

# Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs

Law Enforcement and Traffic Safety Division



Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance  
Grant

State Strategic Plan  
FY2019 – FY2023

## **Executive Summary**

The Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs / Law Enforcement and Traffic Safety Division (ADECA/LETS) supports state and local criminal justice projects by subgranting federal dollars from the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne JAG). In order to facilitate the efficient use of public funds, ADECA/LETS has developed a strategic plan to guide funding priorities and to identify problem areas that must be addressed by criminal justice stakeholders through these grant funds.

The Division's coordination with federal, state and local criminal justice partners, along with the statewide strategic plan and program performance measures will Alabama to responsibly and effectively distribute public funds through a variety of proven and effective programming areas.

## **Strategy Development Coordination**

In the development of Alabama's FY2019-2023 State Strategy, a variety of information-gathering techniques were utilized to identify successful federal, state and local efforts and to respond to the specific needs and concerns of the Criminal Justice Community throughout Alabama. Throughout this process, the Division endeavored to include as many points of view as possible and all significant interests. This information was compared to criminal justice data gathered over a period of years. This plan examines the nature and extent of the identified problems, drug trends in the state, summarizes current efforts and promotes coordination of efforts.

Over a period of months spanning 2018 and 2019, as part of the state's planning process for its federal Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne JAG) allocation, the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA), Law Enforcement and Traffic Safety Division (LETS) worked with the National Criminal Justice Association (NCJA) to develop a useful cost effective stakeholder engagement strategy. As part of this engagement strategy, LETS sought input from traditional and non-traditional partners from across the state on:

- 1) priority project types and initiatives within the eight Byrne JAG purpose areas,
- 2) priority purpose areas for funding,
- 3) previous strategic planning priorities, and
- 4) most pressing state and local issues.

Working together with the NCJA, a survey instrument designed to gather input from across the stakeholder community was developed. On behalf of ADECA/LETS, NCJA distributed the survey to state and local stakeholder groups through list-serves, professional associations and e-mail databases beginning on November 1,

2018. The survey closed on December 7, 2018 with 243 responses from around the state and across all elements of the justice system. The research staff at NCJA collected and tabulated the results and provided a detailed analysis for ADECA/LETS to utilize in its planning efforts.

The survey was designed so that responses could be sorted by function within the criminal justice system. Analysis focused on finding consensus around state and local issues, the Byrne JAG purpose areas most in need of limited funds, and determining which projects in each purpose area were viewed as most critical to Alabama's state and local criminal justice systems.

## **Findings**

### **Identifying the Most Pressing State and Local Needs**

#### **Response Rate**

A total of 243 surveys were submitted, with 178 completed. A survey is complete when the user clicks the Submit button at the end of the survey, regardless of whether they answered all questions. Only data from completed surveys are used in this analysis.

#### **Respondent/Agency Characteristics**

Law enforcement respondents are over-represented in the survey data (51%) of total. Comparisons will be made between law enforcement and non-law enforcement respondents, where applicable. These non-law enforcement respondents include health/substance abuse/mental health (13%), other specified categories (primarily court and child advocates, pharmacists) (11%); courts/judicial positions (9%), and social service providers (6%). Indigent defense, corrections, education/academia, and forensics are not represented in this survey. About a third of respondents are representatives or designees on a board for their agency.

The majority of survey respondents represent primarily rural (46%) or a mix of rural and urban areas (42%). Law enforcement respondents are heavily skewed towards rural areas (63%) than non-law enforcement (60% represent a mix of rural and urban areas).

About half of respondents (51%) represent local government, followed by 21% employed in nonprofits and 20% in state government. Most of the law enforcement respondents (88%) work in local government, while the majority of non-law enforcement respondents (42%) are employed in non-profits, while another third work in state government.

Respondents exclusively represent all but 10 counties (Cleburne, Conecuh, Coosa, Escambia, Fayette, Franklin, Hale, Lowndes, Talladega, and Washington counties), or they provide services statewide. Largest county representation is Jefferson (8%), Mobile (6%) and Madison (5%). There is roughly even distribution across most of the seven regions.

## **Data, Technology and Information Sharing**

Data, technology and information sharing appears to be lacking. Respondents were roughly split on the adequacy of resources for working with data and sharing data/information. About 46% of respondents say these resources are adequate while 42% say they are not. (It is worth noting that 12% did not know how to respond). Two-thirds of respondents (68%) use an automated data system, but only 40% of respondents say the information is easy to access. About 20% of respondents do not have access to automated data systems.

Law enforcement and non-law enforcement diverge significantly in their responses to these questions. About half of law enforcement (53%) and nearly a third of non-law enforcement respondents (30%) said their agencies have adequate resources for data collection/access/management and information sharing. In addition, 40% of law enforcement respondents have access to an automated data system that is easy to use compared to 32% of non-law enforcement respondents.

Overall, respondents primarily exchange data electronically with law enforcement (53%), courts (35%), prosecution (22%), corrections (14%), detention (14%), community service (11%), defense (8%), other agencies (7%), and the state health department (5%). About 28% of respondents do not share information electronically with justice system partners.

## **Evidence-Based Practices**

A little more than half of respondent agencies (54%) incorporate some form of evidence-based practices. About a third of law enforcement respondents were unsure how to answer the question. Non-law enforcement respondents, in contrast, appeared to be more aware; with 70% reporting incorporation of EBPs (and only 13% saying they did not know).

## **Ranking Purpose Area Initiatives**

### **Law Enforcement**

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>All Respondents</i>	<i>Law Enforcement</i>	<i>Non-Law Enforcement</i>
1	Training (41%)	Equipment (72%)	Crisis Intervention/MH/ Suicide Prev. (42%)
2	Equipment (39%)	Training (53%)	School/youth-related (34%)
3	Drug enforcement (35%)	Drug Enforcement (53%)	Law enforcement training (27%)

Training, equipment and drug enforcement were viewed as significant issues within the Law Enforcement purpose area. Equipment purchases was especially important to law enforcement respondents. Non-law enforcement ranked behavioral health and youth programs as much more significant than equipment purchases or drug enforcement programs.

**Courts/Prosecution/Indigent Defense**

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>All Respondents</i>	<i>Law Enforcement</i>	<i>Non-Law Enforcement</i>
1	Specialty Courts (35%)	Not applicable (45%)	Specialty courts (51%)
2	Not Applicable (32%)	Training (33%)	Training (20%)
3	Training (27%)	Drug/violent crime (26%)	Not applicable and pretrial risk assessment/monitoring (19%)

Respondents did not appear to feel all that strongly about any particular initiative within Purpose Area 2. This is likely due to the small number of responses from those employed in courts/judicial positions and absence of representatives from the indigent defense field.

**Prevention and Education Programs**

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>All Respondents</i>	<i>Law Enforcement</i>	<i>Non-Law Enforcement</i>
1	Substance abuse prevention/education (48%)	School violence prevention/education and substance abuse education/prevention projects (47%)	Substance abuse prevention/education (48%)
2	Domestic violence prevention (40%)	Domestic violence prevention (45%)	Juvenile delinquency (41%)
3	Juvenile delinquency prevention (37%)	Juvenile delinquency prevention (37%)	Domestic violence prevention (36%)

Substance abuse prevention/education, domestic violence prevention, and juvenile delinquency prevention (37%) were the top three ranked initiatives within this purpose area. Law enforcement respondents also ranked school violence as a significant issue (47%).

**Corrections/Community Corrections**

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>All Respondents</i>	<i>Law Enforcement</i>	<i>Non-Law Enforcement</i>
1	Not applicable (46%)	Not applicable (65%)	Community-based offender treatment (38%)
2	Community-based offender treatment (26%)	Workforce (19%)	Reentry programs (33%)
3	Jail/prison-based offender treatment (23%)	Jail/prison-based offender treatment (18%)	N/A (28%)

Nearly half of respondents said that corrections/community corrections initiatives were not applicable to their role or agency. Of those for whom this Purpose Area applies, offender-based treatment is a significant issue.

**Drug Treatment & Enforcement**

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>All Respondents</i>	<i>Law Enforcement</i>	<i>Non-Law Enforcement</i>
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1	Mental illness and other chronic health conditions/services (36%)	Drug enforcement and interdiction (49%)	Co-occur. mental illness and chronic health (48%)
2	Not applicable (30%)	Not applicable (36%)	Community-based treatment (39%)
3	Drug enforcement and interdiction (30%)	Co-occur. mental illness and other chronic health (24%)	Corrections-based treatment (35%)

Co-occurring mental illness and other chronic health conditions/services and drug enforcement/interdiction were ranked as significant issues within the Drug Enforcement Purpose Area. About a third of respondents, however, said that these initiatives did not apply to them. Drug enforcement and interdiction was a top issue for law enforcement (49%) while co-occurring mental illness and chronic health conditions was a top issue within the non-law enforcement group. Treatment was also a significant issue for the non-law enforcement group.

### **Planning, Evaluation and Technology**

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>All Respondents</i>	<i>Law Enforcement</i>	<i>Non-Law Enforcement</i>
1	Training (48%)	Training (56%)	Automated info sharing with community services (44%)
2	Forensic science lab enhancements (37%)	Forensics lab improvements (44%)	Training (39%)
3	Automated information sharing projects with justice system partners and community services (33% each)	Database and technology upgrades (39%)	Automated information sharing with justice system partners (30%)

Training, forensic lab improvements and automated justice information sharing were among the top concerns within the Planning, Evaluation and Technology Purpose Area. Database and technology upgrades were also a major concern among law enforcement.

### **Crime Victim and Witness**

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>All Respondents</i>	<i>Law Enforcement</i>	<i>Non-Law Enforcement</i>
1	Behavioral health/trauma-informed care (42%)	Training and education for CJ practitioners (43%)	Behavioral health services/trauma-informed care (54%)
2	Child advocacy centers (38%)	Child advocacy centers (43%)	Children exposed to violence (37%)
3	Children exposed to violence (35%)	Children exposed to violence (33%)	Child advocacy centers (33%)

Behavioral health/trauma-informed care and youth victimization appear to be major issues overall. Law enforcement ranked training and education for criminal justice practitioners a top priority.

## **Mental Health**

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>All Respondents</i>	<i>Law Enforcement</i>	<i>Non-Law Enforcement</i>
1	Evaluation/assessment of mental health and co-occurring disorders (55%)	Training (58%)	Evaluation/assessment (57%)
2	CIT Training and support (48%)	Evaluation/assessment (53%)	Residential inpatient behavioral health treatment (55%)
3	Training (39%) and residential inpatient behavioral health treatment programs (38%)	CIT training/support (51%)	CIT training and support (45%)

Respondent ranked evaluation/assessment of mental health and co-occurring disorders, CIT training and support, and general training among top concerns within the Mental Health Purpose Area (behavioral health treatment programs were nearly ranked third). Again, law enforcement viewed general training as a top priority.

## **Ranking Purpose Areas**

Rank	All Respondents	Law Enforcement Only	Non-Law Enforcement
1	Law enforcement (60%)	LE Program (84%)	Mental Health (71%)
2	Mental health (60%)	Mental health (48%)	Prevention/education (48%)
3	Prevention/education (43%)	Prevention and education (36%)	Drug treatment (41%)
4	Drug Treatment (38%)	Drug Treatment (35%)	Law enforcement (37%)
5	Planning, evaluation and technology (33%)	Planning, evaluation and tech (33%)	Court/prosecution/indigent defense (35%)
6	Crime victim and witness (29%)	Crime victim and witness (25%)	Crime victim and witness (35%)
7	Court/Prosecution Indigent Defense (28%)	Court/prosecution/defense (21%)	Planning, evaluation and tech (34%)
8	Corrections and community corrections (25%)	Corrections and community corrections (21%)	Corrections and community corrections (29%)

Law Enforcement, Mental Health and Prevention/Education were identified as the top 3 most important Purpose Areas. Not surprisingly, most law enforcement respondents viewed the Law Enforcement purpose area as the most critical. Most non-law enforcement respondents said Mental Health was a top concern and Drug Treatment was ranked as more

significant than the Law Enforcement Purpose Area. Corrections and Community Corrections were viewed as the least important (respondents from the corrections field did not participate in the survey).

Note: there is an error in the survey instrument in which respondents were asked to rank Purpose Areas in order from 1 to 8 with 1 being the most important. However, the question contains checkboxes rather than ranking fields, and therefore respondents could only select rather than rank critical Purpose Areas.

## Previously Funded Projects

### Drug and Gang Enforcement

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>All Respondents</i>	<i>Law Enforcement</i>	<i>Non-Law Enforcement</i>
Extremely Important	43%	51%	35%
Important	53%	47%	58%
Unimportant	4%	2%	7%
Extremely Unimportant	0%	0%	0%

Most respondents viewed drug and gang enforcement with some degree of importance.

### Specialized Drug and Gang Prosecution

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>All Respondents</i>	<i>Law Enforcement</i>	<i>Non-Law Enforcement</i>
Extremely Important	31%	42%	20%
Important	57%	53%	62%
Unimportant	11%	4%	17%
Extremely Unimportant	<1%	0%	1%

A little more than half of respondents viewed specialized drug and gang prosecution as important.

### Enhanced Reporting and Information Sharing

<i>Ranking</i>	<i>All Respondents</i>	<i>Law Enforcement</i>	<i>Non-Law Enforcement</i>
Extremely Important	49%	53%	47%
Important	47%	46%	48%
Unimportant	1%	6%	6%
Extremely Unimportant	0%	0%	0%

Enhanced reporting and information sharing is still an important issue cross respondent groups.



### Most Pressing State Issues

<i>All Respondents</i>	<i>Law Enforcement</i>	<i>Non-Law Enforcement</i>
Access to behavioral health services/initiatives (36%)	Access to behavioral health services/initiatives (35%)	Access to behavioral health services/initiatives (35%)
Prison overcrowding and recidivism (32%)	Prison overcrowding and recidivism (30%)	Prison overcrowding and recidivism (34%)
Increased drug and gang enforcement (10%)	Increased drug and gang enforcement (17%)	Prevention Education and early interventions (12%)
Prevention, Education and early interventions (7%)	Other (6%)	Diversion and alternatives to incarceration (9%)
Diversion and alternatives to incarceration (6%)	Improving cross system information sharing (5%)	Improving cross system information sharing (5%)
Improving cross system information sharing (5%)	Diversion and alternatives to incarceration (3%)	Increased drug and gang enforcement (2%)
Other (4%)	Prevention, Education and early interventions (3%)	Other (2%)
Enhanced parole/reentry initiatives (<1%)	Enhanced parole/reentry initiatives (<1%)	Enhanced parole/reentry initiatives (0%)

### Most Pressing Local Issues

<i>All Respondents</i>	<i>Law Enforcement</i>	<i>Non-Law Enforcement</i>
Access to behavioral health services/initiatives (43%)	Access to behavioral health services/initiatives (37%)	Access to behavioral health services/initiatives (49%)
Prevention, education and early intervention (13%)	Drug and gang enforcement (22%)	Prevention, education and early intervention (16%)
Drug and gang enforcement (12%)	Cross-system information sharing (14%)	Diversion and alternatives to incarceration (13%)
Jail overcrowding and recidivism (11%)	Jail overcrowding and recidivism (10%)	Jail overcrowding and recidivism (12%)
Improving cross system information sharing (9%)	Prevention, education and early intervention (9%)	Cross-system information sharing (5%)
Diversion and alternatives to incarceration (7%)	Other (3%)	Drug and gang enforcement (2%)
Other (3%)	Diversion and alternatives to incarceration (2%)	Other (2%)
Enhanced probation/reentry (2%)	Enhanced probation/reentry (2%)	Enhanced probation/reentry (1%)

In addition to a survey ADECA/LETS conducted a series of town hall meetings across seven regions in the state to collect information from local criminal justice stakeholders about gaps in resources or services. We held meeting sin the following regions:



Out of these regional meetings came the following top 5 priorities:

1. Need for more mental health initiatives and mental health training for law enforcement officers
2. Alternatives to incarceration for those who are suffering from mental illness and/or substance abuse issues
3. Field delivery of on site training for law enforcement officers to reduce the cost of sending officers to training by bringing it to them
4. Narcotics/Violent crime enforcement
5. Law enforcement equipment upgrades/replacement

### **Moving Forward**

While this survey serves as the bedrock for LETS's stakeholder outreach strategy, survey findings are not meant to be a strategic plan. Strategic planning takes into account the knowledge held within the field, the decision making of appointed justice system leaders, an understanding of the funding landscape within the state and a thorough review of available data to formulate a strategy that addresses identified needs, gaps or emerging trends. While Byrne JAG funds represent only a small percent of criminal justice spending nationally, these dollars represent an opportunity to fund initiatives that can positively impact the work of **multiple** system partners and enhance public safety. If used effectively, they will ultimately reduce justice system costs and save the taxpayers' money. With that said, findings addressed here are meant to inform the LETS Division of the knowledge, opinions, and consensus within the field. The overwhelming survey response was that a very diversified, balanced approach to spending across all purpose areas was preferred to one more heavily weighted in one area as has been the practice in Alabama over the past 20 +/- years.

## **Drug Use Trends in Alabama**

### **Drug Use in Alabama**

According to data collected among the state funded Drug Task Forces (DTFs) and the Gulf Coast HIDTA (High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas) the following drugs have impacted Alabama the most:

#### **1. Cocaine**

- a) Continues to be the primary drug threat to the urban areas of the state of Alabama.
  - b) Wholesale distributors transport cocaine into the state in its powder form, the majority of which is converted locally into crack.
  - c) Crack cocaine distribution and abuse is associated with more incidents of violent and property crimes than any other drug.
  - d) Cocaine is primarily transported into areas of Alabama by Mexican Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs) and also by Black DTOs often affiliated with smaller street level groups of individuals who distribute crack.
- Investigations show that the majority of cocaine entering Alabama comes from the Atlanta, Georgia area. Couriers utilize methods such as commercial, rental, and private vehicles to transport cocaine.

#### **2. Methamphetamine**

- a) Methamphetamine continues to be a major drug threat to the rural areas of the state.
- b) Methamphetamine distribution and abuse continue to peak in Alabama.
- c) Methamphetamine generates violent crime and affects public safety, public health, and environmental concerns during its production and distribution.
- d) Powder methamphetamine is widely available throughout the state.
- e) Alabama Act 2012-237 was passed April 2012, requiring that drugs containing meth precursors like ephedrine or pseudoephedrine be sold only in pharmacies and that they be kept behind the counter. As a result, local methamphetamine laboratories have decreased, and smaller one-pot laboratories have increased.
- f) The production of methamphetamine is a major drug threat, contributing to the commission of violent and property crimes.
- g) Powdered methamphetamine is being converted to ice methamphetamine throughout the state.
- h) Mexican DTOs are the primary wholesale distributors of methamphetamine in Alabama.
- i) The use and distribution of methamphetamine continue to rise among the Black DTOs in Alabama.

### **3. Heroin**

- a) Heroin is increasingly becoming an alternate drug of choice for hydrocodone users.
- b) Heroin is becoming increasingly available in the college areas as well as urban areas in the state.
- c) Alabama treatment programs have reported an increase in admissions for heroin abuse.
- d) Areas in and around Birmingham have experienced an increase in heroin related deaths resulting from overdoses.
- e) Intelligence reports indicate that heroin is being transported into the state from Atlanta, Georgia and Detroit, Michigan.

### **4. Diverted Pharmaceuticals**

- a) The abuse of diverted pharmaceuticals has reached epidemic proportions in the state of Alabama.
- b) Treatment centers in Alabama reported the highest number of admissions for pharmaceuticals abuse in 2012.
- c) The availability of pharmaceuticals remains high in Alabama. Reports indicate that abusers frequently have easy access to prescription medications through family and friends.
- d) The most commonly abused pharmaceuticals in Alabama have been reported as hydrocodone, oxycodone and alprazolam.
- e) Treatment centers in Alabama reported admissions for opana (oxymorphone) abuse showed a significant increase in 2012.
- f) An increase in the number of pain management clinics in Alabama and the surrounding states have contributed to easy access for abusers of pharmaceutical drugs.
- g) Federal legislation is aiding area law enforcement in curtailing the utilization of the internet to purchase pharmaceuticals. Prior to the enactment of this legislation, pharmaceuticals were easily obtained without a prescription or consultation from a licensed physician via the Internet.

### **5. Marijuana**

- a) Marijuana continues to be a widely abused drug in Alabama.
- b) Intelligence indicates Marijuana remains a "gateway" drug for teens and young adults who are beginning to experiment with drugs.
- c) Vast rural areas throughout Alabama provide ideal cover and concealment to marijuana growers. This contributes heavily to the large quantities of marijuana produced in the state.
- d) Mexico-produced marijuana is transported into and through Alabama along primary transportation routes.

- e) Hydroponic and medicinal marijuana are being shipped via postal service from California to all areas of Alabama.
- f) Mexican DTOs are the primary distributors of marijuana in the local retail market. Recent shipments of marijuana from surrounding states provide additional availability for individuals within Alabama. The number of indoor marijuana grow sites has increased and is being cultivated by Mexicans utilizing seeds from Mexico.
- g) Modern indoor cultivation techniques have contributed to the production of a higher grade of marijuana.

## **6. Other Dangerous Drugs**

- a) The availability of club drugs continue to show a slight increase in small quantities throughout the state, especially in university towns.
- b) Synthetic drugs such as spice have become more popular over the past year in Alabama, and are smoked as an alternative to marijuana.
- c) Bath salts such as Ivory Wave are consumed as a synthetic methamphetamine.
- d) The availability of MDMA (Ecstasy) is moderate across the state and is the most prevalent and popular of the "club drugs" in Alabama.
- e) Synthetic substances that mimic marijuana or other drugs, often referred to as "spice", "bath salts" or various other names, are being created with chemical compounds which had not been identified and prohibited as controlled substances under state law.
- f) Alabama Act 201-717 referred to as the "Spice Bill", was made law in 2012. This law regulates synthetic marijuana and other similar substances.

## **Attacking the Substance Abuse Problem in Alabama**

Currently there is a national discussion on how our country should be attacking substance abuse and the issues that are related to it. The argument seems to be centered on the issue of supply vs. demand. Beginning in the 1980's, America began its "War on Drugs". This effort was an attempt to begin ridding our country of illegal narcotics by attacking the supply of those narcotics and their path into our country. This model centered solely on the enforcement aspect of drug control. While this had an impact on the availability of illegal narcotics, it did nothing in the way of addressing the demand of these drugs in our country.

After 40 years, the United States' war on drugs has cost \$1 trillion and hundreds of thousands of lives. About 40,000 people were in U.S. jails and prisons for drug crimes in 1980, compared with more than 500,000 today. Excessively long prison sentences and locking up people for small drug offenses contribute greatly to this ballooning of the prison population.

This serves as evidence that our current strategies are not completely addressing the problem. We must take steps to identify and solve the problem. What we do not

need to do is continue failing strategies that cost huge sums of money and seemingly exacerbate the problem. Rather than continuing on the unsuccessful path of the war on drugs, we must identify what works and what does not in terms of real evidence and data.

While certain levels of enforcement are the first step in the process, we must identify ways to contribute to solving the drug addiction problem. A multi-faceted approach to the substance abuse problem is a proven method to make a real impact. This would include treatment, prevention, and intervention methods.

Treating drug addiction as a health issue could save billions of dollars, improve public health and help us better control violence and crime in our communities. Hundreds of thousands of people have died from overdoses and drug-related diseases, including HIV and hepatitis C, because they did not have access to cost-effective, life-saving solutions. When it comes to drugs, we should focus on the goals we agree on: protecting our kids, protecting public safety and preventing and treating drug abuse and addiction.

## **Summary of Plan**

With the priorities that have been established in this plan, we plan to make a meaningful effort to address those issues through a balanced approach. First we plan to develop Request for Proposals (RFP's) for those areas identified as having the biggest need. These RFP's will serve as a mechanism by which we can look at the best and most innovative approaches to mental health and substance services, prevention and education, enforcement, and specialized prosecution and courts programs.

In the arena of prevention and education we will rely previous experience and contacts we established in managing the Governor's Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities Program which was prevention based grant, funded through the US Department of Education. This program allowed the state of Alabama to fund the best evidence based programs and practices towards preventing school aged youth from engaging in behaviors related to bullying, violence, and substance abuse. We will develop a similar RFP to attract programs from around the state to help in establishing a proven set of these type programs.

We will also address the needs of mental health services by developing an RFP that will allow outside service providers as well as state and local partners to team up with law enforcement to better address the needs of those individuals who are involved in the criminal justice system but are not being provided essential services as it relates to the mental health status. There are limited options available in local lockup facilities and police departments when it comes to helping those who suffer from mental health problems. Through an RFP we can attempt to assist local

departments in making a connection to service providers located in their community to help them when the need arises.

In an effort to help reduce recidivism and relieve the pressure that is currently on our state correctional system, we plan to develop an RFP that will allow for programs that can serve as alternatives to incarceration. This can include specialized prosecution programs and specialty courts. Specialty courts can include things such as drug courts and veteran's courts. While many of our judicial jurisdictions have already established drug courts we will rely on our communication with the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) to help gather information regarding which jurisdictions do not already have a specialized drug court and we can help provide funding for getting the initiative started in that community.

Over the years the Byrne JAG program in Alabama has been very heavy on the enforcement aspect of the criminal justice system. This approach has provided funding to multiple drug and violent crime task forces across the state. This approach has allowed law enforcement to partially rid communities of narcotics and violent criminals who deal them. But the overall impact of this approach has led to a prison system and local jail system that is over 200% capacity. Our local jails are filled with defendants who were arrested on drug charges and are awaiting trial. The process from arrest to court to sentencing is taking 12 to 18 months due to a backlog of drug cases at the Alabama Department of Forensic Sciences. In Alabama drug cases cannot be sent to grand jury until you have forensic results from a state certified lab.

After a defendant has been found guilty they are sentenced. Judges have to follow state sentencing guidelines. These guidelines lead to lengthy minimum mandatory sentences for drug offenses. This often leads to scores of low level non-violent inmates who are serving lengthy sentences for drug crimes. These actions have lead to prison overcrowding in Alabama.

We must to begin to shift our focus to a more balanced approach. While enforcement will still play a role in our overall plan, it will be at a drastically reduced level to allow for a more balanced approach to eliminating the strains on our state criminal justice system.

The State of Alabama continues its efforts to create a more efficient criminal justice system and provide a better response to the states' rising crime rates. Through the support of the Byrne JAG program, ADECA/LETS will begin to support a variety of programs designed to address what stakeholders have identified as our biggest needs at both the state and local levels. A multi-faceted approach to crime prevention and reduction allows for a bigger and more collective approach to bettering Alabama communities.

