

**FY11 Annual Services Plan**  
Muscatine County Decategorization  
Project

Submitted by:  
Nicole Mann  
Decategorization Coordinator

October 1, 2010

## **Executive Summary:**

The Muscatine County Decategorization Project maintains a viable community approach to protect and enhance the lives of at risk youth by engaging community members through service on the Decategorization Board or participation in various focus groups. This approach is directed by the Muscatine County Decategorization Board. Board members represent Juvenile Justice, Child Welfare, and elected officials. Muscatine Decategorization's Board members offer many connections within community agencies and can disseminate accurate information to groups and programs as well as bring back information from these groups to the Decategorization Board concerning the community's needs. The Muscatine County Decategorization Board chooses to meet with the Cedar County Decategorization Board in order to share resources and collaborate on Decategorization planning. The board is composed of the following members:

- Scott Hobart – 7<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Chief Juvenile Court Officer
- Judge Gary Strausser – 7<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Judge
- Gary Lippe – Eastern Service Area Manager
- Leta Hosier – Iowa Department of Human Services Community Liaison
- Kas Kelly – Muscatine County Board of Supervisors
- Dana Echelbarger – 7<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Juvenile Court Officer
- Russ Hayes – Iowa Department of Human Services Supervisor
- Mike Johannsen – Muscatine County Community Services

The monitoring process for services under the purview of the Muscatine County Decategorization Board is assigned to staff that is contracted from the Scott County Decategorization Program and the work of the staff is directed by the Muscatine Decategorization Board. The process includes planning, program and fiscal monitoring, grants management, technical assistance, and outcome measurement. Quarterly reports including qualitative and quantitative measures are required by contract along with specific outcome measures that must be met. Site visits are conducted periodically to ensure compliance and provide technical assistance where needed. The Board regularly reviews service utilization and outcomes achievement. It is the Board's role to determine the actions taken regarding service contracts such as withholding payment due to poor outcomes achievement. Board members share information with other community entities regarding the actions of the Board and the issues and successes that are encountered.

**1. A description of the community planning used in developing the annual plan. This description should include information on the community members and organizations that were invited to and actually participated in developing the plan. Community participation can be achieved through strategies such as community forums, community education events, and community focus groups.**

Community stakeholders have been tentative to participate in long term community planning due to the lack of consistent funding. Each year Decategorization carry over funding is subject to retraction and moved to the Iowa General Fund according to administrative rules. Community members are aware of this instability and are reluctant to completely invest in the community planning efforts. This also makes it difficult to plan new services while working with tentative budgets.

In order to address the community's needs, Cedar County and Muscatine County Decategorization hosted a community forum on March 8, 2010. There were 15 community stakeholders in attendance representing a wide range of local agencies. The intent of the forum was to allow for an open discussion addressing sustainability of services during hard economic times to assist the Cedar County and Muscatine Decategorization Board in making informative decisions about future funding. Information gathered at the community forum revealed that agencies have are working with individuals experiencing a higher level of stress and more people are seeking community-based assistance. Participants also discussed poor communication between local human services, clientele, and legislators (see Attachment A).

Muscatine County Decategorization started an email distribution list with agencies and individuals who attended the Community Forum; we have been building this list over the last six months. One week prior to a Decategorization Board meeting we email information regarding the meeting, including agendas. This strategy has greatly increased community awareness of current Decategorization projects and encourages public input at meetings.

Muscatine County Decategorization staff has been invited to numerous community planning committees. This is a seamless way to understand the various services and initiatives occurring in the county to assist with community planning efforts. The following is a list of the current meetings attended by Muscatine County Decategorization staff:

- Muscatine County CPPC Committee
- 7<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Summit
- United Way Transportation Affinity Group
- Casey Breakthrough Series Collaborative on Timely Permanency through Reunification
- Muscatine Director/Provider Meetings
- Muscatine United Way Community Forums

- Statewide DMC

Muscatine County Decategorization Annual Plan was developed from input from the various committee work and community forums gathered from the sources listed above. This process was used in order to gain the broadest possible perspective on issues. If funding was available to meet a particular community need the Request for Proposals (RFP) would be used to contract for services. Members of the community sit on the RFP review team to evaluate each proposal and make suggestions to the Decat board on which bidder should be awarded the contract. This allows for more community input and diversity into the Decat funding opportunities.

***2. A description of the Decategorization project's efforts to network and coordinate with other community planning initiatives [i.e. school improvement plans, Community Empowerment Areas, Community Partnership for Protecting Children projects, United Way, etc.] affecting children and families within the boundaries of their project.***

Muscatine County Decategorization will continue to address the needs our youth at risk of entering Juvenile Court and Child Welfare systems. While addressing mental health systemic issues, Muscatine County Decategorization is still committed to providing leadership and collaboration with community partners.

Decategorization staff will share partnering activities, funding opportunities and linkage to the boarder community events at monthly Decategorization and other community meetings.

The Seventh Judicial District has quarterly meetings in Davenport, Iowa to share information with Guardians Ad Litem, Judges, Juvenile Court, DHS, Decategorization, ***elevate***, and other court involved personnel. This group works to decrease barriers and implement best practice within the court system for children and youth. District 7 has applied for funding to create resource folders which organize pertinent information for foster care youth.

Decategorization staff will continue to represent the community partner on the Core Team for the Casey Family Program's Breakthrough Series Collaborative-- Permanency through Timely Reunification. The Core Team for this project is working on small tests of change to increase timely reunification for youth who are in out of home placements.

Muscatine/Cedar County United Way is a current provider of the 2-1-1 information system, however during the community forum it was determined that families underutilize these services and United Way may not have accurate information regarding services provided.

Decategorization staff will continue to work with United Way on their Transportation Affinity Work Group to address transportation barriers that youth and families are faced with when accessing services.

Muscatine County Early Childhood Iowa is a community partner which receives updated information about Muscatine County programs funded through Decategorization. We are planning to engage Early Childhood Iowa staff to effectively provide programming and information throughout Muscatine County.

Muscatine County became a Community Partnership for the Protection of Children (CPPC) site in FY07. They will be continuing to work with their Shared Decision Making Team and informing the community about the four strategic goals of CPPC. Muscatine County Decategorization is available to provide technical assistance to the Muscatine County CPPC site.

As a result of the Community Forum, Kas Kelly, a Muscatine Decategorization Board Member, reinstated the Director/Provider Meetings in Muscatine County. These meetings provide an opportunity for local providers to come together and share resources.

***3. A description of any community needs assessment process and/or data [child welfare outcomes data, need indicator data from other systems such as health, education, community empowerment, etc.] that was used in developing the annual plan to enhance child welfare and juvenile justice service systems in the area.***

1. Decategorization staff gathered data and information from the sources listed in Question 1. A community forum and information collected from various community meetings assisted Muscatine County Decategorization with the annual plan. Please refer to Attachment A for a more detailed description of community needs.
2. Reviewed the priorities for CJJP
3. The following documents were reviewed by Decategorization staff:
  - 2009 Iowa Community Empowerment Annual Report
  - DHS Child and Family Service Review (CFSR) 2010 State Wide Assessment
  - Iowa Kids Count 2008: Trends in the Well-Being of Iowa Children
  - DHS Olmstead Plan for Mental Health and Disability Services: Draft State Plan Framework (7/01/10)
  - Iowa Child Abuse Prevention Program 2009 Annual Report
  - Serving Iowa Youth and Families with a Youth Development Approach: JJDP Act Formula Grant Application and Three-Year Comprehensive Plan (March 2009)
  - State of Iowa Juvenile Delinquency Annual Statistical Report 2008

- Statewide Community Partnerships Evaluation 2010
  - Iowa Child Welfare Decategorization Handbook August 2010
4. Muscatine County Decategorization developed a plan for building capacity and achieving outcomes (See Attachment B).

***4. A description of the project's specific and quantifiable short term plans and desired results for the state fiscal year; as well as a description of how these short term plans align with the project's longer term goals for improving outcomes for children and families.***

**LONG TERM GOAL #1**

Improve services in the community that will assist in the achievement of the Child and Family Service Review outcomes of child well-being, safety and permanency.

Short Term Strategies:

- If funding is available issue RFP's for services that will systemically enhance well being, safety and permanency for at risk youth
- Monitor and review current programs aimed at improving child well-being, safety and permanency to ensure they meet their objectives and outcomes
- Collaborate with community agencies to leverage funding to enhance the current continuum of care for children and families

**LONG TERM GOAL #2:**

To keep youth from entering the more expensive child welfare and juvenile justice systems and to ensure a safe and permanent exit from those systems if already involved

Short Term Plans for FY09:

- Monitor current program outcomes to ensure that they are meeting the target population and objectives
- Explore evidenced based programs that have proven to divert youth away from the child welfare and juvenile justice systems

**LONG TERM GOAL #3**

To maintain positive leadership role in the community and a reputation for excellence through the continuity of qualified staff and board members

Short Term Strategies:

- Update personnel policies, procedures and performance standards that promote excellence
- Provide incentives that encourage improvement in work performance

- Establish market rate salary ranges for each level of position within the organization
- Encourage Board members to designate substitutes for meetings when they will be absent
- Develop a clear plan for addressing succession of Board members
- Hire and retain qualified staff
- Promote the importance of the 28E

#### **LONG TERM GOAL #4**

Continue to be fiscally responsible with state funds

##### Short Term Strategies:

- Maintain subcontract with Bi-State Regional Commission for the purposes of obtaining necessary financial and personnel services
- Engage qualified CPA firm for annual audits
- Each fiscal year Scott County Decategorization will have an unqualified audit, which includes Muscatine County Decategorization
- Complete and submit financial reports for the Eastern Service Area Manager and the DHS Contract Manager
- Muscatine County Decategorization Governance Board shall practice general accepted accounting practices
- Be aware of the operating budget and make contracting decisions based upon this knowledge
- Research contracting opportunities to make sure they align with the vision and mission of Decategorization

***5. A description of the project's proposed plans to use funding available within their Decategorization services funding pool during the fiscal year, including plans to use their available carryover funds- resulting from Decategorization operations during the previous fiscal year- by the close of the current state fiscal year.***

Decat Coordination (7/1/10-6/30/11) – provides Decategorization Coordination and support services in Muscatine County. This includes providing technical support, facilitation of meetings, collaboration with community stakeholders, monitoring program spending, issuing RFP's, writing contracts, and maintaining contract compliance.

Family Advocacy Program (7/1/10-6/30/11) – provide support, outreach and skill building activities to youth who have a diagnosable mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder and their families.

In-Home Brief Intensive Services (11/1/10-6/30/11) – provide in-home family-centered brief intensive services to children (age six to seventeen) in Muscatine County who are not currently involved with but are at-risk of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system and/or child welfare system.

Muscatine County Community Partnerships for the Protection of Children (10/1/10-6/30/11) – provide leadership and coordination of activities to implement the Community Partnership for the Protection of Children Initiative in Muscatine County.

Strengthening Families (11/1/10-6/30/11) – provides evidence-based family skills training to parents and youth between the ages of 10-14. Program works with high-risk families to prevent teen substance abuse and other behavior problems, strengthen parenting skills, and build family strengths.

Summer Community Services (7/1/10-6/30/11) – provide summer community services for youth ages 12-17 who reside in Muscatine County who have been court ordered to provide community service as a consequence for problem behavior and to monitor progress toward identified outcomes.

Victim Restitution (7/1/10-6/30/11) – provides an employer of record and performs the payroll functions for the juveniles enrolled in the Seventh Judicial District Juvenile Court Services Victim Restitution Program.

Other services that have not yet been contracted for, but are in the development stages are:

- Parent Partner Program
- Treatment Foster Care Training
- Disproportionality Training
- Expansion of the Iowa Youth Dream Team Initiative
- Legal Guardianship Services
- Violators Program
- IJAG or Related Education Services

***6. A description of the project's plans to track results and outcomes achieved by funded programs during the year.***

The Decategorization Coordinator tracks and monitors each program's outcome measures and contract compliance through various mechanisms. The contractor provides quarterly reports containing information regarding progress towards achieving program outcomes and objectives. The Decategorization Coordinator reviews the reports and addresses any questions with the contractor. The Decategorization Coordinator meets with the DHS Contract Manager on a quarterly basis to monitor and review quarterly reports, performance outcomes, communication with contractors, and address any concerns. If a performance improvement plan is needed the Decategorization Coordinator will bring this to the attention of the board.

The Decategorization Coordinator is readily available to assist the contractor with any program or budgetary questions or barriers that may arise. This open

communication is effective in maintaining the integrity of the program deliverables and the quality of the services provided. The Decategorization Coordinator maintains the contract file and includes all relevant documentation of communication with the contractor to assist in audits and determining contract compliance. The monitoring ensures that the Muscatine County Decategorization Board is a good steward of state funds.

Annual site visits are another way of monitoring and tracking the results of contracted programs. During site visits the Decategorization Coordinator can speak directly with staff members to gain insight on the effectiveness of the program and the specific impact they have on children and families. Depending on the program the Decategorization Coordinator is able to read through case files, see the program in action, review financial records, and review how data is tracked through the contractor's monitoring systems.

The information gathered from the various methods is then compiled and reported to the Decategorization Board to review the outcomes and outputs of each program. The Decategorization Coordinator or Board Members may make suggestions for program improvements as long as the intent of the contract is not compromised. The Board votes on any changes and Decategorization Staff would communicate those changes with the contractor.

It has been difficult to monitor program outcomes due to the limited time frame Decategorization Projects have each year to plan and implement new programs. This cycle of unstable funding leads to programs that are not able to provide consistent services that are flexible enough to make the changes needed to address family needs and produce the long term outcomes needed to address program achievements. Muscatine County, with a high population of Hispanic immigrants, relies on consistency and stability in order to adequately establish the program and optimize utilization. Without optimal utilization, outcomes measurement is difficult since most outcomes are long-term by nature in the delivery of human services.

Muscatine County Decategorization is committed to writing effective contracts. In order to remain on top of contracting guidelines the Decategorization Coordinator attends trainings provided by DHS related to contracting and the DHS contracting system (C-2); attends various conference calls related to Decategorization; and reads the DHS Services Contracting Newsletter.

***7. A description of the project's plans to monitor and maintain fiscal accountability during the year [fiscal accountability includes monitoring the performance and results of contractors receiving funding and monitoring expenditures for Decategorization services during the year].***

The Muscatine County Decategorization Program values the opportunity to provide outstanding services to at risk youth and realizes that maintaining fiscal

accountability is an integral part in sustaining those services. Bi-State Regional Commission is the fiscal manager for the Scott County Decategorization Program. These services are extended to the Muscatine County Decategorization Project through the coordination contract between the two entities. They are a valuable resource in providing information regarding fiscal accountability requirements, monitoring and reviewing billings, preparing Decategorization budgets, and conducting on site fiscal reviews.

Each month contract holders are required to submit billings with detailed invoices and backup documentation to the Decategorization Coordinator. The bills are subsequently sent to Bi-State Regional Commission for review of budgetary and contract compliance. Then processed bills are submitted back to the Decat Coordinator for an additional review. The Coordinator provides the bills to the Department of Human Services where they are again reviewed and processed for payment.

At every Decategorization Board meeting an expenditure report is submitted to the members. The Decategorization staff and board members review expenditures and monitor the overall program budget. If programs are under spending or overspending the Decategorization staff are asked to contact the contractor to assess the situation.

All Decategorization contracts are performance based contracts. Performance based contracting focuses on the desired results of the program by using measurable performance standards and plans for quality assurance. If a contractor is not achieving the required outcomes the board has the opportunity to reduce payment based on the unmet outcomes. Decat programs would prefer to issue multiyear contracts in order to gather long term data however with the unstable funding cycle this is not possible.

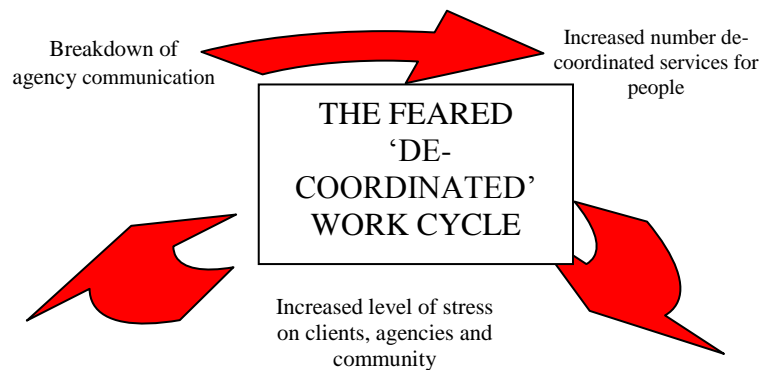
**Attachment A:**  
**Cedar and Muscatine Community Forum**  
**March 8, 2010**  
**Facilitated by: Cedar and Muscatine Counties Decategorization**

Local area public, private, state and community-based agencies gathered to discuss the impact of the local economy is having on their agency and how they are responding to the current social and economic situation. The agency representatives were candid with their answers concerning short and long term challenges and short and long term solutions for their agency, community at large, and the citizens of Cedar and Muscatine Counties.

The participants discussed the consistent reduction of funding from the State of Iowa as a result of lower State revenues. The decrease of dollars has increased the number of people accessing and utilizing the current social service delivery system. Furthermore, people seeking services present with more complex and intensive needs. Local agencies are struggling with how to provide more specialized services during a time when identified gaps in services are increasing.

The forum members discussed there was a higher level of stress being experienced by individual agencies, as well as, their specific population served. As additional people are seeking community-based assistance, it is unclear where the entry point of services is located in the community. This is true for practitioners; members shared how individually they are the broker of information in assisting clients in navigating the system. This informal support system was identified as a successful business model in the community however, as agencies' funding and time become more restricted members are concerned with fragmentation of services.

Figure 1 represents the cycle the community would like to avoid during this economic downtime.



The perception among the participants was that there will be a decrease in funding for social service programming in FY 11. The consensus of the attendees is to continue to

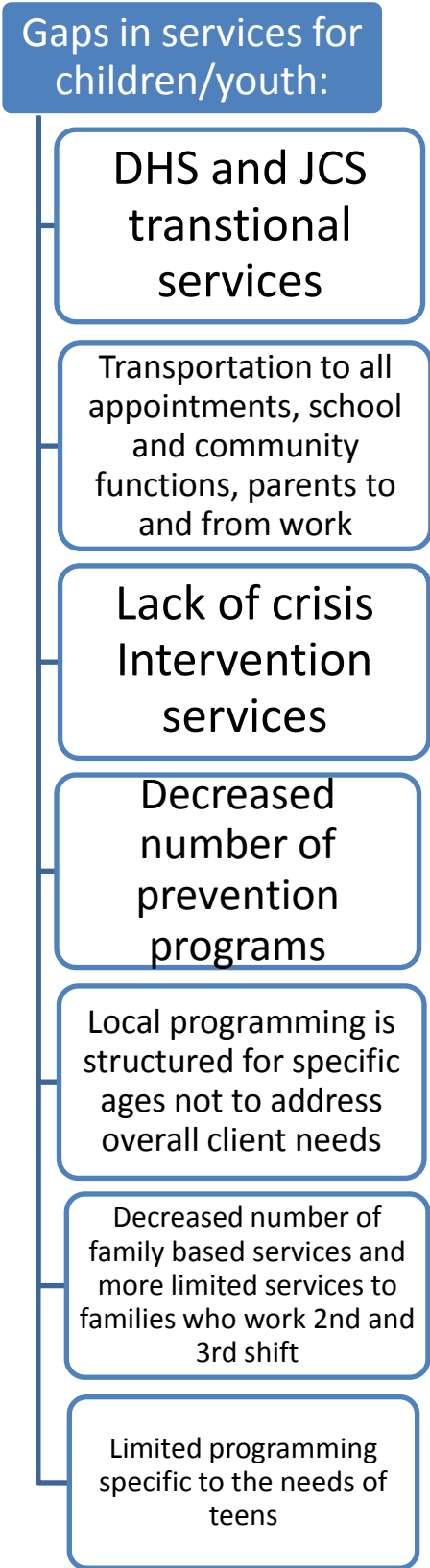
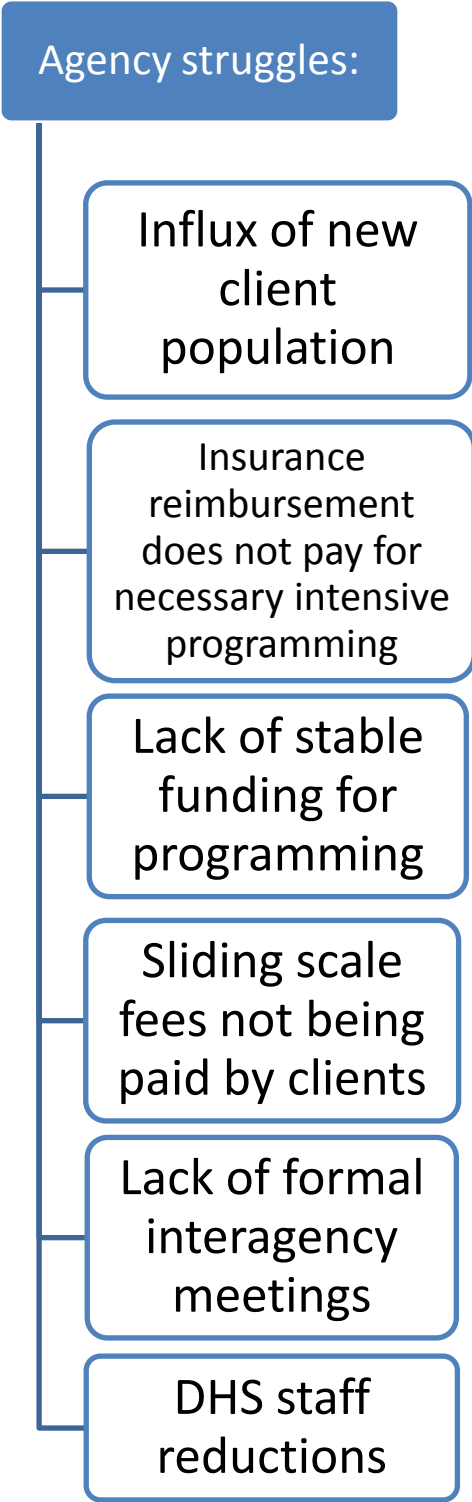
rely on internal knowledge and positive interagency relationships. Agency personnel will share information and program changes, a structure to receive update information that will assist clients to navigate the social service system successfully. This collaborative style of communication is a long standing practice in the communities. For agencies to meet the higher demand for their services, working harder will not overcome the barriers of *time*. As the informal communication system currently functions it can be a drain on agency resources in attempting to locate the right person with the specific information.

Here is a brief list of examples shared:

- There is not a clear pattern of communication between local agencies and schools
- Muscatine United Way 211 is underutilized and contains limited information
- No formally supported multiagency meetings
- Lack of information about Decategorization programs and processes
- Lack of coordinated communication system between agencies

The communication topic shifted focus and began to reveal the potential root cause of the challenges. The group discussed how there is a break in communication between local human services, clientele, and legislators. Legislation sessions can be time consuming, difficult to understand, and difficult to obtain information about. In addition, the client population served by human service providers generally do not vote. In the human service field, the people seeking services are families that are not heard, marginalized by institutions and have diverse backgrounds which limit their interactions with the legislative system such as: persons with convicted felonies, of illegal immigrant status, and with limited cognitive abilities. This complicates the ability to inform legislators of effective programs, gaps in services for children and youth, and rally constituents to advocate for services with legislators. This process results in less local program awareness and less funding which are all unintended outcomes for children and families.

As this pattern unfolds, the participants reveal the agency's reality when they are faced with funding obstacles. The figure below captures the agency barriers and how these barriers influence practice and programming to children and families.



The participant goals are:

- Increase awareness in legislative issues to include mental health
- Attend coffees or community meetings with legislators to advise on local and agency issues
- Kick off legislative session with a formal meeting with legislators
- Share information with other agencies to increase effectiveness and decrease agency staff anxiety
- Engage school members
- Reconvene Directors Meetings to share agency information
- Reconnect with United Way and connection between services
- Create a link system to share training information, agency updates, and other info

The lingering theme of the day was: being internally intentional. Having a clear purpose will allow us to remain collaborative partners if in the future tough choices arise.

The Decategorization programs of Cedar and Muscatine Counties appreciates the investment of the forum participants in their communities. Thank you for your time and sharing your thoughts during the forum.

**Attachment B:**  
**DECATEGORIZATION: BUILDING CAPACITY AND ACHIEVING OUTCOMES**

