

**Washtenaw Equity Partnership (WEP) Court Process Subcommittee Meeting  
April 12, 2022 5:00-6:15pm**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Attendees:**

Deborah Labelle (Co-Chair)

Judge Carol Kuhnke (Co-Chair)

Judge Tim Connors

Joe Summers

Dick Soble

Nimish Ganatra

Peter Joseph Martel

Ted Heaton

Bonsitu Kitaba

Sandhya Kajeepeta (Vera)

Kaitlin Kall (Vera)

Liz Swavola (Vera)

- Voted unanimously to approve last month's minutes
- Kaitlin (Vera) reviewed work plan and target dates for the remainder of 2022
  - Q: Will the recommendations include how they might be implemented?
    - A: Yes. We encourage you to think about “quick-wins” – things that could be implemented quickly – as well as things that will take more investment, time, and resources to implement
    - Vera's strong suggestion is that recommendations can be implemented locally. This will help with feasibility. There may be issues that require state-level legislative change, but most should be able to be implemented locally.
  - Q: Are the recommendations that you've made in other jurisdictions mainly implemented by the court?
    - A: No, our past recommendations have spanned multiple agencies and stakeholders. Of course, this subcommittee is the Court Process subcommittee, so our recommendations may mainly focus on courts.
  - Q: What if agencies don't agree with the recommendations? How do we deal with resistance from agency stakeholders?

- A: Political will is part of a feasibility analysis. Recommendations will be supported by WEP and will be made public. In our recommendations, we should be specific about who has the ability to make the recommended changes.
  - Comment: We understand that our focus is on the county, where we have more control, but we should keep an eye on longer-term recommendations and think about what legislation is being discussed at the state level. We could invite legislators from the judiciary committee to speak with the subcommittee about what legislation is being proposed and what data/documentation they've compiled to support that legislation.
- Voting on the subcommittee priorities
  - Discussion before vote
    - Sentencing and Cobbs agreements should be grouped together. Plea agreements should be considered separately.
    - Difficult to decide without knowing what data are available
      - Data availability can be considered further into the process, but shouldn't be a limiting factor now
    - Look at recommendations with a temporal frame – short, medium, and long
    - Bind over decision plays an ongoing role throughout the life of a case
    - Indigent defense has been a focus for Michigan
    - Q: Will we allow others who are not here to vote?
      - We will follow up individually with anyone not present to cast their vote. If they do not respond, we can assume they are not actively participating in the subcommittee.
  - Result of vote
    - Restorative justice – 11
    - Data and metrics to track racial inequities – 8
    - Disparities in access to specialty courts – 7
    - Disparities in bond/bail decisions – 7
    - Disparities in sentencing decisions (including Cobb's agreements) – 6
    - Disparities in plea agreements – 5
    - Examining approach of court process and its purpose, addressing root causes, questioning how it serves public, and addressing public perceptions – 4
  - Discussion of how it is okay that “examining approach of court process and its purpose” did not make the top 5 because it is really a lens through which we should view all of the subcommittee's work
  - Given that the recommendation is for each subcommittee to select 3-5 priority areas, we are selecting the top 5 with plea agreements as a tentative 6<sup>th</sup> area. We will discuss in the next meeting if we have the capacity to take on this additional topic.
- Next steps
  - Vera will reach out to the people not present to cast their vote by Friday, March 15<sup>th</sup>
  - During next month's meeting, we will finalize the list of priorities

- During next meeting we will also think about how to structure the work ahead
- Next meeting: Tuesday, May 10 at 5pm