

**Washtenaw Equity Partnership (WEP) Court Process Subcommittee Meeting
June 7, 2022**

Attendees:

Deborah Labelle (Co-Chair)
Judge Carol Kuhnke (Co-Chair)
Peter Martel
Dick Soble
Nimish Ganatra
Ted Heaton
Bonsitu Kitaba
Alex Roth (Vera)
Tara Dhanraj Roden (Vera)
Kaitlin Kall (Vera)

Meeting Notes

- A. Consensus to move meetings to Wednesdays going forward.
- B. April and May meeting minutes approved. No changes made.
- C. Discussion about assigning members to priority areas:
 - Members express interest in working on different priority areas
 - Develop list of members who will work on each priority area
- D. Discussion about processes for smaller working groups assigned to each priority areas:
 - Priority area working groups will meet and work independently
 - Vera will assist with logistics and scheduling
 - Each working group should review questions, consolidate, add, and think about potential sources of information to answer these questions. Example: One group made decide that a conversation with defense attorneys would be helpful. They should report this to the subcommittee so that the larger group can streamline/consolidate questions for stakeholder groups and create a schedule.
 - Larger subcommittee to meet once a month. Question about how often working groups should meet. Send Alex information ahead of time to help inform agenda.
 - Suggestion that a Vera staff member is assigned to each working group. Should adjust meeting schedule in order to accommodate this. Alex will get started on scheduling polls. Agreement that later afternoon is the best time for folks.
 - Vera can do desk research (literature reviews, etc.) and analyze court administrative data in between meetings, as well as focus/groups interviews.
 - Concerns about scheduling and summer travel plans. Suggestion to use first working group meetings to discuss meeting schedules and cadence.
 - Working groups can have authority to whittle down questions currently contained within each priority area.

- E. Discussion about who is missing from this group:
- Lack of membership of directly impacted people and defense attorneys
- F. Discussion about potential sources of data and information
- Co-chair highlighted a survey used in New York courts related to experiences of procedural justice - "Equity and Justice Survey." Would something like this be a useful tool to get a sense of community members' experiences? Likes the anonymous component. Is this something that could be done in over a few months?
 - Member suggested that this would be a large undertaking. Co-chair will circulate NY example and group should take a look at existing survey results.
 - Co-chair highlighted an annual survey that could be consulted. Goes out to every 'customer' of the court in the state. Surveys are open for 2-week period. Signs in courthouse that announce that survey is available, and it is directly handed out to people. People can mail it back or hand it back in person.
 - Question about what type of disparity data we have on hand. Bond information seems to be missing from a lot of the cases Vera has received. Vera is following up on the possibility of obtaining more bond data.
 - Co-chair says she doesn't believe the courts keeps this data in a reliable way. Normally Trial Court would only note if bond has been changed; and in that case it has to be manually entered.
 - Data from other jurisdictions and national data about disparities and bail could be helpful.
 - Co-chair says she has a pretty good sense of what data the courts and MDOC collect, but some of these problems we know already exist. Knowing that collecting data is expensive and time consuming, does it make more sense to try to identify some points in the process that we could try to focus in on rather than a wider analysis?
 - Co-chair: CREW report highlighted some data capacity needs— specifically, data about sentencing/sentencing guidelines and Cobbs agreements. Courts have built in new data fields into court databases in order to store and report out on this data. Previously, there were many cases that were missing this data. Currently have interns backfilling in this data, which is tedious and time-consuming. Courts provided all data that Vera requested as available.
 - What type of bond data does prosecution record? Prosecutors are now at arraignment (felonies). Previous administration did not have them at arraignment. In District Court, judge will review bond if it is raised by either attorney. When case is reviewed at exam, bond can be raised again. When a case reaches Circuit Court bond has already been set. Prosecutors make note of bond. Attorneys have access to JIS – so they can look at amount of bond set in District Court case system.
 - Vera is not currently getting JIS data at this time. Vera can talk to District Court to see if this is something they would be able to share. Member points out that JIS can also be accessed by the public, but one must look up each defendant by name.