

GREATEST CHALLENGES & GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

TRANSITIONING TO A REMOTE OFFICE

Challenge

- Technology hardware availability limitations due to interrupted supply chains and increased demand
- Balancing our needs with that of other justice partners to ensure responsive solutions
- Countless extra hours dedicated by leadership, technical specialists, and other staff to ensure a successful transition to an ever-changing environment
- We have a limited ability to resolve cases because of the lack of jury trials and anticipate a large volume of trials once the court system resumes trials.

Accomplishment

- Pivoting 111 staff from in-office work to **full remote operation within 36 hours**
- Training and implementation of multiple videoconferencing and collaboration software platforms for court and in-office use
- Flexible adaptation to continue providing services for victims, witnesses and the public in new ways

GREATEST CHALLENGES & GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENTS: MARSY'S LAW – NEW WI CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

ENACTED ON MAY 4, 2020 WITH CERTIFICATION OF THE SPRING ELECTION

Challenge

- Self executing – immediately effective and no time to prepare
- Occurred during COVID health pandemic
- Unfunded – no additional resources to provide new mandated services
- We were forced to shift resources from non mandated trauma sensitive services to notification services
- Several new rights – most significant is that all crime victims were afforded early notification and participation rights **to be present and be heard at every court proceeding**. This created a staffing crisis in our victim witness intake unit due to the very short turn around time from the time a law enforcement referral comes into the DA's Office to the time of the first court proceeding.

Accomplishment

- We believe we are currently in compliance with this new law
- Able to meet internally and with county and statewide stakeholders via video conferencing to plan, coordinate and communicate new services
- Shifted all resources dedicated to non mandated services to new services
- Updated all letters, forms and website information to reflect new victim rights
- Upon request, victims are currently appearing by Zoom at every proceeding and able to speak to the Judge whenever their rights are implicated. This provides victims a much more significant voice in the criminal justice system.

GREATEST CHALLENGES & GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

INCREASE IN GUN VIOLENCE

Challenge

- Increase in serious, complicated cases without an increase in the number of prosecutors or prosecutorial experience
- Lots of very traumatized victims including the family members of homicide victims. Many of these victims are hesitant to trust anyone connected to the criminal justice system.
- Limited financial resources to keep people safe, repair shattered vehicles, home windows, etc.
- Community Fear

Accomplishment

- Our Crime Response unit was able to connect with victims and offer trauma informed services.
- Crime response was able to secure some additional funds for victims. Those funds have now been spent.
- Creation of a work group with various stakeholders to brainstorm solutions to gun violence outside of traditional resolutions

GREATEST CHALLENGES & GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENTS: CIVIL UNREST

Challenge

- The unjustifiable killing of George Floyd on May 25th, 2020 was a catalyst, but not the origin of understandable anger and outrage towards a system and society that has systematically oppressed African-Americans for four hundred years.
- This righteous anger and outrage manifested itself in wide-spread peaceful protests both here in Dane County, and across the United States.
- A minority of those individuals took advantage of this unrest and sought to enrich themselves through looting, and express their anger through the destruction of private and public property.
- An opportunity to reflect on our own practices, but also to continue our long standing work at addressing disparities and institutional racism.
- Balancing the needs to make victims of looting and vandalism whole, while also ensuring fair and just treatment of those who have violated the law.

TRAININGS (2018-PRESENT):

- Sept. 25, 2018 – Mental Health and Prosecution: What Prosecution Teams Need to Know
- Oct. 11, 2018 – Reaching the “Last Girl” (WCASA)
- Nov. 30, 2018 – Dane County Immigration Affairs: What Prosecution Teams Need to Know
- Dec. 20, 2018 – Working with Transgender Communities in the Criminal Justice System
- Dec. 6, 2018- Managing Trauma at Work: What to do when personal trauma impacts work and when secondary trauma impacts home
- Jan. 17, 2019 – Focused Interruption Coalition: What Prosecution Teams Need to Know
- Feb. 8, 2019 – Book Review – White Fragility: why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism
- April 22, 2019 – Unitarian Church – White Fragility talk by Robin DiAngelo
- April 23, 2019 – White Fragility Discussion group
- May 13, 2019 – Hate Crimes Community Action Team Meeting
- May 30, 2019 – Judge Nicholas McNamara: Prison Admissions Data: What Prosecution Teams are Doing Right and What We Could Do Better
- July/August 2019 – When They See Us – Story of the Central Park 5
- August 8, 2019 – Book Review: The Master Plan: My journey from Life of Prison to a Life of Purpose
- Oct. 9, 2019 – Forgiveness for Prosecution Teams: Does forgiveness have a role in the criminal justice system?
- Oct. 15 & 16, 2019 – YWCA Racial Justice Conference
- Oct/Nov/Dec 2019 – Cracking the Code Training regarding Implicit Bias – Mandatory
- Dec. 11, 2019 – The Language of Domestic Terrorism: What Prosecution Teams Need to Know
- April 22, 2020 – Community Restorative Court Lunch and Learn
- May 12, 2020 – Social Work Ethics and Boundaries Training – Navigating Ethics and Boundaries in Providing Culturally Sensitive Services
- July/Aug 2020 – Dane County DA's Office – New York Times 1619 Project Curriculum
- Summer/Fall 2020 – Book Review: Stamped From the Beginning – The Definitive History of Racist of Ideas in America by Ibram X. Kendi
- Sept 29 – Oct 1, 2020 – YWCA Racial Justice Virtual Conference

Unmet Needs:

- 2 FTE Positions in the Victim/Witness Unit (Marsy's Law)
- Attempting to Re-class Paralegal position to IT Specialist

Commitment to Racial Equity:

- Creation of Social Justice Director Position (using 1 FTE DPU position to offset cost)

Budget Cuts:

- The DA's Office was unable to create a 5% costs savings given new constitutional mandate