

**Opportunities for Youth  
Dropout Prevention and Juvenile Justice  
Follow-Up Report**

**October 26, 2004**

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**DEDICATED TO IMPROVING THE CITY AND BUILDING PUBLIC TRUST**



**OFFICE OF THE CITY AUDITOR**

**AUSTIN, TEXAS**

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## COUNCIL SUMMARY

**There continues to be a need for coordinating agency efforts to effectively address juvenile crime and truancy issues in Austin.** Several police departments across the country, including the Austin Police Department (APD), have reported that daytime crime rates are a problem, in part, because students are committing crimes instead of going to school. According to research, some of the most common daytime juvenile crimes include burglary, aggravated assault, drug use, and vandalism. Truancy, or chronic, unexcused absences, has also been shown to correlate with adult criminality and other reduced quality of life measures. Research indicates the most effective response to juvenile crime involves a coordinated, system-wide approach. To address the daytime crime problem in Austin during school hours, APD has initiated a program addressing juvenile justice issues that is designed to work in collaboration with the Austin Independent School District (AISD), the AISD Police Department, Travis County juvenile justice agencies and local social service agencies.

**The WDB and AISD have a partnership dedicated to participating in programs directed specifically toward at-risk youth and dropout prevention and recovery.** The WDB funds a program focused on at-risk youth called the Youth Employment Partnership (YEP) which is a consortium of four social service agencies. These agencies include Goodwill Industries of Central Texas, American Youth Works, the Austin Area Urban League, and Communities in Schools. The focus of the YEP is to provide a range of social services that provide at-risk youth with comprehensive activities to assist them in achieving academic or employment success. Additionally, the WDB interfaces with AISD staff on the Youth Advisory Group (YAG) whose mission is to identify and address the needs of at-risk youth that includes addressing alternative education issues.

We found that AISD has staff devoted to dropout prevention efforts, expanded criteria for identifying students at-risk and a system in place that utilizes at-risk criteria to identify and intervene with potential school dropouts. AISD has assigned district-level responsibility for dropout prevention and recovery programs to appropriate levels of management from 1995 to the present. AISD is utilizing a program designed to address dropout prevention and intervention issues, and in addition, has implemented attendance and truancy support initiatives that encourage collaborative efforts among organizations in the community. By utilizing criteria that correlate with school dropout and truancy, AISD has an increased ability to identify opportunities to intervene before a student becomes a chronic truant and/or drops out of school.

**Our earlier Juvenile Justice System audit recognized the need for such collaboration and local juvenile justice agencies sustained this effort until 2000.** Before its dissolution, a Management Coordination Team (MCT) consisting of management level staff from various youth agencies functioned as a collaborative workgroup focusing on issues and strategies addressing common juvenile justice issues. However, we found the team did not take steps to formalize its operations in written policies or to assess the effectiveness of their collaborative efforts as recommended. Additionally, the MCT did not implement formal interagency agreements or policies and procedures for sharing information on specific juvenile cases across agencies as recommended in the original audit. Last, the MCT did not take steps to standardize interagency data collection, formatting, and evaluation techniques to enable system wide program evaluation. In an attempt to revive similar collaborative efforts, in August 2004, APD initiated a new program to address truancy and other juvenile justice issues, the success of which

requires multi-agency participation. It is important to note that the agencies comprising the local infrastructure responsible for addressing juvenile justice issues in Austin are currently facing similar barriers to efficient and effective service delivery as those outlined in the 1995 audit.

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**OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH PARTNERED AUDITS:  
DROPOUT PREVENTION AND RECOVER AND JUVENILE JUSTICE ISSUES  
FOLLOW UP**

**BACKGROUND**

Law enforcement officials across the country, including the Austin Police Department (APD), have reported that crime committed during school hours by juveniles is a problem. Many of these crimes are committed by juveniles who habitually skip class without an authorized excuse. Such behaviors have been shown to contribute to adverse quality of life issues for juveniles as they move into adulthood.

**Juvenile crime during school hours and truancy are still concerns for the City of Austin.**

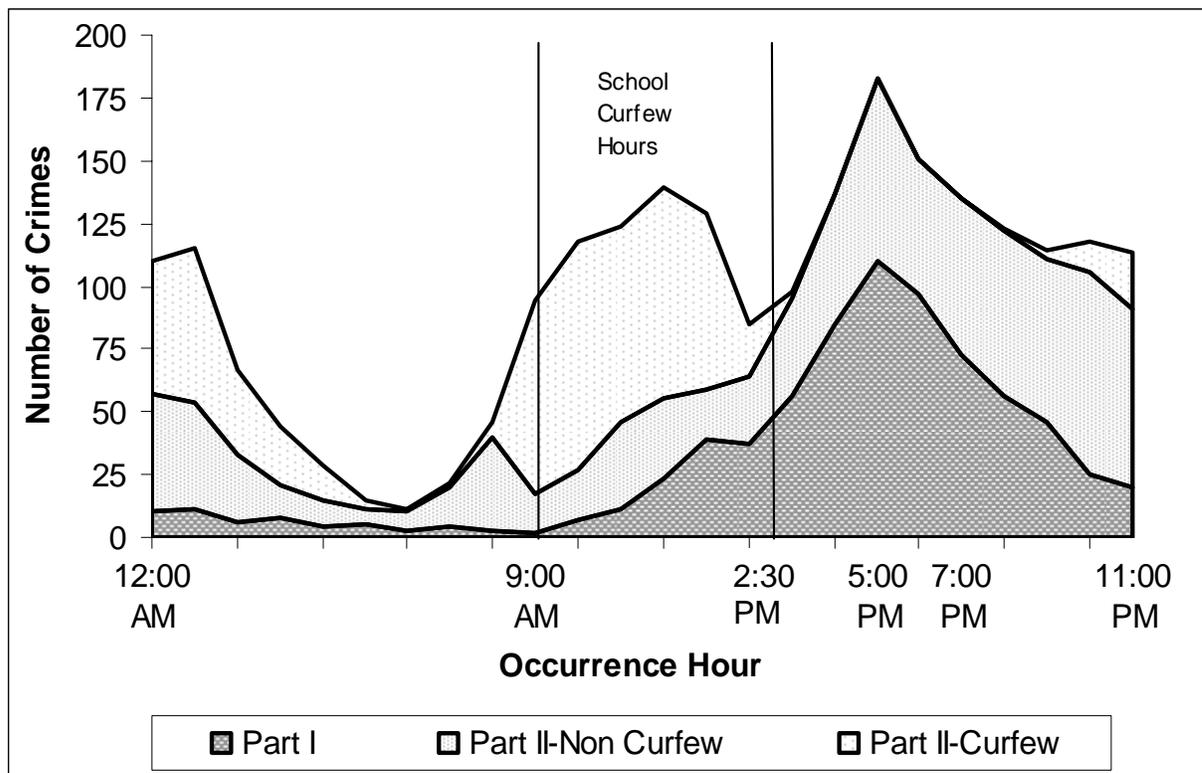
Several police departments across the country, including the Austin Police Department (APD), have reported that daytime crime rates are a problem, in part, because students are committing crimes such as burglary, theft, and auto theft instead of going to school. Ultimately, chronic unauthorized absences from school, or truancy, have been shown to correlate with adult criminality, lower lifetime earnings and other reduced quality of life measures compared to adults who completed their schooling.

**Law enforcement officials in several jurisdictions, including the Austin Police Department (APD), have reported that crime committed during school hours by school aged juveniles is a problem.** According to research reports citing data from several jurisdictions, the most common daytime juvenile crimes include burglary, aggravated assault, drug use, and vandalism. Crime data from the APD indicate similar issues in Austin, where daytime crimes by juveniles include both serious crimes known as Part I or index offenses and less serious crimes or Part II offenses. Under the nation's conventional method of reporting crime statistics, the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program, Part I index criminal offenses include murder, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, motor vehicle theft, and arson. The less serious Part II offenses include public order crimes such as vandalism, weapons carrying, drug and alcohol related crimes, and curfew violations.

To address the daytime crime problem many jurisdictions are implementing initiatives to combat students' unexcused absences from school, typically referred to as truancy. One popular initiative is the enactment of daytime curfew ordinances, which are aimed at controlling the movement of juveniles under the age of 17 during school hours. In Austin for example, daytime curfew hours during the school year are between 9:00 am and 2:30 pm, Monday through Friday. A student who is not in school during curfew hours, and who does not have a valid excuse from a parent or guardian, is committing a curfew violation. According to the Austin city ordinance, curfew violations are classified as Class C misdemeanors, and students identified as violating the ordinance can be issued a citation by the APD, which is punishable by a fine of not less than 50 dollars.

Exhibit 1.1 contains crime data obtained from APD that shows the frequency of Part I crimes and Part II crimes broken down into “curfew violations” and “all other” crimes committed between 12:00 am and 11:00 pm in Austin for the 2003 school year. As the exhibit indicates, during the 2003 school year, the frequency of both Part I and Part II crimes including both non-curfew and curfew violations committed by juveniles reached the highest between 5:00 pm and 7:00 pm. However, the next largest peak in crimes occurred between the hours of 9:00 am and 2:00 pm, when most juveniles should be attending school classes, the majority of which are curfew violations.

**EXHIBIT 1.1**  
**Part I and Part II Crimes with Juvenile Arrests by Hour**  
**School Year 2003-2004**



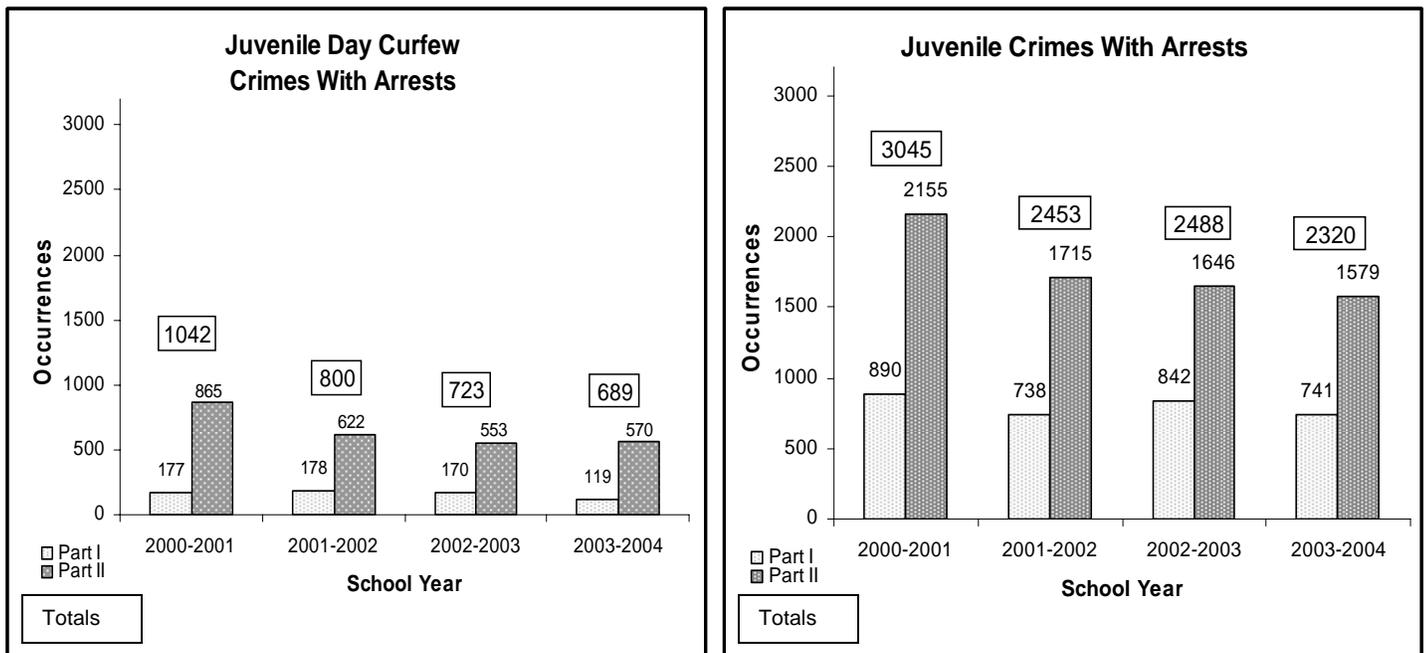
SOURCE: OCA analysis of data obtained from Austin Police Department, (August 19, 2003 – May 26, 2004), September 2004

Data in exhibit 1.2 indicates the number of crimes with juvenile arrests occurring during daytime curfew hours decreased 34 per cent from school year (SY) 2000 to SY 2003. The results of analyses to determine trends in the frequencies of crimes for which at least one juvenile was arrested during the last four school years are displayed in Exhibit 1.2 below. As the first chart in the exhibit indicates, the total number of crimes (Part I and Part II combined) during daytime curfew hours with juvenile arrests for SY 2000 was 1042. By SY 2003, this number had dropped to 689, amounting to a decrease of 34 percent over the four-year period. This chart also shows the frequencies of the more serious Part I Index

offenses committed during daytime curfew hours resulting in juvenile arrests remained relatively steady from SY 2000 through SY 2002 at around 170 until SY 2003 when the number dropped to 119. In all four years, less serious Part II crimes comprised by far the greatest number of crimes occurring during school hours. The frequency of these crimes has decreased from 865 in SY 2000 to a low of 553 in SY 2002 then increased slightly to 570 for SY 2003.

The second chart in exhibit 1.2 shows that the total number of crimes with juvenile arrests, regardless of the time of day, has also declined over the last four years from 3,045 in SY 2000 to 2,320 in SY 2003 (27 per cent). The frequency of the more serious Part I index offenses decreased from 890 in SY 2000 to 741 in SY 2003. For all four years, the less serious Part II crimes again comprise the greatest number of crimes occurring within a 24 hour period, including daytime curfew hours.

**EXHIBIT 1.2**  
**Juvenile Crime Occurrences**



SOURCE: OCA analysis of data obtained from Austin Police Department, September 2004

APD officers have different options when encountering a truant student. The officer can issue a ticket requiring the student to appear before court. The family can then become involved in the Justice of the Peace Court system, the Municipal Court system, or the Truancy Court system based on the age of student and district where the student resides. Officers can also respond by releasing the truant, returning the truant to school, attempting to contact the parent or guardian or, if the truant is caught in an act equal to or less than a class C misdemeanor, he or she may be taken to Garner-Bettes Juvenile Detention Center. Despite APD's efforts, some truants and their families fail to appear in court. According to APD, youth are increasingly aware that aggressive follow-up actions

or sanctions may not be taken when citations are issued for curfew violations. Thus, many truants do not experience consequences for their delinquent behavior.

**Truancy is a precursor to more serious, longer-term problems for the delinquent minors such as dropping out of school, poor quality of life, and adult criminality.**

Reports issued by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention conclude that truancy can not only result in an increase in daytime juvenile crime, but is also a powerful predictor of a lifetime of social and economic problems, as well as a precursor to adult criminal behavior. Students with excessive unauthorized absences often end up completely dropping out of school leading to a considerably lower earning potential over their lifetimes than students who complete high school and post-secondary school. Therefore, as research indicates, adults who were frequently truant as teenagers are much more likely than those who were not to have lower paying jobs, a greater chance of living in poverty, and more reliance on welfare support. The research suggests additional future problems for such delinquents including poorer physical and mental health. Most dramatically, truant activity appears to be a predictor of both violent and non-violent adult criminality often leading to incarceration. In light of this information, many communities across the country are developing truancy reduction programs that involve the collaboration of local schools, law enforcement, judicial agencies, and community social service agencies.

**The solution to effectively address juvenile crime and truancy in Austin still requires collaboration among appropriate agencies.**

Information regarding juvenile crimes committed during school hours in the Austin area indicated the need for a closer look at local initiatives to address curfew violations, truancy, school dropout issues, and juvenile crime. In conjunction with a community-wide organizing effort led by APD, the Office of the City Auditor (OCA) set out to assess the current status of the local infrastructure in place to address some of those issues. Accordingly, the OCA, as a part of the amended 2004 service plan, conducted a follow-up audit on recommendations issued in two Opportunities for Youth Partnered audit reports published in 1995. One of the audits focused on school dropout prevention and recovery, while the other dealt with juvenile justice issues in the Austin/Travis County area. From the two audits, we chose to assess the implementation status of several key recommendations that would best present a picture of the current state of the local infrastructure in place to address current juvenile crime and delinquency issues.

**In 1995, the Office of the City Auditor published two Opportunities for Youth audit reports, one that focused on dropout prevention; the other on juvenile justice issues in the Austin/Travis County area.** Both audits were conducted as partnered audits with active collaboration of the APD, the Austin Independent School District (AISD), the City of Austin's Health and Human Services Department (HHSD), the Travis County District Attorney's Office (DA's Office), the Travis County Juvenile Court (TCJC) and the local Workforce Development Board (WDB) planning team.

The Dropout Prevention and Recovery audit focused on the AISD and the community-based organizations involved in dropout prevention and recovery. The primary objective of the audit was to assess the extent and effectiveness of the community's efforts to recover dropouts. We also assessed the efforts underway to prevent at-risk students from

dropping out of school, and the degree to which these efforts are evaluated for effectiveness and efficiency. In summary, the 1995 Dropout Prevention and Recovery audit findings included the following:

- Improvements were needed in the criteria and process used for identifying students at-risk for dropping out of school, as well as in the systems for referring these students to needed programs;
- To reduce the impact of dropouts on society, the effectiveness of the community's recovery efforts needed improvement;
- Improved coordination among AISD and community-based programs was needed to enhance recovery efforts through shared referrals; and
- Resource allocation decisions were hampered by inconsistent performance measurement and documentation practices among AISD and community dropout recovery programs.

The recommendations that were issued to address the findings in the Dropout Prevention and Recovery audit focused mainly on increasing collaborative efforts between AISD and the community-based agencies involved in dropout prevention and recovery. In addition, recommendations were made aimed at standardizing and centralizing the performance measurement and information tracking for dropout prevention and recovery programs and service providers.

The objectives of the Juvenile Justice System audit were designed: 1) to determine whether policy formulation and implementation by local governmental entities responsible for responding to juvenile crime were adequately coordinated to provide an effective response; and 2) to determine whether there were gaps in program coverage that contributed to juveniles returning to crime. The findings of the Juvenile Justice audit can be summarized as the following:

- The coordination between agencies in the system was not adequate to provide an effective response to repeat juvenile offenders;
- Although research suggested that the most effective responses to juvenile crime involved collaborative efforts, the Austin/Travis County system was not designed to support collaborative efforts at the oversight or agency management levels; and
- In order to adequately provide programming for the number and type of juvenile offenders the system was encountering, responsibility for program development and implementation needed to be spread throughout the system as a whole.

The recommendations issued to address the Juvenile Justice audit findings focused on the establishment of a collaborative infrastructure to provide for system-wide accountability by elected officials, coordination of efforts at the agency level, and performance measurement across agency boundaries.

**To assess the status of the local infrastructure in place to help address current daytime juvenile delinquency issues, we chose to assess the implementation status of a several key recommendations from the two 1995 audits.** Because local crime data and national research data indicate that daytime crime and truancy are strongly related to dropping out of school and juvenile crime problems, we chose to conduct follow-up audit testing on a few related recommendations from both the dropout prevention and juvenile justice audits. By testing the implementation status of these recommendations issued in

1995, we hoped to obtain and be able to provide information on current issues related to truancy, daytime crime, school dropout, and juvenile justice in Austin.

## **OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY**

### **Objective**

The objective of this follow-up work was to assess the progress that the City and various community agencies have made toward addressing selected audit findings and implementing corresponding audit recommendations set forth in the Opportunities for Youth Dropout Prevention and Recovery and Juvenile Justice Opportunities for Youth audits issued in 1995.

### **Scope**

For this follow-up audit, we limited our scope to verifying the implementation status of nine of the 25 total recommendations issued with the two 1995 audits. The nine recommendations chosen were those that we felt could best provide a current depiction of community infrastructure systems in place to address dropout and juvenile justice issues, especially as they impact the recent trend of truancy related crime committed during school hours in Austin. Conducting this assessment required us to contact and obtain information from staff of several agencies including the Austin Independent School District, the Austin Police Department, Capital Area Workforce Development Board, District Attorney's Office, City of Austin Health and Human Services Department, and the Travis County Juvenile Court.

**Scope limitation:** Information regarding status of implementation of the recommendations issued in the 1995 Opportunities for Youth Audits was not available from the Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department. Accordingly, contributions by HHSD to implementing the recommendations are not specifically reflected in the status report.

### **Methodology**

To accomplish our objective, we interviewed individuals from the Austin Independent School District, the Austin Police Department, Capital Area Workforce Development Board, District Attorney's Office, City of Austin Health and Human Services Department, and the Travis County Juvenile Court as each of these agencies were actively involved in the previous two audits and in the implementation process. Additionally, we reviewed and analyzed a variety of documents and data presented by the participating agencies or discovered through our research.

This audit was conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

**CHAPTER ONE**  
**DROPOUT PREVENTION AND RECOVERY**  
**FOLLOW-UP RESULTS**

## **DROPOUT PREVENTION AND RECOVERY FOLLOW-UP RESULTS**

The Austin Independent School District (AISD) has improved dropout prevention efforts since the 1995 audit report was issued. The AISD has created a staff position dedicated to dropout prevention and has a process in place designed to dissuade at risk students from dropping out of school. Since these organizational and programmatic changes have been made within AISD, data from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) indicates that AISD has experienced an overall decline in dropout rates during the last several years.

**The Austin Independent School District (AISD) has improved dropout prevention efforts, and data shows an overall reduction in district dropout rates since the original audit.**

The Dropout Prevention and Recovery audit issued in 1995 pointed to the need for AISD to improve dropout prevention and recovery efforts. As a result, we issued recommendations designed to improve AISD dropout prevention efforts in selected areas.

### **At-A-Glance: Dropout Audit Verified Implementation Status**

Recommendation number	Recommendation's issue area	Implemented	Partially Implemented	Not Implemented
1	AISD-Director of Dropout Prevention	<b>X</b>		
10	AISD has dropout criteria used for program referral	<b>X</b>		
2	AISD participates on WDB	<b>X</b>		
8	AISD & WDB coordinate dropout prevention plans	<b>X</b>		
4	WDB has programs for students at risk of dropping out	<b>X</b>		
5	Information sharing agreement & confidentiality waiver developed between AISD & WDB			<b>X</b>

Auditor's Note: The agencies did not report implementation status to the City of Austin. Complete recommendations are provided in Appendix B.

#### **Dropout Prevention and Recovery (DPR) Recommendation # 1**

Establish director-level responsibility for dropout-related programs

✓ **Implemented**

**In 1995, AISD implemented a district-level position with responsibility for dropout prevention and recovery (DPR) programs.** Findings from the original audit indicate that AISD efforts to reduce dropout rates were fragmented, giving the appearance that dropout prevention efforts were not a high priority. To address this issue, we recommended that AISD appoint a district-level position dedicated to the planning,

coordination, implementation, and evaluation of the district's DPR programs. During our follow-up work we obtained organizational charts from AISD which shows that a position of Director of Dropout Prevention was created at an organizational level that has the capacity to influence AISD policy. In addition, the job description for this position indicates that the position is dedicated to the leadership and coordination of AISD's dropout and prevention programs, dropout recovery efforts, and truancy intervention programs. Thus, the original recommendation has been fully implemented.

**Suggested strategy for further implementation:**

1. AISD should continue to implement dropout and truancy reduction programs while encouraging collaborative efforts among the Austin Police Department (APD) and other local youth services organizations.

**Dropout Prevention and Recovery (DPR) Recommendation # 10**

AISD utilizes at-risk criteria for program referral

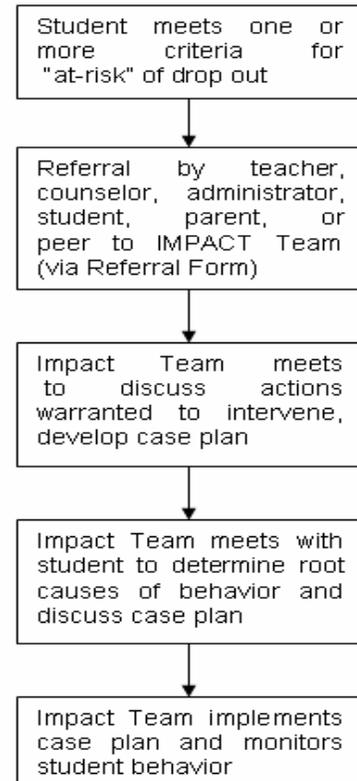
✓ **Implemented**

**AISD has, during the last ten years, expanded the criteria used to identify students at risk for dropping out of school.** Findings from the original audit revealed that the criteria used to identify students at risk of dropping out of school were too broad to effectively target at risk students and to ensure efficient provision of services. To address this finding, we recommended that AISD enhance criteria for identifying and prioritizing levels of dropout risk. During the last ten years, AISD has implemented a broader range of risk factors including academic performance, environmental, familial, economic, social, developmental, and other psychosocial indicators. The complete list of risk factors used by AISD for evaluating whether a student is at risk for dropping out of school can be found in Appendix C. According to AISD, no one risk factor is necessarily given priority over another; if a student meets one risk factor he or she can be considered "at-risk." These at-risk students are the focus of AISD's current identification, prevention and intervention efforts. Therefore, the original recommendation has been implemented.

**AISD has implemented a system that utilizes the at-risk criteria to identify, prioritize and intervene with potential school dropouts.** Our original audit results indicated that the identification of at risk students was not only impaired by broad at-risk criteria, but the criteria were not systematically used for intervention efforts. Thus, we recommended that AISD develop a system that uses a range of risk criteria to identify, prioritize, and intervene with students at risk of dropping out of school. Our follow-up work indicates that AISD has implemented such a system. This system is utilized within the framework of the IMPACT team process, which according to AISD has been implemented in all schools within the district.

In short, the purpose of the IMPACT team approach is to connect the needs of the students and their parents with available resources within AISD, as well as those offered by other community-based organizations. Additionally, the program focuses on parent and student accountability for school attendance and performance. Each IMACT team is required to have as members an assistant principal, counselor, nurse, teacher, and Communities in Schools representative. Each campus may add additional members to the IMACT team depending on the campus' demographics, grade level, and target population. Exhibit 1.3 depicts the IMPACT team process.

**Exhibit 1.3  
IMPACT Team Process**



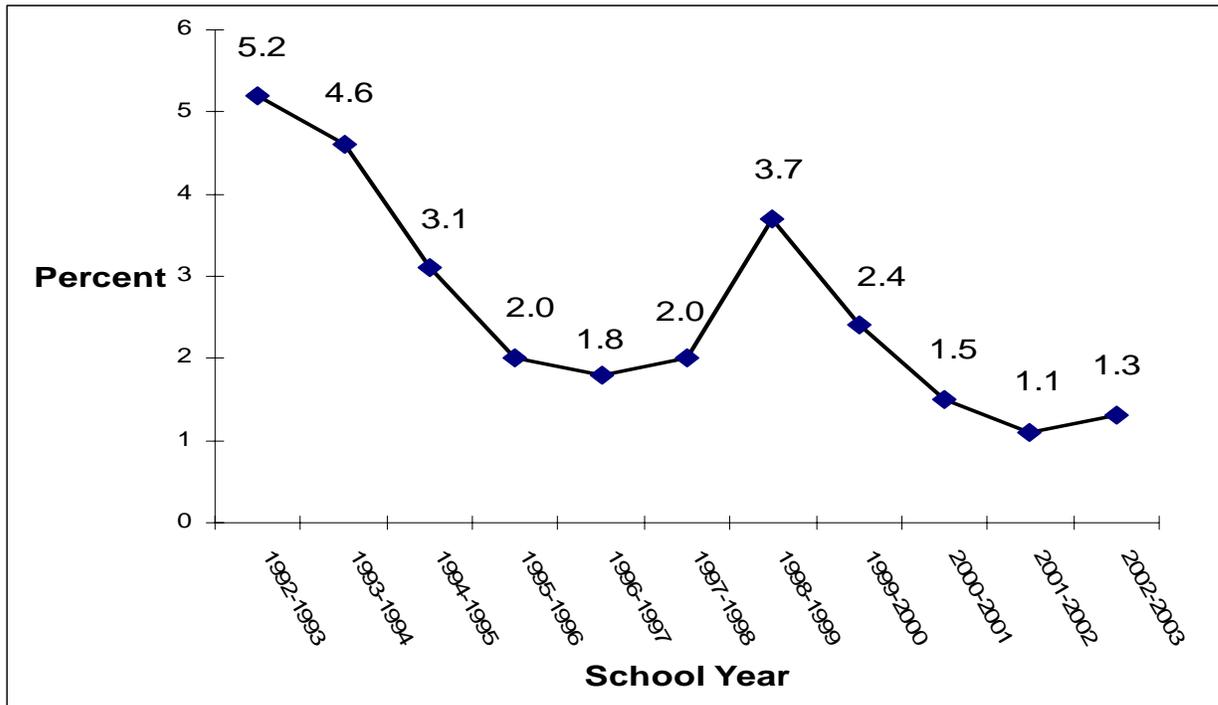
Source: AISD, September 2004

**Suggested strategies for further implementation:**

1. AISD should continue to incorporate correlates of school dropout and truancy into the at-risk criteria utilized within the district. Collaboration with APD and other social service entities may assist in identifying additional at-risk indicators.

**Data from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) indicates that AISD has experienced an overall decline in dropout rates during the last several years.** Our original audit report cited AISD dropout rates that were slightly higher than the statewide average for urban districts for the 1992-1993 school year. Since that time, data from the TEA indicates AISD has experienced a 3.9 percentage point decline in dropout rates through the 2002-2003 school year. As shown in Exhibit 1.4 on the following page, the AISD dropout rate has gone from 5.2 percent in school year 1992–1993 to 1.3 per cent for school year 2002-2003. The decline in AISD dropout rates is in part a result of AISD dedicating staff to design, develop, and implement programs aimed at dropout prevention through the use of refined criteria for identifying at-risk students and early intervention.

**Exhibit 1.4  
AISD Annual Dropout Rate**



Source: Texas Education Agency, Academic Excellence Indicator System, 2002-2003.  
 Auditor's note: The dropout rate in the original report was 7.3 percent in 1992-1993. Due to a change in TEA's calculation method, the dropout rate for the same school year is now calculated at 5.2 percent.

**Collaboration between AISD and the Workforce Development Board regarding dropout-related program development is occurring.**

The 1995 Dropout Prevention and Recovery audit identified the need for the establishment of a community wide infrastructure to eliminate barriers to recovering at risk students who have dropped out of school. To address this, recommendations were made to address these issues.

**Dropout Prevention and Recovery (DPR) Recommendation # 2**

AISD participates on the WDB

✓ **Implemented**

**AISD employees have represented the education community as members of the Workforce Development Board for several terms since 1995.** The original audit pointed out the absence of a coordinated interagency system focused on eliminating barriers to recovering school dropouts. Further, the report concluded that AISD would benefit from partnering with the then emerging WDB to provide positive job training and employment alternatives for school dropouts. Thus, we recommended that in order to coordinate district dropout recovery efforts and community resources, the superintendent of AISD should assign district level responsibility for participation as a member on the WDB. However, in our follow-up work we found that local elected officials (i.e., the mayor or county judge), not the superintendent of AISD, have the responsibility to make

appointments to the WDB. Further, the legislation creating the WDB requires the appointment be a representative of the education community as a whole, not from a particular school district such as AISD. So, while the local elected officials may ask the superintendent of AISD to suggest an AISD employee to be recommended for membership, AISD does not have a permanent reserved position on the WDB. For example, an AISD representative was the original appointee to the WDB, but was followed by a representative of a private education firm, and then by a board member of the Del Valle ISD. Currently, AISD's Director of Dropout Prevention holds this position on the WDB. Therefore, this recommendation is implemented to the extent possible based on State requirements for WDB membership.

**Dropout Prevention and Recovery (DPR) Recommendations # 8 and #4**

Rec. #8: AISD and the WDB collaborate on dropout prevention plans  
✓ **Implemented**

Rec. #4: WDB has programs for students at risk of dropping out  
✓ **Implemented**

**The WDB and AISD have a partnership dedicated to participating in programs directed toward at-risk youth and dropout prevention and recovery.** To provide additional support for dropout prevention and recovery efforts from a community standpoint, the 1995 audit recommended the WDB and AISD collaborate on planning and developing programs directed toward dropout prevention and recovery.

Prior to 1999, the majority of the WDB resources were directed mainly toward providing employment skills to adults, yet a small percentage of services were provided to youths. However, since 2001, the WDB began funding a program directed toward at-risk youth called the Youth Employment Partnership (YEP) which is a consortium of Goodwill Industries of Central Texas, American Youth Works, the Austin Area Urban League, and Communities in Schools. The focus of the YEP is to provide a broad range of social services that will provide at-risk youth with effective, comprehensive activities to assist them in achieving academic or employment success, including varied options for improving educational competencies, opportunities for job training, and connections to employers. Each organization comprising the YEP provides a variety of services for at-risk youth in our community.

For example, Goodwill offers programs such as literacy training and General Education Development Diploma (GED) preparation courses for youth who have dropped out of school. Additionally, Goodwill provides a case manager to certain schools to operate an on campus dropout prevention program. American Youth Works is a Charter High School which works with youth who were unable to thrive in the public school setting and provides GED preparation courses as well other services such as career training. The Austin Area Urban League provides GED students with employment training. Finally, Communities in Schools is housed within AISD schools and provides intensive services to at-risk youth. Dropout prevention is one of the primary tasks of Communities in Schools as well as providing academic support and career preparation to AISD students.

In 2003, the WDB formed the Youth Advisory Group (YAG) whose mission is to identify and address the needs of at-risk youth in the community and to provide services to high school age at-risk youths with the goal of keeping them in school until graduation or helping them to obtain a nontraditional education leading to a GED. The AISD Dropout Prevention and Reduction Coordinator is not only a member of the WDB, but is also an active participant on the WDB's YAG.

**AISD has, at times, undertaken collaborative initiatives with other community and social service-based agencies.** For example, in 2000 AISD empanelled a Dropout Prevention Reduction Task Force to develop dropout prevention strategies for the district. Though the WDB was not represented on the task force, information obtained from AISD indicates that persons representing education, business, community, law enforcement/juvenile justice, social service, ministry, parents, and students were involved.

**Suggested strategy for implementation:**

1. The WDB and AISD should remain open to collaborative efforts with one another if changes in programming could benefit either entity in achieving their objectives related to dropouts or students at-risk of dropping out.

**Dropout Prevention and Recovery (DPR) Recommendation # 5**

AISD and the WDB should have information sharing agreements and confidentiality waivers

✓ **Not Implemented**

**Due primarily to statutory limitations, agreements to facilitate information sharing between AISD and WDB were never finalized or implemented.** As stated above, the original audit report contained recommendations for AISD to partner with the WDB in dropout prevention and recovery efforts. To facilitate provision of services to specific youths, the report also contained a recommendation to AISD and to WDB to jointly develop information sharing agreement and a parent/guardian waiver form that would enable referrals to be made between the two organizations. The audit report cited barriers to information sharing between the two entities due to legal constraints and individual privacy rights. However, the original audit team concluded that in the interest of increased efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery, the agencies should work together to find ways to share information while protecting confidential information.

During our follow-up work we found that a workgroup was assigned to develop the information sharing agreements and referral forms between AISD and the WDB. However, due to the weight and complexity of the confidentiality requirements contained in the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), AISD reported that the information sharing documents were never finalized. AISD does have a parent/guardian information release waiver for use within AISD, but the waiver has not been used with any external agency. However, it is important to note that in September 2004, a data sharing agreement between AISD and the WDB was drafted, but is not yet in use. Therefore, this recommendation has not been implemented.

**Suggested strategy for implementation:**

1. The WDB and AISD should periodically re-evaluate their needs with respect to sharing information about individual at-risk students or students who have dropped out as well as the mechanisms necessary for obtaining parent/guardian waivers to allow the exchange of such information.

Should the need to coordinate services arise, it may be that the use of a contracting or grant approach would allow AISD to provide relevant information to WDB service providers if the WDB was acting as agents or contractors to AISD.

**CHAPTER TWO**  
**JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM**  
**FOLLOW-UP RESULTS**

## JUVENILE JUSTICE AUDIT FOLLOW-UP RESULTS

Following the 1995 audit, in an effort to address juvenile justice issues from a systemic perspective, management from multiple agencies convened to collaborate on solutions to identified issues. Due to multiple challenges, the collaborative efforts eventually ceased. Recognizing the need for a collaborative environment to address juvenile justice issues, the Austin Police Department (APD) has initiated a similar work group, the success of which depends upon long-term interagency collaboration.

**As recommended, interagency collaboration improved following the 1995 audit; however, in 2000, efforts of the Management Coordination Team subsided until the APD began an initiative to restore a similar work group in August 2004.**

The Juvenile Justice System audit issued in 1995 revealed the need for the development and implementation of a coordinated, collaborative approach to service delivery among key agencies in order to effectively and efficiently respond to juvenile crime in Austin/Travis County. As a result, OCA issued recommendations to address these areas.

### At-A-Glance: Juvenile Justice Audit Verified Implementation Status

Recommendation number	Recommendation's issue area	Implemented	Partially Implemented	Not Implemented
3A	Assign staff to the MCT		X	
3B	Develop an interagency agreement, policies and procedures			X
10	Develop an information sharing agreement			X
12	Appoint staff to an information management group			X

Auditor's Note: The agencies did not report implementation status to the City of Austin. Complete recommendations are provided in Appendix B.

#### **Juvenile Justice System Recommendation # 3A**

- Participating agencies assign management-level staff to the MCT
- ✓ **Partially Implemented**

**An interagency Management Coordination Team was developed to address juvenile justice issues.** Our original audit team found that the agencies involved in the juvenile justice system of the Austin/Travis County area were not coordinating efforts for responding to juvenile crime. In 1995, the audit team recommended the creation of a

system wide response to juvenile crime, including the development of a Management Coordination Team (MCT) with management level personnel assigned from the five main agencies involved in responding to issues related to juvenile crime. Following the audit, the MCT was established. Originally, each of the following agencies assigned management level staff to the MCT: the Austin Independent School District (AISD), Travis County Juvenile Court, the City of Austin Health and Human Services Department, the Austin Police Department (APD), and the Travis County District Attorney (DA). In later years, the MCT's membership expanded to include the Travis County Criminal Justice Planning department, the Travis County Attorney's Office, other juvenile service providers such as the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, and the Travis County Sheriff's Office.

**Due to differing agency missions and challenges to interagency collaboration, the MCT ceased to function in 2000.** In fact, the last recorded MCT meeting was in April of 2000. The MCT met bi-monthly in 1995 and into 1996, but over the next several years came to meet on a monthly, then semi-monthly basis. Beginning in May 1999, the participants suggested that the MCT meet quarterly. Additional meetings were scheduled through December of 2000; however no documentation of meetings beyond April of 2000 was available during our follow-up work.

We found that differing agency missions and challenges to interagency collaboration and communication contributed to the end of the MCT. Reportedly, agencies found collaboration difficult because each approached youth issues from different operational and philosophical perspectives. Some agencies focused on intervention and prevention, while others approached youth concerns from a juvenile justice (corrections) perspective. Because the MCT activities were not sustained over time, this recommendation is only partially implemented.

**Before its dissolution, the MCT functioned as a collaborative workgroup focusing on issues and strategies addressing common juvenile justice issues.** The original audit team not only recommended the establishment of an MCT, but also suggested specific functions of the team. These functions included the development of operating policies and procedures and the creation of methods to assess the results of the group's collaborative efforts. Before 2000 when the MCT stopped meeting, the team did function as a group with a common interest in improving the juvenile justice system in Travis County. The MCT's original focus was the Serious Habitual Offender Comprehensive Action Program (SHOCAP) and work on developing an alternative training center for truant students. The MCT also reviewed potential grants and grant applications related to juvenile justice. In addition, the county constables worked with the MCT to establish a short-term "drop off" center for students who violated curfew or were truant from school, which was called the Absent Student Assistance Program (ASAP).

The MCT did provide a collaborative environment from which juvenile justice programs emerged. However, the team did not take steps to formalize its operations in written policies or to assess the effectiveness of their collaborative efforts as recommended. Because of this and the fact that the MCT no longer exists, we do not consider this recommendation currently implemented.

It is important to note that many collaborative efforts are occurring among local agencies

that were not envisioned by the original recommendations. For example, the Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department and the Travis County Juvenile Probation Department participate in several interagency collaborations as shown in Appendix A. However, with respect to the spirit of the original recommendation, an overall governance structure to coordinate the entire system has not been implemented.

**Juvenile Justice System Recommendations #3B and #10**

- Develop an omnibus information sharing and confidentiality agreement, policies, procedures and an evaluation system
- ✓ **Not Implemented**

The MCT did not implement formal interagency agreements or policies and procedures for sharing information on specific juvenile cases across agencies. In 1995, we found that the agencies most commonly involved with juveniles were not sharing information pertinent to individual juvenile cases impacting the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery. Therefore, the audit team recommended that once established, the MCT should develop an omnibus information sharing and confidentiality agreement, as well as operating policies and procedures that address confidentiality issues related to interagency information sharing.

Though all agencies were initially committed to implementing this recommendation, during the mid-1990s, confidentiality restrictions in the Texas Family Code severely limited the exchange of information on individual juveniles between agencies. As a result, the MCT did not finalize an interagency information sharing agreement or corresponding policies. Thus, agencies were still unable to share information related to specific juvenile cases to facilitate service delivery. Recent revisions to the Texas Family Code could promote the sharing of juvenile information among agencies more easily.

A need exists to facilitate the exchange of juvenile justice information among multiple entities to effectively address truancy and juvenile issues in our community. Research indicates that the most effective response to juvenile crime issues involves a coordinated system wide approach. This type of approach necessitates the collaboration among law enforcement, local social services, and school systems. The most effective approaches to truancy recognize that parents must be involved and held accountable for their children's school attendance. Second, truants and their families must be made aware of and encouraged to utilize services capable of addressing the root cause of the truant behavior.

Such a collaborative system does exist in other Texas counties. For example, a consortium of Dallas County agencies has developed a web-based juvenile justice information database for collecting and sharing juvenile information. Approximately 70 agencies (law enforcement, prosecutors, courts, probation, schools, and social service providers) participate and have access to this single database, providing information on a juvenile's criminal history, allowing them to make informed decisions regarding the juvenile's supervision, control and treatment.

**Since the disbanding of the MCT, local probation officers, law enforcement officers, and AISD staff have found ways to overcome confidentiality barriers to share critical information on individual juveniles and to collaborate on related issues.** For example, in May 2000, a truancy task force was convened consisting of representatives

from the Justices of the Peace, the Travis County Constables, the District Attorney, the County Attorney, Juvenile Probation, AISD, and the Travis County Juvenile Board, to focus on the truancy problem in Travis County. Emerging primarily from the Travis County Juvenile board was the Truancy Court, which placed a dedicated truancy court on a school campus to deal with the range of truancy-related issues. To support this unique court project, inter-local agreements were developed between Travis County and AISD and between Travis County and the City of Austin to allow information exchange between agencies pertaining to particular juvenile cases. Travis County Truancy Court continues to utilize inter-local agreements to facilitate the sharing of information among selected juvenile justice agencies and has demonstrated success in reducing recidivism and increasing parental involvement in the lives of at risk youth. Thus, because of statutory confidentiality requirements, it was not possible for the MCT to implement the recommendation at that time.

**Suggested strategies for further implementation:**

1. If data sharing remain problematic for Travis County juvenile justice agencies, the Dallas County effort may offer some insight into a methodology and format to accomplish intent of the original Opportunities for Youth Juvenile Justice audit recommendation.

**Recommendation #12**

Participating agencies should appoint a member to the MCT's electronic information management group.

✓ **Not Implemented**

**The MCT did not take steps to standardize interagency data collection, formatting, and evaluation techniques to enable system wide program evaluation.** In 1995, the audit team found efforts to share information related to specific juvenile cases, as well as to compile data for program evaluation was hindered by the incompatibility of the agencies' information systems. In order to ensure that the information available to the MCT was adequate for decision-making and program evaluation, we recommended the creation of an information management group within the MCT to focus on standardizing data collection, formatting, and evaluation techniques.

During our follow-up work we did not find evidence that an information management group had been developed. Reportedly, staff across MCT agencies had difficulty sharing electronic data, partly because they were unable to agree on a common information technology system or the data protocols to use. Also, as stated, statutory confidentiality restrictions in the Texas Family Code provided obstacles that limited agencies from exchanging information on individual juveniles. Because members of the MCT perceived these data sharing barriers to be insurmountable, the development of standardized data collection methods and protocols were not accomplished as recommended. Thus, agencies within the Austin/Travis County juvenile justice system still have no ability to compile and analyze system wide data to assess the effectiveness of juvenile-focused programs. Thus, this recommendation has not been implemented.

**Agencies comprising the local infrastructure responsible for addressing juvenile justice issues are currently facing similar barriers to efficient and effective service**

**delivery as those outlined in the 1995 audit.** In order for a similar collaborative work group to be successful in impacting juvenile justice issues, the same barriers faced by the MCT must be overcome. Interagency agreements, policies, and procedures for sharing information on specific juvenile cases across agencies must be developed. Additionally, steps need to be taken to standardize interagency data collection, formatting, and evaluation techniques to enable system wide data sharing and program evaluation. Without development and implementation in these areas, the sustainability of future collaborative groups will not be possible.

**To attempt to revive similar collaborative efforts, in August of this year, APD initiated a program to address truancy and other juvenile justice issues, the success of which requires multi-agency participation.** In an effort to improve the collective response to juvenile justice issues; APD has recently developed the Juvenile Accountability and Community Service (JACS) program. The JACS program was created primarily to improve school attendance, deter truancy, and increase the enforcement of the juvenile curfew ordinance. Through the JACS program, APD is seeking to bring together, again, key agencies that must interface to successfully deal with juvenile justice matters in the community. Agencies involved in the JACS program include the AISD, APD, the District Attorney's Office, Juvenile Court, Justices of the Peace, and the Municipal Court. The JACS program is designed to work concurrently with other social service agencies in an effort to hold youth and their parents accountable for delinquent conduct.

Ultimately, the mission of the JACS program is to decrease juvenile crime in Austin by helping families connect with services to assist their children in avoiding delinquent conduct and in becoming more productive and educated citizens of our community. Since truancy is one of the most powerful predictors of delinquent behavior, the AISD Police and APD are reportedly working together to improve school attendance by making curfew enforcement a priority. To this end, AISD Police and APD have agreed on a protocol to track curfew violations during school hours. Furthermore, Municipal Court judges and prosecutors are working to develop a collaborative process that will enable each entity to absorb the increased workload from curfew violations and truants.

#### **Suggested strategies for implementation:**

1. If electronic data sharing remains problematic for Travis County juvenile justice agencies, the Dallas County effort may offer some insight into a methodology and format to accomplish intent of this recommendation.
2. Agencies participating in APD's JACS program should commit to ongoing meetings to concentrate on juvenile justice issues. The participating entities may want to consider collaborating on one issue at a time (such as truancy during school hours) and gradually add concerns to be addressed in a collaborative setting.

**APPENDIX A**  
**MANAGEMENT RESPONSES**

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# **Austin Independent School District**

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# The Austin Independent School District

October 22, 2004

Mr. Brian K. Williams  
Office of the City Auditor  
206 E. 9<sup>th</sup> Street, suite 16.122  
P.O. Box 1088  
Austin, Texas 78767-8808

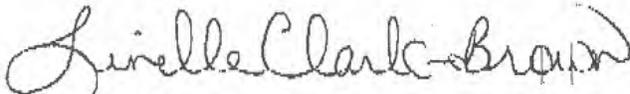
Dear Mr. Williams:

We received on October 22, 2004 from Ms. Kristan Bina, City of Austin Auditor, the attached revised table indicating recommendations: 1, 10, 2, and 8 have been changed to implemented. We concur with the final decision as indicated in the revised document that recommendations 1, 10, 2, and 8 have been implemented.

We however disagree with the finding of Not Implemented for recommendation # 5 (Information sharing agreement & confidentiality waiver developed between AISD & WDB) for the same reason as described in our response dated October 21, 2004 to the preliminary findings of the City Austin Opportunities for Youth follow-up audit. We request finding # 5 also be changed to "implemented". A Data Sharing Agreement by and Between the Austin Independent School District and Work-Source Greater Austin Workforce Board Youth Advisory Group has been developed and signed by the Executive Director, Work-Source Greater Austin Area Workforce Board. It is anticipated the Superintendent of Schools for the Austin Independent School District will sign the agreement upon Board of Trustees approval. The agreement will be submitted to the AISD Board of Trustees for concurrence at a November 2004 board meeting.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to these findings.

Sincerely,



*for* John Moore II  
Executive Director

Xc Dr. Pat D. Forgione, Jr.  
Dr. Darlene Westbrook  
Dr. Linelle Clark-Brown  
Bob Rutishauser

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# **Austin Police Department**

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## MEMORANDUM

### **Austin Police Department**

**TO:** Brian Williams, COA Office of the City Auditor  
**FROM:** Robert A. Gross Cmdr. NCAC, Shauna Jacobsen Cmdr CIB  
**DATE:** October 19, 2004  
**SUBJECT:** Response to Opportunities for Youth Follow-Up Audit

Thank you for providing us the opportunity to respond to the findings summary of the 2004 follow-up on the 1995 Opportunities for Youth Audit. We are in concurrence with all nine recommendations, the six for Dropout Prevention and Recovery as well as the three for the Juvenile Justice System. We would like to share some specific observations on each of the recommendations that will be attached as a short addendum.

#### DROPOUT PREVENTION AND RECOVERY FOLLOW-UP RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Austin Independent School District (AISD) will appoint a Director of Dropout Prevention – implemented
2. AISD participates on the Workforce Development Board (WDB) – implemented
4. WDB has programs for students at risk of dropping out –implemented
5. An information sharing agreement and confidentiality waiver should be developed between AISD and WDB –not implemented
8. AISD and WDB coordinate dropout prevention plans –implemented
10. AISD has dropout criteria used for program referral – implemented

#### JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

- 3A. Involved agencies will appoint staff to a Management Coordination Team (MCT) – initially and partially implemented
- 3B. Involved agencies will develop an interagency agreement, policies and procedures for sharing information on specific juvenile cases – not implemented
10. Involved agencies will develop an omnibus information and information sharing agreement – not implemented
12. Involved agencies will appoint staff to an information management group – not implemented

## ADDENDUM

### DROPOUT PREVENTION AND RECOVERY

4. An information sharing agreement will help to facilitate coordination and allow for other agencies to participate on a measured level, to holistically address dropout prevention and response to juvenile entry into the criminal justice system. The agreement should be shared with agency partners and signed by designees of partner agencies, to ensure that the agencies in the system gauge their progress individually as well as collectively. Furthermore, APD recommends that assessment instruments demonstrate content validity (if not construct validity) and reliability.
8. A lack of coordination of programs affecting the same population allows for redundancies in programs and creates cracks through which young people fall. APD recommends that the City Council provide a permanent seat on the Workforce Development Board to coordinate programs and promote performance as well as fiscal efficiency. APD also recommends recreation of the now-defunct Dropout Prevention Reduction Task Force that was empanelled in 2000.

### JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

- 3A. APD should spearhead efforts to re-form the MCT committee. The members of this committee should pursue building a true Youth and Family Assessment Center similar to what has been done in other Texas cities (such as Dallas and Corpus Christi).
- 3B. APD should revisit the essence of the Memorandum of Agreement that was drafted with agency partners in October of 2001. This was a comprehensive draft agreement covering issues and needs that are still unresolved, and which will continue to affect Austin/Travis County's youth in the future. (See Attachment.) (10).
9. APD requests that each agency provide summary data of the number of juveniles/students processed on a programmed basis, as well as summary data on intervention plans and adjudications, including sanctions. This is necessary to capture performance data within an agency and between system agencies. But more importantly, the information is necessary in order to allow impact teams, judges, and other supports to plan appropriate interventions for affected students.
12. It is our recommendation that a permanent ISO member be established and installed on the board to resolve information technology issues of interface and data sharing. This has been a big impediment in an age where the ability to share information is readily available.

**Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department**

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**Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department**



**OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR**  
**P.O. Box 1088**  
**Austin, Texas 78767**  
**(512) 972-5010 Fax (512) 972-5016**

October 22, 2004

Steve Morgan, CIA, CGAP, CFE, CGFM  
Office of the City Auditor  
206 East 9<sup>th</sup> Street Suite 16.122  
P.O. Box 1088  
Austin, Texas 78767-8808

RE: Response to Opportunities for Youth Follow-Up Audit- Draft Report 10/15/04

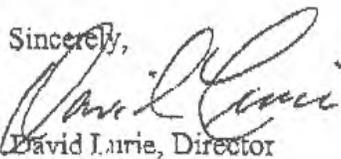
We would like to offer the attached response to the 10/15/04 release of the draft Opportunities for Youth Follow-Up Report. The Health and Human Services Department is committed to working with youth development providers to address the issues of dropouts and juvenile prevention.

We would appreciate your substituting the following paragraph for the Scope Limitation paragraph on page 10 of the draft report. If the attached response information cannot be included in the Appendix you reference, please distribute this letter and attachment with the follow-up report on Tuesday.

The City of Austin and Travis County invested \$1,096,882 in at-risk youth and after-school programs through social service contracts in FY04 and another \$4,553,478 in non-social service contracts for after-school and at-risk youth and their families wraparound services. This financial contribution is outside the contributions made by various staff with numerous planning collaborations that address dropout prevention/recovery and juvenile crime prevention.

We are appreciative of the follow-up audit and the emphasis placed on the need to continue our focus on these very important issues.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone at (512) 972-5010 or Donna Jackson at (512) 972-5017.

Sincerely,  
  
David Laurie, Director

Attachment

cc: Michael McDonald, Acting Assistant City Manager  
Vince Cobalis, Assistant Director  
Donna Jackson, Manager, Family and Youth Services  
Melanie Miller, CPA, Chief Financial Officer

## HHSD Response to Opportunities for Youth Follow-Up Audit- Draft Report 10/15/04

Because of the length of time that has transpired, attrition that has occurred over the past nine years, and the reorganization of the Austin-Travis County Health and Human Services Department into distinct City of Austin and Travis County entities, we were not able to provide written documentation as requested from the Office of the City Auditor. During this reorganization much of the planning functions were assigned to Travis County while more of the administrative tasks remained with the City. However, we were able to confirm that Dennis Campa and Deborah Britton, both past managers of HHSD Youth Services, served on the Management Coordination Team (MCT).

**HHSD Dropout Prevention/Recovery and Juvenile Crime Prevention Services.** We have since the time of this audit continued to partner with the Austin Police Department (APD) and the Austin Independent School District (AISD) in efforts to reduce juvenile crime and address the issues of dropout prevention and recovery. Additionally, we fund numerous social service programs (such as Truancy Court and the Youth and Family Assessment Center) as well as provide direct services designed to address these issues. These direct service programs include(d):

<b>Program</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Collaborators</b>
Strategic Intervention for High Risk Youth (Grant and General Fund ended in 2003)	<b>Dropout Prevention-</b> Identified high-risk elementary students and provided them with an array of services to include: tutoring, mentoring, counseling and case management in order to facilitate academic success	AISD Communities In School (CIS) Big Brothers/Big Sisters Austin Child Guidance Center
Graffiti Abatement Program and Urban Youth Corp Program	<b>Dropout Recovery-</b> Provides recent dropouts with work-based learning and supportive services to assist them with achieving their GEDs or High School Diplomas	Travis County AISD OJT programs
Youthbuild (Grant funded)	<b>Dropout Recovery-</b> Provides recent dropouts with construction trade skills, entrepreneurship training and supportive services to assist them with achieving their GEDs or High School Diplomas	AISD Community Education, Habitat for Humanity and Small Business Development Program
East Austin Youth Charter (Grant and General funds ended 2001)	<b>Dropout Prevention/Recovery and Juvenile Justice-</b> Identified high-risk students in East Austin and provided them with an array of services to include: gang prevention, GED prep, work-based learning, academic tutoring, etc	AISD, APD, CIS, Travis County 4-H
SE Austin Community Youth Development Program (Grant funded)	<b>Juvenile Crime Prevention-</b> Provides alternative programs for high-risk youth to include recreational, leadership, and academic enrichment and support programs	AISD, APD, Austin Parks and Recreation, River City Youth Foundation, Lone Star Girl Scouts, American Youthworks
Weed and Seed (Grant funded)	<b>Juvenile Crime Prevention-</b> A strategy that aims to prevent, control, and reduce violent crime, drug abuse, and gang activity in targeted high-crime neighborhoods in Austin	APD, AISD, Travis County District Attorney

**HHSD Collaborations.** HHSD is also currently involved in numerous planning collaborations that address the issues of dropout prevention/recovery and juvenile crime prevention. Since 1999, HHSD has had an active role on the AISD Community Education Consortium that oversees after-school enrichment, tutoring and GED programs. We provide over \$1,000,000.00 annually to AISD for these programs that are designed to reach youth during the highest risk times for juvenile delinquency; (See Exhibit 1.1 of the Draft Report); that provides academic support for challenged students; and alternative education options for youth who are not functioning well in a traditional setting.

HHSD also participates in the Community Action Network (CAN)/WorkSource (WDB) sponsored Youth Advisory Group (YAG) that was established as part of the Workforce Investment Act. The YAG is made up of

numerous social service providers, the Austin WorkSource, AISD, United Way, Travis County and HHSD. This is the same YAG group cited **in the Audit Follow-Up Report** which began 15 months ago working to align youth and children collaborations to better coordinate services. Efforts are on the way to create a database of youth service providers and services to improve the abilities of agencies to provide effective information and referral to clients and to identify gaps in services for future planning and as funding becomes available move toward more comprehensive information sharing. This may provide a platform for sharing the types of information expressed in the Opportunities for Youth Audit. While the YAG is focused on the continuum of services available for youth, there will be subgroups that focus on different issue areas. This could create an opportunity for a Management Coordination Team (MCT) that focuses on the areas of dropout prevention/recovery and juvenile crime prevention to champion these issues.

Furthermore, while HHSD is not materially involved in all of the collaborations between AISD and WDB listed in this report, HHSD has played a strong role in many of these efforts by providing administrative grants for these agencies through social services investments. For instance, HHSD provides funding for Communities in Schools who in turn participates on the Impact Teams. Additionally, CIS makes referrals from the Impact Teams for at-risk-youth to the Youth and Family Assessment Center that is also funded by HHSD in partnership with Travis County. HHSD also provides funding for Goodwill, American YouthWorks, and Austin Area Urban League through social services funding and other grant funds made available for the prevention of juvenile delinquency.

With budget reductions in recent years, we will continue to be challenged to develop omnibus information sharing agreements, policies and procedures, and electronic information management systems cited in Recommendations 10 and 12.

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# **Travis County Juvenile Probation Department**

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## TRAVIS COUNTY JUVENILE PROBATION DEPARTMENT

ESTELA P. MEDINA  
Chief Juvenile Probation Officer

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES  
COURT SERVICES  
DETENTION SERVICES  
PROBATION SERVICES  
RESIDENTIAL SERVICES  
SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES  
DOMESTIC RELATIONS OFFICE

October 20, 2004

Mr. Stephen L. Morgan  
City Auditor  
P.O. Box 1088  
Austin, Texas 78767

Dear Mr. Morgan:

Enclosed is the Travis County Juvenile Probation Department's response to "Opportunities for Youth Follow Up Audit" received in this office on October 12, 2004.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (512) 854-7069.

*Thank you.*

Sincerely,

*Estela P. Medina*

Estela P. Medina  
Chief Juvenile Probation Officer

EPM:dt  
Enclosure

CC: W. Jeanne Meurer, 98<sup>th</sup> District Court Judge  
Kristan Bina, City of Austin

2515 South Congress Avenue



Austin, Texas 78704



(512) 854-7000

Fax: (512) 854-7097

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The Travis County Juvenile Probation Department received a draft report, entitled Opportunities for Youth Follow-Up Audit on October 12, 2004.

The report, completed by the Office of the City Auditor, as stated, is to have reviewed local infrastructures that address daytime juvenile issues to include curfew and truancy, and used as its basis, two reports completed in 1995, entitled Opportunities for Youth Partnered Audit.

It is important to make a distinction that juvenile justice proceedings may include two distinct processes. One involves juveniles with offenses that include Class C offenses, violations of city ordinances, daytime curfew, and truancy. These cases are referred to Municipal Courts or Justice of the Peace Courts.

The second process is that in which juveniles, ages 10-16, are arrested for Class B misdemeanors or above and are referred to the Travis County Juvenile Probation Department for processing. These cases are heard by a District Judge or Associate Judge, and the dispositions may include various orders by the courts, to include probation, placement, community service and restitution, counseling and services, to list a few.

Our response is directed to the data as it relates to cases and matters within the jurisdiction of the Travis County Juvenile Probation Department and district court process. The department respectfully disagrees with the findings of the current report as it excluded review of existing collaborations and interagency models. It also does not recognize the work that has occurred at efforts directed to address juvenile crime and truancy since the earlier 1995 report.

### **I. Interagency Collaborations**

The Travis County Juvenile Probation Department and Juvenile Court Judges have been involved with many collaborations geared at a system-wide response to juvenile crime. These collaborations have included the Austin Police Department, City of Austin, the District Attorney's Office, school districts, health and human service agencies, state agencies, local service providers, mental health agencies and community advocates. The following are examples that demonstrate various interagency collaborations and initiatives that have been successful in securing comprehensive system-wide approaches to addressing juvenile crime. They demonstrate multiple agency involvement, sharing of resources and processes, shared accountability, efforts directed at public safety, and to the extent both required and allowed by law, have developed protocols for how information is shared.

#### **Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program**

The Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Program was started in 1995 as a result of a legislative mandate, to provide a program and educational services to students, ages 10-16, who are expelled from school for specific offenses or conduct. The collaboration included Judges, eleven school districts, the District Attorney's Office, the Travis County Juvenile Probation Department, and various community and state agencies.

### **Children's Partnership**

The Children's Partnership, established in 1998, is a collaborative effort developed to bring together resources for juveniles with complex mental health needs and uses a comprehensive, multi-system wraparound approach to services. The various agencies involved include the Travis County Juvenile Probation Department, Austin Travis County MHMR, Travis County Health and Human Services, the Texas Department of Health and Human Services, the Texas Department of Family Services (formerly CPS), and various school districts, community advocates and family members.

### **Travis County Juvenile Drug Court (JDC)**

Development of a Travis County Juvenile Drug Court was started in 1999. The Drug Court program requires that juveniles make changes that contribute to a drug free lifestyle, promotes accountability, and provides for public safety. The program also involves a model of interagency collaboration that includes Judges, the District Attorney's Office, probation staff, service providers, schools, and families. The Drug Court utilizes a mixture of community treatment resources, supervision, and treatment resources at the Travis County Juvenile Probation Department.

### **Project Spotlight**

Project Spotlight was started in 2000, as a collaborative between the APD, Adult Community Supervision and Corrections, and the Travis County Juvenile Probation Department that was developed to assist with supervision and increased community involvement.

### **Truancy Court**

Any review of truancy in our community must also look at programs in place that are helping to reduce truancy.

In 2001, a new initiative designed to intervene with chronic truants was started. Through the efforts of the Travis County Juvenile Board, the District Attorney's Office, the Public Defender's Office, Justice of the Peace (Precinct 4), the Austin Independent School District, AISD law enforcement, City of Austin, Travis County Commissioners Court, and the Travis County Juvenile Probation Department, the Travis County Truancy Court was started.

Truancy Court is a partnership between the Travis County Juvenile Board, Austin Independent School District, the Travis County Juvenile Probation Department, the City of Austin, the Travis County District Attorney's Office, the Travis County Commissioners Court, and various community agencies. This program is designed to provide quick intervention to chronic truants at the students' home school. It provides supervision, referrals to community services, and regular review of a student's progress towards reduced truancy.

As a pilot, the program began in spring 2002 by providing services to 8<sup>th</sup> graders at Mendez Middle School and 9<sup>th</sup> graders at Travis High School. In the 2002-2003 school year, the program expanded to serve all grades at Mendez and 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students at Travis High school. In the summer of 2003, the program provided services to some students at Lanier. In the 2003-2004 school year, based on

AISD needs, resources were reallocated to Fulmore Middle School and 9<sup>th</sup> grade at Travis High School. Truancy Court is currently at Fulmore and Mendez Middle Schools and remains at Travis High School. The Travis County Truancy Court incorporates several ideas identified by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention as Components of Promising Truancy Reduction Efforts, including the following:

- Consistent attendance policy and practice, known to all students, parents, staff, and community agencies
- A continuum of prevention and intervention services, along with incentives and graduated sanctions for students and parents
- Meaningful parent involvement
- Data-driven decision making
- Quasi-judicial proceedings (in Travis County they are actual judicial proceedings)
- Focus on school transition years

### **Community Service and Life Skills Alternative to School Suspension**

The Travis County Juvenile Probation Department's Community Service and Life Skills Alternative to School Suspension (C.L.A.S.S.) program was established in 2004 to provide the Court with an alternative for juveniles suspended from school. The purpose of the program is to provide life skills instruction and community service activities for juveniles pending court or who are on probation, and who have been suspended from school. Although the current structure of the program was started in the Spring of 2004, the Travis County Juvenile Probation Department, Juvenile Court and AISD have had a school suspension program in place since 2000.

## **II. Omnibus Information Sharing**

The current report makes reference to the development of an "omnibus information sharing and confidentiality agreement". While we agree that an omnibus agreement does not exist, the same has not been a barrier to allow the opportunity for multiple agencies that includes juvenile justice, to develop and improve service delivery, as demonstrated by current program models.

The development of a more comprehensive sharing of information, even in 2004, will require some of the same review and purpose as described by the agencies studying this matter in 1995, including a review of state and federal statutes that govern exchange of information and confidentiality. Current models of interagency collaborations and additional developments in technology could assist to further enhance this effort.

The Travis County Juvenile Probation Department has started the process to review a juvenile justice information model currently in place in another county, which has been able to integrate multiple agency information. The department will be working to involve others who will have an interest in this effort.

In light of what may have been reported, efforts to accomplish system-wide or community-wide responses to juvenile crime have occurred, and will continue to do so.

The Travis County Juvenile Probation Department looks forward to participating with any current or future initiatives in the identified areas.

**Workforce Development Board**

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October 22, 2004

Mr. Steve Morgan, City Auditor  
Office of the City Auditor  
206 E 9<sup>th</sup> Street, suite 16.122  
PO Box 1088  
Austin, TX 78767-8808

Dear Mr. Morgan:

Attached is a revised response to the 1995 Audit regarding cooperation between WorkSource and AISD on drop out prevention and opportunities for youth.

Please let me know if any additional information is needed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert G. Rutishauser". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R".

Robert G. Rutishauser  
Chair, Youth Advisory Group

### **WorkSource response to the follow-up audit on Opportunities for Youth**

When the Audit team visited WorkSource several months ago, we were unable to identify any employees that were here when the 1995 audit was performed and so were unable to identify any specific actions that stemmed from that audit. However, many of the actions called for under the audit have been implemented, which may or may not be connected with the impetus from the audit. Specifically:

1. For the past several years WorkSource has funded the Youth Employment Partnership (YEP) (which is a consortium of Goodwill, Austin Area Urban League, Communities in Schools and American Youth Works) at a level of about \$1 million per year. These organizations work with at-risk youths, some of whom are in school and some of whom have dropped out of school. CIS, in particular, has counselors on local AISD campuses to provide the services needed to keep the students in school. The other organizations work with youths to enable them to get a GED and be able to advance to post-secondary education and training. All of these organizations work closely with AISD to try to prevent and recover drop-outs. These organizations provided support to 541 participants during program year 2004.

2. Due to funding limitations, the YEP cannot support all of the thousands of at-risk students in Austin. About 1 ½ years ago WorkSource formed the Youth Advisory Group (YAG) to develop a program to help these youths. The YAG includes representatives from about 20 organizations that provide services to high school age at-risk youths with a goal of keeping them in school or helping them get a GED if they drop out. Dr. Linelle Clark Brown, the Dropout Prevention Coordinator from AISD, is a key member of the YAG and has been instrumental in formulating the plan of action for strengthening our support system for youth. This plan involves mapping the need for support services and the supply of support services by geographical area, specifically AISD high school attendance zones, in order to identify areas where there are “gaps” in service.

- a. The “demand” data will be provided by AISD based on 15 criteria for at-risk students defined by TEA. This information is, of course, confidential so WorkSource and AISD are implementing a data sharing agreement. The agreement has been approved by the senior staff of both organizations, has been signed by the WorkSource Ex. Director and is awaiting approval by the AISD Board of Trustees.
- b. The “supply” data will be developed from a survey being developed with assistance from Travis County. These data will be summarized and displayed in a web site that is under development.

There are two basic uses for this data. (1) The data on “gaps” will be used by the City, County and AISD to determine where to best deploy resources to reduce dropouts. (2) The data on the web site will enable AISD counselors to identify services available in their high school area and match students needing help with available resources.

We concur with the “implemented” status of the audit recommendations. In view of the above (Par. 2.a.), we believe that the “not implemented” status for recommendation 5 can be changed to “implemented” as soon as the AISD Board approves the agreement, which will probably occur on November 8, 2004.

**APPENDIX B**  
**STATUS OF RECOMMENDATIONS TESTED**

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**STATUS OF RECOMMENDATIONS TESTED  
OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH: DROPOUT PREVENTION AND  
RECOVERY AUDIT**

<p><b>Recommendation 1:</b> To assist campuses in achieving their dropout objectives &amp; identifying strategies for the most efficient use of resources, the Superintendent of Schools, Austin Independent School District (AISD), should assign district-level responsibility for coordinating the planning, implementation, tracking and evaluation of dropout prevention and recovery programs funded by AISD, whether they are operated within the District or in the community. Per OCA review: <b>IMPLEMENTED</b> The Superintendent of AISD has established a director-level position responsible for dropout-related programs.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 10:</b> To enable the efficient targeting of dropout prevention services to students most in need or most likely to benefit, the Superintendent should develop criteria for identifying and prioritizing levels of dropout risk and a system for using those priorities in referral and program design. Per OCA review: <b>IMPLEMENTED</b> AISD utilizes expanded at-risk criteria for program referral.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 2:</b> To coordinate District dropout prevention and recovery efforts and resources with those in the community, the Superintendent should assign district-level responsibility for participation on the Austin/Travis County Workforce Development Board (WDB). Per OCA review: <b>IMPLEMENTED</b> This recommendation is implemented to the extent possible based on State requirements for WDB membership.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 8:</b> The Superintendent should demonstrate the District’s full commitment to collaborating with community-wide dropout prevention and recovery efforts by supporting implementation and follow-through with plans, strategies, and performance measurement systems developed by the District in coordination with the WDB. Per OCA review: <b>IMPLEMENTED</b> AISD and the WDB currently coordinate dropout prevention plans.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 4:</b> To provide the opportunity for dropout prevention efforts to be linked with those addressing recovery, the Superintendent and the Workforce Development Board (WDB) Planning Team should include programs developed for students at high risk of dropping out, within AISD and the community, in the WDB’s recommended planning and oversight activities. Per OCA review: <b>IMPLEMENTED</b> The WDB does have programs for students at risk of dropping out of school.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 5:</b> To expand outreach efforts to dropouts and students at risk of dropping out, the Superintendent and the WDB Planning Team should collaborate to develop information sharing agreement and standardized parent/guardian waiver forms that would enable referrals to be made between organizations. Per OCA review: <b>NOT IMPLEMENTED</b> AISD and the WDB do not have information sharing agreements and confidentiality waivers finalized.</p>

**STATUS OF RECOMMENDATIONS TESTED**  
**OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH: JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM AUDIT**

**Recommendation 3A:** To create a coherent system-wide response to juvenile crime, the following agencies' directors' should assign management level personnel to the Management Coordination

Team (MCT):

- Director, City of Austin HHSD (from Youth and Family Services Division)
- APD, Chief of Police
- TCJC, Chief of Probation
- Travis County DA (from Family Justice Division)
- AISD Superintendent

Per OCA review: **PARTIALLY IMPLEMENTED**

Participating agencies did assign management level staff to the MCT however; the team's activities were not sustained over time.

**Recommendation 3B:** The Management Coordination Team (MCT) should carry out the following functions:

- Develop and obtain adoption of a formal interagency agreement by the elected bodies governing the team's agencies;
- Develop and implement operating policies and procedures;
- Plan, implement and measure the results of collaborative strategies.

Per OCA review: **NOT IMPLEMENTED**

The MCT did not develop and formalize an interagency agreement, policies, procedures and measurement practices.

**Recommendation 10:** To improve service provision to juveniles in Austin/Travis County the entities that comprise the Management Coordination Team (MCT) should develop an omnibus information sharing and confidentiality agreement that:

- can be executed by all agencies within, and that interface with, the current system,
- identifies specific pieces of information that can be shared,
- identifies which service-providing organizations will have access to the information,
- includes policies and procedures on how the information is to be shared,
- includes policies on what purpose the information may be used for, and
- develops policies that will address statutory requirement on confidentiality.

Per OCA review: **NOT IMPLEMENTED**

An omnibus information sharing and confidentiality agreements were not developed and implemented.

**Recommendation 12:** To ensure that information available to the MCT is adequate for fact-based decision-making and program evaluation, each agency should appoint a member to an electronic information management group.

Per OCA review: **NOT IMPLEMENTED**

Participating agencies did not appoint a member to the MCT's electronic information management group.

**APPENDIX C**  
**SCHOOL DROPOUT RISK FACTORS**

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## School Dropout Risk Factors

<b>Academic Performance</b>	<b>Social Factors</b>	<b>Familial Factors</b>
Did not perform satisfactorily on a readiness test or assessment instrument	Is currently on parole, probation, deferred prosecution or other conditional release	Is pregnant or is a parent
Did not maintain an average of 70 on a scale of 100 in two or more subjects in the foundation curriculum	Has resided in a residential placement facility in the district, including a detention facility, substance abuse treatment facility, emergency shelter, psychiatric hospital, halfway house, foster or group home	Is in the care or custody of PRS or has been referred to PRS by a school official, officer of the court, or law enforcement official
Did not advanced from one grade level to the next for one or more years	Abuses drugs or alcohol	Is homeless
Has been placed in an alternative education program		
Has been expelled		
Has previously dropped out of school		
Is a student of limited English proficiency		
Is a slow learner		
Is an under achiever		
Is unmotivated		
Enrolls late in the school year		

Source: Austin Independent School District and Texas Education Agency, 2003-2004

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**APPENDIX D**  
**AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT IMPACT TEAM**  
**REFERRAL FORM**

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