

COURT SYSTEM TASK FORCE



Virtual Meeting (Zoom)
Tuesday, September 14, 2021; 12:00 PM

- M I N U T E S -

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ted Booras, County Court Judge
Glenn Kelley, Chief Judge
Kathleen Kroll, Circuit Court Judge
Daniel Eisinger, Public Defender Office
Louis Tomeo, Office of the Clerk and Comptroller
Craig Williams, Office of the State Attorney
Michelle Johns, Florida Department of Corrections
April Bristow, General Counsel, 15th Judicial Circuit
Nicole Bishop, Public Safety
Nellie King, Private Attorney
Kevin Jones, Criminal Justice Commission
Mike Edmondson, Office of the State Attorney
Michelle Cruz, County Administration
Javaro Sims, Chief of Police, City of Delray Beach
Alfonso Starling, Colonel, Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office
Barbara Dawicke, Trial Court Administrator, 15th Judicial Circuit

GUESTS PRESENT:

Jennifer Copp, Associate Professor, Florida State University

CJC STAFF PRESENT:

Regenia Herring, Executive Director
Damir Kukec, Research and Planning Manager
Rosalind Murray, Senior Criminal Justice Analyst
Bert Winkler, Criminal Justice Programs Manager
Jacqueline Jackson, Senior Criminal Justice Analyst

I. Welcome and Opening Comments, April Bristow, Chair

CJC Executive Director introduced the new chair, April Bristow, General Counsel for the 15th Judicial Circuit. Ms. Bristow welcomed the attendees and convened the meeting.

II. Roll Call and Introduction of Guests

Members and guests signed in the chat box for attendance in lieu of roll call and introductions.

III. Role of the Court System Task Force, *April Bristow and Regenia Herring*

Ms. Bristow and Ms. Herring discussed the role of the reconstituted Court System Task Force, indicating that it would take direction from the Criminal Justice Commission and focus its efforts initially on the MacArthur Foundation Safety and Justice Challenge (SJC). Ms. Bristow commented that she would like to see the task force focus on fact finding and recommendations that can be realistically attained. She would like to see case process efficiency examined in a manner consistent with the goals of the SJC.

IV. CJC Update, *Regenia Herring*

Ms. Herring indicated that the CJC has made some significant gains through its work, but that some SJC proposals were not adopted. She stated that it would be beneficial if more progressive proposals and actions were developed by Palm Beach County.

V. Safety and Justice Challenge Update, *Regenia Herring, Bert Winkler and Jacqueline Jackson*

Bert Winkler and Jacqueline Jackson presented updates on various aspects of SJC.

- The text reminder system is ongoing. The appearance rate for defendants receiving text reminders is 97%. Defendants on SOR are now receiving text reminders for Pretrial Services appointments. DOC Probation is working with our vendor Uptrust to develop a similar system.
- 21 participants have now been housed in the PalmFUSE project with a goal of 25. Only two have been rearrested. In the two year period prior to being housed, the 21 participants were booked 103 times for a total of 1,932 bed days at a cost of \$250,820 to the county (\$135/day). The PBC Continuum of Care will continue to use frequent utilizer data to prioritize homeless individuals for housing.
- The Public Defender continues its work with its Social Services Coordinator obtaining placements for pretrial clients with community services providers to reduce length of stay in jail.
- Pretrial Services continues to provide indigent clients with bus passes for court hearings and related appointments as well as funding for required drug screens.
- Two new programs are being developed. The first will seek to reduce recidivism for individuals cycling through the jail on low level offenses who plead guilty at First Appearance, receive sentences of ten days or less and have behavioral health challenges. Participants would receive a brief assessment at the jail and then be connected to appropriate services in the community. The second will seek to improve pretrial success for defendants on SOR by making peer mentors available to them.
- Additional funding may be available in 2022 from the MacArthur Foundation in the form of a Sustainability Grant.

- A Memorandum of Understanding has been ratified between the CJC and the Florida State University School of Criminology and Criminal Justice for future research projects.

VI. New Business

A. Preliminary Report on the Impact of Judicial Administrative Order during COVID-19 that Reduced Bonds for Some Third Degree Felonies from \$3,000 to \$1,000-*Jennifer Copp, Florida State University*

Dr. Jennifer Copp of Florida State University (FSU) presented preliminary findings regarding the administrative order (AO) referenced above. A complete report will be issued by the end of the year. The preliminary findings were consistent with the AO achieving its objective of reducing overall bond amounts on certain third degree felonies, leading to higher rates of pretrial release and less time spent in jail during the pandemic. FSU is studying the data on the individuals released pursuant to the AO to determine if there was a corresponding effect on the rates of failures to appear (FTA) and recidivism. Comparing these individuals to those with similar third degree felony charges who were released prior to the issuance of the AO, it was found that FTAs dropped from 5% (pre-AO) to less than 2% (post-AO). The recidivism rate also dropped for the post-AO group, from 15% to 9%.

B. Discuss Testing Unsecured Bond Option with Evaluation-*Jennifer Copp*

Dr. Copp indicated that a pilot project was going to be developed, in consultation with stakeholders, that would create an option of an unsecured bond for a specific subset of defendants, who could then be compared to individuals released on money bond in regard to pretrial success.

C. CJC Executive Committee Directed Staff to Research Current Bond Forfeiture Rates and Collection Process for Further Review-*Regenia Herring*

Ms. Herring informed the members that the CJC Executive Committee has directed staff to research and report on the rates and collection process of bond forfeitures.

The meeting was adjourned.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, October 12, 2021; 12:00 P.M.