

**The JFA Institute**  
Washington, D.C./Austin, Texas

*Conducting Justice and Corrections Research for Effective Policy Making*

**Travis Community Impact Supervision:  
An Incubator Site to Improve Probation**

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## Summary

The Travis County Community Supervision and Corrections Department (CSCD) in Austin, Texas (the county's adult probation department) has teamed up with *The JFA Institute* in a two-year effort to reengineer the operations of the department to support more effective supervision strategies. The goal is to strengthen probation by using an evidence-based practices (EBP) model. This realignment strategy is called the Travis Community Impact Supervision (TCIS). This name was chosen to purposely distinguish this agency-wide effort from departments in Texas and around the country that have implemented limited components of an evidence based approach but have not been able to implement or sustain evidence-based principles throughout the organization. The effort is supported by Travis County criminal law judges, the district attorney and the Travis County Community Justice Council.

The Travis County CSCD, the Community Justice Assistance Division of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, and the Open Society Institute have provided funds to support the reengineering effort and use the department as an "incubator" site to develop, test and document organization-wide changes directed at improving assessment, supervision, sanctioning, personnel training and quality control policies. The National Institute of Corrections is also assisting by providing training and technical assistance in key areas at the request of the department. In this effort, *The JFA Institute* provides research, technical assistance in managing organizational changes and documents the efforts working with the department. Dr. Tony Fabelo is directing the project on behalf of *The JFA Institute*. Dr. Geraldine Nagy, the Director of the Travis County probation department, is directing the overall reform effort in conjunction with senior management staff of the department.

The Travis probation department is the fifth largest probation department in the state and, as such, has tremendous impact on the state probation system. In 2005 Travis had 4% of the statewide probation population under direct supervision with 11,333 offenders. Travis had an additional 11,494 offenders under "indirect" supervision. Some of these offenders are being supervised in other jurisdictions. This brings the total number of offenders under some form of probation supervision in Travis County to 22,827 in FY 2005.

The Travis probation department and probation departments in Texas and nationally are facing challenges that were documented nationally by a forum of experts convened by the U.S. Department of Justice in 2004 and documented in Texas by studies conducted by *The JFA Institute*. Among the challenges are how to:

- Effectively use assessment tools to recommend to courts appropriate conditions of supervision and treatment;
- Develop strategies to integrate providers and community members into conventional and clinical interventions to bring positive change in the behavior of offenders (so called best-practices or evidence-based practices);
- Measure outcomes other than recidivism (such as improved family relations) and generate data on the economic impact of community corrections;

- Develop effective partnerships and collaboration strategies; and,
- Develop organizational strategies to implement evidence-based practices, maintain the integrity of programs and integrate performance measures in the management of programs.

It is with these challenges in mind that Travis County officials made a long-term commitment to strengthening local probation supervision through TCIS. An additional objective is to use the lessons learned at Travis to demonstrate to other localities how to best accomplish this.

This is the first report in a proposed series of “incubator” reports. This report provides a context for understanding the importance of having an incubator site that can be used to develop a successful approach for implementing organization-wide evidence-based practices. The report discusses the “start-up” strategies that have been used to design the organization-wide changes and begin the implementation process. The incubator site effort was officially initiated in November 2005 when state and foundation funding started.

Strategies for other jurisdictions to successfully start a major re-organization along evidence-based practices are discussed in the report. These strategies include establishing an open process to educate the organization staff on the need to change, understanding the organization’s strengths and weaknesses by conducting an independent organizational assessment, establishing an implementation strategy based on the assessment results, establishing the process to manage change and establishing the base of knowledge through research to support the changes. All this has to be administered cohesively by a core committee that should be headed by the director of the probation department but may include an outside facilitator that can promote collaboration, report on timelines, provide technical assistance to the committees and conduct key research.

## I. Introduction

The Travis County Community Supervision and Corrections Department (CSCD) in Austin, Texas (the county's adult probation department) has teamed up with *The JFA Institute* in a two-year effort to reengineer the operations of the department to support more effective supervision strategies. The goal is to strengthen probation by using an evidence-based practices (EBP) model. The Travis CSCD, the Community Justice Assistance Division of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, and the Open Society Institute have provided funds to support the reengineering effort and use the department as an "incubator" site to develop, test and document organization-wide changes directed at improving assessment, supervision, sanctioning, personnel training and quality control policies. The National Institute of Corrections is also assisting by providing training and technical assistance in key areas at the request of the department. As will be explained later, this realignment strategy is called the Travis Community Impact Supervision (TCIS). This name was chosen to purposely distinguish this agency-wide effort from departments in Texas and around the country that have implemented limited components of an evidence-based approach but have not been able to implement or sustain evidence-based principles throughout the organization. The challenges, successes and barriers confronted in the implementation of TCIS will be documented over the two-year period in a series of reports to provide other jurisdictions in Texas and in the nation a base of knowledge to develop effective probation reforms. In other words, we will use the Travis CSCD to "incubate" policies that can benefit the field of probation and criminal justice administration in general.

This is the first report in a proposed series of "incubator" reports. This report provides a context for understanding the importance of having an incubator site that can be used to develop a successful approach for implementing organization-wide evidence-based practices. The report discusses the "start-up" strategies that have been used to design the organization-wide changes and begin the implementation process. The incubator site effort was officially initiated in November 2005 when state and foundation funding started. However, as will be described in the report, the county engaged in critical planning efforts before this time.

In this effort, *The JFA Institute* provides research, technical assistance in managing organizational changes and documents the efforts working with the department. Dr. Tony Fabelo is directing the project on behalf of *The JFA Institute*. Dr. Geraldine Nagy, the Director of the Travis County probation department, is directing the overall reform effort in conjunction with senior management staff of the department. The effort is supported by Travis County criminal law judges, the district attorney and the Travis County Community Justice Council.

The Travis CSCD is the fifth largest probation system in the state and, as such, has tremendous impact on the state probation system. As of August 2005 Harris County (Houston) had the largest population under direct probation supervision in Texas with 12% of the state probation population or 31,739 offenders. Dallas, Bexar (San Antonio) and Tarrant County (Ft. Worth) were second, third and fourth respectively. Travis had 4% of the statewide probation population under direct supervision with 11,333 offenders. Travis had an additional 11,494 offenders under "indirect" supervision. Some of these offenders are being supervised in other jurisdictions although absconders are also

counted as being under “indirect” supervision. This brings the total number of offenders under some form of probation supervision in Travis County to 22,827 in FY 2005.

## II. Need for an Incubator Site

On November 18 and 19, 2004 the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, convened a “National Community Corrections Forum”. More than 55 experts from across the country joined the forum in order “to make recommendations on the areas most in need of attention from the community corrections field and BJA/OJP.”<sup>1</sup> Among the experts participating were Dr. James F. Austin, President of *The JFA Institute*, and Dr. Fabelo. The forum participants agreed that the probation systems across the country are struggling to deal with staggering workloads, lack innovation to address changing community expectations about probation and have difficulty dealing with defining, measuring and sustaining effectiveness. Among the challenges facing probation departments nationally are the need to:

- Effectively use assessment tools to recommend to courts appropriate conditions of supervision and treatment;
- Develop strategies to integrate providers and community members into conventional and clinical interventions to bring positive change in the behavior of offenders (so called best-practices or evidence-based practices);
- Measure outcomes other than recidivism (such as improved family relations) and generate data on the economic impact of community corrections;
- Develop effective partnerships and collaboration strategies; and,
- Develop organizational strategies to implement evidence-based practices, maintain the integrity of programs and integrate performance measures in the management of programs.

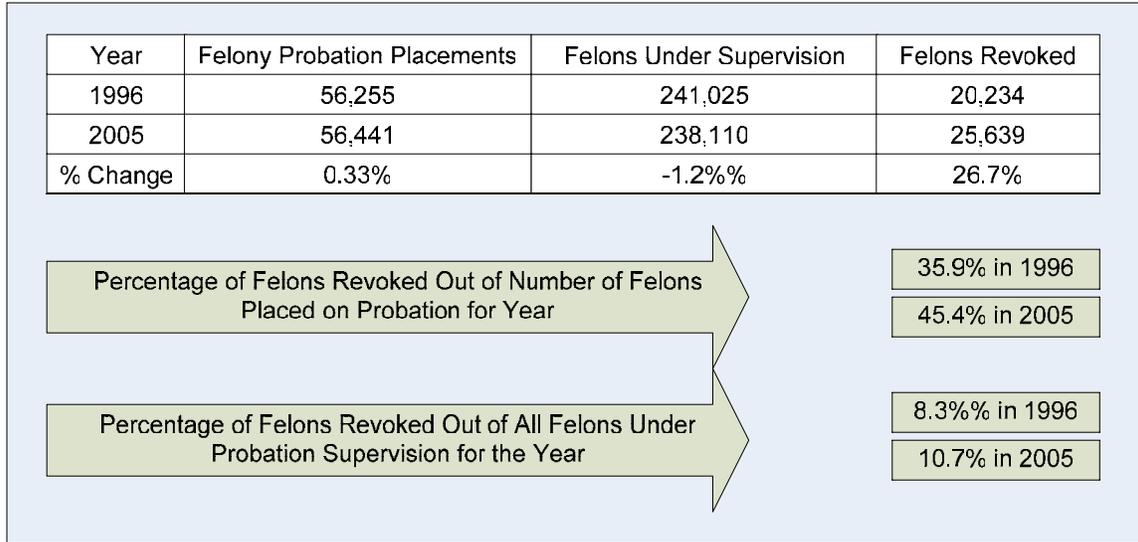
The probation departments in Texas are facing the above challenges as well as other challenges related to the size of some of the departments in the state’s major urban areas. Figure 1 (page 3) shows the number of felony probation placements in Texas, the felony population under supervision and the number of felons revoked from probation in 1996 and 2005. In 2005, there were 56,441 felons placed on probation in Texas plus an additional 126,484 misdemeanants for a total of 182,925 offenders placed on probation. The number of felony placements was about the same as in 1996 (56,255). In 2005, there was 238,110 felons on probation supervision compared to 241,025 in 1996. This was 1.2% fewer felons under probation supervision in Texas than in 1996. However, the number of felons revoked from probation supervision increased by almost 27% during this same period. Moreover, the number of revocations represented 45% of the placements in 2005 compared to 36% in 1996. They represented almost 11% out of the probation population under supervision in 2005 compared to 8% in 1996. In other words, while the number of felons placed on supervision and the population under supervision in 2005 was about the same as in

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<sup>1</sup> Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, “Community Corrections Recommendations from the National Community Corrections Forum, November 18-19, 2004” prepared by the Institute of Law and Justice, [www.ilj.org](http://www.ilj.org).

1996, the number and the proportion of the probation population that got revoked increased during this period.

**Figure 1: Number of Felony Probation Placements, Felony Population under Supervision and Number of Felons Revoked from Probation**



Source: Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Community Justice Assistance Division Statistical Reports

In response to these trends, policy makers in Texas are expecting probation departments to reduce revocations to prison in an attempt to avoid an overcrowding crisis. After maintaining the state funding for probation at about the same level for over a decade, the Texas Legislature in 2005 increased the yearly funding for probation by \$27.7 million. This new funding is directed at hiring additional probation officers to reduce caseloads (\$14.1 million) and at providing additional residential treatment and sanction facility capacity (\$13.6 million for 623 beds).<sup>2</sup> The legislature also adopted more stringent expectations regarding the measuring and reporting of outcomes to the state by local probation departments.

However, the legislature in 2005 was not successful in adopting policy changes to reduce the maximum probation terms for Third Degree felons (from a maximum of ten years to five years), require all probation cases to be reviewed for early termination after a certain period of time, and require localities to adopt drug courts, progressive sanctions and new diversion strategies (HB 2193). The legislation enacting these policies was vetoed by the Governor after the legislative session ended. Without comprehensive policies aimed at improving the probation system on a statewide basis, it is imperative that local officials lead the way in improving probation organizations. This is particularly the case for probation departments in the major urban areas in Texas which face growing populations and organizational challenges.

<sup>2</sup> Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Community Justice Assistant Division. "Overview of Probation for the 79<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature" and "Report to the Governor and the Legislative Budget Board on Monitoring of Community Supervision Diversion Funds."

The probation departments in Harris and Dallas, the two largest departments in the state, are in significant organizational stress as documented by recent evaluations.<sup>3</sup> These departments have ineffective assessment processes and supervision strategies as well as organizational problems that negatively impact their ability to provide effective supervision. These departments, as well as all other major departments in the state, are also being asked to handle a tougher population of offenders as counties and the state face the need to reduce the growth in jail and prison populations by placing more offenders on probation supervision. However, most of these departments do not have the organizational infrastructure, program capacity or culture to achieve and sustain positive supervision outcomes over time. It is with these challenges in mind that Travis County officials made a long-term commitment to strengthening local probation supervision through TCIS. An additional objective is to use the lessons learned at Travis to demonstrate to other localities how to best accomplish this. The Travis County incubator site is designed with this commitment in mind. In particular, the goal is to identify the organizational challenges of implementing an evidence-based practices (EBP) organization and supervision model. The main goal of EBP is to operate the agency as a “learning organization” that uses strategies proven to be effective to manage the probation population. The EBP approach emphasizes differentiated supervision based on risks and needs of the population.

The EBP requires a methodical and strategic shift in the organizational culture. The National Institute of Corrections, in two reports related to the implementation of EBP, states:

*“Aligning these evidence-based principles with the core components of an agency is a consummate challenge and will largely determine the impact the agency has on sustained reductions in recidivism. In order to accomplish this shift to an outcome orientation, practitioners must be prepared to dedicate themselves to a mission that focuses on achieving sustained reductions in recidivism. The scientific principles presented in this document are unlikely to produce a mandate for redirecting and rebuilding an agency’s mission by themselves. Leadership in organizational change and collaboration for systemic change are also necessary.”<sup>4</sup>*

*“Shifting to an evidence-based agency management approach may require significant changes in the way business is conducted. Some changes may include how staff: are recruited and hired; conduct their job duties; receive performance feedback, and interact with each other, offenders and system stakeholders. While the strategies that follow will help guide leaders toward the goal of implementing evidence-based practices both in offender*

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<sup>3</sup> Dr. Tony Fabelo, Ken McGinnis, and Angie Gunter. “Assessment of the Dallas County Community Supervision and Corrections Department” by MGT of America, July 15, 2005; Barry Mahoney and Peggy McGarry. “The Harris County Community Supervision and Corrections Department: A Preliminary Assessment of the Current Situation: Report to the Board Trying Criminal Cases in Harris County,” March 2003.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections, April 30, 2004. “Implementing Evidence-Based Principles in Community Corrections: The Principles of Effective Interventions.”

*supervision and organizational management, leaders must be prepared for the inherent challenge of conducting such a transition process.”<sup>5</sup>*

Under EBP, probation officers are encouraged to motivate offenders to seek change; they must play a function and purpose that is more than just surveillance and information gathering. The organization has to support this shift in order to be successful.

In the last decade or longer, probation agencies have operated as surveillance, paper management and fee collector agencies. Although “pockets” of programs in these agencies may have operated following some elements of EBP, the organizations, in general, have not been geared to support a full-blown EBP approach. As a report by the National Institute of Corrections states:

*“Unfortunately, very few organizations have successfully implemented or been able to sustain implementation of evidence-based principles throughout their operations. While some organizations may have developed a certain breadth of implementation, many have not managed to achieve the depth necessary to change the organizational culture and attain desired outcomes. As a result, change efforts often lose focus, stagnate and are not institutionalized. An integrated approach to implementation provides the depth and breath necessary to ensure lasting change.”<sup>6</sup>*

It is for the above reason that it is important to note that the EBP terminology has been misused in many localities to justify new programs that do not necessarily fit the requirements of an EBP organization and intervention. Therefore, for this reason we will refer to the EBP effort in Travis County as the *Travis Community Impact Supervision* (TCIS) model. This name was chosen to purposely distinguish this agency-wide effort from departments in Texas and around the country that say they are implementing or have implemented evidence-based practices when, in fact, they may not have done that on an organization-wide basis.

The development of the TCIS model and the strategies to start implementing the organizational realignment needed to support the model are explained below. The approach has been to methodically: a) set a baseline for understanding the organizational strengths and weaknesses of the department; b) agree on a strategy for implementing the recommended changes; c) establish a process to manage organizational changes; and d) develop the knowledge needed to guide the implementation of changes.

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<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections, April 22, 2004. “Implementing Evidence-Based Principles in Community Corrections: Leading Organizational Change and Development.”

<sup>6</sup> Elyse Clawson, Brad Bogue, and Lore Joplin. “Implementing Evidence-based Practices in Corrections”, National Institute of Corrections, January 7, 2005. Page 3 and 4.

### III. Setting the Baseline for Organizational Changes

#### A. Overview

The first critical step in an organization-wide realignment is to set the tone for organizational change and, after identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the organization, to set a baseline for identifying what organizational changes are necessary. Dr. Nagy became the director of the department in January 2005 and immediately set the tone for starting the cultural shift needed to support major organizational changes. Initially, this involved clearly communicating a vision for change and carefully addressing organizational issues to create a balance between procedures, and the empowerment of managers and probation officers, to accomplish the more challenging mission of impacting offender behavior. Dr. Nagy arranged for a series of training sessions to familiarize the department with the concepts and culture behind evidence-based practices. She commissioned Mark Carey, former probation official in Minnesota and a national consultant on evidence-based practices, to conduct these sessions. In June 2005, a two-and-a-half day session was conducted with senior level staff and managers. In July 2005, four one-day sessions were conducted with probation officers, supervisors and counselors. Finally, in August 2005 a “recap” session was conducted with senior staff and members of a core-planning group. In these sessions Mr. Carey reviewed in extensive detail the concepts supporting evidence-based practices and assisted the staff in understanding the challenges and barriers to the successful implementation of these practices.

To parallel Mr. Carey’s work, Dr. Nagy commissioned Dr. Fabelo and *The JFA Institute* to conduct a major assessment of the probation department. The assessment was to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the department in order to set a baseline to determine necessary organizational changes. The assessment was also directed at developing a preliminary plan to realign organizational practices along an evidence-based practices (EBP) model. This assessment was conducted in July and August 2005. The assessment included analysis of data, review of different organizational components and extensive interviews individually or through focus groups of personnel at all levels of the organization. The assessment was completed at the end of August 2005 and a comprehensive report was presented to Dr. Nagy, and shared with all staff, the judiciary, the Community Justice Council and the local media. The findings and recommendations of the assessment are summarized in the sections below.<sup>7</sup>

#### B. Challenges Faced by the Organization

The main activities of any probation department in Texas are to: a) monitor paperwork related to the conditions of probation; b) collect fees and other funds from the offenders; c) comply with state standards, usually by setting a good paper trail to show compliance; and d) provide casework and programs to affect the behavior of offenders. The organizational assessment showed that the Travis CSCD conducted the first three

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<sup>7</sup> Dr. Tony Fabelo and Angie Gunter. “Organizational Assessment of Travis County Community Supervision and Corrections Department (CSCD): Facing the Challenges to Successfully Implement the Travis Community Impact Supervision (TCIS) Model.” *The JFA Institute*, Austin, Texas, August 2005.

activities well, but providing casework and programs to affect the behavior of offenders, to a great extent, fell victim to the emphasis on monitoring paperwork, collecting fees and complying on paper with state requirements.

The "paperwork compliance" mentality became the culture of the department as a result of prior leadership styles in the organization, prior ineffective computerization, operational realities related to high caseloads, poor use of information for organizational assessments and planning, and the traditional emphasis on surveillance and compliance that has dominated probation policies across the country. To a great extent, this operational mode has been the result of the state's increased issuance of rules and standards, which lead departments to create more "paper trails" to show compliance.

Inconsistencies in the assessment process and considerable duplication of work during the intake process were found to be critical weaknesses. Assessments are not well coordinated with the setting of the conditions of supervision and the development of case supervision strategies. By policy, the risk assessments are routinely overridden, moving offenders from low to medium risk supervision for the first six months of supervision. Approximately 25% of offenders were found to be supervised at higher levels than what the risk assessment required. Furthermore, there is no internal mechanism to monitor the use of the risk assessment and test its validity on a regular basis.

The department has a fairly comprehensive case supervision instrument available that has been sponsored and promoted by the state probation agency. This instrument is called Strategies for Case Supervision and is commonly referred to as the SCS. However, the SCS is not used in any meaningful way to set supervision strategies. Also, the required Supervision Plan is seen by probation officers as another paper requirement. The plan is automatically generated by the computer based on offense and does not guide case supervision. There are no differentiated supervision case strategies except for the Specialized Caseloads (caseloads of special populations under more intense or specialized supervision). The collateral contact requirement for regular probation cases is not meaningfully carried out and is seen by probation officers as just another box to check in the procedural requirements. Regular probation officers have little field visit experience as they rarely conduct field visits.

The weak assessment process, the lack of integration between the assessment results and the setting of Special Conditions of Supervision by the courts, and the offering of programs that may not correspond closely to a continuum of program expectations and sanctions, reduce the effectiveness of supervision strategies. Judges also differ on their policies regarding sanctions for administrative violations, which creates inconsistencies in the sanctions of offenders equally situated.

Other issues related to training, personnel evaluations and quality control were also reviewed during the assessment. In general, training was found to be oriented at compliance issues and not at the development of effective supervision strategies. Personnel evaluations almost exclusively evaluate compliance with paperwork. Finally, many computerized case management reports are available but the managers are not consistent in how they use these reports and there are no reports oriented at tracking supervision outcomes.

### C. Strengths to Build a Foundation for Change

The assessment also showed that the department has strengths that can serve as the foundation to support the implementation of the TCIS. The review showed the department to have a supportive judiciary and experienced and committed personnel. The administrative staff of the department has the experience and commitment to support the organizational development needed for the TCIS to succeed. The 21 administrators and managers had a combined 271 years of experience in the department.

The department also has well developed standardized organizational processes in place that provide a strong structure to build new processes and policies. Some modifications of these processes are needed, but it is a benefit to have an organization that can rely on well-established processes as opposed to the contrary.

Procedures or administrative structures that are a strength are: (a) the use of a standardized personnel evaluation system that is objective, has addressed inconsistencies in the evaluation and promotion process, and has eliminated the perceptions of nepotism among the staff; (b) the availability of a Field Supervision Manual and Personnel Manual that needs revising, but that will provide the framework for any new policies; (c) the availability of risk, needs and case classification tools that may need to be streamlined and used more effectively, but that provides a framework for facilitating change; (e) the routine use of programmatic audit tools to audit the programs funded by the department; (f) a financial accountability system to track revenues and hold offenders accountable for their debts to the department; (g) the availability of a Court Services Unit that assists judges in their interaction with the probation department and help them with the general policies and procedures of the agency; and, (h) the presence of procedures establishing a continuum of hearings that provide a progressive intervention for offenders committing minor administrative violations (a Supervisory Hearing and an Administrative Hearing before a revocation hearing is conducted). On this later point, a data analysis of the probation population under direct supervision as of July 20, 2005 indicated that the supervisory and administrative hearings forming the department's progressive sanctions policy are utilized frequently by the probation officers.

Collaboration and community planning was found to be strong. Texas law requires that local communities engage in an organized planning process to give guidance, set goals and monitor the effectiveness of community corrections departments. Travis County has routinely engaged in this community planning process. This increases collaboration between the department and other stakeholders in the community. The Community Justice Council has met almost monthly in recent years. The Council is chaired by the District Attorney. The Community Justice Plan for FY 2006-2007 is comprehensive in terms of presenting the continuum of sanctions and services available in Travis County and clearly states the criteria for use of each service or alternative. In addition, the department's Field Manual outlines the appropriate criteria for using each of the sanctions and program alternatives.

In terms of information management, the assessment found that the department's computerized case tracking system has gone through a positive transformation in recent years. The computer system is widely used at the local offices. The computer interface is easy to use and comprehensive. The department is also

compliant with the state reporting requirements and can produce standard aggregate statistical reports. In addition, all financial transactions are posted, collected and balanced using the computerized case tracking system.

Finally, the assessment found the department to benefit from certain situational factors that may facilitate the organizational changes needed to successfully implement TCIS. These included the support of the judiciary and district attorney, along with the established collaboration between the department and other community and county agencies. Travis County also has a relatively well-educated and employed probation population.

#### **IV. Establishing an Implementation Strategy**

The assessment completed in August 2005 included a set of recommendations to strengthen probation along evidence-based practices. After the organizational assessment was completed, a three-day strategic implementation planning session was conducted in October 2005 to fine-tune the recommendations presented in the report and to empower the staff to participate in the organizational change process. This planning session was scheduled after a session in early October in which Dr. Nagy and Dr. Fabelo presented the results of the assessment to all the staff of the department gathered in one location. The timing of the agency-wide staff meeting was planned to guarantee that all the personnel in the department were briefed on the findings of the assessment before the strategic planning session was conducted. The idea was to set the tone for an open communication process to reduce misinformation and reduce the fear of change.

The strategic planning session was conducted in mid-October and was facilitated by Dr. Nagy, Dr. Fabelo and Mr. Carey. Session participants included 25 members of the department that were carefully selected to cross represent different areas of expertise, responsibilities and sensitivities important to the successful development of implementation strategies and to gather support for the organizational changes. The staff was divided in groups along areas of expertise, but the three day planning session was conducted with all staff present and participating in every conversation, regardless of area of expertise. The expertise groupings were: (a) assessment and diagnostic; (b) case supervision strategies; (c) sanctions; (d) personnel development and training; (e) personnel evaluation measures; and (f) quality assurance.

Some of the overarching questions that guided the discussions during the strategic planning session were the following:

- What are the key locations and timing issues related to centralizing diagnosis and assessments processes?
- What are the particular issues related to the diagnosis and assessment of felons versus misdemeanants and special populations like sex offenders?
- What are the appropriate diagnosis tools to create a streamlined diagnosis and assessment process and how can these tools be tested and validated?

- How can inconsistencies in sanctions for violations be addressed?
- What type of supervision “templates” can be developed for particular populations, how can they be targeted to the different populations and how can conditions of supervision be redesigned and administered to support the supervision templates?
- What should happen during a supervision contact and how can field visits and programs be more effectively designed to support outcome goals?
- What are the strategies to reduce and/or redeploy caseloads to maximize the time that probation officers have with offenders?
- What non-supervision strategies or reporting technologies can be used to supplement the work of probation officers?
- What are the logistics of revamping the assignment of cases along a neighborhood-based strategy or along an officer specialization strategy?
- What should be the target of training to support the new strategies and to maintain fidelity and quality?
- What reporting protocols are needed to generate quality assurance reports and what process and outcome measures should be integrated in these reports?
- What research is needed to support each key aspect of the organizational realignment?

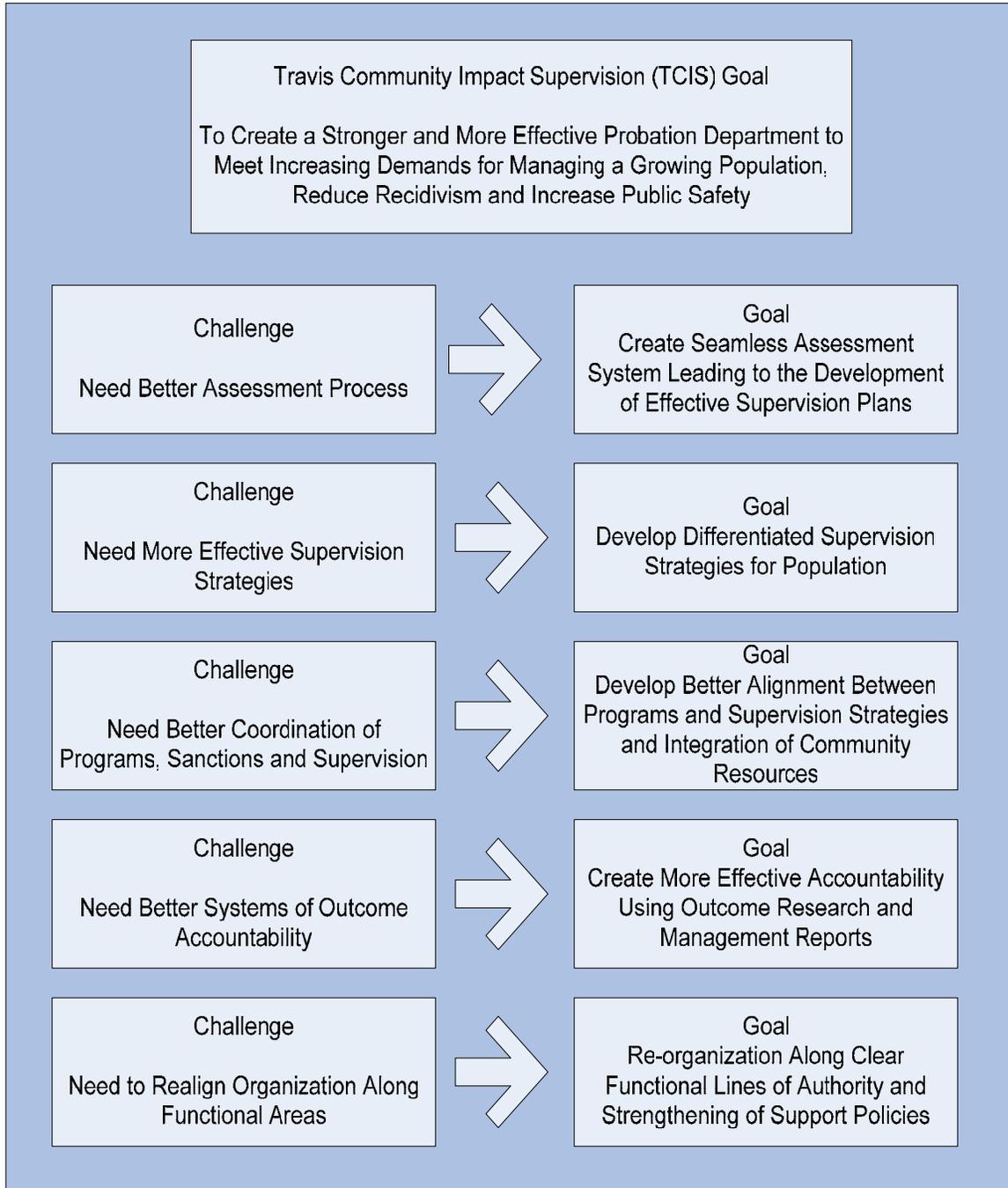
Figure 2 (page 11) summarizes the results of the strategic planning session. The strategic planning session led to an agreement on the overall goal for the TCIS and on the goals of the organizational changes needed to meet each of the major challenges raised in the assessment report. This was done after intense, open and guided discussions that empowered the staff. Some specific agreements reached during the session were: (a) to create a central diagnosis and assessment process; (b) to use the SCS and risk assessment instruments as the framework for building this process; (c) to explore the creation of a Magistrate Court dedicated to the handling of sanctions for violations; and, (d) conduct selected research projects needed to generate the knowledge for supporting implementation strategies.

A report summarizing the result of the strategic planning session was developed immediately. This report was distributed to all participants, who were then given permission to share the document with anybody inside or outside the department. The document was also summarized by Dr. Nagy in an email to all employees of the department.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> “Strategic Planning Session: Implementing Travis Community Impact Supervision Model” October 12-14, 2005.

Figure 2: Goals of TCIS



## V. Establishing a Process to Manage Change

The different implementation components (and their interrelated connections) require careful management of the process of designing and implementing modification strategies. In October 2005, Dr. Nagy began the process by re-organizing the top management of the agency along more functional lines as was recommended in the assessment of August 2005. Realignment of functions occurred along diagnosis, operations, special supervision and programs/social services/community resources with each of these areas getting a director in charge of all related activities in their areas.

After the strategic planning session, a process to manage organizational change was formally established in November 2005. Committees were created to parcel out the design and implementation work. These committees were given clear charges as depicted in Figure 3 (page 13).

The committees were created by Dr. Nagy with input from key staff members. Dr. Nagy designated a chairperson for each committee who is in charge of setting an agenda and maintaining a record of the work assignments and accomplishments. Dr. Nagy designated herself, Ms. Donna Farris - Director of Operations, and Dr. Fabelo as the “steering” committee to coordinate the work of all the committees. Dr. Fabelo and *JFA Institute* staff is facilitating the work of the Diagnosis and Assessment Committee, which initially will be a critical committee. The redesign of the diagnosis and assessment process is a critical step before other steps in the organizational realignment can be implemented.

Critical to keeping the process of change moving forward is the development of clear timelines. The steering committee developed a “big picture” two-year timeline for the project and a timeline for the first year. These timelines are depicted in Figure 4 (page 14). As can be seen, Phase I of the process of change is between November 2005 and August 2006 (the end of the state fiscal year). The main goal of Phase I is to design and implement a centralized diagnosis unit and the design of supervision strategies templates. The more detailed timeline for the first year sets milestones for critical steps. Phase II is from September 2006 to August 2007. The main goal in Phase II is to realign the supervision strategies and set the organizational support and outcome monitoring structures.

The steering committee also developed a more detailed first year list of tasks with timelines. This timeline is depicted in Figure 5 (page 15). Each committee chairperson was given this more detailed timeline. Each chairperson, working in conjunction with the steering committee, can monitor and adjust the timeline as needed. However, the intent is that committees stay on task and meet the timelines.

**Figure 3: Committee Structure Created to Manage the Design and Implementation of TCIS**

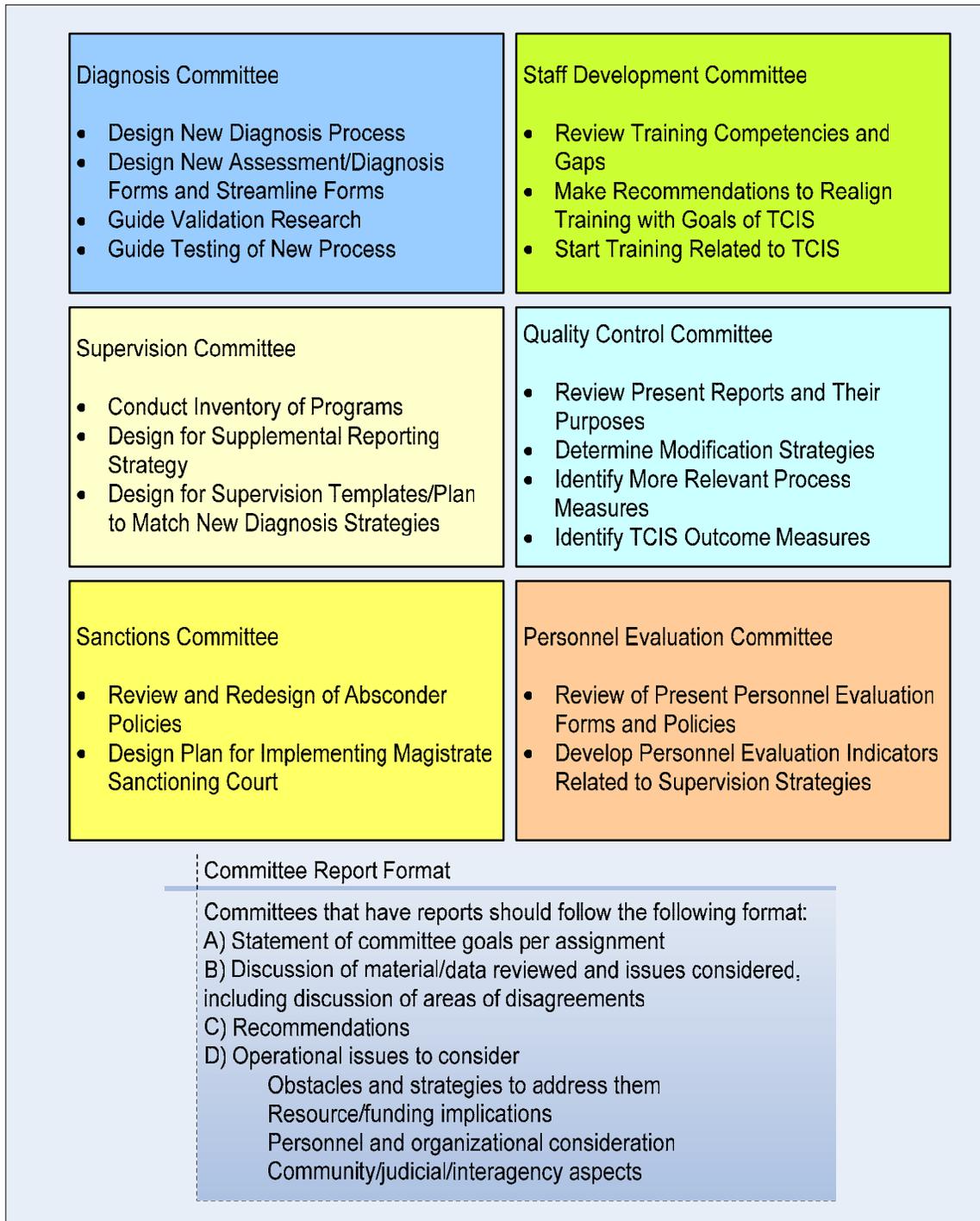


Figure 4: Two-Year Timeline and More Detailed First Year Milestone Timeline

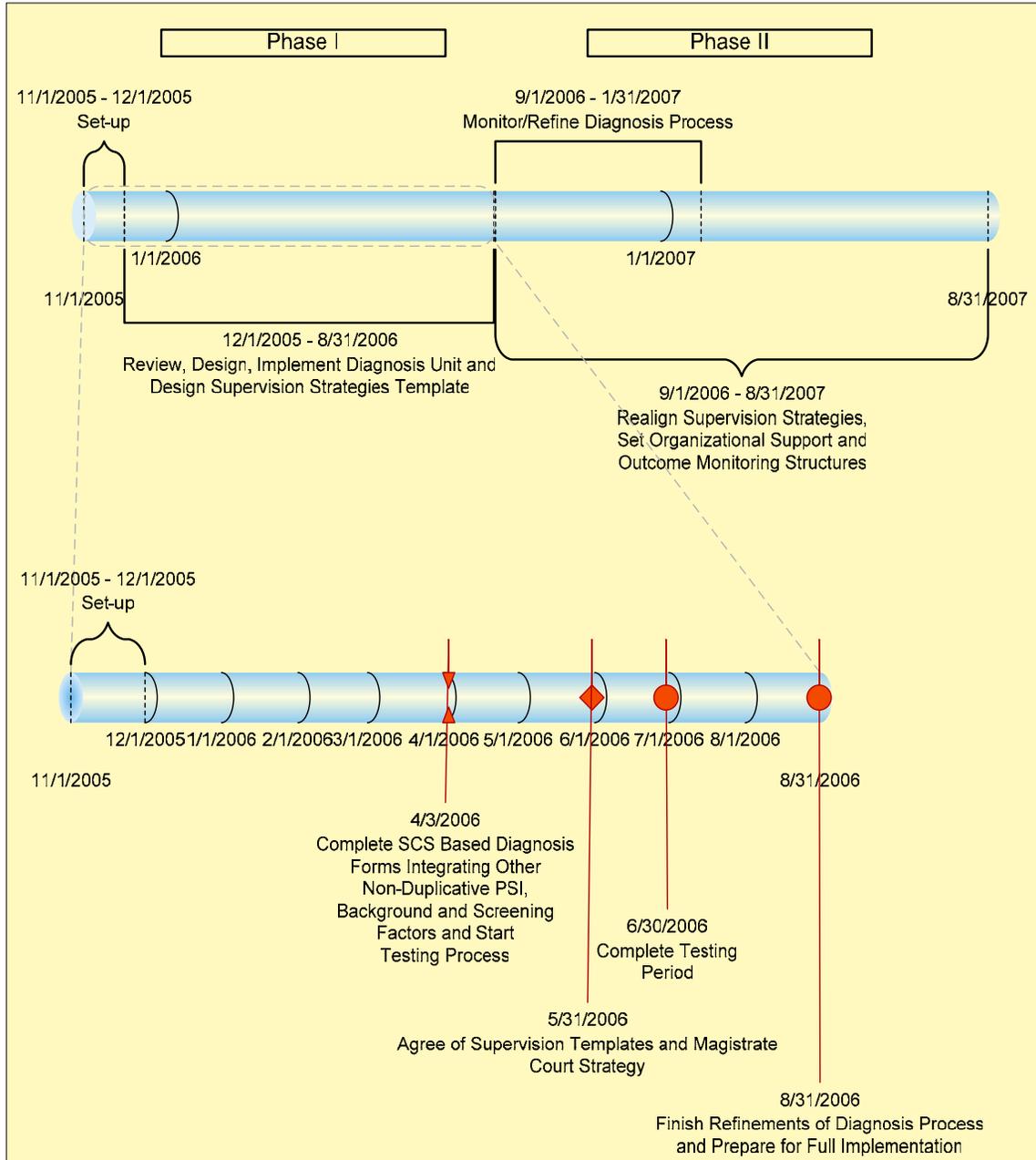


Figure 5: Committee Task Specific First Year Timeline

ID	Task Name	Start	Finish	Q4 05		Q1 06			Q2 06			Q3 06			
				Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
1	Set Up/Committee Organization	11/1/2005	11/30/2005	█	✓	Completed 11/30/06									
2	Formulate, Request and Receive Computerized Data	11/1/2005	12/30/2005	█	✓	Completed 11/23/05									
3	Flowchart Present Assessment Process and Forms	11/15/2005	12/15/2005	█	✓	Completed 12/15/05									
4	Flowchart Proposed Diagnosis Unit Process and Forms	12/15/2005	1/13/2006	█	✓	Completed 1/3/06									
5	Research to validate risk assessment	12/30/2005	1/30/2006	█											
6	Research SCS Profile from Computerized Data	12/30/2005	1/30/2006	█	✓	Completed 1/3/06									
7	Research Other Population Profiles	1/31/2006	3/31/2006			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█		
8	Streamline Forms and Create New Diagnosis Center Process Forms	1/30/2006	4/3/2006			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█		
9	Test New Forms and Process and Research Offenders Distribution	4/3/2006	6/30/2006					█	█	█	█	█	█		
10	Implement Refinements to Process and Prepare for Full Implementation	5/2/2006	8/31/2006					█	█	█	█	█	█		
11	Agree on Implementation Readiness	7/31/2006	7/31/2006										◆		
12	Supervision Committee Inventory of Programs	11/15/2005	1/13/2006	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█		
13	Supervision Committee Design Supplemental Reporting Strategy	2/1/2006	3/31/2006			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█		
14	Supervision Committee Development of Supervision Templates/Plan	1/2/2006	5/2/2006			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█		
15	Supervision Committee Agreement on Templates and Plan	5/31/2006	5/31/2006										◆		
16	Supervision Committee Report	7/31/2006	7/31/2006										◆		
17	Sanctions Committee Review of Absconder Policies	11/22/2005	2/15/2006	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█		
18	Sanctions Committee Design Plans for Magistrate Sanctioning Court	1/2/2006	5/31/2006			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█		
19	Sanctions Committee Agreement for Magistrate Sanctioning Court	5/31/2006	5/31/2006										◆		
20	Sanctions Committee Report	7/31/2006	7/31/2006										◆		
21	Staff Development Committee Review of Training Competencies and Gaps	12/15/2005	4/14/2006	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█		
22	Staff Development Committee Report	7/31/2006	7/31/2006										◆		
23	Quality Control Committee Review of Present Reports and Purpose	11/29/2005	2/15/2006	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█		
24	Quality Control Committee Proposed New Process Measures and Outcomes	1/16/2006	3/31/2006			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█		
25	Quality Control Committee Report	7/31/2006	7/31/2006										◆		
26	Personnel Evaluation Committee Review of Present Evaluation Forms	11/22/2005	1/30/2006	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█		
27	Personnel Evaluation Committee Development of New Indicators	1/30/2006	4/28/2006			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█		
28	Personnel Committee Report	7/31/2006	7/31/2006										◆		

## VI. Establishing a Base of Knowledge

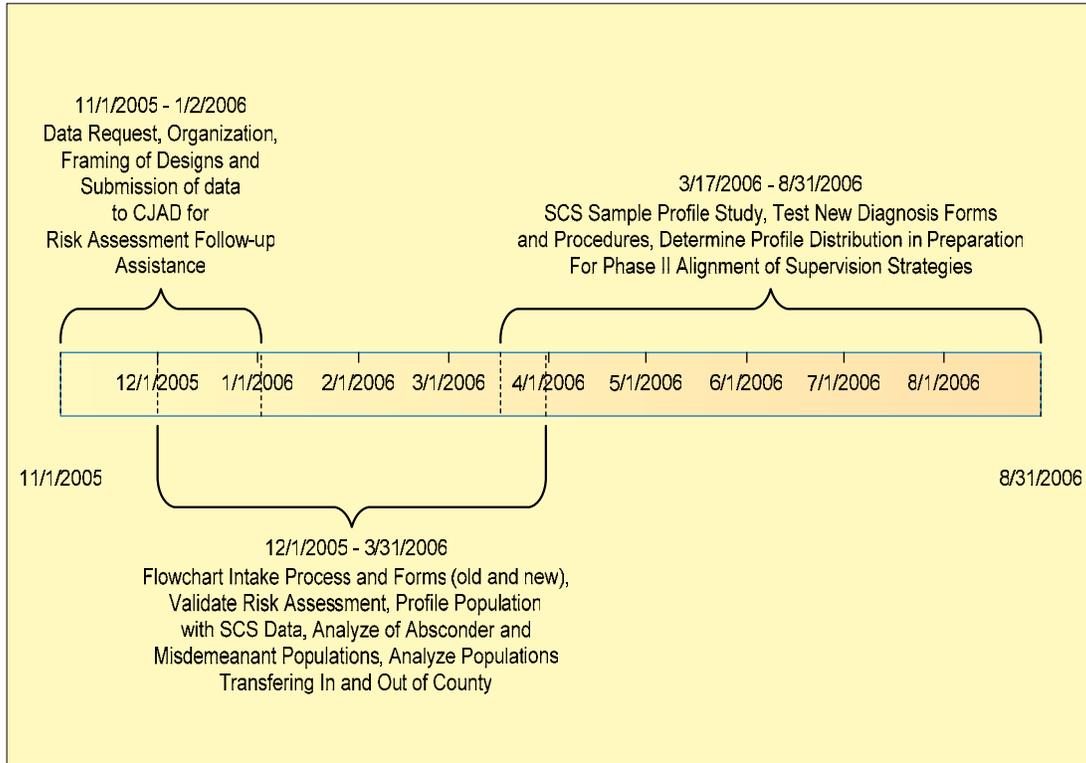
*The JFA Institute*, working with the department staff, has the responsibility to create the base of knowledge to support the process of change. One critical aspect of transforming the department is that the transformation be done relying on evidence as a basis for change. For example, it was agreed at the strategic planning session that the present SCS and risk assessment instruments should provide the foundation to build the new diagnosis and assessment process. Yet, the present risk assessment instrument has not been validated for a Travis County population and the distribution of the probation population along SCS categories is unknown. Therefore, key research to be conducted during Phase I is to validate the risk assessment instrument, make modifications as needed and to profile the probation population along the SCS categories. Since SCS are not routinely done on all probationers (just probationers classified in maximum supervision) this later research will require the design of a sample study to collect the information.

Other research can rely on the computerized information from the department. This includes research to:

- Profile the absconder and misdemeanor populations to design policies to address the absconder problem and determine special diagnosis approaches for the misdemeanor population
- Model the flow and profile of the population transferred out of the county for supervision and the population received from other counties for supervision to determine how this may affect the design of diagnosis and supervision strategies
- Test the new diagnosis and assessment procedures on a sample of cases before deciding on full implementation

As with other aspects of the project, a timeline has been developed for the completion of the research projects during Phase I. This timeline is depicted in Figure 6 (page 17).

**Figure 6: Phase I Timeline for Research Projects**



## VII. Conclusion

This report provided a context for understanding the importance of having an incubator site that serves as a guide for comprehensive probation reforms and presented the “start-up” strategies that have been used to design the organization-wide changes. The challenges, successes and barriers confronted in implementing the TCIS will be documented over the two-year period in a series of reports to provide other jurisdictions in Texas and in the nation a base of knowledge to develop effective probation reforms.

Figure 7 (page 18) summarizes the strategies for other jurisdictions to follow to successfully start a major organizational realignment effort. As discussed above, it is necessary to: (a) establish an open process to educate the organization staff on the need to change; (b) understand the organization’s strengths and weaknesses by conducting an independent organizational assessment in order to set a baseline for organizational changes; (c) establish an implementation strategy based on the assessment results; (d) establish a process to manage change; and, (e) establish a base of knowledge through research to support the changes. All this has to be administered cohesively by a core committee that should be headed by the director of the probation department but may include an outside facilitator that can promote collaboration, report on timelines, provide technical assistance to the committees and conduct some of the key research.

**Figure 7: Incubator Lessons – Setting the Start Up for a Major Reorganization of Probation along Evidence-Based Practices**

