

## **Program Narrative**

### **1. Abstract**

The Center for Suburban Criminal Justice at Bergen Community College in Paramus, New Jersey, is leading a consortium of suburban public institutions that serves to unite the expertise of criminal justice professionals, academics, and other partners. As a unified coalition, they analyze and address the characteristics of suburban crime, the role of the criminal justice systems, and the interrelationship of both to the unique nature of suburban communities. The number and diversity of groups that become involved in the Center's activities, the partnerships that develop, and the impartial research that is generated by the Center's activities will measure progress towards this goal. All of these achievements will increase the Center's outreach and improve the Center's ability to accommodate and serve the distinct and diverse nature of suburban communities. This will help make suburban communities safer.

The Center will respond to emerging national problems and highlight important issues and crime trends with its focus on the unique characteristics of suburban communities. The activities of the Center will include seminars for high school, middle school, and elementary school students conducted in three states, professional training, community awareness, and work with at-risk individuals.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

The Center for Suburban Criminal Justice was established to fill a need that is not being met by existing agencies. There were certain key points focused on when establishing and building this organization. First, more Americans now live and work in the suburbs than in urban and rural areas. Nonetheless, urban and rural criminal justice have long overshadowed suburban criminal justice with regard to the quantity of centers in existence providing vital research, policy, technical assistance, and professional development services for criminal justice systems in their respective areas. As importantly, the suburbs are characterized by significant diversity in population, income, and even in the nature of the communities. However, there is no discussion of this diversity and how it affects criminal justice. A major reason for this is that there is not enough focus on the growing problem of suburban crime.

The Center has identified key problems that must be addressed.

### **Problems to be addressed**

- We have incomplete information about suburban criminal justice issues and little resource sharing about the best ways to respond to suburban criminal justice issues.
- We face a growing need for suburban criminal justice services as community agencies struggle with inadequate resource support.
- There is no formal supportive network or structure to effectively coordinate community training, professional development, research, collaboration efforts, and prevention efforts.

### 3. Goals and Objectives

**Timeline key:** ○ = planning and development underway  
 ● = objective or task completed and implemented  
 ► = objective institutionalized and ongoing

**Goal #1: Develop an infrastructure consisting of community colleges as centers of operations to improve and coordinate services and resources, and thereby, alleviate the fragmentation found in suburban communities.**

Objectives:	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall
1.1 Assist member community colleges in developing relationships with their criminal justice systems. At least 7 local and state sponsoring agencies will contact their counterparts in other states to support Center member activities.	○	●	►	►
1.2 Assist member community colleges in developing relationships with social service and educational entities within their respective communities. At least 5 local and state sponsoring agencies will contact their counterparts in other states to support Center member activities.	○	●	►	►
1.3 Form a united effort focused on selected criminal justice issues in suburbia by convening personnel at community colleges to finalize and develop an action program. At least 5 meetings will be held.	○	●	►	►
1.4 Review participating agencies to identify and incorporate a variety of suburb communities to insure that railroad suburbs, black suburbs, working class, etc. are represented.		○	●	►
1.5 Develop surveys and other instruments to collect data from participants at conferences and workshops concerning attitudes, interests, concerns, and suggestions for improvement. Each conference will have a series of common questions for participants to answer.	○	●	►	►

<b>Goal #2: Launch data collection on a local and regional basis for comparative purposes on selective criminal justice issues.</b>				
Objectives:				
2.1 Review, refine and update data collection methods to ensure reporting is consistent at partnering community colleges. At least 5 surveys will be combined in a regional analysis.		○	●	▶
2.2 Conduct consistency training for data collection and reporting as needed for community colleges. A training meeting will be held at each member college.		○	●	▶
2.3 Create computer-sharing system. Each member college will share common system.		○	●	▶
2.4 Replicate seminars / conferences at partnering community colleges to investigate regional problems in criminal justice. A total of 6 identical seminars will be held at member colleges.		○	●	▶
2.5 Statistical analysis of data. Each member will contribute the data collected to form a joint analysis.			○	●
<b>Goal #3: Utilize the Center to understand better how the sense of place of “suburbia” influences criminal behavior</b>				
Objectives:	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall
3.1 Recruit community college faculty into suburban studies groups comprised of at least 8 different disciplines.	○	○	●	▶
3.2 Replicate suburban studies group at the other partnering community colleges. An academic training meeting will be held at each member college.	○	●	▶	
3.3 Have faculty members from diverse disciplines at partnering colleges compare their findings and share with students in their classes. A report will be compiled on this.		○	●	▶

<b>Goal #4: Merge academic findings with the practical application of criminal justice, educational and social service agencies.</b>				
Objectives:				
4.1 Review community based services to identify loopholes. This will be demonstrated by a pilot survey.		○	●	▶
4.2 Disseminate research and academic findings to the community through publications, meetings, and conferences to encourage resource sharing to fill identified gaps. Demonstrated by a pilot survey will be conducted.	○	●	▶	▶
4.3 Develop after-school program at Bergen Community College based on the findings generated at the seminars. This will be a demonstration site for at-risk students. Results will be disseminate to member colleges.			○	●

#### 4. Project Design

In order to confront and overcome the problems identified above, the Center for Suburban Criminal Justice was established at Bergen Community College in Bergen County, New Jersey in 2005. Westchester Community College, located in Valhalla, Westchester County, New York, and Norwalk Community College, located in Norwalk, Fairfield County, Connecticut are operational partners with the Center. During the initial phase of the project, we developed a strong network of collaboration and clearly defined our philosophy and commitment to respond to the increase in suburban crime. Due to the number of independent communities and police departments (70 communities, 70 police departments in Bergen County alone) and the need to have a comprehensive view of criminal justice problems, it was decided that the entire criminal justice system had to be included in the organization. Therefore, the leaders of all branches of the criminal justice

system including local, county, and state organizations signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2005.

With the full support of criminal justice, a decision was made to headquarter the Center at Bergen Community College, a public, state supported, suburban community college. This achieved a number of organizational goals. The college was already the center and focal point of activity for a fragmented suburban county. The college had an excellent criminal justice program with over 900 students. The selection of a community college fit both the goals of the college to serve the community while providing a neutral site where all would be welcome. In addition, the college could provide the wide-ranging services and expertise needed to confront criminal justice issues.

With the Center based at Bergen Community College, other community colleges could serve as operational branches in their extended communities. Building steadily, Westchester Community College in New York and Norwalk Community College in Connecticut, and the Humber Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning in Toronto, Canada joined the Center. All of these organizations are in the process of institutionalizing the Center in their operations. Therefore, the Center can now operate on a local, regional, and international level, which matches the levels of most criminal justice problems.

### **Implications for Policy and Practice**

This project will allow suburban community colleges to work together on critical projects that affect the communities they serve as well as their own institutions. The mission will additionally allow criminal justice agencies from local and state jurisdictions to form a regional perspective on the suburban issues they face. Social service agencies,

as well as educational agencies from local and state jurisdictions will also be able to work together to form a regional perspective.

The Center will work in partnership with professionals in criminal justice, social service, and education to share research with community leaders, academic audiences, and policy makers. The Center is committed to producing objective, actionable research that benefits citizens and informs public policy to make suburban communities safer. The project will highlight the outstanding work of professionals working in suburbia since their efforts and the problems they confront have long been overshadowed by urban and rural efforts.

**Target Population and Benefits**

The Center’s member colleges will serve the communities in their geographic area to provide local service. The 234 square mile of Bergen County in Northeast New Jersey has a population of 884,118. The 450 square mile of Westchester County serves a population of 945,000. The 225 square mile of Fairfield County serves a population of 400,000. However, with the Center’s local, regional, and international perspectives, the research produced can be generalized to other suburban communities. Benefits will be significant, as the following table suggests.

<b>Constituents</b>	<b>Benefits</b>
<b>Local and County Law Enforcement</b>	Greater information from research and enhanced coordination and cooperative effort from other professional community agencies.
<b>Social Service Agencies</b>	Greater information and knowledge regarding suburban social service needs; knowledge and access to coordinating services. Identification of loopholes

	and development of programs to address them. Cooperation of criminal justice, educational, and family institutions.
<b>Educational Agencies</b>	Greater information, knowledge, and access to resources. Cooperation from other institutions (criminal justice, social service, and family)
<b>Families and General Public</b>	Greater awareness of and sensitivity to suburban issues; knowledge of resources; increased safety in the community.

### 5. Management and Organizational Capability

Bergen Community College (BCC), one of New Jersey’s largest community colleges, is located in the state’s most densely populated county. A comprehensive institution, Bergen serves more than 15,000 students in ninety degree and certificate programs and an additional 10,000 in continuing education, English as a Second Language, and workforce development. Collaborating closely with industry employers, BCC has been the leading regional provider of workforce development since 1968. The Criminal Justice program in particular has along history of success as evidenced by its more than 900 students, numerous local and regional partners, and now, the Center for Suburban Criminal Justice, established in 2005. Importantly, over 90% of the Criminal Justice Program graduates are employed in the region’s criminal justice agencies.

BCC is well positioned to effectively manage this partnership and ensure project success. The college's capacity to accomplish proposed goals and outcomes is clearly evidenced in its exemplary thirty-year record of managing successful partnerships to effectively carry out substantial grants awarded by federal, state, and foundation funding sources. BCC is widely recognized for its excellent programs, winning and effectively

managing two Governor's Workforce Excellence Grant awards, one in the amount of \$580,000 and a second for \$1.3 million. The college secures and manages over \$1 million in grant funds each year. Its Office of Grants Administration ensures grant project implementation, quality control, and contract compliance. A full-time grants accountant monitors expenditures and ensures compliance according to GAAP. Furthermore, a highly sophisticated information technology system enables the Office of Institutional Research to effectively track and document project progress.

As importantly, the college's organizational structure itself is designed to ensure funded projects such as the Center for Suburban Criminal Justice become fully institutionalized and self-sustaining. The Center is located in the college's Division of Continuing Education, Community Outreach and Grants. The Division Vice President, working with the college's executive council, provides direct project oversight and supervision of the Director of the Center. The Vice President in turn, reports to the College President who has ultimate programmatic and fiduciary responsibility with the Board of Trustees.

Grant project personnel include the project director, a coordinator each for Bergen, Westchester, and Norwalk Community Colleges, an office manager, and two faculty members. Position descriptions, responsibilities, and qualifications of the project director and three community college coordinators are discussed below.

Philip Dolce, serves as the project director, providing supervision of all of the Center's activities including operations, projects, grants and staff. He creates strategies and establishes goals of the Center, serves as primary liaison to partnering colleges as to all local, state, federal, and international agencies involved with the Center. He is responsible for managing, oversight, and supervision of full-time and part-time employees including annual written performance

evaluations, verification of funding sources for employees, and plans for professional development. Create strategic plans for the Center by working with external organizations in the public and private sector to identify community issues, generate increased partnerships, alliances and resources.