Washtenaw Equity Partnership (WEP) Data Subcommittee

February 1, 2022 12:00-1:30 pm

Attendees:

MaryAnn Sarosi (Co-chair)

Eli Savit (Co-chair)

Linda Rexer

Truly Render

Trevor Bechtel

Grady Bridges

Meghan O'Neil

Lindsay Ryan

Honorable Darlene O'Brien

Linh Song

Jeff Rose

Sandhya Kajeepeta (Vera)

Tara Dhanraj (Vera)

- Introductions of members who were not present at the first meeting.
- Discussion of other subcommittees' charges within the Washtenaw Equity Partnership (WEP).
  - o Working Group didn't want to recreate silos through subcommittees, the subcommittees are designed in a more holistic way to capture different processes within the criminal legal system.
- Vera staff presented on the Working Group's activity at the January meeting to identify 6 broad research themes using a Jamboard tool.
  - o The Jamboard tool is a way for a large group to "post" sticky notes on a virtual board in response to questions posed by the facilitator to help the Working Group identify issues it would like to see addressed in the WEP process.
  - o These research priorities should represent the most urgent gaps in knowledge/areas of inquiry that we need to explore in order to inform the WEP's recommendations.
  - o The priorities are still under development and need final approval from Working Group members.
  - o The six preliminary research priorities that emerged from the discussion are:
    - What are the primary drivers of racial disparities in the criminal legal system and how can they be intervened upon?
    - What are gaps in access to community resources/services?

- What do county residents need to thrive and feel safe, and are government agencies and other service providers delivering those needs?
- What are effective non-punitive/non-carceral approaches to increase safety and how are they being used?
- What are strategies to increase government transparency and accountability?
- What are strategies to move problems outside of the criminal legal system?
- Each subcommittee does not need to consider all six research questions. They might only select one to focus on. For example, this subcommittee could primarily hone in on question five focused on government transparency and accountability.
- Whatever work the subcommittee decides to undertake should be clearly responsive to at least one of these research priorities.
- Subcommittee member asked about where these documents can be accessed and whether there is a shared drive.
  - There is a Google Drive with subcommittee materials that will be shared with members.
- Subcommittee member asked about where and how the public/community members come into this process because we will want to build public trust and support around our recommendations.
  - The Working Group itself has a broad range of voices including heavy representation from community residents. The subcommittees also have representation from justice impacted people and community members. Since we can't survey everyone in Washtenaw County, one of the ways we hear from the public is through the diversity of membership in the WEP.
  - We also have the option to post questions to the public on the WEP website.
  - Some subcommittees are planning on doing focus groups. This is something we could do too if it aligns with our priorities.
  - The WEP will engage with quantitative and qualitative data.
  - Another member shared about a process in Ann Arbor to engage community in use for ARPA dollars. This process includes an online survey and Q&A forum. Asking for community voices about how to allocate ARPA funding for various projects including unarmed crisis response. Link shared in chat: https://www.a2gov.org/departments/systems-planning/Pages/American-Rescue-Plan-Act-Funding--.aspx
  - We will be proposing recommendations, but no officials are obligated to enact them. At the end of the day, people place their trust in elected officials through their vote.
- There are four elements from the subcommittee's charge (data collection, analysis, integration, and transparency) that can translate into the research priorities for the data subcommittee.
- Improving data collection – data management for the criminal legal system is not built for analysis and looking at trends, it's built for case management. If we want to be able to ask questions of the data, we need to make sure we're collecting the right information.

- o Improving data analysis – Criminal legal data is only useful if it is analyzed in a way that informs practice. The goal of improving data analysis is to understand whether any data analytics infrastructure exists in Washtenaw, identify best practices and models of county-level data analytics across the country and develop a blueprint for data analytics infrastructure.
  - o Improving data integration – Each agency maintains its own data systems and none of these systems really talk to each other so this research priority could include identifying how data could be integrated among Washtenaw's government agencies that intersect with the criminal legal system.
  - o Improving data transparency – One of the Working Group's Guiding Principles, Accountability, states that transparency must guide collection, analysis, and sharing of data and information across the system. Our subcommittee could work on how county criminal legal it would take to make that data publicly available.
- The group then discussed what steps it could take to fulfill the improving data collection research priority:
  - o One member noted that the subcommittee should understand what the data points are in the adult and juvenile system (beyond the court process), what type of data is collected and where there are gaps.
  - o Need to know where data is collected to learn where disparities occur. The subcommittee discussed how it could map out where data is collected by creating flowcharts of data collected in the juvenile and criminal legal systems. The juvenile court has a flow chart and the Prosecutor Transparency Project is creating one. The Court Process subcommittee is also working on an adult criminal court flowchart.
  - o One member cautioned that we have to address how data may be inconsistently captured. In her criminal justice research she has found that race and ethnicity data is often inaccurate because there of a lack of uniformity in identifying identify race or ethnicity. For example, in law enforcement data, it might be that officers record race based on their assessment of a person's background.
  - o Member mentioned if recommendations include collecting data, this sometimes can be hard in practice and may require additional resources and funding to accomplish. We need to think about resources needed to implement recommendations for collection of new data.
  - o Member stated that there is a difference between how a case navigates the system and how data navigates the system. We can create a data flowchart that isn't as complicated as a larger criminal case flowchart. There are existing tools to identify where racial disparities may arise, for example sequential intercept model.
  - o Members suggested use of PhotoVoice as methodology. This is data collection method with social work lens where community members are given a camera to document and share their own experiences. Multiple other members agreed that PhotoVoice could be a great tool for this work. Various schools at U of M uses this method including School of Social Work, Stamps School, and Ginsberg Center. Trevor can connect subcommittee to the school. Cautionary note from another member about people with lived experiences not wanting to share their experiences and relive trauma. Clarification from other

members that PhotoVoice gives the participant full autonomy to choose what they share and how they share.

- A subcommittee member stated fact finding needs to happen first; group must understand the landscape of criminal legal data to inform recommendations. For example, in order for us to talk about data collection, we need to get a lay of the land first.
- One way the subcommittee could proceed with researching our 4 priorities is to break up into pods and work on each of the research priorities on parallel tracks.
  - o A member flagged that there is work we need to do together as a baseline and then we can split up on parallel tracks to work on the 4 research priorities of improved data collection, improved data integration, improved data analysis and improved data transparency. All of these tracks hinge on the first step of establishing what the data landscape looks like.
- Member made general comment that we should attach a level of importance to each recommendation for data collection and differentiate what is necessary and what would be nice to have.
- For the next meeting:
  - o In the next meeting, the subcommittee will discuss the remaining three research priorities to help flesh out steps the subcommittee wants to take to address the priorities. The remaining research priorities to discuss are improving analysis, improving data integration, and improving data transparency.
  - o Co-chairs to work with subcommittee members to understand PhotoVoice more clearly.
  - o Co-chairs to follow up with Grady about what baseline work needs to be conducted before group can split off onto parallel tracks.
- Meeting schedule
  - o Monthly meetings alternating first Monday (11:30a-1p) and second Wednesday (4:30-6p). The chairs will send out a schedule and calendar invites before the March meeting.
- Closing comments
  - o A subcommittee member is working on committee on statewide data integration led by the Lt. Governor. There's more legislative support for data collection and integration than in the past and conversations around how integrating data between criminal legal institutions can be done including whether to pilot a county-level data integration effort between criminal institutions.
  - o A subcommittee member reported that the Ann Arbor police oversight commission is having a hard time getting their hands on AAPD data.
  - o A subcommittee member is working on a couple of studies involving racial and economic disparities in the criminal legal arena. She will share the studies when they become public.