

## 2020.07.01 - TF. Policy & Race Equity Comm. Mtg. Notes

Present: Reena Shah, Andre Davis, Steve Sakamoto-Wengel, Laura Opont, Paul Cucuzella, Zafar Shah, Zenita Wickham Hurley, Shelly Mintz, Danielle Cruttenden, Matthew Stubenberg, Hannibal Kemerer, Sandy Bartlett, Ethan Navare, Zak Shirley, Rachel Wanat, Jessica Williams, Ann Ciekot, Marceline White, Cizhu Feng, Franklyn Baker, David Eppler, Juliana Bell, Karen Anderson, Rachel Wanat, Sandy Brantley, Shelly Martin, Susan Erlichman, Victoria Schultz, Wendy Shiff, Xinyi Li, Guy Flynn, Anand Parikh, Shelby McClousky, Ebele Ebonwu, Kevin Schaum

### **General Notes**

**Transparency:** AG's office has determined that the Open Meetings Act doesn't technically apply, but in interest of transparency the TF. will allow public access to all meetings. Interested members of the public just need to email to get access information.

**Subcommittees:** As sub-committees are being formed, they need to be added to the website. They will follow the same transparency procedures as the full committees.

**Task force Meeting on 7/9:** The full task force will meet in one week, each committee should prepare a 3-5 minute presentation on the specifics of their plans. Time will be included for the full taskforce to ask questions.

**Available Resources (Research, tech issues, working through REIA toolkit):** AAG's (Sandy Brantley, Jessica Williams, Anand Parikh), Law Clerks, Data and Legal Technology Committee.

**CARES Funding:** May be important to coordinate how all committees are planning on utilizing CARES funding. Committees need specific ideas in order to receive this funding.

**Community Engagement:** Many committees have a subcommittee on community engagement, chairs can reach out to PACE Committee in order to pool resources and avoid duplication of efforts.

### **Racial Equity Impact Assessment Toolkit Example-Life and Health Planning Committee**

**1st question of toolkit:** What racial/ethnic groups are most affected by any concerns with issues related to this proposal?

-Problem: people often find themselves in crisis and don't have things in place like advanced directives or powers of attorney, and during a crisis is the worst time to try and set these things up.

-This is an issue that is important to everybody.

-Pointed out that elderly homeowners, even including those without liens, who pass away or move into extended care facilities only have informal arrangements for leaving property in care of family members. When the homeowner passes, it becomes very difficult for many of these family members to properly manage this property.

**Note:** Demonstrates that the question of which racial/ethnic groups can really be read as which groups of any type. Focus on who is most impacted by lack of awareness or access. Could be geographical, age, race, etc.

**Note:** Covid-19 is disproportionately hitting communities of color, chairs should use Covid data to sharpen the focus of their research into the issue area.

**2nd Question, Engaging Stakeholders:** More than having members from diverse perspectives, it is necessary to have input from diverse perspectives. Chairs should follow-up if the diverse perspectives represented on their committees aren't speaking up.

**3rd Question, Identifying and Documenting Racial Inequities:** Lots of research is out there, LHP Committee found a helpful study through a simple google search.

**Note:** Utilize AAG's and Law Clerks to conduct research if you're hitting a wall.

**Committee Reports**-Where are individual committees at, where and how have chairs been able to implement race equity policies.

#### **Civil Legal Aid Funding Committee**

-Catherine Bledsoe: First focus is on tapping into CARES Act funding. MD received around 1.3 billion, and five most populous counties received about 500 million, money which must be spent by Dec. 31st. Committee is working to find how to utilize this money for civil legal aid.

-MD legal services (largest civil legal aid provider) has had a budget shortfall of \$5 million as a result of court closures, so looking into longer term sources of aid.

-Short term strategy, galvanize the private bar to step in.

-Need not just to make up for the shortfall but increase funding to respond to covid-19 increases in need.

#### **Pro Bono Committee**

-Pro Bono Committee has not met yet but getting the private bar to step in is a priority. The Equal Justice Council may be able to redirect their efforts to providing 'boots on the ground' for the coming wave of legal needs.

-On diversity: Focusing on bringing in members of hardest hit communities, such as LatinX, into the committee process. Also planning on being centered in Baltimore, but also including services to other parts of MD.

Big idea is to have the number of aspirational Pro Bono hours encouraged by the bar increased.

### **Consumer Protection Committee**

The committee had their first meeting last week. Lots of representation in terms of race, ethnicity, age, expertise, and geography.

-Issue being focused on is debt collection; there will be a huge number of debt collection cases filed when courts reopen.

-Short term ideas: alternative dispute resolution/online resolution, public outreach, credit counseling services.

-Long term: looking into creating income-based payment plans and looking at garnishment laws.

-In the process of creating subcommittees to look into different facets of debt collection.

### **Housing Security Committee**

Committee has met, the first step was to focus expertise on most applicable subcommittees, one on renters issues and one on homeowners issues. Then set up short-term, medium-term, and long-term phases.

-Phase one: eviction prevention, diversion programs to keep cases from going to court. Maximize effectiveness of relief programs, whether that's putting together resources or just making people aware resources exist.

-Phase 2: focus on courts, how can ADR programs and available relief programs keep cases moving without them going to final judgement. Planning on leveraging judiciary members to find out what's feasible. Working to have geographical diversity in these judiciary members.

-Phase 3: Legislative policy goals. Need to not just address Covid-19 directly, but underlying housing issues that have existed long before the pandemic.

Selection of committee members has been a process of identifying those who have already been doing meaningful work in this subject area, including lawyers, legal advocates, community organizers.

-In the meeting, talked about how values and vision lead you to strategies that everyone has consensus on. This applies to outward values displayed by work as well as internal values undertaken within the committee. Chairs are applying this by having every voice heard, 'No Stupid Questions.'

### **Data and Legal Technology Committee**

Committee has met. Includes libraries, courts, legal firms, tech and non-tech people. Broken down to 3 subcommittees.

- Court operations

- Court Data

- Technology Barriers

-Short term goals: Writing a paper on standards for recommendations on courts reopening, using infographics for easily accessible information. In addition, utilizing technology fixes for issues found by other committees

**Note:** This committee is a resource to other committees for finding data.

### **Economic and Food Security Committee**

Committee still organizing highly diverse membership, will meet before the task force meeting next week. Emphasis on including members who have 'lived experience,' i.e. actually used these services. Focus on access to public benefits, such as unemployment insurance, temporary cash and income and food benefits. Subcommittees:

- unemployment insurance

- temporary cash and income assistance

- healthcare

-Focus is on access to these programs, both the administrative side of distributing benefits being overwhelmed and assisting the large number of people trying to access these programs for the first time. Plan to find gaps in access to programs, provide public outreach and education to those in need of benefits.

### **Life and Health Planning Committee**

Brought together groups like MD Pro Bono Services and other relevant orgs, working on bringing in diverse perspectives.

- Have been working together for some time

Focusing on two subcommittees, one on resources for developing wills, advanced directives, and power of attorney, second on community outreach, finding out what individuals on the ground are experiencing.

-Still working on bringing in racial diversity to the committee, doing so by reaching out to community organizers, local commission on aging, and others.

### **Surviving Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation Committee**

Committee has met. Set up subcommittees and leadership for those subcommittees. Focus on identifying and assisting vulnerable communities and individuals who are at higher risk for abuse

Big challenge has been the broad scope of the committee, addressing this by finding experts on specific populations. This includes geography, race, religion, age.

- Have found a drop in reporting, however much more likely that is due to lack of the normal reporting systems (schools, lawyers, caregivers).

- Short term goal: Informing people as to what reporting methods are available. Plan to develop digital and hard-copy information that would direct vulnerable groups to relevant resources.

- Develop a hotline.

### **Public Awareness and Community Engagement Committee**

- Still populating committee. Meeting tomorrow to discuss ways to get word out to the public.

- Multi-pronged approach: print media, radio, tv. Will need alternative methods, possible pamphlets.

**Note:** Many committees have a subcommittee on community engagement, chairs can reach out to PACEC in order to pool resources and avoid duplication of efforts.