

King County Superior Court Targeted Operational Master Plan

**Presented to the
Superior Court Targeted FMP Steering Committee
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Children & Families Involved in the Justice System -- Background

- Among the court's primary duties is the resolution of legal disputes involving children and families.
- Types of cases may include dependency, family law (divorce, adoption), Becca (truancy, runaways), and juvenile offender.
- During the court process, children and families interact with many stakeholders, such as:
 - Judges, commissioners, attorneys, social workers, probation counselors, law enforcement, service and treatment providers, and detention staff.

Challenges for Children & Families Involved in the Justice System

- Proceedings can be complex and demanding.
- Some families may be involved in multiple cases simultaneously where each case has distinct procedures.
- Of all case types, children and family cases pose the greatest threat of violence in the court facility.
- Corresponding services such as urinalysis, paternity testing, counseling, treatment, and child care can be difficult to access and significantly delayed.
- It can be difficult for litigants, especially non-represented, to access information about their legal rights and expectations.

Facility/Space Challenges for Children & Families Involved in the Court System

- None of the three sites – King County Courthouse, Youth Service Center (YSC) & Regional Justice Center – handles all case types related to children and families. This requires families to maneuver through multiple sites for handling their cases
- Parking and transportation to these facilities can be difficult.
- Spaces are not conducive to assist children and families to resolve their disputes. For example,
 - ✓ Lack of space for court-related services such as child care, urinalysis, assessments, etc.
 - ✓ Lack of interview rooms appropriate for families.
 - ✓ YSC faces millions of dollars in major maintenance costs in just the near term.

Targeted Operational Master Plan Timeline and Structure

- These issues led to a proviso in the 2005 Adopted Budget requesting a work plan for a targeted operational master plan.
- Developed jointly by the Superior Court and Executive, the work plan was transmitted on June 1, 2005 to Council and approved in August 2005.
- Chaired by Presiding Judge Trickey and Maura Brueger, Senior Advisor, Executive Office, a Cabinet Oversight Group guided the development of the OMP. Membership included:
 - King County Superior Court, Executive Office, King County Council, Office of Management & Budget, Prosecuting Attorney's Office, Office of Public Defense, WA State Department of Social & Health Services, WA State Attorney General's Office, King County District Court, King County Youth & Family Service Network, Casey Family Programs, and King County Bar Association.
- Policy Studies Inc. (PSI) was selected as the consultant in October 2005.
- The Targeted Operational Master Plan has been approved by the Superior Court judges, King County Executive, and King County Council.

Targeted OMP Approach

- Identify the guiding principles for an effective children and family justice system;
- Describe current programs and services for children and families in the court system;
- Assess work processes, interfaces among programs and agencies, and needs for functional adjacencies; and,
- Make recommendations for improvements in the children and family justice system.

Guiding Principles

After extensive stakeholder interviews and discussions, the Cabinet Oversight Group developed five principles that became a core element of the OMP recommendations.

1. Accessible. The justice system should be convenient, timely, and affordable to everyone with a legitimate concern.
2. Understandable. Families need to understand the terminology used in the court and what they are being ordered to do.
3. Comprehensive. Holistically address families with multiple court cases, both in terms of legal matters, and in terms of treatment and supports services.
4. Effective. Produce better outcomes for families in King County.
5. Culturally Competent. Assure the justice system's sensitivity to issues of language and culture.

Assessment

- PSI produced a high-level forecast of caseload and judicial need through 2020. This forecast indicates that the overall increase in workload is likely to be modest – a total of eleven percent increase in workload and judicial need from 2005 to 2020.
- There was extensive stakeholder input in the development of the OMP, including participation by judges, commissioners, attorneys, court staff, social workers, probation counselors, law enforcement, service and treatment providers, and youth and families involved in the justice system.
- With the support of consultant PSI, the Cabinet Oversight Group assessed over 60 options for improving children & family justice services.
- The OMP successfully resulted in:
 - ✓ Eleven recommendations for delivering more coordinated, accessible, and effective justice services to children and families; and
 - ✓ Setting the stage for analyzing the size, type, and cost of potential facilities.

Recommendations 1 & 2

- ***Coordinate Court and Service Responses to Families Involved in Multiple Court Cases***
 - For children and families with multiple cases, address their legal matters consistently, comprehensively, and without unnecessary duplication through combining or coordinating cases.
 - Better coordinate and communicate among agencies responsible for assessing, referring, managing, and providing services to families complying with court-ordered service requirements.
- ***Improve Litigant Information and Assistance***
 - The children-family justice system can be complex and confusing for litigants involved in resolving disputes.
 - Develop specific improvements to litigant information and assistance based on litigant surveys.
 - Examine the feasibility of expanding the role and number of court staff to increase procedural advice to litigants in dependency, family law, Becca, offender, and other matters involving children and families.

Recommendations 3 & 4

■ ***Reduce Case Processing Delays***

- Improve case management; eliminate unnecessary or duplicative hearings; improve trial scheduling; and assure judges have the necessary information to move the case closer to resolution.
- Develop an automated case management system that is capable of identifying and providing complete information on all the cases involving a family.

■ ***Optimize Therapeutic Courts***

- There is an opportunity to talk about the appropriate size and funding of therapeutic courts (juvenile drug court, juvenile treatment court & family treatment court), given the growing experience and information about these approaches.
- The OMP recommends conducting policy discussions to develop a sustainable approach for therapeutic courts.

Recommendations 5 & 6

- ***Provide Case-Related Services On-Site***
 - There are numerous court-related services that, if readily accessible, help move cases through the procedural steps necessary to reach resolution. (Child care, mediation services, urinalysis, parent seminars, etc.)
 - Identify and incorporate these services into the facility master plan process to assure on-site access.
- ***Establish within the Court Facility Screening, Assessment and Linkages to Community-Based Social and Treatment Services***
 - Link children and families to social and treatment services before they leave the court facility by developing an integrated process for screening, assessment, and enrollment in collaboration with community providers.
 - Resolve potential barriers to client participation – such as scheduling, transportation, interpreters, funding, and childcare.

Recommendations 7 & 8

- ***Provide a Safe and Secure Environment for Litigants, Public, Court and Court-related Staff***
 - It is imperative that the environment for litigants, witnesses, family members, attorneys, staff and judicial officers is safe and secure.
 - Identify and implement methods for assuring a safe and secure environment. Incorporate security and safety measures into the facility master plan process and potential building concepts.
- ***Improve Facility Accessibility***
 - Simply getting to court facilities poses a great challenge for many of the litigants, staff and community service partners.
 - Improve access to court facilities through exploring public transportation options, improvements to parking needs, technology solutions, alternative operating hours, and a community-based reception center for law enforcement.

Recommendations 9 & 10

■ ***Assure Cultural Competency***

- Culture has a major influence on effectiveness of the justice system to deliver services.
- Build the knowledge and skills of all individuals and systems to work effectively with families from many different cultures. Involve clients, community leaders, and service providers from the minority community to improve cultural competency.

■ ***Optimize Technology***

- The current juvenile and family justice system relies upon 21 stand alone applications and five major technology systems.
- Identify the specific technology needs, such as a comprehensive case management system, to implement OMP recommendations.

Recommendation 11

- ***Provide Facilities that Meet the Needs Identified***
 - Justice services for children and families are fragmented across three sites.
 - The OMP includes the facility concept of providing a comprehensive set of justice services to children and families *on the same site* (e.g., Children and Family Justice Center).
 - Questions about how many sites, costs, and other facility implications will be examined as part of the next phase, the Facilities Master Plan (FMP).
 - If the FMP results in a recommendation to proceed with a Children and Family Justice Center, it will not determine the actual site(s). However, it will provide information that will contribute to a potential review of sites, such as the number of facilities and facility size.

Facilities Master Plan: Next Steps

- The resources to complete the FMP are included in the 2007 Executive Proposed Budget.
- If funding is approved by Council, the FMP would begin in late 2006 and be completed in the 4th quarter of 2007
- FMP Steps
 - Update workload trends/forecasts
 - Develop options for conceptual building program
 - Complete life-cycle cost analysis for each option
 - Draft report
- Oversight Committee and workgroups will include representatives from stakeholder groups