

Research Committee Notes
Problem Solving Courts
January 6, 2006

Present: Nina Gardner, Chair (note taker)
Rep. Gilman Shattuck
Stephen Monier, U.S. Marshall
Rod Tenney
John Tobin
Rep. Harriett Cady (excused due to illness)

A general discussion began with the question, "Rehab or lock up" those are the current options. Current criminal justice policy can be strident in its approach. Looking at alternatives can affect how much and how we spend the state's resources dealing with those within the system. There was discussion that there is growing willingness among the various participants in the system to consider new approaches that are outcome driven.

Community-oriented problem solving produces better outcomes. Can courts adopt this kind of new approach, alternatives that can be utilized without jepodizingf safety. There needs also to be a recognition that this approach cannot work in all cases, there are some where adjudication is the appropriate response. But there are some cases which might lend themselves to a new approach which might produce a different outcome.

It was generally recognized that these new approaches are built upon local courts working with those with whom they naturally connect in their local communities. They know the people in the local communities, the resources and the kinds of problems that do not respond well to the existing system. Underlying this whole view is a recognition that resources are limited.

Looking ahead, it will be very important how we frame the discussion concerning these issues. People will ask, "How will this affect my life?"

Next meeting was scheduled for January 20, 2006.