

CONNECTICUT SENTENCING COMMISSION

Steering Committee Meeting

Wednesday, January 4, 2012

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

*Blue and White Room, Central Connecticut State University
New Britain, CT*

Members in Attendance: Mike Lawlor (Committee Chair), Judge Shortall (Commission Chair), Viven Blackford, Thomas Ullmann, Kevin Kane, Judge Carroll

Also Participating: Andrew Clark (Acting Executive Director), Jason DePatie

MINUTES

I. MEETING CONVENED

Mike Lawlor called the meeting to order at approximately 10:10 a.m.

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE MEETING OF OCTOBER 18, 2011

Upon a duly made and seconded motion, the minutes were approved by a **unanimous voice vote**.

III. SETTING PRIORITIES AMONG RESEARCH TOPICS RECOMMENDED BY COMMITTEES

Judge Shortall explained that the next step for the research questions is to put them out for bid with the Sentencing Commission's university partners. Andrew Clark informed the committee that with Mike Lawlor's approval the questions have already been circulated to Sarah Russell (Quinnipiac), Fiona Doherty (Yale) and Steve Cox (CCSU).

Next discussion focused on the creation of a Sentencing Commission database and identifying what information would be useful to the Commission. Tom Ullmann suggested a committee meet with DOC to learn what information is already tracked. Mike Lawlor identified Ivan Kuzyk from OPM as a resource to identify the gaps in data collection. Judge Carroll made the point that Judicial may be able to help track data if gaps are identified. Mike Lawlor then briefly discussed OPM's Recidivism Report by Ivan Kuzyk because its findings will be of interest to the Commission.

Andrew Clark inquired as to member's expectations regarding a Sentencing Commission database. He asked whether members were expecting a report on different topics of interest to the Commission or a live database that will be automatically populated with the latest information available. Members identified Sean Thakkar as someone the committee should reach out to since he is overseeing the creation of a statewide Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS).

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Mike Lawlor then directed the committee's attention to the research questions prepared by the Sentencing Structure, Policy and Practices Committee. Questions one and three were identified as projects that could easily be answered by the law schools. Tom Ullmann identified question three as particularly useful since the next version of the Model Penal Code is expected to be released next year. To help answer the committee's mandatory minimum question, Andrew Clark suggested reviewing the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee's report on mandatory minimums.

When reviewing the research questions prepared by the Recidivism Reduction Committee, members noted the quality of the questions, but asked that the committee break them down into smaller questions with a more limited scope. Mike Lawlor suggested that a way to help narrow down the questions could be to think about the end result and how these questions would translate into a legislative proposal.

As for the Research, Measurement and Evaluation Committee's recommendation to support the evaluation of the CSSD study, committee members recognized the value of the study, but did not think that the Commission's support was needed at this time. Committee members were concerned that the Commission was not involved in designing the study and since it is already under contract with CSSD an endorsement would have little practical effect.

IV. ROLE OF THE RESEARCH, MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION COMMITTEE

Tom Ullmann updated the committee as to the progress of the Research, Measurement and Evaluation Committee. He explained that the committee had solicited comments from Barbara Tombs regarding the various ways that other Sentencing Commissions' research functions operate. It was agreed that the Commission's research needs to be independent and evidence-based. Vivien Blackford asked what the role of the Research, Measurement and Evaluation Committee as it relates to the larger Commission. Judge Shortall responded that the committee's role is to help guide how research should be evaluated and monitor the RFP process.

V. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The committee discussed the importance of a conflict of interest policy for the Commission. Members recognized that when professional interests and the work of the Sentencing Commission overlap a conflict of interest situation can develop. Judge Shortall then discussed the different types of conflicts, cited examples of conflict of interest policies from other states and Connecticut's statutes. The committee identified the Attorney General's Office as a potential resource for helping create this policy and to explain RFP requirements to the Commission. Judge Shortall asked for this item to be on the agenda for the next meeting.

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VI. OTHER BUSINESS

Vivien Blackford made the point that throughout the research process it is important to look at offenders as people. If we do not understand their life experience and motivations we cannot have a meaningful impact on recidivism rates and the criminal justice system.

VII. MEETING ADJOURNED

The meeting was adjourned at 12:03 p.m.