

Criminal Justice Collaborative Council

Pretrial Services Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, April 12, 2005

Library Learning Resource Center Room B

Ann Arbor, MI

12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Members Present: J. Cedric Simpson (District Court Presiding Judge), Charlie Pope (Magistrate/14B District Court Administrator), Sheila Blakney (Senior Assistant, Public Defender), Julie Chaffee (Director, Community Corrections), Michael Gatti (Magistrate), Steve Hiller (Deputy Chief Assistant Prosecutor), Kirk Filsinger (Jail Commander), Rick Visel (Director, Correctional Services)

Members Absent: None

Others Present: None

Convened: 12:06 p.m.

I. Welcome

Scott Patton welcomed the group. He explained that the origin of the committee is that it was formed at the February CJCC meeting by Judge Brown and with the strong support of Judge J. Cedric Simpson. Establishing a pretrial program had been recommended several times before, including by a committee of the Jail Overcrowding Task Force that was convened by Mark Ptaszek. Other terms used to describe the effort included “bond policy committee” and “arraignment committee” but the intention is to establish pretrial services to assist with arraignments and benefit other aspects of the criminal justice system.

II. Purpose/ Scope

J Cedric Simpson led members in a discussion of the proposed purpose of the group. Two goals emerged from this discussion:

1. To not have individuals incarcerated in the jail due to lack of information at the arraignment.
2. To have good, verifiable information that is modified at the time of preliminary exams.

An information gap was identified that hinders these goals from being achieved. Currently in most cases, magistrates receive information at the time of arraignment that includes the police bond recommendation, information from the Law Enforcement Information Network (CCH, a criminal history document), and the Prosecutor but no mitigating information from the defendant. Information that would be helpful includes residence, employment, and community ties. It is crucial that this information be verified quickly after arrest so that it is available for the arraignment. Charlie Pope described the best arraignment as one in which the most accurate information is shared so that the most appropriate bond decision can be made.

A second component to pretrial services includes supervision of defendants in the period between arraignment and preliminary examination for felons. This supervision happens if the defendant is incarcerated but currently does not happen if the defendant is out on bond.

III. Best Practices

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Washtenaw County had a pretrial services function that was eliminated approximately twenty years ago. Participants were unsure about reasons why it was eliminated but did confirm that the service included an interview with arrestee and included verifying residence, employment, and community ties. Several years ago, Jim Inloes had developed a proposal for establishing a pretrial services component but this was not implemented due to budgetary reasons, participants believed.

Agreement was reached that a well designed initial assessment is crucial to the success of any pretrial services. Discussion ensued about whom does this well and potential best practices included Oakland County and Kent County. Julie Chaffee agreed to get the assessment tool used by Kent County and share it with the group at the next meeting. Scott Patton agreed to research any recent changes to State mandates that impact pretrial services.

J Cedric Simpson was insistent that the services be managed by the District Court. While no official recommendation was made, several members agreed with this position.

IV. Next Steps

Scott Patton informed the committee that the CJCC Steering Committee has been looking to establish more structure around the committees to ensure alignment. One tool to help with this is a project charter, which details the committee's charge, membership, scope and timeline for completion. Members asked him to draft a copy for approval at the next meeting.

Scott Patton also called for volunteers to chair future meetings of the committee. Members unanimously selected J Cedric Simpson. Scott will work with J Cedric Simpson to schedule future meetings, develop agendas, and coordinate the meetings.

Adjourned 1:32 p.m.