

Outcome Based Program Area Budget by Victoria Reinhardt

For Immediate release:

The election of five new Commissioners in the last year has given Ramsey County a nearly unprecedented opportunity for new ideas and change. We are taking this unique opportunity to do things better, not simply to do things differently. A great example of this philosophy happened May 27 when I introduced a pilot project for outcome based programmatic budgeting in the area of juvenile crime prevention. This is a victory for juvenile crime prevention advocates and all taxpayers who want more control over how our money is spent.

Outcome Based Programmatic Area Budgeting (OBPAB) represents a paradigm shift in the way public sector budgets are designed. Traditionally, money is allocated to each department to spend on the programs that are within that department's jurisdiction. It is very difficult to tie the money spent to the outcome produced or to compare a program's effectiveness versus that of a similar program in a different department. OBPAB incorporates private sector budgeting practices in to the Ramsey County budget. It takes the emphasis away from the departments and puts it where it should be, on the outcomes of each program. According to County Manager Terry Schutten, "the pilot project in the area of juvenile crime prevention will be a national model." This is because of its systematic approach to crime prevention and the connection to outcomes.

Crime and punishment make headlines. How often the headline reads "J. DOE - CONVICTED!" What if, instead, the headline read, "CRIME PREVENTED!" And it went on to explain that at age 14, J. Doe participated in mandatory counseling at a cost of \$1,000 per family and that the prevention rate is 23% (results from a prevention project in Duluth). Not only would tax dollars be saved because of using effective prevention programs, but 23 of 100 victims wouldn't be victims, 23 of 100 perpetrators wouldn't be perpetrators, and their families and friends wouldn't be suffering. All of us are the benefactors when crime is prevented. And with the high costs of prosecution and incarceration, each crime prevented can save us hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Because the availability of funds is decreasing, switching to OBPAB, in which all County Departments and the community are working together, makes sense. This is an idea I talked about as I went door-to-door last year. It is a new idea on how to prevent juvenile crime. We will look at each program and at its merit for the desired outcome - keeping kids out of trouble. On May 27, 1997, the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners agreed and embraced the pilot project. Outcome Based Programmatic Area Budgeting regarding juvenile crime prevention will provide for cost-effective delivery of high quality services and will move us toward a community in which the headline reads "**CRIME RATES DOWN - PREVENTION WORKS!**"