Washtenaw Equity Partnership (WEP) Prevention & Front End Subcommittee Meeting

February 15, 2022 5:00-6:30 pm

Meeting Minutes

Attendees:

Desirae Simmons (Co-Chair)
Victoria Burton-Harris (Co-Chair)
Belinda Dulin
Elizabeth Spring
Lisa Jackson
Kevin Karpiak
Darnesha Pickens
Ashley Shukait
Tish Lee
Mary Garboden
Aubrey Patino
Vonnie McLoyd
Gillian Gainsley
Alex Roth (Vera)
Tara Dhanraj (Vera)

- Co-chairs welcomed everyone and gave space for new members to introduce themselves. There was one new member in attendance.
- Co-chairs led discussion about WEP working group draft research priorities and solicited feedback from the subcommittee.
    - One member asked about considering other types of disparities such as gender, sexual identity and immigration. Other members added low income and historically oppressed groups.
        - Co-chair mentioned that this project has a count level focus framed around racial disparity but recognizes there is a lot of intersectionality and that we cannot only think about racial disparity without considering other factors.
        - Vera member confirmed that the driving force of this project is to look at racial disparities and inequities in Washtenaw's local legal system but also agrees intersectionality is important.
    - One member asked if a 7th question could be added to the larger WEP working group research priorities asking how racial disparities intersect with other issues such as gender, immigration status, disability, etc.
    - Member asked if a research priority should highlight power dynamics.
        - Co-chair responded that the updated set of priorities separates transparency and accountability. This change allows for attention to the positionality of people who have the power to implement changes and provides access to community to know what is happening and to hold their electeds accountable.
    - Co-chair will keep subcommittee updated as priorities for the working group are finalized.
- Co-chairs led discussion around developing the subcommittee's research priorities
    - Previously shared google doc was shared with group for discussion and to continue adding notes to throughout the meeting.

- o Brainstorming prompts were read out and co-chair asked for subcommittee member reactions.
  - ▪ One member wanted to know the scope of ideas this group can dream about accomplishing.
  - ▪ Another member shared they were thinking about what specific problems this subcommittee needs to address and stated that the group would need to prioritize what problems could be addressed within a year.
  - ▪ Member said question number 2 stood out and wondered how the group creates a problem statement or situation where the group can address one of many issues in the system.
- o Co-chair recommended reviewing the subcommittee charge to get a better idea of what the group can focus on. Part of the work to do in the subcommittee and overall is to push beyond what is already happening and seems possible.
- o Member mentioned that group should look at health and social issues that should not be in the criminal legal system to begin with.
- o Member stated that Prison Policy Initiative has a great resource detailing actionable reform efforts.
- o Member would like to see what the drivers of racial and ethnic disparities are in Washtenaw and 2-3 action items for each that the group can do to address them.
- o Member stated there are a lot of groups that have never been listened to, even within social services.
- ● Research Questions
  - o Previously shared google doc was shared with this group. Questions were read out and additional added as members provided them during the meeting.
  - o Member asked what metrics are being referenced. Is this law enforcement data? If so, there is often a difference between what metric should be captured and what is actually captured.
    - ▪ Member stated that part of the work might be determining the discrepancies.
  - o Member thinks it's important to get data on disproportionality of school discipline, school resource officers and their presence in schools and how disciplinary action might be influenced by the officers.
  - o Member stated there should be an analysis of carceral ties that we might not typically think of. For example, housing policies and the prohibitive nature of housing choice vouchers for people who have a criminal history. This can also apply to the school and behavioral health system. Group can think through if there are ways to remove some of these carceral ties.
  - o Member stated as it relates to metrics that this group can look at, it would be important to think about specific neighborhoods using geographical data showing higher rates of policing with county data that been released around health, socioeconomic status, income, etc.
    - ▪ Member stated with careful and strategic FOIA requests this group could likely obtain this data.
  - o Member shared it would be interesting to look at interventions that lead to subsequent carceral interactions. For example, if someone calls 911 for an overdose and then a warrant check is run, or there is increased police surveillance/raids at that location.
  - o Member shared about benefits and challenges to policing data. It's a struggle to get all agencies involved to share data, especially where there is overlapping jurisdiction.
  - o Member asked if there is data captured on risk factors related to housing instability, school system, and others. Does the prosecutor's office track these factors, and could it point to preventative measures?

- Member stated that YCS has ended some contracts with school resource officers and thinks other districts has as well. What do risk factors look like for students who are in schools with school resource officers versus in schools without them. Question around what are school resource officers replaced with? Would like to see spending saved from school resource officers used to support students.
  - Member made a comment about police data stating that police will say they are policing specific areas more heavily because that is where there is more crime. It will be challenging to parse out the difference between someone looking for crime versus being called to a location.
    - Member stated that there are many layers to understanding why police might be called to a certain neighborhood. Often in these areas police are the only public service available.
- Co-chairs shifted the conversation to focus groups and experts the subcommittee can work with to move the work forward. The sooner the group can identify who they would like to work with, the sooner the work can start.
  - At the beginning of the conversation the list had high school students, SURE Mom's, small businesses, and mutual aid groups.
  - Group members add the following additional focus group areas:

    - WICIR
    - Affordable housing residents
    - People who use drugs
    - Sex workers
    - People already in the system and their families
    - Faith groups
    - Black student unions at high schools
    - People recently released from incarceration
    - Ozone or neutral zone participants
    - People in precisely those areas with a surplus of calls for service and police actions. Member would want to be able to hear their stories and parse them to see if they similarly show that double bind of policing being the only social service
    - Mentor 2 youth participants
    - Families who have experienced CPS
    - College students
    - Shelter warming center
    - Encampments
  - Members stated that the list of focus groups need to be prioritized before moving to the next step.
  - Discussion moved to experts. Currently on the list was Prison Policy Initiative. Co-chair made point that people with lived experience are experts.
    - Member suggested adding ANSWER (sex work collective in Detroit and Washtenaw) to the expert list.
- Discussion around what would be a good way to prioritize or group questions and focus groups that the subcommittee members presented today.
  - Co-chair asked if members would like to do this together, in a smaller group or remotely in a google doc.
  - One member suggested prioritizing focus groups based upon who this group has connections with and will be most accessible.

- o Member stated there might be crossover/overlap between focus group areas identified and might be able to narrow down list based upon this.
- o Question from members about providing funds to people in focus groups to compensate them for their time.
  - ▪ Vera staff member confirmed there are funds available for this but the amount for each subcommittee has yet to be determined.
  - ▪ Member asked if Vera or working group could apply for more local funds so that there is more money available to give to participants.
- o Co-chairs will work on consolidating focus group areas and research questions and will share with the group.
- ● Next steps:
  - o Co-chairs will work on consolidating focus group areas and share with the group.
  - o Subcommittee members will make sure their ideas were represented correctly in shared google docs.
- ● Procedural
  - o Vote was held on previous meeting's minutes. All members voted to approve.