

August 31, 2006

The Honorable Larry Phillips  
Chair, King County Council  
Room 1200  
C O U R T H O U S E

Dear Councilmember Phillips:

I am pleased to transmit the Superior Court Targeted Operational Master Plan (OMP) for your review and consideration. As outlined in the proviso in the 2005 Adopted Budget Ordinance, the focus of this OMP was to examine a comprehensive approach for juvenile, family law, and related therapeutic courts and review the potential facility needs for these operations. Under the guidance of the Cabinet Oversight Group, the nine-month effort to develop the OMP successfully resulted in eleven recommendations for delivering more coordinated, accessible, and effective justice services to children and families.

This OMP builds on a track record in King County for innovative responses to the needs that bring children and families to the door of the justice system. Over the past ten years, the council and my office have supported the vision and drive of the Superior Court to pursue many pioneering programs, including the Unified Family Court Intensive Case Management, Juvenile Drug Court, Reclaiming Futures, Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, evidence-based treatment programs, Family Treatment Court, and Systems Integration. Today, King County is regarded as a national leader in embracing best practices and state-of-the-art programs on behalf of families involved in the justice system.

In recent years, these advances highlighted the need for a more comprehensive and accessible approach across the many types of cases that involve children and families. Divorce, abuse and neglect, truancy, delinquency, and other family conflicts are the main reasons for children and families to come to the attention of the justice system. The cases related to these conflicts can be complex and can present many barriers for families to successfully navigate. Moreover, families can be involved in multiple cases which often proceed on separate legal tracks, governed by different rules, and supported by different system professionals. Families can also struggle with accessing and completing services required by the court due to cost, transportation, scheduling, and other challenges.

Another concern is that three different sites handle matters for children and families depending on the type of case – Juvenile Court (12<sup>th</sup> and Alder, Seattle), King County Courthouse (downtown, Seattle), and the Regional Justice Center (Kent). For example, it is possible for families to have cases in more than one site at the same time. Not only are our justice services divided among these sites, each site falls short in meeting the particular needs of children and families. In particular, the space at the Juvenile Court facility is not conducive to assisting youth and their families in resolving disputes. This facility also faces millions of dollars in major maintenance projects in the near future.

In response to the Superior Court raising these issues, the 2005 Adopted Budget Ordinance includes a provision supporting the preparation of a Targeted Operational Master Plan (OMP). In the spring of 2005, the Superior Court and the Office of Management and Budget convened a work group to prepare the OMP work plan called for in the proviso. The work plan was transmitted to the King County Council on June 1, 2005 and approved by motion in August of 2005. By October 2005, Policies Studies Incorporated (PSI) was selected as the consultant for this project.

Inclusive stakeholder involvement is a hallmark of this OMP. The issues that bring children and families to the attention of the justice system can be complex and require a response that involves judges, commissioners, attorneys, social workers, probation officers, service providers, schools, law enforcement, and treatment services. Co-chaired by Judge Michael Trickey, Presiding Judge, Superior Court, and Maura Brueger, Senior Advisor, King County Executive's Office, the Cabinet Oversight Group guided the development of the OMP. This group included representatives from the King County Superior Court, King County Executive Office, King County Council, Office of Management and Budget, Prosecuting Attorney's Office, Office of Public Defense, Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Washington State Attorney General's Office, King County District Court, King County Youth and Family Service Network, Casey Family Programs, and King County Bar Association.

Early in the project, PSI asked stakeholders how children and families *should* experience the justice system. The Cabinet Oversight Group created five major principles from this information that guided the work of the project and the development of the eleven OMP recommendations.

- *Accessible.* The justice system should be convenient, timely, and affordable to everyone with a legitimate concern.
- *Understandable.* Families need to understand the terminology used in the court and what they are being ordered to do.
- *Comprehensive.* Holistically address families with multiple court cases, both in terms of legal matters, and in terms of treatment and supports services.

- *Effective.* Produce better outcomes for families in King County.
- *Culturally Competent.* Assure the justice system's sensitivity to issues of language and culture.

The OMP also provides a long-term outlook for operations and services related to cases involving children and families. 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. Based on projected population increases and filing rates per 100,000 population, a total of eleven percent increase in workload and judicial need is projected from 2005 to 2020.

With the support of PSI, the Cabinet Oversight Group conducted an extensive examination of current work flows, reviewed the concerns and suggestions of litigants and system professionals, and assessed over 60 options for improving children and family justice services. From this work, the oversight group developed eleven recommendations that, consistent with the guiding principles, emphasize strategies for improving the experience of children and families involved in the court system. These recommendations are listed below:

1. Coordinate Court and Service Responses to Families Involved in Multiple Court Cases.
2. Improve Litigant Information and Assistance.
3. Reduce Case Processing Delays.
4. Optimize Therapeutic Courts.
5. Provide Case-Related Services On-Site.
6. Establish within the Court Facility Screening, Assessment and Linkages to Community-Based Social and Treatment Services.
7. Provide a Safe and Secure Environment for Litigants, Public, Court and Court-related Staff.
8. Improve Facility Accessibility.
9. Assure Cultural Competency.
10. Optimize Technology.
11. Provide Facilities that Meet the Needs Identified.

As a whole, these recommendations set a new direction for a more coordinated, accessible, understandable, and effective response to the conflicts and the underlying causes that bring children and families into the justice system. They also may require new or different space than is available in the current facilities. The Cabinet Oversight Group reviewed a range of service delivery concepts and preferred creating one or two "full-service" facilities where most cases involving children and families would be heard and services related to these cases would be available.

As noted in the OMP, these concepts resulted in three potential facility options – one full service facility, one initial full service facility with a second full service facility to follow, and two full service facilities. These three full-service options will be compared to a baseline option that only addresses the long-term facility needs if the juvenile and family court operations remain in their current locations.

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Given these facility implications, the next step is to complete a Facility Master Plan (FMP). The attached Superior Court Targeted FMP Work Program includes the major work elements, timeline, and process for completing an FMP. Specifically, the FMP will accomplish the following major elements by the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2007:

- Update workload forecasts and establish operational assumptions
- Develop conceptual building program options for Children & Family Court
- Conduct life-cycle cost analyses
- Develop draft report

The FMP work program also indicates that the results from the FMP will be integrated with other criminal justice planning efforts. It is important to note that this FMP work will take place in the face of constrained debt service. The available unallocated general fund capacity is currently less than \$100 million. Competing for this debt capacity are a multitude of other high priority capital projects that are in the planning stages, including a consolidated elections facility; consolidated data center; re-location of the Criminal Investigation Division; capital improvements resulting from operational and facilities master plans currently underway for the District Court, and the King County Sheriff's Office; other capital projects in the Courthouse, such as the relocation of WER; a new evidence and AFIS facility for the Sheriff; and capital proposals arising from the Regional Justice Center site plan under development.

The work of the FMP will be guided by a steering committee co-chaired by Judge Trickey and Kathy Brown, Facilities Management Division Director. A work group will also be convened to support the project and the work of consultants on the technical pieces of this effort. Funding for the FMP will be included in the 2007 Executive Proposed Budget.

The Superior Court Targeted OMP sets an exciting and promising agenda for improving the delivery of justice services to children and families. I am pleased that, after a careful review, the Superior Court judges have elected to support the OMP. The enclosed materials include a letter from Judge Trickey summarizing the court's review process. I would like to thank Judge Trickey for his leadership on this project as well as Maura Brueger from my staff, and the many judges and commissioners whose time and expertise made this OMP possible. The court's managers and staff also should be recognized for their countless hours spent describing current operations, generating data, and reviewing draft work products.

I would also like to thank Councilmembers Larry Gossett and Kathy Lambert, District Court Chief Presiding Judge Corinna Harn, and members of the Cabinet Oversight Group and Project Workgroup for contributing their enthusiasm, patience, and expertise to the development of this OMP. This report is another example that the inherently complex issues in our justice system can only be addressed with the collective interest and expertise of all parties.

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On behalf of the Superior Court, we look forward to your review of these documents and encourage your approval of the attached ordinance approving the OMP. If you have any questions, please contact Judge Michael Trickey, Presiding Judge, King County Superior Court at 206-296-9625, or Maura Brueger, Senior Advisor, King County Executive's Office, at 206-296-4001.

Sincerely,

Ron Sims  
King County Executive

Enclosures

cc: King County Councilmembers

ATTN: Ross Baker, Chief of Staff  
Shelley Sutton, Policy Staff Director  
Rebecha Cusack, Lead Staff, BFM Committee  
Clifton Curry, Senior Legislative Analyst, LJHS Committee  
Anne Noris, Clerk of the Council

The Honorable Michael Trickey, Presiding Judge, King County Superior Court  
The Honorable Patricia Clark, Chief Juvenile Judge, King County Superior Court  
The Honorable Corinna Harn, Chief Presiding Judge, King County District Court  
The Honorable Norm Maleng, King County Prosecuting Attorney  
King County Superior Targeted Operational Master Plan Cabinet Oversight Group  
Jackie MacLean, Director, Department of Community and Human Services  
Paul Tanaka, County Administrative Officer, Department of Executive Services  
Kathy Brown, Division Director, Facilities Management, DES  
Bob Cowan, Director, Office of Management and Budget  
Reed Holtgeerts, Director, Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention  
Paul Sherfey, Chief Administrative Officer, King County Superior Court