

Washtenaw Equity Partnership Working Group November 2, 2022 Meeting Notes

In attendance:

Alma Smith
Victoria Burton-Harris
Ché Carter
Mark Creekmore
Alyshia Dyer
S. Joy Gaines
Natalie Holbrook
LaWanda Hollister
Heather Martin
Melvin Parson
Aubrey Patiño
Judge Miriam Perry
MaryAnn Sarosi
Eli Savit
Desirae Simmons
Peri Stone-Palmquist
Rachelle Wilson

Angie Carpio (Vera)
Tara Dhanraj (Vera)
Alex Roth (Vera)
Jen Peirce (Vera)
Shahd Elbushra (Vera)

- 1) Welcome and Introduction by Chair
- 2) Recap and Upcoming
 - a. Recap of October 18th Meeting
 - i. Vera update on Working Group feedback re: sending materials sooner.
 - ii. Reviewed recommendations from 4 subcommittees – Court Process, Post-Sentencing, Data, and Behavioral Health.
 - b. Process for Today
 - i. This will be an extension of last meeting. We will be reviewing Youth Justice and Front-End recommendations today.
 - ii. Only have an hour so might need to accelerate some of the conversations or come back to them another time to make sure we have time to look at all the recommendations from the two subcommittees. Or maybe take people's comments and try to work on those offline.
 - iii. Will share links to Google Drive for each subcommittee.

- iv. Slides have several recommendations on them, will not be reviewing each individually but will give people a chance to comment or raise concerns about any of the recommendations on each slide before moving on to the next. Working under the assumption that people have already reviewed these.
- c. Expectation Setting
 - i. Chair thanks everyone for their work on WEP and being generous with their time. It's been a learning process for everyone as we've created a real-time project that has embraced community, local organizations, and institutional leaders to formulate recommendations to address racial disparities in Washtenaw County's criminal legal system. The Working Group has been essential to getting us where we are now. As we near the end of the project now, the process will require heavier engagement than in the past as the Working Group takes subcommittee recommendations and harmonizes/integrates them for the report.
 - ii. Report will cover a wide range of topics and it's not possible to have exhausted every detail on every topic. The substance of the subcommittee recommendations will be honored, but the language of recommendations may not be exactly the same as what the subcommittees send to the Working Group because we will need to harmonize and integrate recommendations for the final report. Some areas will have more detail than others based on the amount of data the team was able to access.
 - iii. Report that the WEP generates will be a starting point, not a conclusion. We will make recommendations that other actors have to find value in and implement and the community will need to come along to say that those changes are important and will improve the criminal legal system.
 - iv. Your support and leadership with the subcommittees in the next few weeks is critical to keep members engaged. This includes encouraging collaboration both in meetings and offline and also taking a more flexible approach to some of the issues since the specific language recommended by the subcommittees is not necessarily going to be the same as what is in the final report.
 - v. Expectation is that we will produce a report that is useful and valuable for the county and for local organizations to improve processes that contribute to inequities in the system.
- d. Next Steps
 - i. Process for generating action/implementation steps – will be ongoing throughout November in subcommittee meetings and offline.
 - ii. November 14th meeting – Final Feedback Review, most recommendations should be in consolidated recommendation document sent out last week, ask everyone to review that. May be some additional recommendations/edits sent later – will flag those for people.
 - iii. Would like to move 12/19 meeting to 12/12 so Vera has time to work on final report before the holidays and get information to everyone sooner. Vera will send a Zoom poll and majority of people okay with that date. Meeting will be to decide on final recommendations. For people who aren't able to make it, can explore ways to provide feedback outside of that meeting.
 - iv. Member comments on how there are a lot of changes and work being done on systems, especially in mental health, and we're making recommendations about things that are in

the process of change, so recommendations have a short shelf life. Asks how that will be addressed, particularly when don't have participation from key players like sheriff.

- v. Chair explains hoping to have community event when report released to educate community members, particularly low-income and minority community members about report and how they could work with WEP to move recommendations forward and will applaud any changes underway and that move those recommendations forward or make them moot. There will also be a team to help develop a plan to implement recommendations. Efforts when report is finished will be broader than just recommendations themselves, will need to harmonize with other ongoing efforts and future developments. Suggests that could have a more detailed conversation about this offline. Another member suggests instead that there be a meeting for WG to discuss implementation/follow-up after WG has reviewed final report.

3) Reviewing Recommendations

a. Youth Justice & Schools

- i. Member asks whether there will be guidelines based on research in final report to explain broad terms like "use diversion in as many cases as possible." Vera staff says will do that as much as possible. Another member explains that intent was to have diversion be almost the default option and that definitely talked about using it as default option in property cases, which make up a huge proportion of juvenile charges. Should explain that in report.
- ii. Member asks whether "diversion" should be "deflection" instead. Another member explains that some statutes refer to deflection efforts as diversion, so should work either way. Will include definition in final report.
- iii. Question about what the diversion process would look like at each level, who decides what youth to divert using what criteria. A subcommittee co-chair explains that need to map out existing programs, figure out where gaps need to be filled, but that referrals should come from anyone – schools, police, etc.
- iv. Question about recommendation #3, how to make sure CBOs are accountable to the community and who has the capacity to do intake work for alternatives to residential placement, whether orgs have enough funding to do that.
- v. Whatever recommendations, e.g. about residential placement, we make need to be taken within the context of organization's capacity. Member explains funding was a big part of the discussion, and also that residential placement in Washtenaw County is not a disposition of first choice, usually for charge considered violent or people who've had multiple contacts with system.
- vi. Member comments that report should be more specific than referring to things as more serious/less serious crimes.
- vii. Should entity that will be deflecting people be housed in courts, schools, prosecutor's office, etc? That could affect how programs operate, funding needed.
- viii. Brooklyn DA did deflection program around arts and culture community-based programming. A lot of impact data from that. Should think about all the different types of deflection/diversion that are possible.
- ix. Member comment in chat: "I'm placing this here as something for us to consider at a future meeting, but as I'm going through all of our recommendations, I see that we are wanting quite a few boards/resident groups. I'm learning about sociocratic models of

organization that may be useful for us to consider that can help to maintain the flow of information, alignment, and accountability to the whole and intended purpose.”

- x. Recommendation #6 should specify that those should be through CBOs, not police or SROs. Vera staff explains that is clearer in full text of recommendation and it speaks to leveraging funds to contract out with service providers. Member comments in chat that has been told schools have shifted their approach to involving law enforcement in substance issues.
 - xi. Member comment in chat: “I just want to name that substance use, depression, apathy (and also. Behaviors) are normal responses to the world we are living in and the future that young people see in front of them. So I hope that some of the programming takes this into account.” Member response in chat: “If you know of harm reduction or other programming to support substance challenges, we’d love to know. Ozone and Corner are 2 providers but capacity is an issue, as is access.”
- b. Front-end and Prevention
- i. What has input from Continuum of Care and economic development boards been on housing recommendations? No formal input, but some informal discussions. Also, member of Front End Subcommittee is member of CoC board as well.
 - ii. For recommendation #5, should add something about ensuring police are not submitting notices of police activity to landlords, which would help with evictions.
 - iii. Overlap with recommendations about calls for service with efforts currently underway.
 - iv. What does it mean for WCSO to turn over alternative response? Suggestion that should work on developing the alternative response first and then working on shifting that from WCSO, but generally it is not good practice for this to be led by law enforcement.
 - v. Two units at U of M that deal with violence prevention – could tap them for #16.
 - vi. Member comments that really appreciates #21. Member comment in chat: “#21 could part of that look at recommendations for schools to look at developing more nuanced policies? Their strict approach to this has limited who we can hire, given our teams are in the schools.”
 - vii. Question about housing-related responses – have we looked at statutory and regulatory restrictions on who can be in public/section 8 housing? Did look at public housing for AA, Ypsi, and MSHDA (which is the most restrictive), but not Section 8. Member comments that there are only two absolute bans for Section 8—criminal sexual conduct and manufacturing methamphetamine in a public housing unity—everything else is a choice that the PHA is making.
 - viii. Question about whether there are applications for waivers from MSHDA. Member explains that Avalon Housing has had some success with appeals for MSHDA, but that’s often with the help of legal services advocating for people. Member comment in chat: “I think MSHDA does allow for waivers generally (though not sure about in this context).” This would be something interesting to follow up on.

4) Meeting adjourns