

Champaign County Racial Justice Task Force
Legal Process Subcommittee
Minutes of February 17, 2017 Meeting

Members Present: Lynn Branham, Esther Patt, Susan Silver, Demario Turner
Audience: Patti Petrie

The subcommittee reviewed Lynn Branham's draft document about Financial Release Conditions. It included 3 recommendations and will be presented to the Task Force on February 23 to receive feedback about the formatting of sections in the Task Force's report. The recommendations are: 1. Expand the court authorization of the issuance of notices to appear by the Champaign County Sheriff and the staff under his command. 2. Utilize validated risk-assessment instruments and well-trained pretrial-services officers to limit the imposition of financial-release conditions as much as the law currently allows. 3. Ensure that the validated risk-assessment instrument used in Champaign County is race-neutral and readily accessible to the public.

Esther Patt reported that when she did a one-day view of the jail population, all the people in jail on bond of \$25,000 or less whose charge was a non-violent offense had originally been released on recognizance. They failed to appear and now won't be released without paying bail.

Susan Silver shared her conversation with Joe Gordon, the county's Probation and Court Services officer. One idea for reducing incidents of failure to appear would be to provide funding for the Public Defender's office to hire a social worker to remind people about their court dates. Susan also pointed out that reminding people of court dates is part of a more comprehensive pre-trial services program mentioned above.

Esther reported that the Public Defender, Janie Miller-Jones, responding to questions we posed about her offices' resources said the office has an investigator and does not need another one; attorney caseloads are within national guidelines; and the one need she identified was more money for expert witnesses. The Task Force might want to include that in our final recommendations, along with the recommendation of hiring a social worker.

Demario Turner said he is having a hard time getting information from the Secretary of State's office regarding loss of driver's license for non-payment of tickets or fees. Esther said she will gather information about court fees being used to promote fee reform legislation and she'll write up what she has found so far about driving on suspended or revoked license. Demario said he is going to look into the subject of racial composition of juries.

The subcommittee still needs to decide whether to study charging, prosecutorial discretion and probation revocation. The subcommittee membership no longer includes an attorney so outside help will be needed to tackle these issues.

Respectfully submitted,
Esther Patt