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U.S. Department of Justice
National Institute of Corrections

THE LOCAL SYSTEM ASSESSMENT

FACILITY DEVELOPMENT INFORMATION AND APPLICATION

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the

National Institute of Corrections

Jails Division

THE LOCAL SYSTEM ASSESSMENT

INFORMATION AND APPLICATION

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**THE LOCAL SYSTEM ASSESSMENT
OVERVIEW**

A Local System Assessment (LSA) is an assessment of all of the components of the requesting jurisdiction's criminal justice system. This includes a review of the existing jail, the law enforcement community programs that take individuals out of the jail prior to trial, programs that provide different sentencing options for convicted offenders, and the court system. The first of three LSA functions is to look at what is occurring within these components, evaluate their processes and coordination, and assess how well they are working. Another function is to present information about new programs and/or modifications to existing programs that the jurisdiction may want to consider. The third function is to assess the jurisdiction's capacity to develop or modify its criminal justice components in a way that enhances, rather than strains, the system.

Recommendations following the LSA focus on two key areas. The first is identification of options not currently being used, but for which the capacity might exist. The second is capacity development for the implementation or improvement of existing services and programs.

Target Jurisdictions

Any jurisdiction that is seriously planning a new jail; constructing or renovating an existing facility; or considering changing some of the functions of its criminal justice system could benefit from a Local System Assessment. Other reasons for requesting an LSA might be to:

- *assess how well the criminal justice system is handling the demands it faces;*

The Local System Assessment

- *determine if existing services and programs are meeting the needs of the criminal justice system;*
- *assess existing services and programs for consistency with public safety concerns; and*
- *validate the the correctional efficacy of existing programs.*

NIC Jails Division Findings

It is the premise of the Jails Division that criminal justice systems appear to be more successful when their various components work together. The jail is but one part of a criminal justice system. Successful solutions to the problems of the system--including the jail--are those that work best for the community and that have been reached by the community. Size, design, method of construction, level of jail services and programs, and style of inmate management are all questions that are best explored and answered at the local level.

Many jurisdictions have no options between incarceration and probation. However, with improvements in technology that make monitoring possible, jurisdictions are increasingly implementing intermediate sanctions programs that satisfy punitive needs and also meet the concerns of public safety without overburdening the community's resources.

Criminal statutes specify punishments for offenders that vary in severity. To implement the punishments, judges are provided with an array of options, including intermediate sanctions. Based on which punishment is the most appropriate, offenders may be placed in jail, on probation, or in one of a variety of intermediate sanctions programs. However, those intermediate sanctions that do not involve incarceration must be consistent with the goals of the local criminal justice system and with public safety concerns. Local control, which ranges from almost total freedom (probation) to total restriction (jail), is a key factor.

While some intermediate sanctions have been devised in part as a means of easing the local jail's crowding problems, their success has often been only random. Programs that simply divert people from jail to alleviate crowding can actually have the opposite effect. Inappropriately placed offenders who fail are often sent back to jail,

thereby aggravating the crowding problems.

The Approach of the Local System Assessment

The LSA is a technical assistance event during which a consultant team is sent to the requesting jurisdiction. While onsite, they conduct interviews with members of the system, gather information, and conduct a one-day community meeting that explores jail planning and design issues. This meeting includes presentations and discussion of such topics as legal issues, the purpose of the jail, total systems planning, community involvement, and structural limitations. The consultant team's task is to conduct a review of the requesting jurisdiction's system (including the existing jail) and provide a professional assessment regarding its ability to manage criminal justice issues.

Within two weeks of the event, the consultants submit a report to the jurisdiction that presents a review of their findings. Through their discussions with officials, the community meeting, and their technical assistance report, the team will offer information regarding possible options and recommendations for future action.

The Local System Assessment serves as a decision point. After the LSA, officials can evaluate the assessment and determine the appropriate direction for their community's criminal justice system.

* *Understand the operation and capacity of the local criminal justice system;*

* *Understand who is in jail and why, and determine whether other appropriate pre- and post-trial options exist that are consistent with the goals of the criminal justice system and public safety;*

* *Outline the scope of the jail planning project, including collecting sufficient data to analyze incarceration issues, and developing functional programs prior to the design phase;*

* *Share experiences of other jurisdictions that are planning new facilities;*

What are the Goals of the Local System Assessment?

* *Identify possible pre- and post-trial options that can be developed with existing resources;*

* *Identify capacities that would need to be developed or expanded to consider options not feasible;*

* *Help the community recognize its perception of the values and philosophies of incarceration; and*

* *Make local officials aware of and promote their involvement in both the Facility Development Program and the Local System Management Program.*

The Local System Assessment is a complex event requiring coordination and planning. The assigned primary consultant will work with a contact person from the requesting agency to schedule and coordinate the various meetings, tours, and interviews. The following section explains the tasks and responsibilities of the agency contact person. It also contains checklists to help ensure everything is prepared for the consultant team.

The consultants conducting the Local System Assessment will perform a detailed review of the requesting community's existing jail; take an indepth look at the law enforcement community and the court system, assessing their relationship to the jail; assess and evaluate the impact of existing programs and options to pre-trial incarceration; assess and evaluate the impact of existing intermediate sanctions; and present information about criminal justice planning in the form of a community meeting.

They will spend between 3 and 4 days in the community. For the consultants to collect and analyze the most accurate information possible, many key persons from the criminal justice system and the community, as well as the requesting agency, will be involved in the LSA.

Since the event requires considerable local coordination, the requesting agency will name a contact person to assist the primary consultant. The agency contact person will have the following tasks to complete before the consultants arrive:

- **Ensure that jail staff are prepared for the consultants' visit. Selected staff must be present for interviews and have various documents available for review. (See the Jail Assessment Checklist in Exhibit I for details.)**
- **Schedule and coordinate interviews with the coordinators of all non-jail programs used as punishments.**
- **Schedule and coordinate interviews with selected members of the criminal justice system. (See the Criminal Justice System Analysis Checklist in Exhibit II for details.)**

Requesting Agency Tasks and Responsibilities

- **Schedule and coordinate interviews with selected members of the local government and the community.**
- **Arrange locations for various interviews and meetings, including the LSA Community Meeting.**
- **Assist the consultants in getting to and from various meetings.**
- **Collect and have available basic data about the local criminal justice system.**
- **Collect and have available basic data about the county or jurisdiction.**
- **Coordinate the details of the LSA Community Meeting. (See the LSA Community Meeting Checklist in Exhibit III and the Required & Recommended Attendance List in Exhibit IV for details.)**

JAIL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

1. Schedule interviews with the following staff:

- Jail administrator or commander
- Medical authority
- Food service supervisor
- Fire authority
- Mid-level managers
- Line staff (one or two)
- Inmates (two or three)
- Maintenance staff.

2. Have the following written materials available:

- Policy and procedures manual
- Inmate rules and regulations
- Applicable state statutes
- Applicable state standards (if any)
- Recent state inspection reports (if any)
- Recent inspection reports from the health and fire departments

- Organizational chart
- Staffing plan
- Inmate records (operational and programmatic)
- Program and service schedules.

EXHIBIT I

3. Have jail floor plans (preferably size 8 1/2 x 11) available. The consultants should be able to keep the plans.
4. Ensure all keys have been located and are available during the jail tour.
5. Arrange for an office or room that the consultants can use when conducting interviews and reviewing documents.
6. Have a copy machine available. If possible, a support person should be designated to assist the consultant with copying.

NOTE: *Not all jurisdictions will have all of the above staff positions and/or documents. The agency contact person will discuss this with the primary consultant and make the appropriate adjustments.*

CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM ANALYSIS CHECKLIST

1. Notify and schedule interviews with the following members of the criminal justice system:

Court Staff:

- Chief or District Court Judge
- County Judge(s)
- Court Administrator
- County Prosecutor/
District Attorney
- Municipal Judge(s)
- Public Defender
- Probation Officer.

Law Enforcement Staff:

- Sheriff
- Sheriff's Patrol Captain
- Police Chief(s)
- Representatives from other agencies who are responsible for committing individuals to the jail, such as fish and game wardens, federal marshals, and parole officers.

2. Arrange for the locations of the various meetings. Assist the consultants in reaching these locations.
3. Work with appropriate court and law enforcement officials to ensure any basic data requested by the consultants is made available.

EXHIBIT II

NOTE: Some counties will have several police chiefs. The agency contact person should arrange for an interview with the chief whose department is responsible for the largest number of arrestees taken to jail. Other departments within the county should be represented if possible.

PRE-TRIAL OPTIONS CHECKLIST

For Each Program:

1. Have a copy of the agency's organizational structure available.
2. Have a copy of the agency's mission statement available.
3. Have a brief program description available, including how clients are assigned to the program, how they are monitored, how and why they are terminated, what occurs after termination.
 - ❑ *the number of agencies and/or individuals placing clients in the program,*
 - ❑ *the number of clients taken in to the program yearly and monthly,*
 - ❑ *if available, information on seasonal shifts in the number of intakes,*
 - ❑ *information regarding program staff schedules,*
4. Have program data available, including:
 - ❑ *the total number of terminations and how many are returned to the jail,*
 - ❑ *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 of clients returned to jail and the length of their stay in jail before returning to the program, and*
 - ❑ *per client program costs and annual operating budget.*
5. Determine and schedule appropriate interviews with program staff.
6. Arrange for an office or room that the consultants can use when conducting interviews and reviewing documents.
7. Have a copy machine available. If possible, a support person should be designated to assist the consultant with copying.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY CHECKLIST

For Each Program:

Schedule interviews with the following government officials and community leaders:

Local Government Officials

- * County Commissioner(s) or Supervisor(s)
- * County Administrator
- * Budget Director
- * County Attorney

Community Representatives

- * Representatives from the mental health community.
- * A member of the clergy who has had some involvement with the jail.
- * Representatives of assistance programs such as A.A., N.A., and the Salvation Army. They can be from programs already providing service, or from those that would like to provide services.

- * A representative from the Board of Education.
- * Local business leaders with an interest in the jail project.
- * Community leaders from other interested groups, e.g., the Rotary, the Lions, and the Elks.
- * Arrange for the locations of the various meetings. Assist the consultants in reaching these locations.
- * Work with appropriate local government officials to ensure any basic data requested by the consultants is made available.

NOTE: As with the jail assessment, not all jurisdictions will have the above staff positions. Plus, not all communities will have the mentioned service groups and community leaders. The agency contact will work with the primary consultant to schedule interviews with as many members of the above groups as possible.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY CHECKLIST

1. Schedule interviews with the following government officials and community leaders listed below and in the next column.
2. Arrange for the locations of the various meetings. Assist the consultants in reaching these locations.
3. Work with appropriate local government officials to ensure any basic data requested by the consultants is made available.

Local Government Officials

- * County Commissioner(s)
or Supervisor(s)
- * County Administrator
- * Budget Director
- * County Attorney

Community Representatives

- * Representatives from the mental health community.
- * A member of the clergy who has had some involvement with the jail.
- * Representatives of assistance programs such as A.A., N.A., and the Salvation Army. They can be from programs already providing service, or from those that would like to provide services.
- * A representative from the Board of Education.
- * Local business leaders with an interest in the jail project.
- * Community leaders from other interested groups, e.g., the Rotary, the Lions, and the Elks.

NOTE: As with the jail assessment, not all jurisdictions will have the above staff positions. Plus, not all communities will have the mentioned service groups and community leaders. The agency contact will work with the primary consultant to schedule interviews with as many members of the above groups as possible.

LSA COMMUNITY MEETING CHECKLIST

The key to the LSA Community Meeting depends on the participation of officials from the criminal justice system and members of the community. It is the taxpayers' chance to hear the issues and express their feelings. As with the jail and criminal justice system assessments, forethought and planning are critical to the meeting's success. To help ensure success, the agency contact will perform the following tasks:

1. Select a location away from the jail, the sheriff's office, and the courthouse, if at all possible. Chamber of Commerce meeting rooms, restaurants, library meeting rooms, and church halls have all been used successfully.
2. Send letters of invitation as soon as the date has been decided and a location determined.
3. 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.

4. Although they are not required, refreshments add a nice touch to the gathering. Unfortunately, NIC is not able to cover such expenditures.
5. Provide a support person to help register the community meeting participants. The consultants will provide a registration form. While participants are asked to sign in, it is helpful to have the support person re-copy the difficult-to-read signatures.

EXHIBIT III

6. Ensure the equipment required by the consultant team is available and functional. Generally the consultant team will require:
 - ❑ one flipchart (lecturer's pad) approximately 28" x 33" with an easel;
 - ❑ several broad-tipped markers in blue, black, or red;
 - ❑ an overhead projector;
 - ❑ a projection screen; and
 - ❑ writing materials for the participants.

Required and Recommended Attendance List

Who Must Attend:

- *County Sheriff*
- *Undersheriff/Chief Deputy*
- *Jail Administrator*
- *County Manager/Administrator*
- *County Commissioners, especially persons with oversight authority for the sheriff's budget*
- *County Attorney*
- *District Attorney*

Who Must Be Invited:

- *Legal rights of prisoner legal aid group representative(s)*
- *Community-based resource persons from mental health, education, library, medical services, etc.*
- *County or facility planner*
- *Regional Planning Unit representative*

EXHIBIT IV

The Institute has found that participation in the community meeting by these key people has added to the meeting's success, and ultimately, the jail planning project.

- *Public Defender*
- *Judiciary, at least one representative of the criminal bench*
- *Architect/Facility Planner*
- *Law Enforcement representatives, i.e., local Police Chiefs*
- *Court Services, i.e., probation*
- *Coordinators of intermediate sanctions programs*
- *Citizens Groups, i.e. League of Women Voters, AAUW, Taxpayer's Union, Chamber of Commerce, Bar Association, etc.*

- *Jail Planning/Advisory Committee (if one has been established)*
- *State Planning Agency Representative*
- *News Media*
- *Local Clergy, Council of Churches representative(s), etc.*
- *City Council or Mayor's Office representative*
- *Counsel for plaintiff if the jail is currently under suit*
- *Jail Standards and Inspection Unit staff*
- *U.S. Marshal (if the county has a contract to hold federal prisoners).*

It is recommended that letters of invitation be sent by both the sheriff and the county commissioners. If this is not possible, a letter from one agency with a follow-up telephone call from the other would be advisable. If anyone on the Must Attend list cannot attend, it is recommended that the meeting be rescheduled for a time when he/she can attend.

**APPLICATION FOR THE LOCAL
SYSTEM ASSESSMENT**

PLEASE COMPLETE AND MAIL TO:

**National Institute of Corrections
Jails Division**

1960 Industrial Circle

Suite A

Longmont, CO 80501

Telephone: 1-800-995-6429

(303) 682-0639

Fax: (303) 682-0469

NIC USE ONLY

T.A.# _____

FACILITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

APPLICATION FOR LOCAL SYSTEM ASSESSMENT

A letter signed by the sheriff or county commissioners must be sent to the National Institute of Corrections Jails Division to request a Local System Assessment. Before the Assessment can be scheduled, this form must be completed and submitted to prepare the NIC staff and consultants to visit the requesting community. This application may accompany that letter or may be sent later if the jurisdiction submits a request letter without prior knowledge of the Facility Development Program.

Requesting Agency Information:

Requesting Agency Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____ Telephone: (____) _____

City County State Zip

Agency Contact Information:

Who will act as the agency contact person?

Name: _____ Title: _____

Mailing Address: _____ Telephone: (____) _____

City County State Zip

JAIL ASSESSMENT

Jail Assessment Data:

_____ Number of jail officers

_____ Number of jail support staff

_____ Number of beds

_____ Average daily number of inmates

_____ Average number of adult male inmates

_____ Average number of adult female inmates

_____ Average number of pre-trial inmates

_____ Average number of sentenced inmates

_____ Average number of juvenile males

_____ Average number of juvenile females

_____ Number of intakes per year

_____ Is there litigation pending?*

***Identify and explain any litigation or court orders.**

ALTERNATIVE INCARCERATION OPTIONS

Pre-Trial Options Data:

Do programs exist that divert pre-trial offenders from the jail?

If yes, identify the agencies responsible for the programs, approximately how many offenders are involved, and the number of program staff.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Post-Trial Options Data:

Do programs exist that divert sentenced inmates from the jail?

If yes, identify the agencies responsible for the programs, approximately how many offenders are involved, the number of program staff, and briefly describe the program.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM AND COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

Court and Law Enforcement Data:

_____ Number of circuit, district, or superior courts

_____ Number of county courts

_____ Number of municipal courts

_____ Number of alternative sentencing programs that are available (work release, weekenders, etc.)

_____ Number of probation officers

_____ Average number of probationers

_____ Number of parole officers

_____ Average number of parolees

_____ Number of times the district court hears cases per week

_____ Number of times the county court hears cases per week

_____ Number of times the municipal court hears cases per week

_____ Is there a bond schedule for petty and misdemeanor offenses?

_____ Number of agencies that commit offenders to the jail*

***Please list the arresting agencies that commit individuals to the jail:**

Community Data:

_____ County Population

_____ Number of square miles in the county

_____ Number of cities and towns in the county

_____ Are any changes anticipated that will affect the county's population
**(Y/N)

****Explain anticipated changes:** _____

List and describe other correctional facilities in the county: _____

PROJECT INFORMATION

Please complete this section if the county has made a firm commitment to build a new jail.

PROJECT DATA:

_____ Has a site been selected?

_____ Have the required parties approved the site?

_____ Has an architect been hired?*

_____ Has a correctional planner been hired?

_____ Are planning funds available?***

_____ Are construction funds available?

_____ Have any studies or reports been completed?***

_____ Has a pre-architectural program been completed?

_____ Has an architectural program been completed?

_____ Has a site analysis been done?

_____ Have schematic drawings been done?

_____ Have design development drawings been done?

_____ Have construction documents been developed?

What prompted the county to consider planning a new jail?

Is there any formal opposition to the jail project?

Has a Planning Committee and/or Advisory Board been established?

***Architect Information**

Name: _____ Title: _____

Mailing Address: _____ Telephone: (____) _____

****Correctional Planner Information**

Name: _____ Title: _____

Mailing Address: _____ Telephone: (____) _____

*****Studies Information**

Types and Comments: _____

DATE COMPLETED: _____

BY: _____

SHERIFF'S SIGNATURE: _____

COUNTY COMMISSIONER'S
SIGNATURE: _____

Note: The above signatures are not required if an original technical assistance letter was signed by both individuals.