the Assessment Team Leader and the agency contact person. It puts into writing those things which will help the agency contact person prepare for the site visit. Think of this letter as a guide not a requirement. If a letter like this seems like a good idea, use this one as a template and modify it as needed.

A second sample letter is also included with these resource materials. These letters might be combined, or become a series of more than two letters, depending upon your assessment of the need for written correspondence with the jurisdiction. A similar set of letters might be prepared in advance of the second site visit.



Date  
Name of Agency Contact Person  
Title of Agency Contact Person  
Address

Dear (Name of Agency Contact Person):

This will follow-up our phone conversations concerning the Criminal Justice System Assessment you have requested from the National Institute of Corrections (NIC).

The purposes of this letter are to handle some basic logistics, provide you with some background information about the members of the assessment team, summarize our view of what a Criminal Justice System Assessment involves, and help get you started with preparations for our visit.

NIC has asked (names of members of assessment team here) to visit (name of jurisdiction here). We are arranging our travel so that we will be in (name of place) by (day, time, and date). We can start out as early on (day) (date) as you wish.

We would like our first appointment to be with you and/or persons you believe we need to see to get us oriented. We could do this at a breakfast meeting, or it could be our first meeting on (first day of initial visit). If there are tours to programs and facilities, we ought to do these early during our visit, too.

We would like to devote the rest of the first two days on site to conducting interviews. The third day of the visit, (day), should be reserved for an all day community meeting. We would like to finish up by 5:00 p.m. on (day) (date).

It might help you to start with a short summary of who we are: (Enter short summaries of bios here.)

I promised to outline our view of what a criminal justice system assessment involves. The following will summarize what is detailed in A Guide to a Criminal Justice System Assessment: A Work in Progress, which I have enclosed with this letter.

The system assessment is part of the NIC's Criminal Justice System Project. This Initiative is being mounted to help jurisdictions develop a more coordinated, rational, and cost-effective system of correctional sanctions and punishments. The program builds on many years of NIC experience with assistance efforts that take a "systemic" approach to addressing criminal justice issues.

The program will involve a policy team of key state and local criminal justice leaders in a strategic planning process to develop and implement policy regarding the design, use, capacity, and cost of a coordinated system of sanctions. During the first year, your jurisdiction will receive a criminal justice system assessment. Your jurisdiction will receive a report summarizing the findings of the assessment and recommendations for further action. The assessment work will be followed by access to technical assistance and training.

The initial work of the Initiative will develop preliminary baseline information about how the sanctioning system currently operates in your jurisdiction. The assessment will be conducted by NIC staff, consultants, and practitioners in the field. Through extensive interviews and review of available data, the assessment will examine:

- What is occurring with the various sanctioning components for pretrial defendants and sentenced offenders, i.e. jail, prison, intermediate sanctions, pretrial services, prosecutorial and/or defender operated diversion programs, probation, and parole.
- The processing of defendants and cases through the justice process and coordination between and among justice system agencies.
- Your jurisdiction's capacity to develop and modify its sanctioning components to enhance system effectiveness and efficiency. This will include an examination of the capacity to collect and compile information to support policy development efforts.
- Factors in the political environment and among key criminal justice stakeholders that either support or impede positive change.

The Criminal Justice System Assessment may also include a community meeting that includes the key criminal justice decision makers who have been interviewed during the first two days of the on site visit, officials of general government, service providers, and others to discuss preliminary findings, explore and obtain additional advice concerning options, provide information, and initiate action planning.

A number of intermediate and practical benefits should be realized by each participating jurisdiction:

- Greater agreement among criminal justice agencies regarding the appropriate use of specific sanctions, resources, and options.
- Creation and refinement of specific written policies regarding desired outcomes, target offender populations, screening procedures, intervention approaches, and capacity and costs of individual sanctions within a continuum of sanctions.
- Routine, systematic information gathering, increased use of information in decision making, and increased sharing of information and resources across system components.
- An opportunity to consider the increased use of objective offender risk and needs assessment instruments.
- Improved capacity of criminal justice agencies to monitor critical decisions and functions and increased ability to forecast the potential impact of proposed changes on the criminal justice system.

I have enclosed a content outline of the report which I will prepare with the help of the other members of the assessment team. This outline will give you a pretty detailed picture of the scope of our visit. It should also serve to advise you of the information we will need, either in advance of our visit, or which will need to be provided to us when we are on site. Clearly, because of the pace of activities when we are on site, it will help to have information that we can read before our visit. I will call you with details as a follow up to this letter.

◀ The content outline of the assessment report which is to be prepared following the initial site visit is also in the TOOLS AND RESOURCES section of this document, p. 87.

A sample interview schedule also appears in the TOOLS AND RESOURCES section of this document, p. 107.

This paragraph should only be included if a community meeting is being planned as part of the initial site visit. Similar language can be developed to describe a policy group meeting, if that is to be substituted for the community meeting during the initial site visit. A sample agenda for a typical community meeting is included in the TOOLS AND RESOURCES section of this document, p. 90.

Please take time to review the attached document, A Criminal Justice System Assessment Guide, to give you an idea of the kind of work that will take place during the system assessment. Of course, the assessment will be tailored to your specific situation. The enclosed sample interview schedule will provide you with an example of the types of people it will be helpful for us to see during the first two days of our visit.

A typical agenda for the community meeting is also enclosed. I want to work with you to tailor an agenda for this meeting. This sample can serve as a starting point.

This paragraph should only be included if a community meeting is being planned as part of the initial site visit. Similar language can be developed to describe a policy group meeting, if that is to be substituted for the community meeting during the initial site visit. A sample agenda for a typical community meeting is included in the TOOLS AND RESOURCES section of this document.

Finally, I would like to offer to sit down with a small group of the leadership to debrief before our departure from your jurisdiction. This will allow us to sum up before we leave and let you know what to expect in our report. It will also give us an opportunity to plan for the second site visit. Please give some thought as to whether you want us to do this or not and, if you do, think about who you want involved in this final debriefing. It's your call.

Please review the enclosed materials. I will call you soon after you get them. I can answer any questions you have and go into more detail, if that will help. Setting up the interviews should be a high priority; we are relying on you to do the scheduling.

I have provided copies of this letter to the other members of the assessment team, to NIC, and to the Program Manager.

If you have any questions or need assistance, please feel free to call me at work (phone #) or at home (phone #). I look forward to working with you.

Very truly yours,

(Signature here)  
(Enter title here)

cc: Other members of Assessment Team  
NIC  
Program Manager

## Letter #2 to the Agency Contact Person

This letter is an example of a second or subsequent letter which might be sent to the Agency Contact Person prior to the initial site visit. Like Letter #1, this letter is merely a template, or example. And, if the assessment team chooses to use it as a starting place, it will need to be tailored to fit the specific situation.

Date

Name of Agency Contact Person

Title of Agency Contact Person

Address

Dear (enter name of Agency Contact Person here):

I am sending the enclosed to you today in anticipation of a telephone call with you next week.

My purpose in sending these pages to you is to help you prepare materials for our visit, and to provide you with more concrete suggestions about the people we believe we will need to see when we are visiting you.

The enclosed pages are from appendices which appear in the Guide, which I sent to you earlier, so you may have seen them before. Think of them as a guide, not something you must follow without variation.

It would be helpful if you would review the following:

- Requesting Agency Tasks and Responsibilities
- Sanctioning Options Checklist (one for each sanction)
- Criminal Justice System Checklist
- Local Government and Community Checklist
- Community Meeting Checklist
- Suggested List of Persons to Invite to the Community Meeting

We can discuss these lists when we talk on the phone next week.

I am also writing to begin preparing a comparative analysis. This analysis will serve as an example of the type of cross-jurisdiction information that will be useful for establishing a context for the administration of sanctions in your jurisdiction.

I am also willing to prepare the beginnings of a comparative analysis. In order to complete the comparative analysis, I will need data for each of the counties in your state. If you can supply the basic data, I can prepare these materials before we arrive. Some of this information may not be readily available. Do not do any special data collection to get this together. Let's begin with what can easily be pulled together. Ideally, here is what I will need:

(Sample copies of these checklists appear in the TOOLS AND RESOURCES section of the Guide, Chapter 15.)

(An example of a comparative analysis also appears in the TOOLS AND RESOURCES section of the Guide, p. 91.)

- reported crime, by county
- arrests by county, broken down by adult/juvenile and felony/misdemeanor (or Part I and Part II arrests)
- total population, by county (as well as adult and juvenile populations by county, if you can get it)
- jail admissions, average daily population, length of stay in each county (or judicial district)
- number of adults and juveniles under supervision in each county or, if not available by county, in each judicial district. (Provide one day counts by type of supervision if it is available)
- the number of court filings, by type of filing and by level of court, if it is available; same information for the number of court dispositions, and type of disposition if that is available
- state commitments by county (prison, state commitments of youth, etc.)
- number of probation/parolees revoked, by county, or by judicial district; number of technical versus new terms
- any expenditure information by justice function; for example, expenditures for police, courts, corrections, by county or judicial district

We can discuss the construction of the comparative analysis when we talk on the phone next week.

Very truly yours,

(enter your signature here)

(enter your name and title here)

cc: (List persons who are to receive copies here)

# Initial System Assessment Report Outline

This topical outline should serve as a guide for the preparation of the Initial System Assessment Report which is to be written after the completion of the initial site visit. While additional material may be added depending upon the nature of the assessment and the jurisdiction involved, the report outline includes sections which are expected to be covered. *Section II, Chapter 8: Preparing the Initial System Assessment Report* describes these sections of the report in more detail.

- A. Executive Summary
- B. The Request for Technical Assistance
- C. Characteristics of the Jurisdiction
- D. Crime and the Justice System
  - 1. Nature of the Crime Problem
  - 2. Justice System Overview and Justice Agency Profiles
    - a. Major Issues and Concerns
  - 3. Description of the Sanctioning System
    - a. Major Issues and Concerns
- E. Discussion of the Dimensions
- F. The Community Meeting
- G. Observations
- H. Recommendations

## Appendices

- Summary or abstract of approved application for funds
- List of persons who were interviewed
- Comparative Analysis
- Matrix of Sanctions Form
- Community Meeting Agenda
- List of Participants at the Community Meeting
- Summary of the Community Meeting and Outcomes
- Baseline data to be used in the evaluation

## Second System Assessment Report Outline

This outline serves as a guide for the preparation of the Second System Assessment Report, which is to be written after the completion of the second site visit. While additional material may be added depending upon the nature of the assessment and the jurisdiction involved, the report outline includes sections which are expected to be covered. *Section II, Chapter 11: Completing the Second System Assessment Report* describes these sections of the report in more detail.

- A. Executive Summary
  - B. The Request for Technical Assistance (including an overview of all assessment activities)
  - C. Characteristics of the Jurisdiction
  - D. Crime and the Justice System
    - 1. Nature of the Crime Problem
    - 2. Justice System Overview and Justice Agency Profiles
      - a. Major Issues and Concerns
    - 3. Description of the Sanctioning System
      - a. Major Issues and Concerns
  - E. The Policy Group Meeting
  - F. The Multiple Dimensions of a System Assessment
  - G. Recommendations
  - H. Next Steps
  - I. Additional Resources
- Appendices

## Sample Community Meeting Invitation

### Community Meeting:

THE ASSESSMENT OF  
THE WASHINGTON COUNTY JUSTICE SYSTEM  
provided by the U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections

**Wednesday, September 27, 1995**

**8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

(Box lunch included with R.S.V.P. — limited to 80 registrants)

### Commissioners' Small Hearing Room

Washington County Courts and Administration Building  
100 Washington County Parkway, Anytown, Anystate

### Assessment Team:

Robert Cushman • Center for Urban Analysis • Santa Clara County, CA  
Billy Wasson • Director of Corrections • Marion County, Salem, OR

You are invited to participate...identify issues...express concerns...influence the direction for the future

Reviewing all components of system, how agencies better interact,  
experiences of other jurisdictions

This event is sponsored by the County to develop a clear understanding  
of justice system needs and public safety expectations for the future.

**R.S.V.P. 271-4840  
before September 25**

John Smith  
Commissioner

Betty Miller  
Commissioner

John P. Rock  
Commissioner

Lauren Williams  
Sheriff

John Doe  
Presiding County

Catherine Phillips  
Chief Judge  
Court Judge

Tom Jones  
District Attorney



# Sample Community Meeting Agenda

**Community Meeting:**

Wednesday, September 27, 1995

Commissioners' Hearing Room #2

Washington County Courts and Administration Building  
100 Washington County Parkway, Anytown, Anystate

- 8:00 a.m.      Registration
- 8:30 a.m.      Welcome and Introductions  
John Smith, Chair, Jefferson County Board of County Commissioners  
Tom Jones, District Attorney  
Lauren Williams, Sheriff
- 8:45 a.m.      Overview  
U.S. Department of Justice  
National Institute of Corrections
- 10:00 a.m.     Role of Jail and Options for Continuum of Legal Sanctions
- noon            Box lunch provided with R.S.V.P.
- 12:30 p.m.     Identification of Major Criminal Justice Issues  
during lunch
- 1:30 p.m.      Discussion of Strategies to Deal with Criminal Justice Issues
- 2:00 p.m.      Action Plan Development: Phase 1
- 3:00 p.m.      Tour of Detention Center
- 4:00 p.m.      Adjourn

## Sample Comparative Analysis

The Guide suggests that a comparative analysis be prepared prior to the initial site visit (see page 40 of the Guide). The purpose of a comparative analysis, which can be structured to either compare states, or compare counties or judicial districts within states, is to establish a context within which a jurisdiction can compare itself with other jurisdictions of similar size and circumstance. These comparisons focus on justice indicators: crime, arrests, court filings and dispositions, number of bookings into jail, average daily populations in jail, and so forth. Since jurisdictions vary in size and population, rates per 100,000 population are calculated and used instead of the raw number of crimes, arrests, etc. This levels the playing field to make comparisons possible. The outcome of even the most basic comparative analysis is to let a jurisdiction know whether its justice processing rates are different or similar to other jurisdictions.

The first page of an actual county level comparative analysis appears on the next page. Note the counties are ranked according to their rates per 100,000 population on each indicator. A spread sheet similar to this needs to be prepared, then a short narrative needs to be written to interpret the information. The items which might be collected most easily include:

- number of crimes reported to the police(FBI Crime Index);
- number of arrests of adults and juveniles;
- number of felony and misdemeanor (or Part I and Part II) arrests;
- number of court filings, by type, by court in each judicial district or county;
- number of court dispositions, by type, by court in each judicial district or county;
- number of commitments to state prison by judicial district or county;
- number of commitments to state youth corrections by judicial district or county;
- number of sentences, by type, where available (jail, probation, fine, etc.);
- number of persons booked into jail annually; \*
- average length of stay in jail; \*\*
- average daily population of sentenced prisoners;\*
- average daily population of pretrial prisoners;\*
- average daily felony population in jail;\*
- average daily misdemeanor population in jail;\*
- average daily population on probation supervision;\*
- average daily population in various community based sanctions (may be difficult to get).

\* May need to be obtained by making a few phone calls to similar size jurisdictions.

\*\* Can be calculated by multiplying the average daily population by 365 days and dividing by the number of admissions (assumes admissions are roughly equal to releases).

# Sample Comparative Analysis

## ATTACHMENT I

### AN EXAMPLE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CRIME AND JUSTICE PROCESSING RATES FOR MONTANA COUNTIES

#### INTRODUCTION

The following information was developed and presented to Yellowstone County, Montana (Billings) officials as part of a technical assistance and training effort conducted by National Institute of Corrections (NIC) consultant Robert Cushman and sponsored by the NIC, September 1, 1994.

The purpose of the comparative analysis was to provide Yellowstone County officials with an example of a comparative analysis which would create a Statewide context within which Yellowstone County could determine how its justice processing rates are different than other large counties within Montana.

The exercise was also intended to demonstrate that the local legal culture in any given county will produce large cross county differences within a state, even though the counties are operating under the same statutory framework. This was intended to illustrate that the work load of the Yellowstone county justice system is not primarily the product of the behavior of the criminal population. The tables which are presented here provide evidence that the differences in workload and costs across Montana Counties can be most easily explained by differences in the justice policies and decision making behavior of justice officials at the seven key justice system decision points discussed during the first portion of the Thursday meeting.

This means that justice officials are collectively exercising choices - choices which are subject to change, and that these choices have workload and expenditure implications.

This insight has important implications. In many jurisdictions the justice system is literally being managed by the workload. The notion that, acting collectively, the justice agencies can actually manage the workload differently, provides the means to turn this around, to take

control of the situation, and to empower State and local officials to manage scarce justice resources to provide the best public protection available resources can provide. Of course, it means working together. No one agency can accomplish this, working alone; and no one agency or interest will be allowed to dominate or drive the process.

The comparative analysis presented here is a limited one. It is meant to be illustrative. It was compiled from readily available existing sources of information with less than two days of work. With more time and more resources many other comparisons might be possible. Yellowstone County is being encouraged to create a more extensive comparative analysis at least once a year, and to share it with the justice system coordination group which this consultant has recommended be formed to improve justice system-wide communication, cooperation and coordination.

#### OFFENSES REPORTED

Data concerning serious crimes reported to the police is provided by local law enforcement to the Montana Board of Crime Control. This information is compiled into what is known as the Uniform Crime Report (UCR) Index, composed of seven major crimes most likely to be reported to the police. This index is the most widely accepted and utilized measure of the level of serious crime in a community.

Table 1 presents the UCR data for Yellowstone County, for the five next largest counties, an average made up of these next five largest counties, and for the State as a whole, for 1992. County rankings are also displayed (#1 being most serious). A complete listing of County rankings appears at the end of this section.

The five other largest counties represent 323,320 people, or 39% of the Statewide population and, when Yellowstone County's population is added, the population total for the six counties is 53% of the State's population.

Table 1 shows that 7,940 serious crimes were reported in Yellowstone County in 1992. The crime rate, 6,780.1 serious crimes per 100,000 population, ranked 2nd within the state. The other five large counties had crime rates ranging from the most serious in the State (Cascade) to Gallatin, which ranked 35th.

The average crime rate for the five other counties was 5,239.1. This means the Yellowstone County serious crime rate was 29% above the average for these five other large counties. (Note: A few small jurisdictions did not report

offenses. This may slightly increase the crime rates of some of the counties.)

Table 1

Serious Crimes Reported  
 - Yellowstone County Compared to Five Other Largest Counties  
 and Statewide

County	# of Serious Crimes			Rank
	1992 Population	Reported	Rate	
Yellowstone	117,107	7,940	6,780.1	2
Missoula	81,140	4,522	5,573.1	6
Cascade	80,113	5,632	7,030.1	1
Flathead	61,061	3,666	6,003.8	4
Gallatin	52,032	1,033	1,985.3	35
Lewis & Clark	48,974	2,086	4,259.4	10
5 County Average	-	-	5,239.1	-
State Average	-	-	4,277.9	-

CLASSES OF OFFENSES

Table 2 details the number of offenses by offense type. Yellowstone County closely mirrors the State in terms of the proportion each crime contributes to the total.

Table 2

Comparison of Crimes Reported, by Type

Crime Type	# Crimes Reported Yellowstone Co.	# Crimes Reported Statewide
Homicide	2	17
Rape	29	192
Robbery	96	228
Assault	90	923
Burglary	1,350	4,758
Larceny	5,945	27,395
Motor Veh Theft	428	1,737
Total	7,940	35,250

In Yellowstone County 3% of the total 7,940 offenses reported were accounted for by Homicide, Rape, Robbery and Assault combined. These crimes were 4% of the crimes reported statewide. The crime of burglary makes up 17% of the Yellowstone County total and 14% of the Statewide total. Larceny, makes up 75% of the Yellowstone County total and 78% of the Statewide total. Motor Vehicle Theft makes up about 5% of the serious crimes reported in Yellowstone County and Statewide.

#### ARRESTS

Arrest information is also provided by local law enforcement and collected through the Uniform Crime Reporting system. The data presented here was obtained directly from the Uniform Crime Reporting Office in Washington D.C. 202-324-5015.

Table 3 presents information about adult and juvenile arrests for both part I (the seven serious offenses reported, as shown above in the UCR index) and part II offenses, all other arrests reportable under the UCR system. This provides a measure of the total amount of arrest activity entering the justice system.

Table 3

Part I and Part II Arrests in Yellowstone County,  
Five Other Large Montana Counties and Statewide

County	Juvenile & Adult Part I & Part II			Adult Part I & Part II		
	Arrests	Arrest Rate	Rank	Arrests	Arrest Rate	Rank
Yellowstone	3,501	2,989.6	25	2,499	2,133.9	21
Missoula	5,015	6,180.7	3	3,595	4,430.6	4
Cascade	4,275	5,336.2	5	2,629	3,281.6	9
Flathead	2,898	4,746.1	10	2,135	3,496.5	7
Gallatin	796	1,529.8	37	591	1,135.8	38
Lewis & Clark	1,902	3,883.7	17	1,402	2,862.7	15
5 County Ave.	-	4,604.1	-	-	3,201.8	-
State Average	-	3,601.5	-	-	2,553.4	-

Table 3 shows there were 3,501 juvenile and adult arrests for part I and part II offenses in Yellowstone County in 1992. This produces a combined juvenile and adult arrest rate of 2,989.6 per 100,000 County residents. This arrest rate ranked Yellowstone County 25th, or close to the State median average.

The Yellowstone County arrest rate is about 35% below the "five other large county" average of 4,604.1 juvenile and adult arrests per 100,000 residents. Note the arrest rates of the other five large counties vary considerably, much more than can be accounted for by differences in demographics, economics, and so forth.

Table 3 carries the arrest analysis a step further by separating out and examining the adult arrest rate - the population that will flow into the adult portion of the justice system, including the jail and prisons. It shows there were 2,499 adult arrests for part I and part II offenses in 1992. This produced an adult arrest rate of 2,133.9 and a State rank of 21. The Yellowstone County adult arrest rate was 33% below the average of the other five large counties in the State. Note, again, there was wide variation in the adult arrest rates of the other five large counties in the State.

Table 4

Adult Part I and Part II Arrests in Yellowstone County,  
Five Other Large Montana Counties and Statewide

County	Adult Part I Arrests	Arrest Rate	Rank	Adult Part II Arrests	Arrest Rate	Rank
Yellowstone	581	496.1	9	1,918	1,637.8	27
Missoula	852	1,050.0	1	2,743	3,380.6	5
Cascade	566	706.5	2	2,063	2,575.1	14
Flathead	376	615.8	5	1,759	2,880.7	7
Gallatin	92	176.8	33	499	959.0	39
Lewis & Clark	315	643.2	4	1,087	2,219.5	17
5 County Ave.	-	680.7	-	-	2,521.0	-
State Average	-	475.5	-	-	2,077.9	-

Table 4 shows Yellowstone County had 581 adult arrests for part I offenses, the 7 major crimes most likely to be reported to the police, and 1,918 adult arrests for part II offenses, which includes all other reportable arrests. The Yellowstone County adult part I arrest rank is 9th; the adult part II arrest rate is 27th, or at about the State median average. This confirms an emphasis on making part I, or serious, arrests in Yellowstone County.

The adult part I arrest rate is 27% below the average of the five other large counties; the part II arrest rate is 35% below the average of the five other large counties.

#### DISTRICT COURT FILINGS

Once offenses have been committed and reported, and arrests have been made, cases will be filed with the courts by the prosecutor. Thus, examining the filing and disposition rate of the various courts provides another useful indicator of justice workload and justice processing activity.

The Office of the State Court Administrator prepares an annual report of the Montana Judicial system each year. The data for this report comes from the courts themselves and is reported by both judicial district and by county. The data that is presented here is limited to data describing District Court filings and dispositions. These are courts of general jurisdiction and their workload serves as a proxy for judicial processing of the most serious cases. A more complete comparative analysis might also include data from courts of limited jurisdiction.

Table 5 shows there were 596 Yellowstone County criminal filings in District Court in 1993. The County ranked 14th in filings while the ranks of the other five large counties ranked from 6th to 25th. The County ranked 16th in rate of District Court dispositions compared to ranks of from 2 to 32 for the other five large counties.

The Yellowstone County filing rate for 1993 was 3% below the average for the other five large counties. The disposition rate was also about 3% below the rate for the other large counties. Thus, despite large differences with the other five county averages on crime and arrest measures, these differences appear to wash out at the point of filing. That is, the Yellowstone County scores come quite close to the average of the other five large counties.



Table 5

District Court Criminal Filings and Dispositions  
in Yellowstone County, Five Other Large Counties,  
and Statewide, 1993

County	Filings	Rate	Rank	Disposi- tions	Rate	Rank
Yellowstone	596	508.9	14	526	449.2	16
Missoula	491	605.1	7	336	414.1	21
Cascade	410	511.8	13	250	312.1	32
Flathead	285	466.7	18	274	448.7	18
Gallatin	206	395.9	25	213	409.4	23
Lewis & Clark	299	610.5	6	417	851.5	2
5 County Ave.	-	523.0	-	-	460.8	-
State Average	-	477.9	-	-	435.2	-

#### COMMITMENTS TO PRISON

Statewide data is also available concerning the number of commitments to state prison from each District Court and each county. Data for only the largest jurisdictions is presented in Table 6.

In 1993, Yellowstone County committed 66 people to prison. The Yellowstone County commitment rate was 56.4 state commitments per 100,000 population. The commitment rates for the other large counties ranged from 36.5 to 121.2 prison commitments per 100,000 population. This is a large variation in county commitment rates; however, if considered as a group, the Yellowstone County 1993 State commitment rate was 35% below the average for the five other large counties.

Examined over a longer period of time, 1989-1993, the Yellowstone County commitment rate has averaged 73.3 State commitments per 100,000 population, a much higher rate than the 1993 commitment rate. The difference between the five year rates for Yellowstone County and the five other large county average is 16%. (In computing commitment rates, all of the years were computed against the 1992 population, despite changes in the population base in these counties during these years)

Table 6

Prison Commitments from Yellowstone County,  
Five Other Large Counties,  
and Statewide, 1993 and 1989-1993

County	State Prison Commitments 1993	Rate	Average State Prison Commitments 1989-1993	Rate
Yellowstone	66	56.4	85.8	73.3
Missoula	72	88.7	79.6	98.1
Cascade	76	94.9	85.8	107.1
Flathead	74	121.2	53.6	87.8
Gallatin	19	36.5	20.0	38.4
Lewis & Clark	39	79.6	43.2	88.2
5 County Ave.	-	86.6	-	87.3
State Average	569	69.1	618.4	75.0

## JAIL UTILIZATION

Common measures of jail utilization include: 1) booking rate; that is, the rate at which persons are admitted to the jail; 2) Average daily population of the jail, which expresses the number of persons in jail on any given day; and 3) the average length of jail stay. This is calculated by multiplying the average daily population by the number of days in a year and dividing by the number of bookings. This calculation will provide an approximation of the average length of stay, assuming the number of bookings is approximately the same as the number of releases from the jail during the year.

Phone calls were made to the other five large counties in the State to obtain booking and average daily population figures, thus, these must be considered tentative figures, subject to revision. The results appear in Table 7.

Table 7

Jail Bookings, Average Daily Population and Length of Stay  
for Yellowstone County,  
Five Other Large Counties,  
and Statewide, 1993

County	Number of Jail Bookings	Rate	Average Daily Jail Population	Rate	Average Length of Stay
Yellowstone	3,171	2,707.8	150	128.1	17.27 days
Missoula	3,600	4,436.8	65	80.1	6.59
Cascade	3,000	3,744.7	55	68.7	6.69
Flathead	3,000	4,913.1	55	90.1	6.69
Gallatin	2,149	4,130.2	36	69.2	6.1
Lewis & Clark	3,285	6,707.6	51	104.1	5.7
5 County Ave.	-	4,649.9	-	81.0	6.36
State Average	Not Available				

Table 7 shows that the Yellowstone County jail booking rate is 2,707.8 people per year per 100,000 County population. This is the rate at which citizens enter the jail. It is lower than the booking rates of the other five large counties in the State, and 42% below the average for these five large counties.

On the other hand, the average daily population of the jail is larger than the rates of the other large counties. The average daily population of the Yellowstone County jail is 150, or 128 persons per 100,000 people in the general County population. This rate is higher than any of the other five large counties and 58% higher than the average of the other five large counties.

This higher average daily population is accounted for by a longer average length of stay - 17.27 days in the Yellowstone County Detention Center compared with an average of 6.36 days in the other five large counties.

SUMMARY

Table 8 summarizes the information which has been assembled in this illustrative comparative analysis. It shows the Yellowstone County score, compares it with the

five other large county average, and state rank, where that was available.

Table 8

Comparative Analysis Summary of Crime and Justice Indicators  
Comparison of Yellowstone County with Five Other Large  
Montana Counties

Indicator	Percent Variation From Five Other Large County Average
Crimes Reported	+29%
Arrests	
Juv and Adult	-35%
All Adult	-33%
Adult, Part I	-27%
Adult, Part II	-35%
District Ct Filings	- 3%
District Ct Dispos.	- 3%
Prison Commitment	
1993	-35%
1989-1993 ave	-16%
Jail	
Bookings	-42%
Ave. Daily Pop.	+58%
Length of Stay	+172%

As a final note, it should be said that the differences which are reflected here are neither good nor bad. In the aggregate, they represent an empirical expression of justice policies and decision making within Yellowstone County which differ from practices in other jurisdictions within the State. They "characterize" Yellowstone County. There may be good reasons for these differences. Certainly the differences express preferences. Certainly they express choices that have been made, and certainly these choices have workload and expenditure consequences which can be expressed empirically, as they are revealed in the comparative analysis. The comparative analysis merely provides a method, a tool, for discovering, examining and evaluating these differences.

SUPPORTING TABLES

The Table which follows contains detailed county by county ranking data for the offense, arrest and court filings information used in this report. The counties are listed alphabetically. The data is summarized in earlier tables.

County	1992 Population	Crime Index	Crime Rate	Crime Rank	Dist. Ct Criminal Filings	Filing Rate	Filing Rank	Dist. Ct Criminal Dispos	Dispo Rate	Dispo Rank	Juv+Adult Part 1&2 Arrests
1 Beaverhead	8684	163	1877.0	36	40	460.6	19	39	449.1	17	258
2 Big Horn	11689	310	2652.1	19	66	564.6	9	54	462.0	14	392
3 Blaine	6937	66	951.4	42	15	216.2	44	19	273.9	36	50
4 Broadwater	3421	154	4501.6	7	10	292.3	35	6	175.4	43	133
5 Carbon	8329	197	2365.2	24	13	156.1	47	22	264.1	37	137
6 Carter	1549	0	0.0	48	2	129.1	49	0	0.0	56	0
7 Cascade	80113	5632	7030.1	1	410	511.8	13	250	312.1	32	4275
8 Choteau	5620	134	2384.3	23	13	231.3	42	11	195.7	40	217
9 Custer	12060	494	4096.2	12	76	630.2	4	62	514.1	8	862
10 Daniels	2335	2	85.7	47	1	42.8	54	2	85.7	49	6
11 Dawson	9800	243	2479.6	20	64	653.1	3	45	459.2	15	486
12 Deer Lodge	10597	460	4340.9	9	30	283.1	37	40	377.5	27	472
13 Fallon	3198	37	1157.0	41	9	281.4	38	16	500.3	9	131
14 Fergus	12458	428	3435.5	13	50	401.3	24	61	489.6	10	433
15 Flathead	61061	3666	6003.8	4	285	466.7	18	274	448.7	18	2898
16 Gallatin	52032	1033	1985.3	35	206	395.9	25	213	409.4	23	796
17 Garfield	1637	0	0.0	51	6	366.5	29	5	305.4	33	0
18 Glacier	12498	0	0.0	54	55	440.1	20	61	488.1	12	0
19 Golden Valley	940	6	638.3	43	5	531.9	11	4	425.5	20	1
20 Granite	2627	72	2740.8	16	9	342.6	31	5	190.3	42	160
21 Hill	18204	815	4477.0	8	90	494.4	16	99	543.8	6	1189
22 Jefferson	8184	23	281.0	45	41	501.0	15	40	488.8	11	79
23 Judith Basin	2352	0	0.0	55	9	382.7	27	7	297.6	34	0
24 Lake	21692	479	2208.2	29	135	622.3	5	120	553.2	4	563
25 Lewis & Clark	48974	2086	4259.4	10	299	610.5	6	417	851.5	2	1902
26 Liberty	2365	0	0.0	53	2	84.6	52	1	42.3	52	0
27 Lincoln	18024	618	3428.8	14	145	804.5	2	129	715.7	3	719
28 Madison	6174	131	2121.8	32	18	291.5	36	18	291.5	35	222

29	MCCone	2346	5	213.1	46	3	127.9	50	2	85.3	50	0
30	Meagher	1875	50	2666.7	18	10	533.3	10	10	533.3	7	51
31	Mineral	3418	226	6612.1	3	12	351.1	30	15	438.9	19	169
32	Missoula	81140	4522	5573.1	6	491	605.1	7	336	414.1	21	5015
33	Musselshell	4233	91	2149.8	31	20	472.5	17	5	118.1	47	36
34	Park	15014	635	4229.4	11	62	412.9	22	60	399.6	24	283
35	Petroleum	534	0	0.0	56	1	187.3	45	0	0.0	54	0
36	Phillips	5323	124	2329.5	26	20	375.7	28	22	413.3	22	255
37	Pondera	6631	108	1628.7	38	18	271.5	41	9	135.7	46	187
38	Powder Rivr	2154	52	2414.1	22	7	325.0	33	2	92.9	48	107
39	Powell	6826	142	2080.3	33	104	1523.6	1	107	1567.5	1	73
40	Prairie	1425	0	0.0	50	0	0.0	55	0	0.0	55	0
41	Ravalli	25788	567	2198.7	30	134	519.6	12	142	550.6	5	852
42	Richland	11049	271	2452.7	21	30	271.5	40	41	371.1	28	288
43	Roosevelt	11341	229	2019.2	34	8	70.5	53	4	35.3	53	518
44	Rosebud	10832	197	1818.7	37	33	304.7	34	42	387.7	26	182
45	Sanders	8938	134	1499.2	39	36	402.8	23	33	369.2	29	277
46	Sheridan	4877	114	2337.5	25	6	123.0	51	7	143.5	45	39
47	Silver Bow	34999	1993	5694.4	5	148	422.9	21	125	357.2	30	640
48	Stillwater	6739	86	1276.2	40	9	133.6	48	13	192.9	41	138
49	Sweet Grass	3252	94	2890.5	15	11	338.3	32	7	215.3	38	79
50	Teton	6466	24	371.2	44	18	278.4	39	13	201.1	39	91
51	Toole	5203	119	2287.1	28	31	595.8	8	25	480.5	13	211
52	Treasure	900	0	0.0	52	2	222.2	43	3	333.3	31	9
53	Valley	8494	227	2672.5	17	15	176.6	46	6	70.6	51	293
54	Wheatland	2315	53	2289.4	27	9	388.8	26	9	388.8	25	1
55	Withaux	1227	0	0.0	49	0	0.0	56	2	163.0	44	0
56	Yellowstone	117107	7940	6780.1	2	596	508.9	14	526	449.2	16	3501
	State	824000	35250	4277.9		3938	477.9		3586	435.2		29676

0.0	56	0	0.0	54	0	0.0	56	0	0.0	56	0.0	56
2720.0	28	29	1546.7	33	1	53.3	33	1	53.3	28	1493.3	29
4944.4	8	111	3247.5	10	14	409.6	10	14	409.6	97	2837.9	9
6180.7	3	3595	4430.6	4	852	1050.0	4	852	1050.0	2743	3380.6	5
850.5	42	32	756.0	42	4	94.5	42	4	94.5	28	661.5	41
1884.9	33	267	1778.3	32	44	293.1	32	44	293.1	223	1485.3	30
0.0	48	0	0.0	48	0	0.0	48	0	0.0	0	0.0	48
4790.5	9	167	3137.3	11	14	263.0	11	14	263.0	153	2874.3	8
2820.1	27	122	1839.8	28	37	558.0	28	37	558.0	85	1281.9	34
4967.5	6	76	3528.3	6	4	185.7	6	4	185.7	72	3342.6	6
1069.4	39	64	937.6	40	10	146.5	40	10	146.5	54	791.1	40
0.0	53	0	0.0	53	0	0.0	53	0	0.0	0	0.0	53
3303.9	23	491	1904.0	27	118	457.6	27	118	457.6	373	1446.4	31
2606.6	29	199	1801.1	31	25	226.3	31	25	226.3	174	1574.8	28
4567.5	11	467	4117.8	5	36	317.4	5	36	317.4	431	3800.4	4
1680.2	35	156	1440.2	35	22	203.1	35	22	203.1	134	1237.1	36
3099.1	24	210	2349.5	19	12	134.3	19	12	134.3	198	2215.3	18
799.7	43	26	533.1	44	3	61.5	44	3	61.5	23	471.6	44
1828.6	34	631	1802.9	30	152	434.3	30	152	434.3	479	1368.6	33
2047.8	32	130	1929.1	26	7	103.9	26	7	103.9	123	1825.2	21
2429.3	31	73	2244.8	20	12	369.0	20	12	369.0	61	1875.8	20
1407.4	38	89	1376.4	37	14	216.5	37	14	216.5	75	1159.9	37
4055.4	14	153	2940.6	14	13	249.9	14	13	249.9	140	2690.8	12
1000.0	40	9	1000.0	39	0	0.0	39	0	0.0	9	1000.0	38
3449.5	21	165	1942.5	25	16	188.4	25	16	188.4	149	1754.2	22
43.2	47	1	43.2	47	0	0.0	47	0	0.0	1	43.2	47
0.0	54	0	0.0	54	0	0.0	54	0	0.0	0	0.0	54
2989.6	25	2499	2133.9	21	581	496.1	21	581	496.1	1918	1637.8	27
3601.5		21040	2553.4		3918	475.5		3918	475.5	17122	2077.9	

Rate	Rank	Adult Part 1&2 Arrests	Rate	Rank	Adult Part 1 Arrests	Rate	Rank	Adult Part 2 Arrests	Rate	Rank
2971.0	26	207	2383.7	18	42	483.6	10	165	1900.0	19
3353.6	22	362	3096.9	12	32	273.8	22	330	2823.2	11
720.8	44	42	605.4	43	7	100.9	38	35	504.5	43
3887.8	16	62	1812.3	29	3	87.7	40	59	1724.6	25
1644.9	36	118	1416.7	36	4	48.0	43	114	1368.7	32
0.0	55	0	0.0	55	0	0.0	53	0	0.0	55
5336.2	5	2629	3281.6	9	566	706.5	2	2063	2575.1	14
3861.2	18	85	1512.5	34	14	249.1	25	71	1263.3	35
7147.6	1	572	4743.0	1	60	497.5	8	512	4245.4	2
257.0	45	6	257.0	45	1	42.8	44	5	214.1	45
4959.2	7	327	3336.7	8	66	673.5	3	261	2663.3	13
4454.1	12	323	3048.0	13	23	217.0	27	300	2831.0	10
4096.3	13	65	2032.5	24	9	281.4	20	56	1751.1	23
3475.7	20	257	2062.9	22	49	393.3	15	208	1669.6	26
4746.1	10	2135	3496.5	7	376	615.8	5	1759	2880.7	7
1529.8	37	591	1135.8	38	92	176.8	33	499	959.0	39
0.0	52	0	0.0	52	0	0.0	50	0	0.0	52
0.0	50	0	0.0	50	0	0.0	47	0	0.0	50
106.4	46	1	106.4	46	0	0.0	55	1	106.4	46
6090.6	4	123	4682.1	2	3	114.2	36	120	4567.9	1
6531.5	2	813	4466.1	3	109	598.8	6	704	3867.3	3
965.3	41	67	818.7	41	15	183.3	32	52	635.4	42
0.0	49	0	0.0	49	0	0.0	46	0	0.0	49
2595.4	30	441	2033.0	23	65	299.6	18	376	1733.4	24
3883.7	17	1402	2862.7	15	315	643.2	4	1087	2219.5	17
0.0	51	0	0.0	51	0	0.0	48	0	0.0	51
3989.1	15	485	2690.9	16	50	277.4	21	435	2413.4	15
3595.7	19	165	2672.5	17	26	421.1	13	139	2251.4	16



## Sample Goals and Agenda for a First Policy Group Meeting

### Goals

- To agree on operating principles.
- To review the preliminary findings of the assessment.
- To learn about the assessment program and the technical assistance and training opportunities that may be available to the jurisdiction through the NIC.
- To develop a vision of success.
- To determine who else needs to be involved in order to succeed.
- To develop an action agenda for immediate next steps.

### Agenda

- |            |   |
|------------|---|
| 8:30 a.m.  | Welcome, Introductions, Review of Goals and Agenda  |
| 9:00       | Establishing Operating Principles and Group Norms<br>Who are we as a group? How do we want to operate?                                      |
| 9:30       | Discussion of NIC, Assessment Program, Available Assistance   |
| 9:45       | Examining the Current Criminal Justice System: A Review of the Preliminary Assessment Findings<br>What does our system currently look like? |
| 10:15      | Break   |
| 10:30      | Examining the System (continued)  |
| 11:30      | Scanning the Environment<br>What are major influences that will effect our work?  |
| 12:30 p.m. | Lunch   |
| 1:30       | Defining a Vision for Success<br>What do we want our system to look like?   |
| 3:00       | Break   |
| 3:15       | Conducting a Power Analysis<br>Who else needs to be involved?   |
| 4:30       | Next Steps: Developing an Action Plan   |
| 5:00       | Adjourn   |

## CHAPTER 14

# Aids to Data Collection

### Sample Interview Schedule and List of Persons to be Interviewed

The following itinerary and list of people to interview is intended to serve as a guide to the assessment team and the Agency Contact Person. Clearly, this particular example is designed for situations in which the application involves one or more local units of government. Even so, relevant state officials are included because they are part of the intergovernmental system of justice operating at the local level of government.

#### DAY 1

8:00 am Orientation meeting

9:00 Tour of jail and other programs (if necessary)

10:00 Individual and group interviews with the following:  
Criminal justice officials and departments  
Law enforcement, e.g. police chiefs, state police, game & parks, university  
Local correctional facilities personnel, e.g. jail, work furlough, restitution centers, residential centers  
Pretrial programs and services  
Probation  
Community based sanctions programs  
District Attorney and county prosecutors  
Indigent defense, public defenders, court appointed attorneys  
Courts, including judges of both the highest general jurisdiction and lower courts, court administrators

4:00 pm Individual and group interviews with the following:  
Officials of general government, including county commissioners and  
mayors, county executives and city managers, county justice  
planner, county and city budget personnel, county legal counsel

5:00 pm End the day

## **DAY 2**

8:00 am Individual or group interviews with:  
Private service providers, e.g., privately operated residential programs,  
electronic monitoring, house arrest, day reporting, community service  
Clergy  
Support Groups, e.g., NA, AA, etc.

1:00 pm Individual or group interviews with:  
Publicly funded service providers, e.g., mental health, health  
department, social services  
Medical, education, employment and training, etc.

4:00 pm Individual or group interviews with:  
Community leadership, e.g., Chamber of Commerce/Economic  
Development, League of Women Voters, publisher of local newspaper  
Volunteer organizations

5:00 pm End the day

## Continuum of Sanctions Matrix

Please provide the following information for all the sanctions programs available in your jurisdiction for the latest 12 month period for which you have this information. Feel free to use the back of this page if you need more space. For each program listed, attach the following written materials (if they are available): annual report, annual operating budget, program descriptions and/or brochure, organizational chart, listing of program components and/or services provided, any recent evaluation studies, any other written material you feel will be helpful for a comprehensive understanding of the program.

	PROGRAM	PROGRAM	PROGRAM	PROGRAM
Primary Goal of Program				
Brief Program Description				
Capacity (slots available)				
Average Daily Population				
Average Length of Stay				
Eligibility Criteria				
Typical Offender Profile				
Cost per offender per day				
# terminations. -successful -unsuccessful				
staff/client ratio				
primary source of referrals				

## Sanctions and Services Matrix

For each pretrial or sentencing option available in your jurisdiction, please check (✓) off all the services that are available through *each* option.

SERVICES	PROGRAM	PROGRAM	PROGRAM	PROGRAM
<b>Education</b> GED classes Literacy Tutoring Other:				
<b>Employment</b> Job skills Job search Other:				
<b>Vocational</b> classes skills job search Other:				
<b>Mental Health</b> Individual/group Counseling Support group Anger management Life skills Reality therapy Family counseling Cognitive Restructuring Other:				
<b>Treatment</b> Residential drug/alcohol Outpatient drug/alcohol Day program Sex offender Support group (AA, NA, etc.) Other:				

# Action Lists and Guides

## Agency Contact Person Tasks and Responsibilities Checklist

The system assessment is a complex event. It will require a good deal of coordination and planning. The Assessment Team Leader will work with the Agency Contact Person to schedule and coordinate the various meetings, tours, and interviews. This checklist has been developed to assist the Agency Contact Person and to help ensure that everything is prepared for the assessment team prior to arriving on site.

The Agency Contact Person will be expected to complete the following tasks before the assessment team arrives on site. The Agency Contact Person should be sure that:

- agency personnel are prepared for the assessment team visit. They have been briefed and will be present for interviews.
- necessary documents have been compiled in advance by persons who are to be interviewed, e.g. annual reports, organizational charts, staffing plans, budgets, a listing of programs and services available, and so forth. (Note: Other documents may need to be made available for review while the assessment team is on site, or be forwarded to them after they leave--see Sanctioning Options Checklist, for example.)
- All forms have been filled out prior to their visit. (See, for example, the Matrix of Sanctions Form.)
- All interviews have been scheduled and coordinated.
- All interviews with selected members of the criminal justice system have been scheduled and coordinated (See Justice System Checklist for details).
- All interviews have been scheduled and coordinated with selected members of state and local governments and the community.

- Interview and meeting locations have been arranged, including the community meeting.
- Assistance has been provided to assessment team members so that they know how they are going to get to and from various meetings.
- Basic data has been assembled about the criminal justice system and existing continuum of sanctions.
- The details of the community meeting has been coordinated (see Community Meeting Checklist and the Required and Recommended Attendance List for details).

## Sanctioning Options Checklist

For each sanction:

- Schedule appropriate interviews between the program staff and the assessment team.
- Arrange for an office or room that the assessment team can use when conducting interviews and reviewing documents.
- Have a copy machine available. If possible, a support person should be designated to assist the staff and assessment team with copying.
- Have a copy of the agency's organizational structure available to give to the assessment team.
- Have a copy of the agency's mission statement available to give to the assessment team.
- A brief program description should be prepared to give to the assessment team. It should include a description of the components of the program, a summary of the services that are provided, and set forth the objectives and goals of each component. Provide them with a copy of the most recent annual report, if one is available.
- Provide a brief program description clearly explaining how clients are assigned to the program, how they are monitored, how and why they are terminated, what occurs after termination.
- Be prepared to provide the following program data: the name and number of agencies placing clients in the program; how these placements are paid for; the number of clients taken in to the program annually and monthly, by source, if available; any information on seasonal, hourly or weekly shifts in the number of intakes; the total number of terminations, successful and unsuccessful, and the number that are returned to custody, by type of custodial destination; a list of agencies with the authority to terminate clients and the number of terminations by agency; information regarding the reasons for termination; if program policy allows clients to return to the program after termination, information on the number returning and source of referral or placement; per client costs and annual operating budget; and average length of stay, by type of client.



## Criminal Justice System Checklist

The Agency Contact Person will need to accomplish the following:

- Notify and schedule interviews with the following members of the criminal justice system:
  - Chief or presiding judge of the court of highest level of general jurisdiction
  - Chief or presiding judge of the lower court(s)
  - Court administrators
  - County prosecutor/district attorney
  - Public defender/indigent defense
  - Chief probation officer
  - Sheriff and jail administrator
  - Community corrections administrator
  - Justice planner/coordinator
  - Police chiefs
  - Representatives from other agencies who use one or more sanctions, e.g. fish and game, federal marshals, parole officers
- Arrange for the locations of the various meetings. Assist the members of the assessment team in reaching these locations on time.
- Work with appropriate court and law enforcement officials to ensure any basic data requested by the assessment team is made available to them.

## Local Government and Community Checklist

The Agency Contact Person should schedule interviews with government officials and community leaders as follows.

- Local government officials such as:
  - County commissioner(s) or supervisor(s)
  - Mayors and members of city council
  - County executive or administrator
  - City managers
  - Budget directors at the city and county level
  - County attorney
  - Others
- Community representatives such as:
  - Representatives from mental health
  - Public health providers
  - Social welfare officials
  - Education providers
  - Members of the clergy
  - Volunteer organizations, e.g., Salvation Army, Volunteers of America
  - Chamber of commerce, economic development, and other business leaders
  - League of Women Voters
  - Publisher or editor of the local newspaper
  - Home owner's associations/apartment associations
  - Community leaders from other interested groups, e.g. Rotary, Lions, and so forth

The Agency Contact Person should tend to the following logistical arrangements:

- Arrange for the locations of the various meetings. Assist the assessment team in getting to and from these meeting locations.
- Work with appropriate local government officials to ensure any basic data requested by the assessment team is made available to them.

## Community Meeting Checklist

The System Assessment includes provisions for a community meeting, however, there will be instances where the basic format of the community meeting is radically changed, or where the assessment team and leadership from the host jurisdiction decide such a meeting is neither necessary nor desirable. In other instances, a policy group meeting may be held instead. It is difficult to simultaneously prepare a checklist to cover all these possibilities. This checklist, therefore, anticipates a community meeting and is presented as an aid to the Agency Contact Person who will have primary responsibility for planning this meeting. The success of the community meeting depends on the participation of officials from the criminal justice system and members of the community. The community meeting is an opportunity for taxpayers to hear about criminal justice issues and express their feelings, desires, and opinions about the system.

A successful community meeting will require planning. To ensure a successful meeting, the Agency Contact Person will perform the following tasks:

(See example invitation and flyer in the TOOLS AND RESOURCES section of this document, p. 89.)

- Select a suitable location, large enough to accommodate the number of people who may attend, and away from the jail, the offices of justice officials, the court house. Chamber of Commerce meeting rooms, libraries, church halls, and community centers are suggested alternatives.
- Send invitations and broadly advertise the meeting as soon as the date and location has been determined.
- Make two personal telephone calls to the invitees to encourage their attendance. The first should be made approximately one week prior to the meeting, and the second on the day before the meeting.
- Refreshments add a nice touch to the gathering. Often a box lunch can also be provided.
- Provide a support person to help register participants. The assessment team will want to include a list of participants in their report.
- Ensure the equipment required by the assessment team is available and functioning. Generally, the assessment team will require:
  - one flip chart (lecturer's pad, with newsprint) approximately 28" x 33" with an easel;
  - masking tape to paste newsprint to the walls of the meeting room;
  - several broad-tipped markers in blue, black, or red;
  - an overhead projector to show transparencies;
  - a projection screen; and
  - writing materials for the participants.

## Suggested List of Persons to Invite to the Community Meeting

**This list is separated into two groups:**

(1) Those who must attend the Community Meeting. The NIC has found that participation in the community meeting by these key people has added to the meeting's success, and ultimately, to the success of the Criminal Justice System Assessment. If anyone on the Must Attend list cannot attend, the meeting should be rescheduled for a time when he/she can attend; and (2) Those who must be invited and who will make important potential contributions, but may not be absolutely essential to the success of the meeting.

Please note this assumes a LOCAL, not a state, level community meeting.

**Who MUST attend:**

Sheriff  
Jail Administrator  
County Commissioners  
County Executive/Manager  
County Attorney  
Pretrial Services Agency  
District Attorney  
Defense Attorney/Public Defender  
Judges - at least one member of the criminal bench  
Architect/Facility Planner, if building is an issue  
Law Enforcement representatives, such as local police chiefs  
Court services, including probation  
Coordinators of each of the intermediate sanctions programs  
Citizen groups, i.e. League of Women Voters, AAUW, Taxpayers Association,  
Chamber of Commerce

**Who must be INVITED:**

Community-based resource persons from mental health, education, library,  
medical services, and so forth  
Regional planning or council of governments planner  
Jail planning/advisory committee (if there is one)  
Community Corrections Advisory Committee/Board (if there is one)  
Legal rights of prisoner/legal aid group representatives  
State Criminal Justice Planning Agency  
State corrections representatives not in the "must attend" group  
Local news media  
Local clergy, council of churches representatives  
City council members or Mayor's Office representatives  
U.S. Marshal and related federal users of local sanctions

## Sample Policy Group Meeting Exercise

The following two exercises are examples of exercises that can be used when working with policy groups in the early stages of development. Additional exercises can be found in the *Intermediate Sanctions Handbook*.

### Power Analysis Exercise

- 1 The team begins by brainstorming a list of all those people who the team members anticipate will either support or oppose its work. The list should encompass specific individuals as well as groups. Some people may be listed both individually and as a member of a group, in those cases in which the individual also acts outside the context of their group. (Keep in mind the ground rules: No negative comments while the names go up on the list!)
- 2 Next, consolidate the list by coming to a consensus on the top 20 percent--those with the most influence on your work. Review this list and select an appropriate number of people to serve on your policy board. You can end the power analysis here if you choose. But to more clearly understand why you may want certain people on the board, continue on with the next step.
- 3 Arrange all of the names on your original list on a chart like the one below. It is recommended that this be done using a flipchart or a large white board.

Names	Power (0-3)	Saliency (0-3)	Position (-3 to +3)	Total*
Joan L.	3	1	-3	-9*
Defense Attorneys	1	3	2	6*
Jose H.	0	3	3	0*
Etc.				
Total Score	*****	*****	*****	-3*

\* The total is calculated by multiplying across the columns.

### ***Calculating the Power Analysis Scores***

Determine the power score, saliency score, position score, and total score for each person or group listed.

The **power score** is arrived at by determining the group consensus about how powerful this person is, without regard to his or her position on your work. Both formal and informal power should be taken into consideration.

The **saliency score** is arrived at by determining the group consensus on the relative importance of this project in relation to the person's other work. This helps you gauge whether the person is too busy with other things to be of much help or hindrance to your efforts.

The **position score** reflects the group's assessment of the person's position on intermediate sanctions (i.e., strongly in favor [+3], strongly opposed [-3]).

### ***Interpreting the Power Analysis Scores***

To calculate total scores, multiply the power score by the saliency score by the position score. A "0" score in any box results in a total score of "0." These individuals probably should not be considered for membership on the policy group.

Those with high negative scores (-18 and above) must be considered for membership on the policy team. It is risky not to include these people on the team; if you do not include them, you must consider including either someone with significant influence over the person or group or someone who can beat them in a fight.

Those with high positive scores (+18 and above) should also be considered for membership on the policy team.

Those with average scores (either positive or negative scores in the 8-12 range) should be considered as well, but a different strategy should be considered for each. Use the participation on the team of those with average negative scores to educate them. Including people with an average positive score will offer you the opportunity to strengthen their overall score by increasing their saliency score (i.e., you can get them excited about the project).

If your power analysis results in an overall negative total score, you can be confident that you will have a lot of work to do on marketing your project. Use the individual scores as a guide to direct your efforts. On the other hand, an overall positive total score on the power analysis tells you that the team is starting off with a lead. Be careful to keep that lead and not lose ground as you proceed!

## Sample Policy Group Meeting Exercise

### Achieving a Vision of Success

Virtually every stakeholder in and outside the criminal justice system finds limitations, weaknesses and things that they would like to change about the system. As a way of beginning to envision an improved system in the future, please answer the following questions.

- If you were to characterize your current criminal justice system as a machine, what machine would it be? What would the machine look like?
- As a group, discuss the different machine possibilities. As you come to agreement, make a list of the words or phrases that characterize your machine. List these words/phrases on a piece of flipchart paper.
  - On a second sheet of flipchart paper, draw a picture of your machine.
- Now consider the future: What machine represents what you would like your system to look like?
  - Again, discuss the different possibilities. Note the words or phrases that describe it on another sheet of paper.
  - On a final sheet of flipchart paper, draw your future machine.
- Discuss the implications of your two machines for your work together.

# Presentation Aids

## Slides for a Community Meeting

**T**he assessment team should consider preparing visual aids which can be used during a community and/or policy group meeting.

The following pages contain **samples** of overhead transparencies which have been used at past community meetings. It is not a complete set of visual aids. These particular illustrations can be used to support the part of the community meeting which is described in *Section II, Chapter 7* as "*The Justice System and the Seven Key Justice System Decision Points.*"

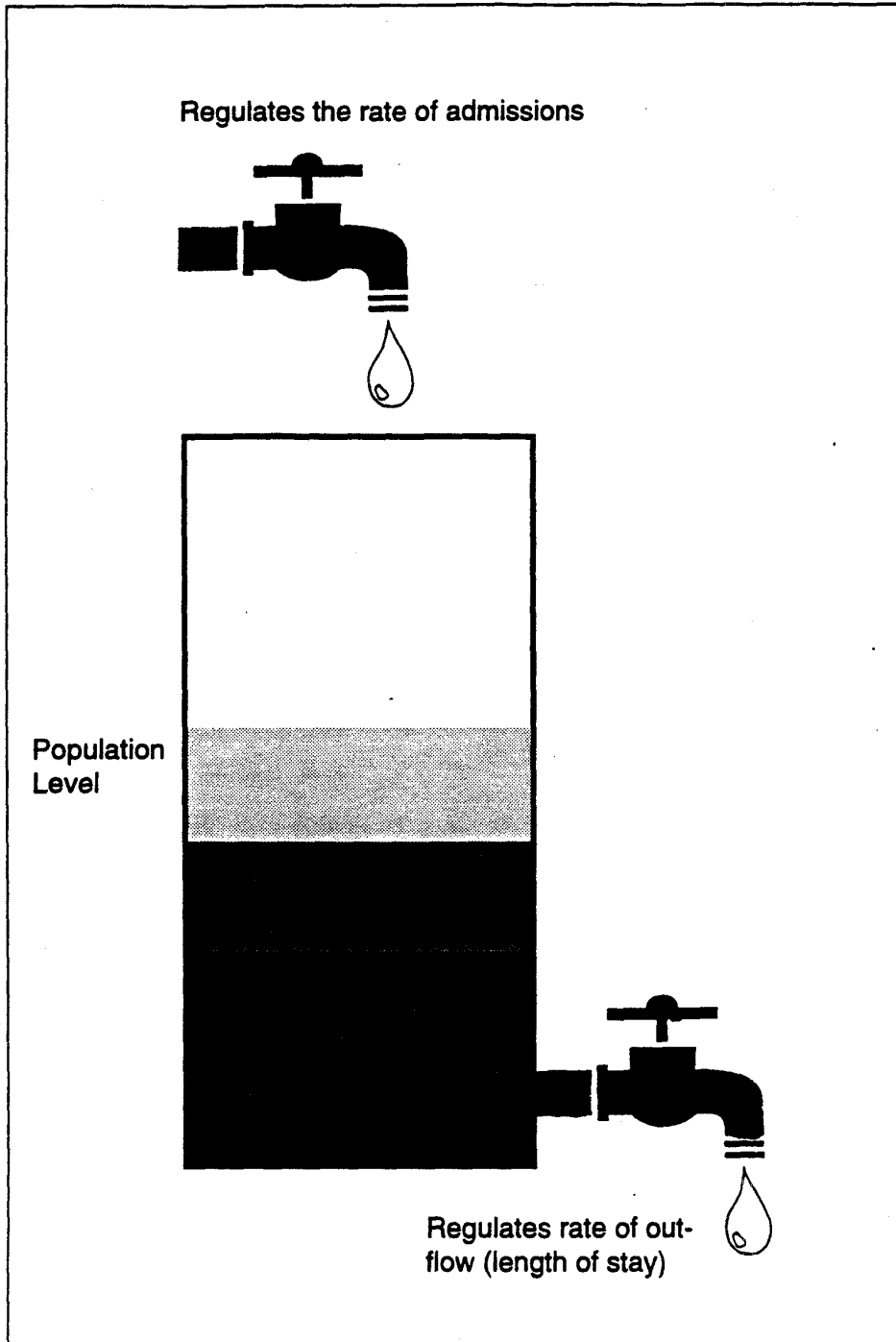
Construction of transparencies and visual aids will depend upon the circumstances and presentation style of the members of the assessment team. Use these examples if they seem appropriate and add others as the presentation at each jurisdiction is designed.



# Sample Slide #1

## The Water Barrel Analogy

This slide illustrates how the rate of admissions and length of stay effects the average daily population.



## **Sample Slide #2**

### **The Seven Key Justice System Decisions**

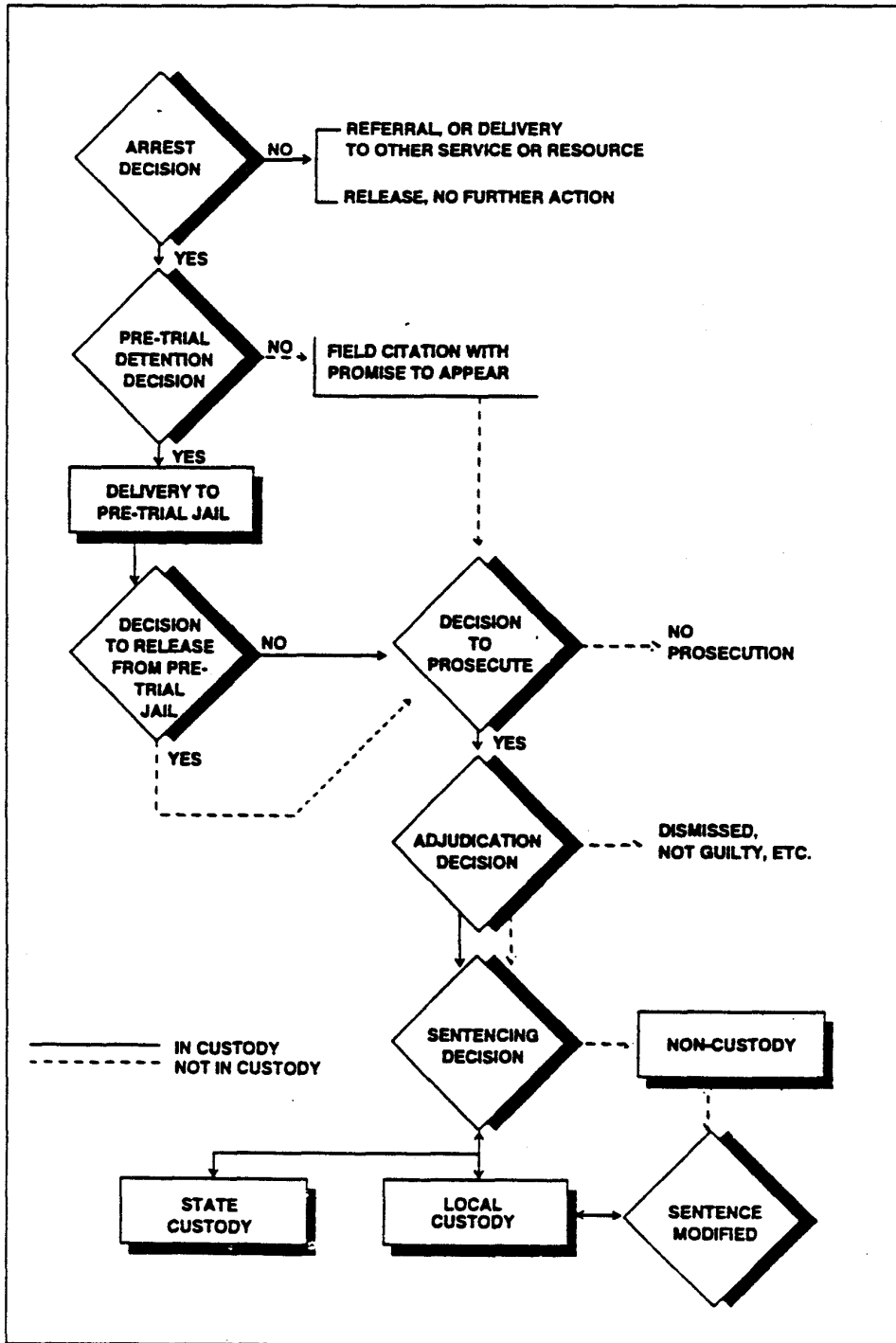
This slide lists the seven key justice system decisions.

- 1. Decision to arrest**
- 2. Decision to detain pre-trial**
- 3. Decision to release from pre-trial detention**
- 4. Decision to prosecute**
- 5. Adjudication outcome**
- 6. Sentencing decision**
- 7. Sentence modification decision**

# Sample Slide #3

## The Seven Key Justice system Decision Points

This slide diagrams the flow of offenders through the seven key justice system decision points

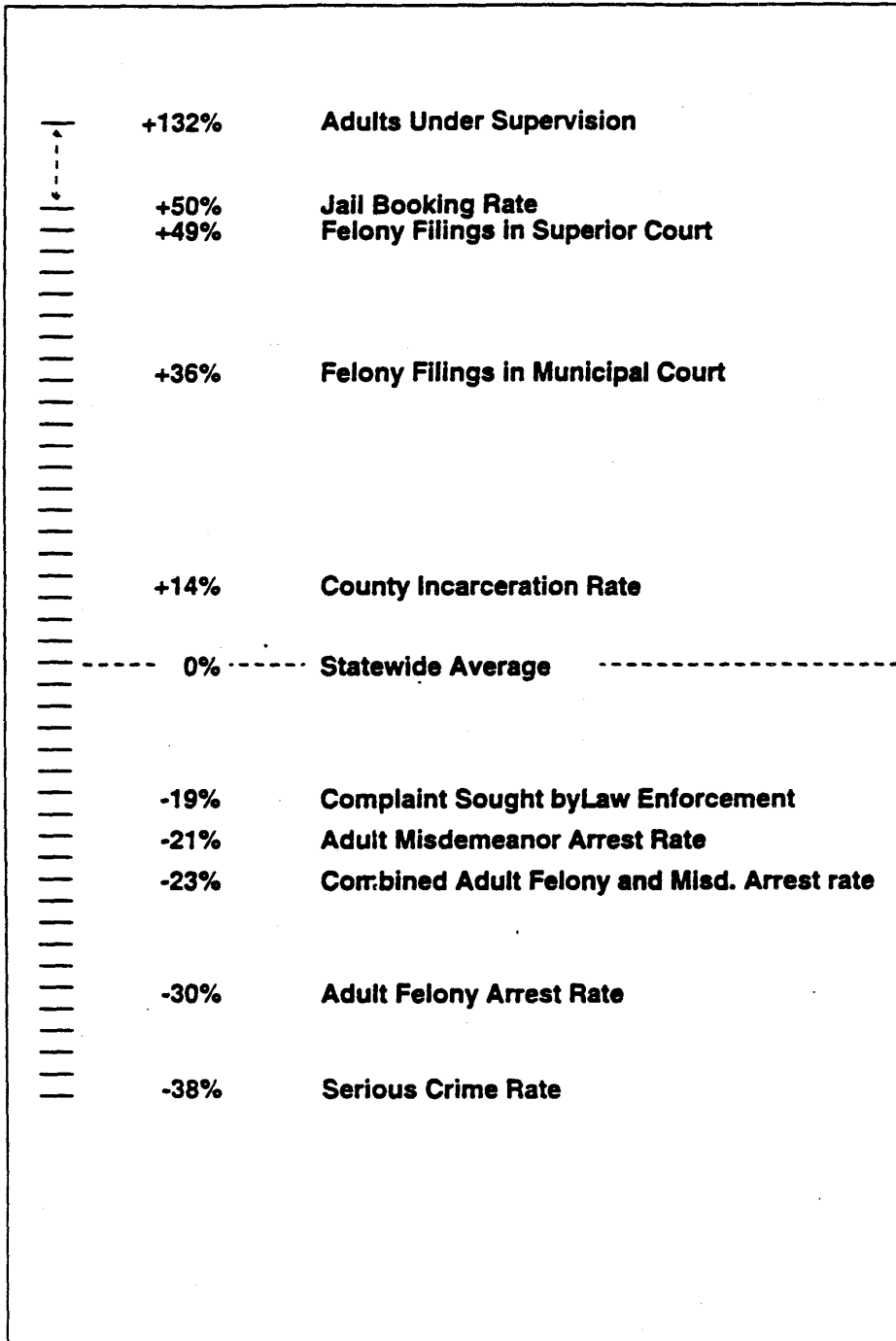


## Sample Slide #4

### Rate Comparisons of Selected Justice Indicators in 1986/87

Santa Clara County, CA compared to Statewide Averages

This slide illustrates how Santa Clara County compared to CA statewide averages for selected justice indicators in 1986/87.





# General Information

## Synopsis of "Dimension" Questions

### **The Presenting Problem**

**What to ask?** How would you describe or define the "presenting problem?" Why is it a problem? What individuals have the power/authority/resources to be involved in a solution? What factors have led to the situation? How long has it been a problem?

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Different Levels, Branches and Agencies of Government**

**What to ask?** How big or small is the state (geography, size, population)? What is the county structure and how many counties are there? Will this assessment be meaningful for the whole state or just to a single county? What agencies have responsibility for what elements of the sanctioning system and how do they relate to each other. Begin with basic issues of who provides probation supervision, who runs prisons and jails, how are other community sanctions administered.

### **Funding**

**What to ask?** What is the history of funding streams in the state? Is there a community corrections act? For how long? At what level has it been funded and at what level of consistency? Who are the budget officers? Does the Governor prepare a budget? Is the legislature responsible? Who makes the budget recommendations each year and where does the money come from? What is the solvency of the state? Of localities? Is there a fiscal crisis? Are there any instate economic think tanks that are studying state/local financing issues as they related to corrections Are there any private sources of funding for correctional initiatives in the state?

### **Role of the Private Sector in Sanctioning**

**What to ask?** What are the criteria for contracting with private providers? What do the contracts look like? What are the requirements? How accountable is the private sector to the state/local agency providing the funding? How responsive are private providers to efforts of policymakers to target appropriate offenders to particular sanctions? Is funding provided to support particular slots, or do private providers only receive funding when the slots are filled?

### **Distribution of Discretion Throughout The System**

**What to ask?** What discretion does the individual (interviewee) have with respect to determining a sentence or sanction? Who else has significant impact upon that determination, how and why? How often are the recommendations in a presentence investigation followed by the judge? What impact does plea bargaining have upon the sentence? What would a map of the sentencing process look like if you were to draw it as a flow chart, identifying key decisionmakers, alternative outcomes?

### **A Continuum of Sanctions**

**What to ask?** What services/sanctions are available for what types of offenders? How many offenders can be accommodated in each for what period of time? What is the likelihood that these resources will continue to be available? For what period of time?

### **Population**

**What to ask?** Profiling information includes three basic categories of data: offense characteristics (statutory category of offense, statutory penalty constraints, relevant victim information, indicators of harm done including use of weapon, physical injury, property loss); offender characteristics (e.g., gender, race, age, chemical/alcohol dependence, criminal record, criminal justice status at time of offense, employment, education, mental health and treatment); and case processing information (initial charges and plea negotiations, presentence investigation report; pretrial detention, nature of sentence imposed including conditions of probation, direct sentence to intermediate sanctions, length of incarceration).

### **The Policy Environment**

**What to ask?** What pressures exist for the jurisdiction to engage the policy making process? Is there leadership present in the community on this issue? Who or where is it? How actively is the bench involved? What is happening in the jurisdiction that might distract policy makers from this effort? Is there some base of support to provide staff, resources, etc. to the effort? If so, where is it? Is there a tradition for this kind of collaborative endeavor in the jurisdiction?

### **Historical Context**

**What to ask?** Is there a history of litigation in the state? Have there been any lawsuits filed--what is status and what are the issues involved? How does the current system have its roots in prior events (e.g., changes in sentencing laws, changes in prison/jail population, administration changes, traditions around community involvement)?

**Use And Availability of Information**

**What to ask?** Do agencies share or are they willing to share information. What information is available from each source, how is it kept, where is it? Automated or not? What individuals know best about the information system? How can one get a picture of who is moving through the system into what sanctions, and for what period of time?

**Community Involvement in The Criminal Justice System**

**What to ask?** To what degree is the community involved in any aspect of the criminal justice system? What is the community attitude about intermediate sanctions? Has any public opinion polling been conducted? If so, what were the results? Who are the most vocal and active members of the community on these topics?



## Other Resources

The references provided below are additional reading material on related topics to the conduct of a criminal justice system assessment. For information on substantive issues, for putting information packets on topics together for jurisdictions, two information services are listed below.

### Basic Reference Documents

**The Intermediate Sanctions Handbook: Experiences and Tools for Policymakers**, edited by Peggy McGarry and Madeline M. Carter, Center for Effective Public Policy, Washington, DC, prepared for the National Institute of Corrections and the State Justice Institute, 1993.

**The Local System Assessment, Consultant's Guide**, Jails Division, National Institute of Corrections, Longmont, CO, October, 1993.

**The Local System Assessment, Community Meeting Resource Manual**, Jails Division, National Institute of Corrections, Longmont, CO, January, 1994.

**The Local System Assessment, Facility Development Information and Application**, Jails Division, National Institute of Corrections, Longmont, CO, undated.

**Enhanced Pretrial Services Delivery Program, Information Gathering and Assessment Process**, Pretrial Services Resource Center, Washington, DC.

### Information Services

#### National Criminal Justice Reference Service

Telephone: 800-851-3420 and 301-251-5500

An agency of the U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, the NCJRS is the largest criminal justice information network in the world. It disseminates and furnishes research findings to individuals who use them to improve criminal justice and the criminal justice system. Call the NCJRS reference staff at the toll-free number and explain the subject for which you need information. A reference specialist will help you to define your inquiry and then search the database for you.

#### National Institute of Corrections National Information Center

Telephone: 800-877-1461

The NIC Information Center has a large collection of published and unpublished material relating to all aspects of corrections.

## Program Announcement

Five jurisdictions will be assisted in developing a more purposeful, cost-effective, and coordinated system of criminal justice sanctions and punishments. They will receive several kinds of intensive assistance for up to 3 years. The extent of the assistance provided to each site will depend on their specific interests and needs as well as the overall program resources. Jurisdictions will be selected to participate based on their responses to a more detailed competitive solicitation available from NIC.

The program builds on many years of NIC experience with assistance efforts that take a "systemic" approach to addressing criminal justice issues. It requires key state and local criminal justice leaders to participate on a long-term policy team that focuses on issues and problems regarding the use of sanctions in their jurisdictions and develops specific policies to address those issues.

The program's objectives are to assist criminal justice policy teams in states and localities to:

- Develop and implement informed policy regarding the design, use, and capacity of a more effective, cost-efficient, and coordinated set of criminal justice sanctions.
- Develop the capacity for ongoing policy development, system monitoring, and communication among criminal justice policymakers and the community.
- Develop an evaluation plan and document the practical achievements of the program so that other jurisdictions can learn from this assistance program and assess the value of adopting a similar approach. Each site will be asked to work with a national evaluation team funded by NIC.

A number of intermediate and practical benefits should be realized by each participating jurisdiction. Among these are:

- Greater agreement among criminal justice agencies regarding the appropriate use of specific sanctions, resources, and options.
- Creation and refinement of specific written policies regarding desired outcomes, target offender populations, screening procedures, intervention approaches, and capacity and costs of individual sanctions within a sanctioning continuum.
- Routine, systematic information gathering, increased use of information in decision-making, and increased sharing of information and resources across system components.
- Increased use of objective risk and needs assessments.
- Improved capacity of criminal justice agencies to monitor critical decisions and functions and increased ability to forecast the potential impact of proposed changes on the criminal justice system.

The program will consist of several parts: 1) state or local system assessments, 2) seminars for policy teams, and 3) facilitation and technical assistance to each site.

**State or Local System Assessments.** Each jurisdiction selected for the program will receive a state or local system assessment. The system assessment is a collaborative effort between a jurisdiction, NIC staff, and consultants to develop a preliminary picture and shared understanding of how the existing sanctioning system works. It will provide a common base upon which to evaluate the current system, shape a common vision for the future, and pursue that vision. The approach is described in Guide to a Criminal Justice System Assessment, which provides a conceptual framework for conducting the assessment along with practical advice and useful tools for developing an individualized assessment strategy for a jurisdiction. The assessment work will be conducted through two visits to each jurisdiction and will result in a report summarizing the findings of the assessment and recommendations for further action.

**Seminars for Policy Teams.** Following the system assessment, a 3½-day seminar will be conducted for policy teams from two or three jurisdictions at a time. NIC will pay the travel and per diem expenses for six to eight criminal justice officials and community leaders from each participating jurisdiction (state, county, judicial district) to attend the seminar. It will focus on key elements of the work needed to be done to develop sound policy regarding the use of sanctions, building a team of policymakers who can work together effectively to accomplish their goals, the various roles of information in developing sentencing policy, and action planning.

**Site Coordination and Technical Assistance.** Through a competitively awarded contract, NIC will provide the expertise to assist the ongoing work of the policy teams. In most cases, this will include a site coordinator who will act as a partner, facilitator, and co-strategist to the team and will arrange other critical technical assistance following the system assessment phase. An NIC staff member assigned to each site will be responsible for working with the site coordinator to ensure that other training, technical assistance, and information services available from NIC are accessed to facilitate achievement of the site's goals.

Following are some examples of areas in which technical assistance may be provided to jurisdictions.

- Establishing, redefining, or maintaining productive policy teams.
- Strategic planning and the policy development process.
- Information development and management, which include improving the capacity to: 1) develop good baseline information on how the system operates, 2) monitor sentencing dispositions and their effects on offenders, 3) identify populations for new and existing sanctions, and 4) conduct evaluations.
- Developing strategies for building public support, including media relations, community relations, marketing, public opinion polls, and external communications.
- Developing, implementing, and evaluating correctional programs.

**Eligibility**

Applicants may be a single state or local jurisdiction, a group of local counties or court/prosecutorial districts, or a state applying with a group of key counties or court/prosecutorial districts. The applicant agency may be any legislative, judicial, or executive branch agency or body that can demonstrate sufficient authority, leadership, commitment, and a sound plan for engaging in this effort.

The process may be useful for states and localities with various primary interests. These may include: 1) controlling costs and setting more rational priorities for the use of scarce correctional resources; 2) defining a sanctioning system in a more meaningful direction, for instance integrating restorative justice principles into a system; 3) developing a more rational basis for matching offenders to sanctioning choices; 4) managing dramatically increasing offender populations or crowding in probation, jail, or prison; or 5) considering major legislative changes that will affect the use of sanctions throughout a state's criminal justice system.

Whatever the driving issue(s), applicant jurisdictions should be willing to seek solutions within the context of how the entire criminal justice system functions. They also must be willing to involve critical policy actors in a long-term process of consensus building regarding the problems and effective solutions, to develop and use sound information in that process, and to explore the separate and shared responsibilities among different levels of state and local government for an effective system.

**Application Procedures**

Interested jurisdictions and agencies should contact the NIC Community Corrections Division for a copy of the Guide to a Criminal Justice System Assessment and an application packet. The deadline for submitting applications will be October 15, 1996.

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Susan Hunter, Prisons Division, 800-995-6423, x124, on interim basis

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1960 Industrial Circle, Suite A

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Toll-free: 800-995-6429

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**NIC Information Center**

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Longmont, Colorado 80501

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