

Dane County Criminal Justice Council Meeting Notes

Wednesday, April 13, 2011
11:30 am – 1:30 pm
Room 357 City-County Building
Madison, WI

Members present: County Executive Falk, Chief Judge Foust, District Attorney Ozanne, County Board Chair McDonell, Clerk of Courts Esqueda, Chief Deputy Hook.

Chair McDonell calls meeting to order at 11:35 am

Public Comments: none

Criminal Justice Council Members briefly introduce themselves

Report on Project Justice Conference: Colleen Clark, Outreach Specialist from Dane County Office of Equal Opportunity, gives summary of 4/12/11 conference—Project Justice: Transforming Racial Disparities in the Criminal Justice System. There was an “overwhelmingly positive reaction” by conference participants.

Marc Mauer, Executive Director of The Sentencing Project reflects on Project Justice Conference.

- Impressed by Dane County and encouraged by the full day conference
- Dane County is “way ahead of the curve” as far as tackling racial disparities in the criminal justice system
- Keep structure and goals for Dane County.
 - If one key player leaves the scene, momentum needs to continue.
 - Should be a larger issue than any one agency/individual.

Mr. Mauer asks the Council about goals.

- Is the goal to reduce racial disparities or to reduce the number of people of color who are incarcerated?
- How do you measure success?
- Discussion ensues around data assessment
 - Measuring while controlling for other variables
 - Show community the facts
 - Baseline measurement as start point

In general, Mr. Mauer is very impressed with Dane County's initiatives and level of commitment. Need to:

- Measure
- Document
- Show effects

Mauer looks to Dane County to be a model County in the United States for changing the current paradigm.

Criminal Justice Council Discussion ensues around:

- AIM program
- Revocations
- Community Corrections
 - Hard Cell versus soft cell
- Kansas and Texas justice reinvestment
- NJ and NY have posted a 20% reduction in jail population
- Michigan turn-around. Investing "state" prison money into local community corrections—county level.
- Leadership

Approaches

- Specific—focus on racial disparities rates in the criminal justice system
- Broad—focus on family, societal dynamic and larger policy issues

Goals for Dane County per Mauer:

- Data assessment in recidivism and/or disparities
- 5% decrease in racial disparities over the next three years.

Mauer holds Montgomery County Jail up as a model for pilot jail initiatives on a county level.

Mauer states "In general, if you don't directly work on racial disparities, most policy changes will actually increase disparities." Ie. Easy cases vs. hard cases.

Attitudes around the nation are changing about incarceration. Mauer cites "Right on Crime" website: a collaboration of conservatives, liberals and libertarians.

Mauer states community prosecutors, in his experience, not effective at lowering disparities.

Esqueda discusses his review of some 2009 sentencing data.

Meeting is adjourned at 12:45 pm.

Meeting notes submitted by Colleen Clark, Dane County Office of Equal Opportunity