

# CONNECTICUT SENTENCING COMMISSION

## Research, Measurement & Evaluation Committee Meeting

Thursday, April 5, 2012

3:30 p.m.

*CCSU Student Center, Camp Room*

*New Britain, CT*

**Members In Attendance:** *Susan Pease (Co-Chair), Thomas Ullmann (Co-Chair), Vivien Blackford, Robert Farr, Linda Frisman, Maureen Price-Boreland, John Santa, Richard Sparaco*

**Also Participating:** *Andrew Clark (Acting Executive Director), Bill Dyson, David Rentler, Sarah White*

### **MINUTES**

#### **I. MEETING CONVENED**

The meeting was called to order at approximately 3:15 p.m.

#### **II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE MEETING OF NOVEMBER 30, 2011**

The minutes were approved by a **unanimous voice vote**.

#### **III. DISTRIBUTION OF RFP'S FROM THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE THAT MAY BE CONSISTENT WITH THE COMMISSION'S RESEARCH**

Prisoner reentry is one of the Connecticut Sentencing Commission's main interests and a priority for the National Institute of Justice (NIJ). It was agreed that the committee should leverage this common ground and apply for NIJ grants. Susan Pease suggested that criminal justice faculty from CCSU could provide research assistance and Linda Frisman may be willing to review research proposals. Robert Farr and Susan Pease agreed that one project could be a cost-benefit analysis to evaluate program outcomes. In the past, the NIJ has supported such evaluations.

Holding a forum in September to expand the Commission's research partnerships was discussed. Tom Ullmann said there are two things to keep in mind regarding the forum: 1) it would be an informational event; 2) the Commission would try to target colleges and universities with criminal justice programs with the goal of pairing program expertise and committee interest.

#### **IV. SUGGESTED RESEARCH TOPIC PRESENTED BY LINDA FRISMAN AND GUEST DAVID RENTLER REGARDING THE USE OF RISK ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS AT THE TIME OF SENTENCING**

Linda Frisman and guest David Rentler spoke to the value of evidence-based practices and utilizing risk assessments at sentencing. Connecticut re-entry practices and current literature on the subject indicate there is support for evidence-based sentencing. Currently, new static and dynamic risk assessment tools are being implemented across Connecticut's

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criminal justice system. David Rentler proposed that these assessments be injected into the sentencing process. The benefit from utilizing science to help inform judges' sentencing decisions in other states is better treatment outcomes and reduced subjectivity.

It was proposed that program effectiveness be tested by utilizing these assessment tools in a pre-post test fashion. To conduct such research, one judge per G.A. could be studied. The researcher could compare the decisions of those who have the risk assessment tools with those who do not with the goal of examining recidivism and the judge satisfaction. Intervention program integrity could also be examined to ensure effective implementation. David Rentler expressed that prisons should be reserved for high risk people who are not amenable to change. Risk assessment tools help identify those who are amenable to change and place them in programs. Components of this research project include:

- 1) Examining how risk/needs assessments affect judges' decision-making process;
- 2) Examining how risk assessments affect offender recidivism;
- 3) Determining the concordance rate (how often do judges using this tool make a decision reflecting the risk score);
- 4) Determining if sentence variability can be reduced through risk assessments.

Linda Frisman noted that CSSD would be vital to conducting this research. A potential researcher should also examine what intervention programs are available for judges. A committee member pointed out that assessment tools could be utilized to identify the need to increase support for certain programs. The committee suggested that one course of action is for Linda Frisman and David Rentler to develop a proposal and the committee could try to identify researchers who may be interested in the project.

## **V. FURTHER DEVELOPMENT AND REFINEMENT OF RESEARCH TOPICS IDENTIFIED BY COMMISSION COMMITTEES THAT WERE NOT SELECTED FOR RESEARCH BY THE STEERING COMMITTEE**

This item was not addressed.

## **VI. PLANNING A FORUM TO DISSEMINATE THE RESEARCH INTERESTS OF THE COMMISSION TO COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY FACULTY AND OTHER RESEARCHERS WHO MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN WORKING WITH US**

This item was addressed in agenda item III.

## **VII. OTHER BUSINESS**

The next meeting was scheduled for the morning of April 25<sup>th</sup> at CSSD.

## **VIII. MEETING ADJOURNED**

Meeting adjourned at approximately 5:00 p.m.