

Washtenaw Equity Partnership (WEP) Post-Sentencing & Reentry Subcommittee Meeting
Friday, May 13, 2022, 2:30-4:00 PM
Meeting Notes

Attendees:

Natalie Holbrook (co-chair)
Ariana Gonzalez (co-chair)
Alma Smith
Frances Walters
Annie Sommerville
Dennis Schrantz
Alex Roth (Vera)
Angie Carpio (Vera)
Tara Dhanraj (Vera)

- Co-chair kicked off meeting. Each attendee gave a brief introduction for new members.
- Review of research priorities
 - Co-chair participated in the Court Subcommittee meeting earlier in the week to discuss potential overlap in priority areas across the two subcommittees for priority number 1.
 - This subcommittee (post-sentencing and reentry) will coordinate with the court process subcommittee on looking at PSIs.
 - Research questions within this research priority will depend on what data can be accessed. Hoping to have focus groups with people around their PSIs and focus groups with judges around how they perceive PSIs. This could be its own research project.
 - This subcommittee will drop the focus on prosecutorial and sentencing diversion in priority 3.
 - First set of questions to consider for each priority area is data on disparities. Data exists but the Dept. of Corrections likely won't want to share it.
 - There are different ways PSIs are conducted in Washtenaw, for example, in District Court, court employees rather than DOC staff conduct PSIs.
 - Priority number 2 and 3 are final for the group.
 - Determine racial disparities in parole and community supervision.
 - Examine jail programming – especially for jail reentry – to determine the degree of racial disparity that may exist for client eligibility, selection, and termination.
 - Priority number 4: Examine previous and existing MDOC state prisoner reentry models and identify strengths and weaknesses of the models re: funding, community control, program design, enrollment, and termination and determine if racial disparities exist in current client selection, enrollment, and termination.
 - Co-chair asked if the group is focusing on services that exist that go beyond DOC services or services funded under contract by them.
 - Thought is to focus on local jail programs for reentry.
 - Priority number 5: Assess the conditions in jail and prison that affect release and reentry and result in racial disparity.
 - Question about this area having overlap with behavioral health subcommittee priorities.

- Clarification from Vera staff that the behavioral health subcommittee is looking at services in the community not inside the jail.
 - Within each priority there is a list of issues/questions that came up with drafting the priorities.
 - One member thought the subcommittee should break into smaller groups for each priority to develop fact finding questions.
- Human subject research: Vera staff stated a need for what research might entail as it relates to human subject research to submit to the Institutional Review Board.
 - One member suggested the review of non-redacted documents, such as PSIs.
 - Focus groups, surveys, and interviews with judges, court staff, people formerly on probation/parole, people formerly incarcerated that had experience with jail programming, families of people reintegrating into the community from jail/prison.
 - Unlikely to conduct research with people currently incarcerated in Michigan; DOC does not typically approve this.
- Plan of Action – subcommittee member created a plan of action document and discussed the document’s content with the group.
 - Plan to send survey to subcommittee members gauging interest in priority areas and capacity to participate.
 - Discussion around how much subcommittee buy in is needed at each step, since subcommittee meetings have not had high attendance.
 - Vera staff clarified the role Vera will have in assisting the subcommittee with fact finding research – Vera generally expects to do most of fact finding and provide information to the subcommittee, though happy to have greater participation from subcommittee members if people have time and are willing.
 - Subcommittee member will go back and edit this document to reflect timeline discussion and Vera’s involvement in fact finding.
- Next steps
 - Co-chair had a question around how Vera has conducted focus groups in the past: how opportunity was communicated with community members.
 - Co-chair recommended someone to join the subcommittee from the Offender Success Program. Group agreed and co-chair will reach out to the person to gauge their interest in joining.
 - Subcommittee member suggested a person from their office to join the subcommittee.
 - Two subcommittee members are no longer on the subcommittee.
 - Vera staff member agreed to join subcommittee’s steering committee.