

# Request for City Council Committee Action from the Department of Intergovernmental Relations

Date: July 1, 2008

To: Intergovernmental Relations Committee

Referral to: None

**Subject:** Update on Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee, June Meeting. Focus on impact of budget cuts on public defender program; Update on City partnership with St. Stephen's to reduce long-term homelessness in Minneapolis

**Recommendation:** None

**Previous Directives:**

Prepared by: Melissa Reed, Government Relations Representative, IGR Approved by: Gene Ranieri, Director, IGR Presenters in Committee: Melissa Reed, Government Relations Representative, IGR
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## Reviews

- Permanent Review Committee (PRC): Approval \_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_
- Civil Rights Approval Approval \_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_
- Policy Review Group (PRG): Approval \_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Financial Impact

No financial impact

## Community Impact

The reduction in the number of public defenders will lead to more delays in trials and will cause local jurisdictions to wait longer to collect fines, fees and assessments.

The City-supported partnership with St. Stephen's and the Minneapolis Police Department contributes to the City's goal of ending homelessness by 2016, as outlined in *Heading Home Hennepin*.

## Supporting Information

### Public Defenders

At its June meeting, the Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee discussed the impact on public defenders, city attorneys and the courts of the significant budget cuts that emerged from the 2008 state legislative session. While cuts were targeted to certain segments of the criminal justice system, reductions in funding to any one area hinders the ability of the entire system to administer justice to defendants, victims and the community.

The state Board of Public Defense is facing a \$1.5 million reduction in state funds for 2009, coupled with a projected budget deficit of \$1.9 million. In June, the Board cut more than 15% of its lawyers, or 72 full-time equivalent positions. Public defenders represent the majority of defendants in Minnesota, including 85 percent of those accused of felonies and half of those accused of misdemeanors. The average public defender handles 714 cases a year, and is expected to exceed 800 after the final job cuts take effect in July (WCCO, June 5, 2008).

The impact of these cuts will be felt throughout the justice system, leading to more delays in trials and making local jurisdictions wait longer to collect fines, fees and assessments. The cuts also mean that public defenders will no longer be able to represent parents in child protection and termination-of-parental-rights cases. 23 layoffs are expected, with the rest of the staff reductions coming through voluntary leaves of absence and early retirements.

### **St. Stephen's Outreach Program Partnership**

The meeting also profiled the successful partnership between St. Stephen's Street Outreach Program, the City of Minneapolis and the Minneapolis Police Department. As a grant program with the City, the partnership supports St. Stephen's in their work as "first responders," providing the first contact for individuals living outside and for the community members who are concerned for them, rather than the police.

Since the program's launch in October, 2007, St. Stephen's Outreach staff has housed thirty homeless adults and is presently working with another fifteen to locate housing. Currently, six full-time outreach staff work in Downtown Minneapolis to identify chronically homeless individuals and help connect them with housing and other resources. St. Stephen's hopes to increase their staff to 10-12 outreach workers.

In addition to connecting people with services, another goal of the program is to reduce police, city and county costs. Police officers' time is approximately \$30/hour, a night in jail costs approximately \$363, and a night in detox costs approximately \$192. It costs St. Stephen's \$120,000/shift to staff their shelter. It is estimated that the top 50 users of county services used \$4.2 million in housing services over the past 4 years. Long-term, stable housing is significantly more cost effective, reduces the strain on public resources, and is safer and healthier for the individuals served.