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UNH Justiceworks Report Says Information Sharing Key to Public Safety
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By Erika Mantz
UNH News Bureau

May 8, 2001

DURHAM, N.H. -- A summer camp in the Lakes Region needs to hire youth counselors, but wonders if a background check will reveal convictions in another state. This is just one example of how barriers to information exchange in the justice system can have costly consequences for public safety, according to a new report by Justiceworks, a northern New England consortium for the study of the prevention and control of crime based at the University of New Hampshire.

"Opportunities and Challenges: Building the New Hampshire Criminal Justice Information System," is the latest edition of "Benchmarks and Blueprints," a series of publications created to support the ongoing discussion of crime prevention and control. It looks at the efforts underway in New Hampshire to use advanced technologies to improve information and sharing among police, the courts and the Department of Corrections. The full report is available on-line at www.justiceworks.unh.edu.

According to John T. Kirkpatrick, director of Justiceworks and author of the report, criminal justice professionals in New Hampshire are already doing collaborative work to enhance communication, but more needs to be done to avoid situations like the death of a Manchester woman in 1996 after her abusive boyfriend lied about there being a restraining order out against him. John Malcolmson shot and killed Barbara Lussier in her office parking lot.

"Many view the justice system as a seamless, monolithic entity, but that's not always the case," says Kirkpatrick. "The criminal justice professionals who
labor on our behalf need our support in the efforts to
work more collaboratively. Using advanced
technologies to enhance the sharing of information
within and between the various jurisdictions of law
enforcement, the judiciary and corrections can be a
substantial benefit to the public."

The report offers examples of advance technologies in
use across the state, like AFIS, an Automated
Fingerprint Identification System that can take and read
offender fingerprints using laser scanning devices, and a
new pilot program in distance education. A partnership
between the New Hampshire Police Standards and
Training Academy, the New Hampshire Department of
Justice and UNH, the program will train officers over
the Internet.

Based at the UNH Institute for Policy and Social
Science Research, Justiceworks combines the expertise
of university professors, researchers, police, judges,
corrections officials and others throughout the region to
serve a three-part mission:

- Provide timely and affordable evaluations of state and
  local programs aimed at minimizing crime and
delinquency;

- Provide useful and current information about crime
  and crime control strategies to planners, policy makers
  and those with an interest in the field of criminal
  justice;

- Develop and provide new training opportunities in
  criminal justice to various audiences within the regional
  justice system, including victim advocates, school
  resource officers, and defense and prosecuting
  attorneys.

Printed copies of this edition of "Benchmarks and
Blueprints," as well as past reports, are available at no
cost. Contact Joe Pace, Justiceworks coordinator of
public affairs, at 603-862-1957.