

PROGRAM ABSTRACT

NAME OF PROGRAM: Drug and Violent Crime Control Task Force

FUNDING AVAILABLE: To Be Announced

ELIGIBILITY: Units of State and Local Government

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In recent years, West Virginia has continued to see a dramatic increase in drug use across the state. Prescription pill abuse is at an epidemic level in many areas. The high demand for these drugs, along with increased targeting of false medical practices, has caused the prices of pills to skyrocket on the streets. With prices rising, and suppliers being targeted with increased rapidity, West Virginia drug abusers have begun to turn to heroin, along with other drugs, to satisfy their cravings. The heroin problem has grown to the point that the Northern Panhandle of West Virginia has become known as the "heroin highway" among many law enforcement circles.

Drugs, both prescription and street, are not only responsible for drug crimes. When drug use in an area increases, so do other crimes: theft, assault, homicide, sexual assault, and many others. Drugs not only lead to petty crimes, committed to support a drug habit, but also to violent crimes, due either to a need for drugs, or impaired judgment.

In many instances, both these and drug related crimes can be traced to the same criminal origins. The nature and complexity of these crimes often require the investment of extensive amounts of investigative time, and the application of sophisticated techniques, skills, and equipment, all of which are usually in short supply. Further, as noted in the U.S. Department of Justice Program Brief on the Organized Crime/Narcotics Program, 'The diffusion of responsibility among local, state, and federal law enforcement jurisdictions works to the advantage of criminal groups. Major criminal conspiracies almost invariably span jurisdictional boundaries to the extent that two or more local or state jurisdictions may be required to respond to the same offense or offenders.'

In order to avoid inefficient, ineffective or inappropriate responses to this realm of law enforcement, the Justice Assistance Grant Advisory Board has been applying the 'Task Force Concept' in this area for some time. This concept results in the **joint** application of talents and resources, both investigative and prosecutorial, from all levels of government, thus ensuring the achievement of maximum enforcement results within the bounds of investigative and prosecutorial resources available.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM:

Multi-jurisdictional task forces have been a pioneering initiative in the battle against violent crime and drug abuse for several years. There are currently 12 organized task forces funded in part by the JAG program in West Virginia. The state currently has one statewide task force and several local task forces, consisting of regions ranging from one to five counties. The task forces are comprised of officers at the local, county, state, and federal level. This type of representation allows the task forces to put resources together and provide a better and more effective way to fight drugs and violent crime in West Virginia.

Goal

The goal of the Drug and Violent Crime Task Force project is to field collaborative, joint investigative teams consisting of state, federal and local investigators, which can effectively attack carefully targeted segments of the criminal element, pursuing them to their roots, regardless of jurisdictional boundaries. These task forces will work in conjunction with community-based programs to more effectively address their area's crime problems.

Objectives

1. Direct resources at broad problems, such as violent crime, gang related crime, weapons and drug trafficking as well as other location specific crime problems identified by each task force.
2. Target the distribution networks and related criminal activities, be those individual or organizational, and to aggressively investigate and prosecute these targets, thereby enhancing the overall public safety in the task force area.
3. Elimination of ineffective and/or wasteful investigative efforts, such that maximum benefit is derived from resources expended.
4. Maximum recovery of criminal assets.
5. Reduce the number of drug and drug-related gun crimes in the task force region.
6. Collaborate with community partners to ensure maximum use of resources, as well as more definitive solutions to long-term problems.
7. Share case intelligence among all law enforcement partners.

Activities

While enforcement resources are always in limited supply, current fiscal conditions in West Virginia have rendered these resources scarcer than ever. The sharing and efficient management of those resources available is, therefore, critical to the success of this program. Key elements are as follows:

1. The use of clearly defined criteria to identify, select, and prioritize investigative targets.
2. The judicious assignment of cases for initiation of investigation and subsequent prosecution.
3. The use of established interdepartmental mechanisms for identification, acquisition, and assignment of resources and skills required in the investigative and prosecutorial process throughout the duration of cases initiated.
4. Coordination and monitoring of cases initiated to ensure proper timing of investigative and prosecutorial activities, and to facilitate timely decision making concerning case continuance, referrals, refocusing and closure.
5. Specialized training, including NIIR, Task Force Commanders' School, and any other offered throughout the year.
6. Covert, as well as overt investigations
7. Forming collaborative partnerships, which is defined as the coming together of multi-disciplinary groups to focus on a specific project where effective implementation involves all identified partners.
8. Offering community drug education.
9. Intelligence sharing through workshops, meetings, deconfliction, and submitting local data to regional and national databases.

TASK FORCE POLICIES AS SET FORTH THE JAG ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

1. Grants will be awarded with a 25% matching requirement. Match must be a cash match.
2. Multi-jurisdictional task force projects must reapply each year in the competitive application process.
3. Personnel

Personnel positions will only be reimbursed at annual entry level salary and benefits up to a maximum of \$28,000 per position. Grantees must certify what entry level is for their department.

Applicants requesting a full-time officer's position must be prepared to hire an additional officer to "backfill" the vacated position. Reimbursement for salary expenses will begin once the grant position is backfilled.

Overtime will be available for full-time drug officers in situations where the department is picking up the salary expenses. Overtime is not available for part-time drug officers.

No grant-funded full-time drug officer will have other law enforcement assignments that will compromise his/her effectiveness on the task force.

The JAG Committee will consider requests for overtime not to exceed \$10,000 per year, per officer. (This overtime is available for officers working drugs on a full-time basis) Please note that any task forces that also receive overtime funds from HIDTA must ensure that they DO NOT exceed the federally set annual limit for overtime funds.

Task Force law enforcement personnel are required to attend "Narcotics Identification and Investigation Training" within one year from the time they start on the Task Force.

The Task Force Commander of each Task Force is required to attend the annual "Task Force Commanders School" sponsored by the U.S. Attorney's Office and the Division of Justice and Community Services.

All Task Force trainings, meetings, etc. that are declared mandatory by the Division of Justice and Community Services are just that. If a Task Force fails to attend the mandatory training, meeting, etc., without good cause, a 5% overall reduction will occur with that Task Force's subsequent fiscal year grant funding.

4. In order to qualify for the multi-jurisdictional drug and violent crime task force project, several items are required:

An interagency agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) must be signed each year by the task force control board consisting of the heads of each department, and the federal representative before reimbursement can take place.

All updated Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) will be due to the Division of Justice and Community Services (DJCS) by no later than September 30th of the year in which the grant is awarded. If the MOUs are not received by DJCS by September 30th then the October reimbursement shall be forfeited. If the MOU is not received by October 31st, the November reimbursement shall be forfeited. Funds shall be forfeited as long as the MOU is delinquent. These forfeited monies will be deobligated and **cannot** be recouped at any time.

The JAG Advisory Board mandates that all task force projects make every attempt to utilize deconfliction databases (ex. HIDTA or WVIX) to enhance officer safety and avoid duplication of enforcement efforts.

7. Organization

Each task force must have a control board whose membership shall be made up of the head of each agency in the task force or his designee, as well as a federal law enforcement agency. In those jurisdictions which have an assistant drug prosecutor, the membership shall include the prosecutor, as well.

Control boards must meet at least quarterly and minutes shall be kept of these meetings and forwarded to the Division of Justice and Community Services with the regular monthly progress reports. July, August and September will be Quarter 1, October, November and December will be Quarter 2, and so on. At least one control board meeting must be held during this time frame. If control board meeting minutes are not submitted to DJCS by the end of the month, then the month's reimbursement shall be forfeited. Funds will be forfeited as long as the control board meeting minutes are delinquent. If the control board meeting is not held during one quarter, then the next quarter the control board must hold two meetings (one of which must be held in the first month of the quarter) and provide minutes from both in order to prevent an interruption in reimbursement. These forfeited monies will be deobligated and **cannot** be recouped at any time.

An off-site and co-located office for each task force is strongly recommended. This designated location must have 24 hour/7days a week access to the office and equipment by all members. Each task force will be evaluated on an individualized case-by-case basis as to the effectiveness of their current site, and if necessary, may be required to move to an off-site and/or co-located office.

A task force must be officially and structurally in operation for one year prior to receiving grant funds. This year shall serve as a trial period as well as to test the level of commitment from the jurisdiction.

8. Reporting

Timely and accurate reporting of statistics/information on the Monthly Task Force Progress Report is required of all Task Forces.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

1. Number of cases referred for state prosecution
2. Number of cases referred for federal prosecution

3. Number of state convictions
4. Number of federal convictions
5. Amount of currency forfeited
6. Value of real property forfeited
7. Quantity (by weight and drug) seizure
8. Number of offenders arrested
9. Number of defendants prosecuted
10. Number of meth labs seized during reporting period
11. Number of firearms seized
12. Number of firearms traced
13. Number of targets entered into deconfliction
14. Drug and Community Outreach events held

DJCS REPORTING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

All projects must:

- Submit monthly progress reports detailing progress and activities during the month.
- Submit monthly financial reports detailing expenditures during the month.
- Submit quarterly progress report summarizing the overall achievements of the reporting period.
- Submit annual progress report summarizing the overall achievements of the project.

DJCS will conduct at least one on-site monitoring visit to examine overall activities and a report will be issued on the findings/recommendations. Projects will be monitored more often if problems develop.