FY09 Annual Services Plan

Muscatine County
Decategorization Project

Submitted by:

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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. Decat'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 Decat Board concerning the community's needs. The board is composed of the following members:

- Scott Hobart—Chief Juvenile Court Officer
- Judge Gary Strausser—District Juvenile Judge
- Denise Gonzales—DHS Service Area Manager (Corey Watt, DHS Community Liaison, is identified as the substitute designee)
- Kas Kelly—Board of Supervisors
- Dana Echelbarger—Juvenile Court Officer

The Board directs the work of the Scott County Decategorization staff under a contractual agreement with the Scott County Decategorization Board, to monitor programming. The process includes planning, program and fiscal monitoring, grants management, 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 under service contracts such as withholding payment due to not meeting outcomes.

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 in this multi-cultural community have in the past taken active roles in long-term planning. Since 2002, when the carryover funding was retracted due to state budget constraints, this participation took a marked downturn. Now community members are tentative to participate in long term community planning due to the fear of funding cuts which will impact their
community. Each year, the Decat Board has to wait until the second quarter of the fiscal year to be informed about carry over funding that will be available for service provision. Community members are aware that there will only be 9 months for this funding to be expended and the cycle of instability starts over. This explains their reluctance 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 small focus groups were conducted, reviews of current plans were performed and information was gathered from other pre-existing committees. The following table illustrates the sources and participants of the various methods of data collection.

**TABLE 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Planning Sources</th>
<th>Participants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review of Muscatine Empowerment Re-designation Plan and Annual Plan</td>
<td>Muscatine Decategorization Board Members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect Child Abuse Iowa 8/28/07 data on child abuse rates</td>
<td>Decategorization Staff and Muscatine County Decategorization Board Members</td>
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<tr>
<td>Juvenile Delinquency Annual Statistical Report</td>
<td>Decategorization Staff and Muscatine County Decategorization Board Members</td>
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<tr>
<td>DHS Annual Report</td>
<td>Decategorization Staff and Muscatine County Decategorization Board Members</td>
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The DHS Community Liaison attends the Muscatine County Decat Board Meetings. He sits on various community boards and committees and brings information from those groups to the board members. 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 the Community Liaison:

- Empowerment Board
- Empowerment Appeals Committee
- Muscatine CPPC
- CPPC State Executive Committee
- CPPC Legislative Task Team

Plans were developed in each county based on the information gathered from the above sources. 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’s 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.

Community Partnership for the Protection of Children
Muscatine has a Community Partnership for the Protection of Children site. Their Leadership Group consists of various community members and serves as a steering committee that receives input from the Neighborhood Groups and Muscatine Connect Board Members. Various subcommittees are formed as needed to address specific community needs. This project is heavily invested in neighborhood networking to achieve their goals.

School Districts
One of the needs that were identified from the Muscatine Empowerment Annual Plan was the need for wrap around services such as after school and summer programs. The Muscatine Board voted to approve funding to Muscatine Community School District and West Liberty Community School Districts for after school and/or summer programs. The programs had to have the following components:

- Services must target youth who experience one or more of the following:
  - Qualify for free or reduced lunch
  - Academic challenges
  - Behavior issues
  - Social deficits
  - OR be a Title I school
- Provide academic activities, healthy recreational activities, skill building activities, and mentoring to students.
- Provide specific curriculum on bullying prevention, substance abuse prevention and character building activities (provide description of the curriculum that will be used).
- Offer healthy snacks for students
- Hours of operation will be from the time school is let out until at least 5pm.
- The program will work with area high schools to identify students that would be appropriate for mentoring activities with the after-school program.

It was difficult to obtain accurate performance measures due to the limited amount of time this program was offered. For FY08 the board did not receive their carry over amounts until October 2007. This left eight months to do community planning, write an informal proposal, award contracts and start the new programs. Therefore school districts were able to offer programming for 3
months. However, the Muscatine After School and Summer Program showed that students improved in attendance rates, math and reading and parents and children were satisfied with the program.

Community Stakeholders
Transportation was another indicated community need addressed. Recently Decat staff brought together representation from one of the local transit systems, Director of Public Health, Empowerment Coordinator, United Way Director, Community Services Director, County Supervisor and DHS to discuss the issue of transportation. The ideas that were generated from this meeting will be brought back to the Decat Board for further review.

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.

Decategorization staff gathered data and information from the sources listed in Question 1. The community needs assessments demonstrated the vast gaps in services in the counties. Educational support services and transportation were evident as identified needs in Muscatine County. Please refer to Attachment A for a complete list of community needs. The information identified in Attachment A was distributed to the Muscatine County Decat Board to reference and utilize when prioritizing funding opportunities.

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

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.

Please note that this year’s services are highly limited due to the lack of knowledge regarding the amount of carry over funds available for FY09.

Decat Coordination (7/1/08-6/30/09)—provide Decat 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.

Muscatine County Community Partnerships for the Protection of Children (10/1/08-9/30/09)—provide leadership and coordination of activities to implement the Community Partnership for the Protection of Children Initiative in Muscatine County.

Family Advocacy Program (7/1/08-6/30/09)—provide support, outreach and skill building activities to youth who have a diagnosable mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder and their families.

Summer Community Services (7/1/08-6/30/09)—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.
If carryover funding and long term commitment to funding cycles is available the Muscatine County Decat Program would fund the following:

- School Based Mental Health Services
- After School Program
- Community Service Mapping

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

The Decat 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 Decat Coordinator reviews the reports and addresses any questions with the contractor. If a performance improvement plan is needed the Decat Coordinator will bring this to the attention of the board.

The Decat 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 Decat 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 Decat 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 Decat 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 Decat 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 Decat 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 Decat Staff would communicate those changes with the contractor.

It has been difficult to monitor program outcomes due to the limited time frame Decat Projects have each year to plan and implement new programs. For FY08, Decat projects were not informed of their carryover dollars until October 2007 which left only nine months to complete the RFP process and start a community program. This cycle of unstable funding leads to programs that come and go in a community. 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.

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 multi year contracts in order to gather long term data however with the unstable funding cycle this is not possible.
Attachment A

Muscatine Community Needs Assessment

Muscatine Empowerment

- Muscatine Empowerment is focusing on Child Abuse Prevention and would welcome any opportunity to bring in an expert to discuss programs that are sound and researched based
  - One Time Funding
    - Fund speaker to promote healthy children
  - Need for wraparound child care or programming for working parents
    - Ongoing Funding
      - Fund wrap around programming
        - After school programming
        - Before school programming
        - Summer programming
        - Vacation or Holiday programming
  - Transportation to and from services
    - Ongoing Funding
      - Fund transportation services
      - Integrate into contracts additional funding for transportation needs

* A community needs assessment is currently underway in Muscatine.