



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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Criminal Justice Task Force on Offender Court Costs and Collections

Meeting Minutes
Zoom - Virtual Meeting
August 20, 2021

Attendees:

Representative Robin Lundstrum	Ms. Lori Kumpuris (for Mr. Bob McMahan)
Senator Clarke Tucker	Mr. Rick Stallings
Judge Tommy Fowler	Ms. Kristin Clark
Ms. Shari Gray (for Mr. Benny Magness)	Ms. Elizabeth Taylor
Senator Bob Ballinger	Ms. Robin White
Ms. Ateca Foreman	

Guests:

Ms. Lindsay Wallace (DOC Chief of Staff)	Ms. Melissa Rangel (DOC Executive Assistant)
Mr. Paul Loathian (DFA Auditor)	Mr. Bob Sanders (INA General Manager)
Mr. Ralph Hudson (Director of Division of Labor)	

Members Absent:

Sheriff John Montgomery	Judge Hamilton Singleton
Circuit Clerk Debbie Wise	Representative Keith Slape
Ms. Lorie Mason Jordan	

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- I. Call to order by Senator Robin Lundstrum
 - II. Motion to Approve Minutes from Meeting on July 19th, 2021
Judge Tommy Fowler mentioned an error on the minutes and that there was a duplication on the amounts of the fees. Chief Wallace assured the group that the duplication would be addressed.
 - III. Discussion of Dear Colleague letter and the Bench card for state courts
Judge Tommy Fowler introduced the Dear Colleague letter from the Department of Justice and his involvement with determining court costs and fees in 2016. The "Dear Colleague" letter establishes seven guiding principles for fines and fees and stops the practice in district courts of incarcerating individuals who cannot pay their fees. He highlighted several specific principles. Since following this procedure, Craighead County has a 70-80 percent collection rate of total costs.

IV. INA Findings and Payment System Development Discussion

Mr. Bob Sanders and Mr. Ralph Hudson presented information on data related to offender court costs/fines. There are currently three ways to pay court fees and fines: online court payments (for participating courts), Department of Correction (DOC) restitution portal, and local online fee/fine payment sites. These systems are similar to those already in place for payments of child support, property tax, state income tax, and more.

There was agreement that we need to get every court on the same page by having a single state-wide system to streamline payment since we have the technology to do so. There were some problems identified with creating such a system: 1. there are so many different entities (counties for example) responsible for accessing and collecting payments. 2. matching offender identities across local and state systems may be difficult. 3. obtaining the data from the courts and having a central access point would require this information to be digitalized and it currently is not.

The group discussed the need for a comprehensive inventory of fee and fine assessing/collecting entities and their computer and digitalization capabilities. Allowing the system to interact with existing payment systems was also discussed, as well as allowing partial payment or automated payment plans for larger amounts owed. Ideas for payment methods with guaranteed funds included credit, PayPal, and retail cash payments.

Mr. Hudson suggested exploring COVID relief funds as a funding option.

V. Questions and Further Discussion

The group discussed concerns with matching payees and payments. The need for a unique identifier was discussed. The task force discussed offender Personal Identification (PID) issues; the comment was made that issues arise when aliases exist. Mr. Stallings noted that everyone arrested with a misdemeanor and up receives a State Identification number (SID) and this gets matched up with aliases. If possible, Mr. Sanders would like to take a look at the data between AOC/ACIC/DOC/DFA. The group agreed this was a good idea. Judge Fowler suggested inviting District court clerks to join the discussion.

VI. Other Business

Next meeting will be set after sending out conflicts.

VII. Meeting adjourned at 2:10 pm.