

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

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

### Meeting Minutes

#### Attendees:

Desirae Simmons (Co-chair)  
Heather Martin (Co-chair)  
Elizabeth Spring  
Ashley Shukait  
Reverend Harrold  
Gina VanDuinen  
Mary Garboden  
Kevin Karpiak  
Lisa Jackson  
Darnesha Pickens  
Aubrey Patino  
Vonnie McLoyd  
Belinda Dulin  
Tara Dhanraj (Vera)  
Alex Roth (Vera)

- Co-chairs welcomed everyone and asked members to add one word of intention for the meeting to the chat box.
- Co-chairs shared with the group what work had been completed with the research priorities since the last meeting. Co-chairs shared how research priorities were grouped together in potential buckets and asked for feedback from the group. Three proposed research priority buckets are: Grounding solutions/services in the community & addressing gaps; Collateral consequences of carceral ties; and Policing/monitoring
  - Member asked group to think about partnerships that are being utilized in inconspicuous ways to monitor people. For example, overdose hotspot surveillance that public health utilizes is also used by the DEA and other monitoring agencies.
  - Member asked about how this group will access data around policing: law enforcement or community. Response from co-chair: data can be collected from multiple sources. Research questions and priorities must be determined first and then can assess data needed and what is possible.
  - Member wanted to flesh out collateral consequences of carceral ties category to include family, employers, psychological trauma knowing loved ones are in jail.
  - Member stated that in 2020 Michigan ended the ban on food stamps for people with drug convictions but wants to know if there are other basic services that people with drug convictions are not eligible for.
  - Member stated that under the collateral consequences category: public service providers can sometimes be the ones who bring police in but need to understand why.
- Co-chairs proposed to the group that this subcommittee takes a neighborhood focus where the research includes diving into specific neighborhoods and recommendations are actionable to those neighborhoods with potential to eventually expand.
  - Brainstorm of neighborhoods that could be focus areas:
    - Sycamore Meadows
    - South Side
    - Grove Neighborhood – Sugar Brook

- West Willow area
  - Ypsi and Augusta Townships
  - Ann Arbor areas to include Pittsfield Township
  - Huron Heights
  - Apple Ridge
- Member expressed concern about neighborhood specific focus and potential for these neighborhoods to look like “perverse places with perverse people.” Also suggested looking at white supremacy specifically that keeps Ann Arbor majority white and maintains divisions and imbalances.
- Member agreed with above comment and also added the question of if people from certain neighborhoods regardless of where they are more likely to enter the carceral system than others due to behavior, appearance, swagger. How can this data be tracked?
- Member stated its important to look at what keeps Ann Arbor white; it is not just housing prices. There are people who can afford to live there but choose not to; must understand what is happening in order to dismantle it.
- Member mentioned that whatever community engagement is conducted, it must be a thoughtful process. Suggested a community engagement process by Force Detroit (<http://forcedetroit.org/build-peace-report-2/>)
- Member shared that it feels like the subcommittee is discussing many broad topics and feeling lost about direction.
  - Co-chair responded that the greatest challenge is that questions being asked are enormous and there is pressure to act in a meaningful way.
- Member shared there are a lot of people on town borders where clients are white and targeted by police for unknown reasons. What is the police’s initial reasoning for interacting with someone and what are the resulting charges; often it is quality of life charges. There is money that goes into some of these neighborhoods for specific things such as treatment but need to find out why people are not going and what are the alternatives.
- Co-chairs posed question to group about who is interested in pursuing a neighborhood focus because it seems like there is not consensus. Co-chair believes focusing on neighborhoods or not will impact actual research questions.
  - 5 members out of 11 in attendance were interested in pursuing a neighborhood focus
  - Member stated if group takes a neighborhood focus there must be qualitative data. There are ways to capture stories about people in highly impacted neighborhoods and also what happens when they leave that neighborhood
  - Member stated they feel uncomfortable pathologizing neighborhoods. Suggested reverse engineering: determine what the group wants to do (developing a program or otherwise) and then figure out what the program would be, how to assess what should be included in it and what is the best way to find that out. Have to be careful because it is easy for community to take the work this subcommittee does and conclude “this is the problem with those people and that neighborhood.” If going to study neighborhoods, need to study a lot of neighborhoods and cannot think of them without context.
  - Co-chairs expressed understanding of concerns mentioned. If group focuses on neighborhoods certain things must be kept in mind. Co-chairs want research that is actionable. Mention to a youth report a few years ago that the county spent \$100K on consulting agency for. Report was never circulated, and no interventions came of it after a lot of extractive qualitative interviewing.

- Member mentioned that race transcends neighborhoods and also have to look at people who have to work in primarily white parts of the county.
  - Co-chairs started conversation around what seems to be missing from the research priorities list:
    - Members stated public spaces and obtaining research questions from the community.
  - Member asked if the subcommittee counts as community and to what end would the group be using focus groups. Vera staff member responded that to a certain extent this group is the community. Co-chair stated that this subcommittee could have the most focus groups, but also this group could connect with other groups that exist in the community already that might have information to share.
- Final thoughts
  - Member asked if the April WEP meeting where subcommittee co-chairs report out on research priorities can be open to all subcommittee members.
- Next steps
  - Vera to create a survey for subcommittee members to complete to continue conversation refining and narrowing down research priorities.