

# ALLEGAN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

112 WALNUT ST. ALLEGAN, MI 49010  
269.673.0500

*"The mission of the Allegan County Sheriff's Office is to provide a full spectrum of corrections, law enforcement and court services so that our community continues to grow and progress as a safe and secure place to live, work and visit."*



Members of the Allegan County Sheriff's Office worked together to create this mission statement, and do their best every day to ensure that their service to the public lives up to those standards.

We struggle to balance the ever-increasing calls for service that our growing county requires against the shrinking financial resources that communities throughout the U.S. have suffered in recent years. To accomplish this, each of our divisions has redirected its efforts to providing: initially, the services that are mandated, and secondly, those that were identified by Allegan County residents as a priority. Whenever possible, grant programs are also used to supplement available funds.

Changes in law reflecting society's desire to "get tough on crime" have resulted in more aggressive law enforcement and incarceration rates. This is evident in crime types such as domestic violence and drunk driving investigations. Crime reporting requirements have also become more complex.

Increases in the violence of complaints, such as domestic violence and other assaults have resulted in more multi-personnel responses. This aspect of police work in Allegan County is also evident in response to traffic crashes. Traffic volume continues to increase dramatically. Traffic crashes that typically could be investigated by one deputy now require multi-personnel response because of the sheer traffic volume around the crash site.

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## SURVEY OF COUNTY RESIDENTS

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A survey of Allegan County residents was conducted in 2003 by The Carl Frost Center for Social Science Research at Hope College. When county residents were asked which of the below list was most important to them, the following priorities were identified:

<b>RANKING</b>	<b>ISSUE</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
1	Drug Law Enforcement	32.6%
2	Investigating Crimes	22.5%
3	Community Policing	18.3%
4	Traffic Safety	16.7%
5	Housing People in Jail ( <i>Mandatory</i> )	4.6%
6	Officers in Schools	3.9%
7	Other	1.4%

(to view the entire survey, go to the Sheriff's Office website [www.allegancounty.org/sheriff](http://www.allegancounty.org/sheriff) and click on the *Public Interest* link)

When budget reductions required cuts to programs, the survey results were used to help determine which services our staff and other resources should be concentrated on. In the following pages, we have highlighted each of our divisions, and how they are addressing these priorities.

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## CORRECTIONS

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It's clear from the survey results that spending tax dollars to pay for housing inmates isn't on the top of many priority lists. What most people don't realize, is that of the varied services provided by the Sheriff's Office, housing inmates is one of the few that the agency is actually mandated by law to provide.



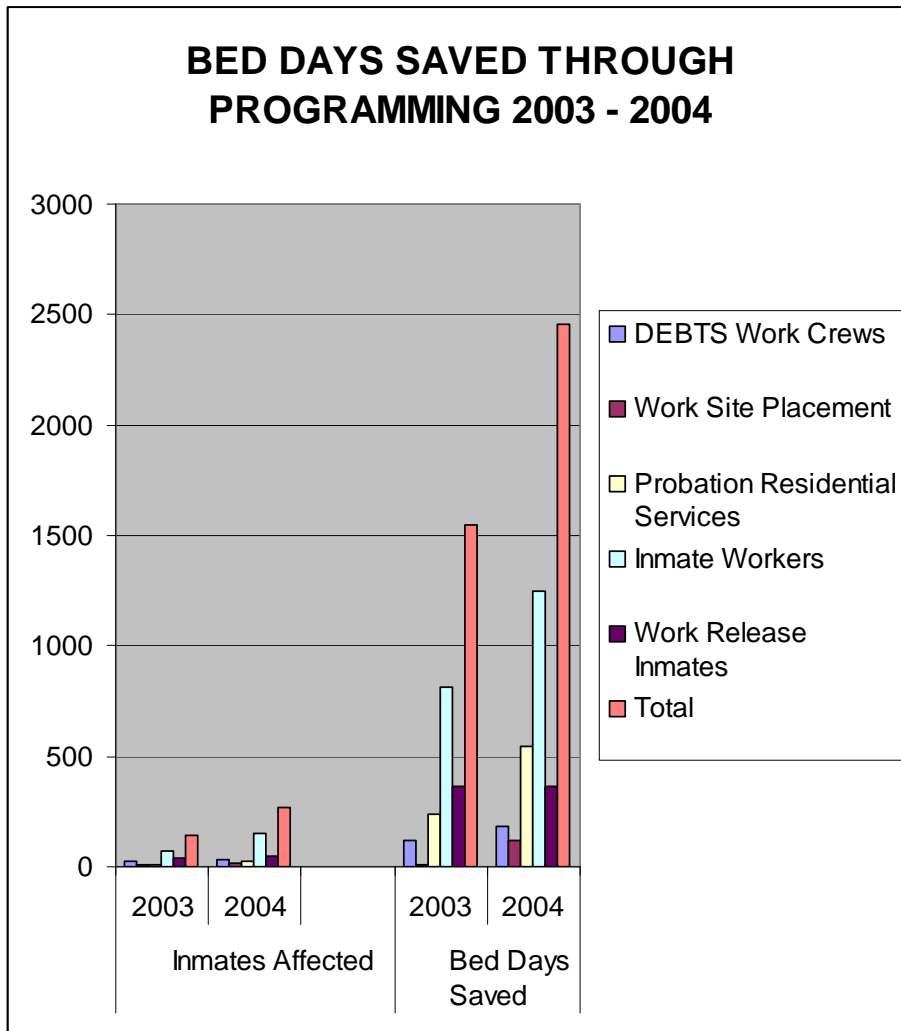
Here inmate workers haul treated lumber up the side of a hill, where they're constructing a stairway.

With the help of grant funds, many different programs have been created under the umbrella of Community Corrections. The aim is to help reduce the strain on the county budget and to decrease the recurring overcrowding. One of the programs, known as "Pay to Stay" charges inmates a fee for room and board for each day they're incarcerated. Another cost saving measure is the Community Service Work Crew, or DEBTS program, where inmates perform various

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work duties for non-profit agencies to earn time off their sentence. Whenever possible, inmates are sentenced to Work Release, which allows them to leave the jail during the day to report to their regular job and earn time off their sentence. This not only helps to ease the overcrowding burden, but it also allows inmates to remain employed while incarcerated.

The Michigan Department of Corrections has awarded grant funds to Allegan County to help implement these programs, and the Community Corrections Advisory Board monitors the progress of the various programs and makes recommendations for improvements. This increasing use of community corrections programming is another way Allegan County is making tax dollars go farther, and is seeking to keep jail overcrowding under control. The chart below demonstrates the number of bed days that are being saved through these programs.

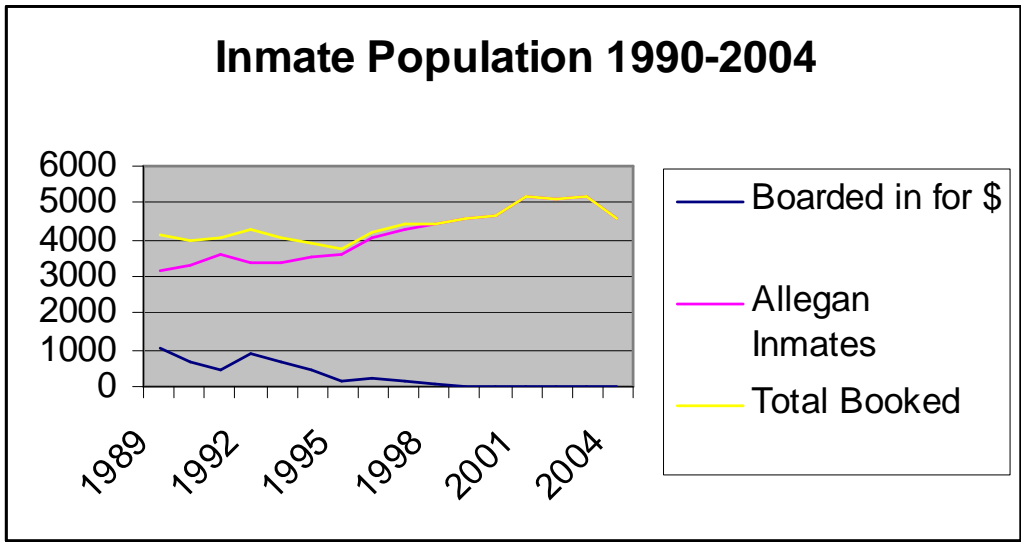


Responding to citizens' priorities, Corrections Staff are also directing efforts at drug law enforcement through use of the Methamphetamine Diversion Program. This unique, award-winning (fully grant funded) program seeks to educate meth offenders, to retrain them in their method of thinking, and to help them get an education, get a job and find a new road in life that is free from drug abuse. Part of the diversion program also includes finding a safe,

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drug-free place to live once the inmate is released from jail. This program is still in its infancy, but has already won a national award.

The chart below shows the history of Allegan County's inmate population over the past 14 years. The number of persons actually lodged in the jail has stabilized and even begun to decrease slightly, for several reasons. Those charged with less serious offenses are now issued a citation, rather than being lodged, to save on bed space. This decrease is believed to be only a temporary reprieve. Projections are that within the next one to two years, the jail will again face overcrowding emergencies which will require us to seek other housing alternatives or to release inmates early.



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## INVESTIGATIVE SERVICES

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Even though staffing levels have remained stagnant in the Detective Bureau for many years, the results of the citizen survey revealed that it was important to continue to keep our commitment to the area drug team and to criminal investigations. We've responded to this feedback by continuing to have two undercover detectives assigned to the Allegan County Drug Unit. This portion of the WeMET team (*West Michigan Enforcement Team—a multi-jurisdictional drug team*) gives particular attention to methamphetamine crimes in the county. Grant-funded informational literature helps area businesses and residents recognize the



Hazardous waste from a meth lab left along the roadway.

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signs of methamphetamine manufacturing. Specialized surveillance equipment used to help combat meth crimes has also been purchased with grant funding.

With the remaining personnel assigned to general criminal investigations (including major cases), prioritization and crime analysis are important factors in stretching our available resources. The use of grant-funded technology assists detectives in solving many crimes.

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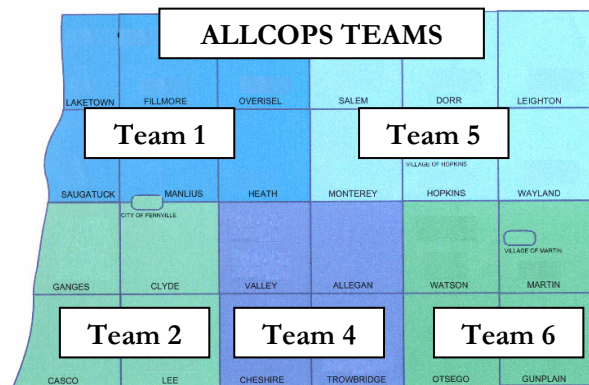
## ROAD PATROL

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In addition to the undercover drug team, Sheriff’s deputies on patrol have found many meth labs in vehicles, in homes and meth lab components left behind alongside the roadway. Officers who are well-trained and aware of the signs of meth labs are invaluable in helping to stop this growing threat in our community.

With no additional funds, law enforcement agencies in Allegan County created *FAST (the Fatal Accident Suppression Team)* to reduce crashes involving serious or fatal injuries. Sheriff’s deputies work together with city and state police officers to saturate areas where the number of traffic crashes is above average, or where traffic violations occur more frequently. Special patrols to enforce seatbelt laws and to remove drunk drivers from our roads have been funded through various grant programs. Whenever possible, patrol deputies perform follow-up investigation on the crimes they’ve taken reports on. This helps to alleviate the case load in the Detective Bureau and in the long term, results in more crimes being solved.

Community Policing is the “rising star” in our road patrol division. Knowing that this is an area where law enforcement and the community working together can really make a difference, criminal justice professionals and their partners in Allegan County formed *ALLCOPS* – Allegan County Community Oriented Policing Services. Using only available resources, a team of officers, detectives and support staff are assigned to each area of the county. In their team area, personnel work closely with city and state police agencies as well as citizens, community groups and other service providers to solve problems identified in the community. These area teams have worked together to sponsor safety events, host bike rides, demonstrate the “Seatbelt convincer,” distribute safety literature, fingerprint children, distribute grant-funded bicycle helmets and gun locks, clean graffiti from buildings and open community policing substations in several communities.



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Two Reserve Deputies participate in a safety event with ALLCOPS Team 6 at the Home Depot on M-89 in Plainwell

The Sheriff's Office Reserve and Mounted Units have provided invaluable support to the Sheriff's Office.

<b>2004 RESERVE HOURS</b>	
Volunteer Patrol Hours	3508
Volunteer Event Hours	2134
Hours Paid (through fees collected)	3081
<b>Total Hours Worked</b>	<b>8723</b>

Beginning in 2005, the Reserve Unit will be officially recognized as a unit of the Sheriff's Office, even though many of their services are provided on a volunteer basis. This change will provide worker's compensation and

liability coverage for these dedicated volunteers. These well-trained officers not only provide search and rescue services, but also provide Courthouse security, security for many special events, perform bicycle patrol, assist at safety events, guard hospitalized inmates, serve subpoenas, patrol county parks and provide many other services that improve the quality of life in Allegan County.

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## SERVICES

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The Services Division fulfills a wide range of agency functions, both through direct service to citizens, as well as support for department personnel. Those functions include training, Animal Control, inmate transports, Civil Process, fleet repairs and maintenance, Court Officers, agency hiring and oversight of the many volunteer groups that serve the Sheriff's Office mission. There are many details to be attended to in an agency the size of the Sheriff's Office, and the Services Division helps to keep the department running smoothly.

Training is critical in the law enforcement profession. Officers are routinely placed in situations where prior training is critical, both for their safety and the safety of the public. The possible liability for taxpayers is enormous. Training of officers is another area where funds have been saved, mainly through the use of an area training consortium. In this consortium, law enforcement agencies from throughout Western Michigan pool together a portion of their annual training grant funds and hire instructors for the classes that their officers need. By sponsoring these classes jointly, costs are kept to a minimum and training dollars are stretched farther.

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During 2004, Allegan County Deputies and Corrections Officers were trained in, and began carrying, Tasers as part of their standard equipment. A Taser is an electro-muscular



Officers participate in semi-annual range training.

disruption device that overrides the motor nervous system, allowing officers to gain control of the situation, while reducing possible injuries to the person being subdued. This weapon is used to de-escalate dangerous situations, and has already shown a drastic reduction in duty-related injuries to both officers and suspects. In one particularly notable incident, two deputies responding to a domestic violence incident used a Taser to gain control of a suspect. The suspect was witnessed stabbing the victim and refused officers' demands to stop. Without the Taser, the officers would have been forced to use lethal force to stop the attack. The County's liability insurance

provider recognizes the benefits of these devices, and, through yet another grant, provided 50% of the necessary funds to purchase the Tasers.

***Some of the training that department personnel received in 2004 includes:***

**GENERAL TRAINING:** Basic Detective Training, Patrol Investigation, Domestic Violence Investigation, Public Information Officer, Interview and Interrogation Technique, Traffic Accident and Investigation, Child Physical and Sexual Abuse Investigation, Precision Driving, Firearms Instruction and Qualification, Laser Radar Instruction, Crime Scene Investigation, Ethics, Meth Lab Investigation, Drug Interdiction, Special Weapons and Tactics Training, First Line Supervisor Instruction, Field Sobriety Training, Police Dynamics and others.

**TACTICAL TRAINING:** Courthouse Deployment, High School Incident Response, Hostage Deployment, Firearms Training, Anhydrous Larceny, Surveillance and others.

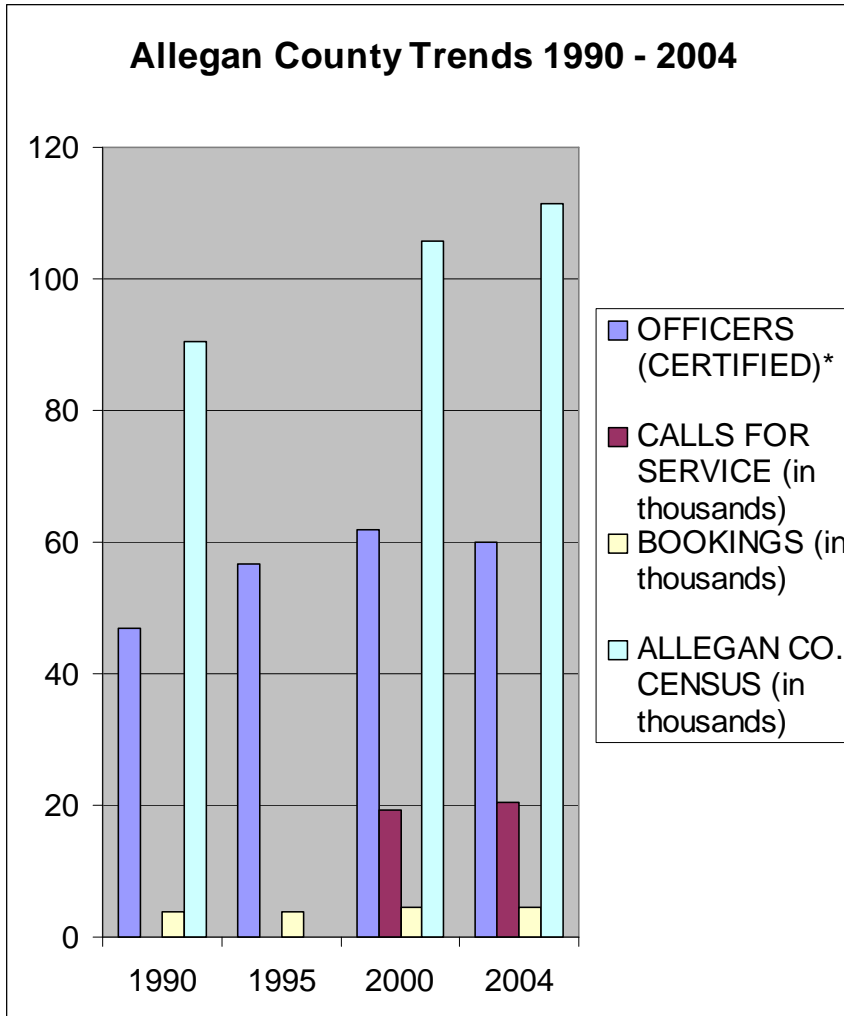
**K-9 TRAINING:** Narcotics Investigation, Tracking, Tactical Training, Building Search, Obedience, School Searches and others.

There are many other training sessions that take place throughout the year, depending on the needs of personnel, funds, staff hours available and the class schedule and location. The ultimate goal is to make sure our personnel are trained and ready to assist you in any way necessary, increasing your safety as well as the officers', and reducing liability.

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## SUMMARY

While Allegan County's overcrowded jail has been in the news a great deal over the last several years, the deficiencies in staffing are not as widely known. Initially, these staffing numbers don't appear to show drastic changes. When you consider that these totals include the addition of a 4-member, partially grant-funded traffic unit (introduced in 1992) as well as the addition of deputies contracted through area townships (beginning in the early 90s with a peak of 14, currently 9 deputies), the picture changes dramatically. With those limited



service positions removed, the chart would present a much different view. Comparable criminal justice agencies in the U.S. average one officer for every 370 residents. The Allegan County Sheriff's Office averages only one officer for every 2,100 residents.

The continuing increase in population puts an added strain on the limited resources available. Reporting methods have changed since 1990—many minor events that were previously counted as *Calls for Service* have now been removed from that count. Today's count more accurately reflects the number of

\*Prior to 2001, the Sheriff and Undersheriff were not certified officers.

incidents that officers are dispatched to. Unfortunately, those calls have also become increasingly violent.

Countywide, law enforcement officers work very hard to provide the most efficient and effective services they can. Your safety and security today and tomorrow will depend on how well the community and law enforcement work together. ALLCOPS is the answer—working with a common goal to make Allegan County a great place to live, do business and raise a family.

*- Serving with Honor and Integrity -*

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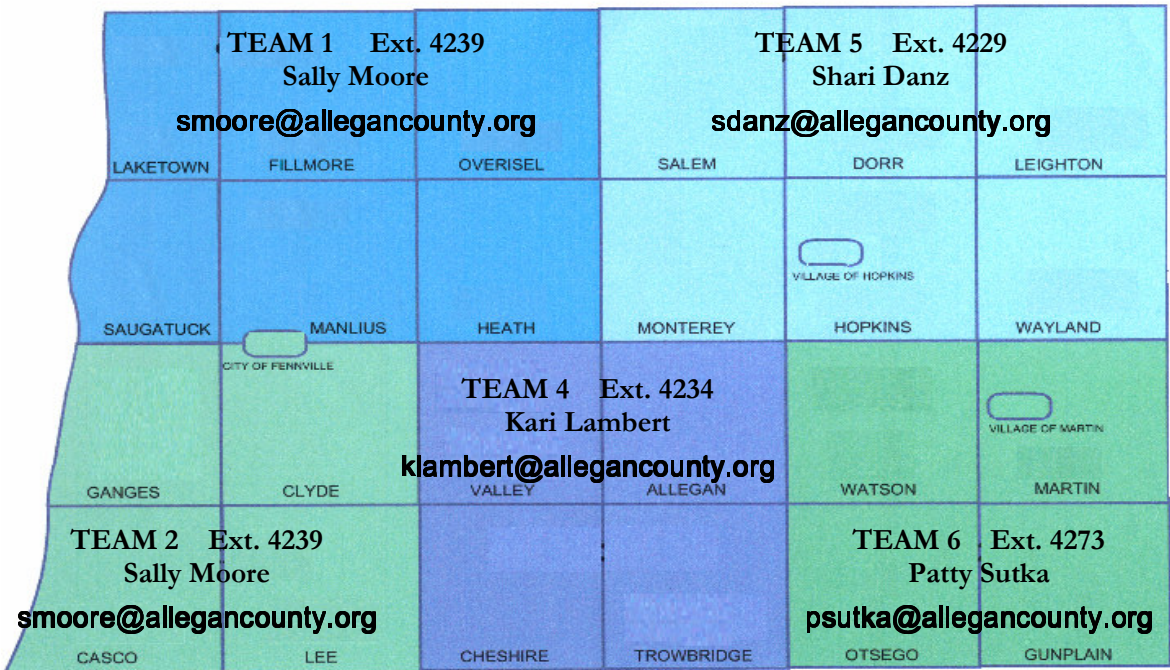
## - CONTACT LIST -

**269.673.0500**

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Detective Bureau Mgmt. Case Management / Manager Records Suprv. & Mgmt. WEMET (Liaison) Cold Case Management Fatal Accidents Gun Board Technical Services and Evidence Techs Hostage Negotiations	Rd. Patrol Oper. Mgmt. Case Mgmt. / Asst. Mgr. Manage Contracts w/Twps & others Traffic Team Reconstructionists Tactical Team Reserve / Mounted Divisions Liquor inspections Aban./Impounded Vehicles Marine / Snowmobile Units Dive Team	Internal Affairs / Citizen Complaints Animal Control Transports Civil Process Vehicles / Purchase, Maintenance, Radios and Radio System Training / Consortium Court Officers / District and Juvenile Evidence Room VSU& TRIAD Coordinator TEAM Program Hiring / Testing / Backgrounds Silent Observer Program	Control and Operations of the Correctional Facility, including: Inmate Care and Custody All Inmate Programs Inmate Phones Inmate Medical

**TEAM COORDINATORS**



For assistance with reports, crime statistics, current trends, ALLCOPS team events, and general information.

269.673.0500

11 February 2005