

PHILADELPHIA STANDARDS AND GOALS
EXEMPLARY COURT PROJECT

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Philadelphia Standards and Goals

Exemplary Court Project

From Conception to Reality

"The Philadelphia Experience"

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I. Introduction

Equipped with the fruits of five years of self-analysis and professional evaluation, as well as a wealth of innovative activity under the direction of young and progressive administration, the Office of Court Administration of the Court of Common Pleas and the Municipal Court of Philadelphia embarked on a comprehensive analysis and planning effort early in 1974 to achieve for Philadelphia the status of a "Model Standards and Goals City for the United States".

A. Review of Standards and Goals, National Advisory Commission on Justice and the American Bar Association

With this goal in mind the reports of the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice (NAC) Standards and Goals, as well as those of the American Bar Association (ABA) were analyzed in detail with a view towards implementation. First, the Standards themselves were analyzed noting the similarities and differences that existed between those of the NAC and the ABA. The comparative analysis of these standards performed by the ABA was particularly instructive in this regard. From this conceptual study there emerged a single model, or series of interconnected standards, which were used to evaluate Court operations. Court procedures were systematically measured against each of these standards to determine whether they fell short, matched or exceeded the goals.

B. Results of Analysis

As a result of this analysis, it was found that the Philadelphia court system, together with the other Philadelphia criminal justice agencies, had

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implemented many, if not most, of the standards and goals of the NAC and ABA.

Throughout this process of review every attempt was made to operationally define the standards and goals, note present operations, and determine deficiencies. Once these deficiencies were located, specific solutions were designed to bring operations in line with the standards.

C. Development of the Plan

A concept entitled, "The Court Impact Plan", set forth by the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, which proposed the implementation of almost every national court innovative program in one large criminal system, was used in conjunction with our Standards and Goals analysis to help us form the nucleus of Philadelphia's proposal to improve Court operations. Specifically, the "Impact Plan" concept with its dozen or more suggested programs was supplemented with locally developed ideas to become the vehicle to implement the standards. Further analysis and consolidation merged the entire program into ten (10) sub-projects as follows:

1. Management and Evaluation of the Plan and Planning for the Courts
2. Philadelphia Justice Information System (PJIS) - An improved criminal justice information system
3. Calendaring, Conflict-Free Scheduling
4. Prosecution Management Information System (PROMIS II)

5. Pretrial Screening and Release, Investigation and Warrant Service Unit Expansion
6. Pretrial Diversion, Project Intercept
7. Witness Utilization Project
8. Court Reporting, Voice Writing Implementation and Computer Assisted Transcription Comparison
9. Sentencing Consistency, Presentence Study
10. Community Programs, Court Volunteer Systems

II. Specific Description of Sub-Projects

A. Management and Evaluation of the Plan and Planning for the Courts

1. Introduction

In developing the Exemplary Court Project grant proposal, it was clearly recognized that for the overall project to be successful there needed to be a single coordinating unit whose function it would be to interact with the nine sub-projects to insure that stated objectives were reached. In addition, there was need to develop a system of evaluation to measure the effectiveness of each of these projects. To accomplish these goals the Management and Evaluation Team was developed.

The Courts had long had a small Research and Planning Unit whose task it was to examine court operations with an eye towards improvement. Building on this foundation, it was decided to create an expanded unit whose job it would be not only to perform the coordinating and evaluating tasks so necessary for the success of the other sub-projects, but also to provide a formalized planning process for the court. As such, court operations would be examined in depth to determine which of the many Standards and Goals of the NAC and ABA could be best

implemented by the nine sub-projects or by the efforts of this unit.

2. Examination of Standards, Management and Evaluation Unit

A preliminary analysis of the Standards and Goals pinpointed a number of areas in which Philadelphia has not fully met the Standards and Goals. Where appropriate, it was decided that the Management and Evaluation Unit would collect data, suggest alternative solutions, prepare cost-benefit analysis of operating programs both within and outside of the Exemplary Court Project, and work on budget analysis problems. Some of the specified areas which are being explored by the Management and Evaluation Team include:

- a. In response to Court Standard 4.10, "Pretrial Motions and Conferences", a consolidated pretrial motions study has been initiated to determine whether all pretrial motions can be consolidated and heard at one single motions hearing (sometimes referred to as an "Omnibus Hearing")
- b. In response to Court Standard 15.2, "Subject Matter of the Court Plan", the feasibility of developing a mass disorder plan for the entire judicial system is being explored.
- c. In response to Court Standard 4.81, "Preliminary Hearing and Arraignment", an investigation is in process to determine whether arraignment can be eliminated as an official step in the trial process.

- d. In response to Court Standards 4.13 and 4.14 an intensive jury management study has been conducted with its aim to facilitate jury utilization and, thereby, decrease costs to the Courts.

In general, the aim of the Management and Evaluation Unit is to constantly survey the standards and goals of the NAC and ABA with the goal of realizing as many of these standards as possible.

By far the most significant efforts of the team will be to provide a coordinated plan for the improvement of the Philadelphia Court System.

3. Results Expected and Achieved to Date

As mentioned above, it would be impossible to enumerate all the areas and/or results the Management and Evaluation Unit are expected to achieve. Suffice to say the aim of this unit is to work towards a common goal which is determining the most effective means for achieving the objectives of the Standards and Goals as they apply to the Philadelphia Court System, and providing the leadership and guidance for the execution of all necessary steps leading towards this achievement. This unit started basic activity in late 1974 but did not become fully operational until August of 1975 with the naming of its director and two final staff members. This unit has initiated numerous procedural innovations which have lead to improved operations and subsequent cost savings to the Court. In addition, the unit is well on its way to completing its major research efforts -- Omnibus and Arraignment Study, Mass Disorder Plan -- with most of the preliminary research completed. Many short and long range efforts have been planned, designed and implemented as well.

B. Philadelphia Justice Information System

1. Introduction

A basic, computer science axiom is that there are three (3) essential elements of any effective information system. They are as follows:

- a. a centralized data base
- b. a control system; and,
- c. a communications system.

The need and value of a centralized data base is well recognized. Where it does not exist, there is a great deal of data redundancy, resulting in a tremendous amount of duplication of effort, events, manpower, data storage and processing.

A control system is clearly as vital as a centralized data base. The number of events, people, documents, and actions that must all come together for the arrest-trial-disposition cycle to be completed is enormous. Given the diverse and independent justice agencies involved in this process there is an absolute need for control machinery which will monitor and facilitate the movement from arrest through disposition.

Finally, an adequate communications system is an essential ingredient in the effective operation of any large organization. This is particularly true within the court system where communication problems are exacerbated by the fact that there is no single homogeneous entity called the "justice system". Rather, there are a multitude of organizationally independent units which must all have access in some fashion to the plethora of data contained in the information system's computer bank. An extensive communication system is required

to adequately inform all those who should be informed on a timely basis, both internal and external to the system.

2. Examination of Standards, PJIS

Although Philadelphia has embarked early in 1968 to implement a total justice information system, and on analysis we found ourselves meeting or exceeding many of the national standards of the ABA and NAC for information system support, we did recognize that there were certain areas in which deficiencies existed. In general, the standards talked of a total justice information system which could serve as a control center for information collected, calendar management, individual case history data, case counting, case management for courts, prosecutors, correction officials, etc., as well as a tool for research and evaluation in the full criminal justice system. While Philadelphia had made a start in each of these areas, the criminal justice system lacked an overall and complete system that would coordinate all aspects of the criminal justice process and avoid duplication of effort. Out of this concern to develop a total justice information system, the PJIS project was born.

3. Results Expected and Achieved to Date

The long range anticipated results from the full implementation of PJIS are summarized as follows:

- a. Coordinating all phases of the judicial process.
- b. Monitoring case flow, noting completion dates and maintaining an inventory of unfinished tasks.
- c. Distributing relevant information to all users within the judicial system.

- d. Providing security and privacy for such information, thereby, guaranteeing confidentiality.
- e. Handling input data for all the diverse agencies in an efficient and integrated manner.

Basically, PJIS will perform two general tasks. First, it will provide user service. That is, it will service requests to enter, process or retrieve information. PJIS will be capable of simultaneously serving many users who are making different kinds of requests.

Second, PJIS will exercise general control over system operations. It will ensure that the tasks it is requested to perform are consistent with previously established policy, and with the rules of the justice system and will monitor the timely performances of tasks by the criminal justice agencies.

To date, PJIS is in the early stages of development. Early integration into the PJIS system of our long proven court information system as well as more recently operational prison and prosecution systems are relatively short range and easily achievable goals. The first steps toward implementation of the long range goals have already been achieved with the implementation of "on-line booking". In addition, the conceptual groundwork and logical methodology or modus operandi for total implementation of long range goals has been established. Guidelines and actual work procedures have been established to insure confidentiality of all information that is now part of the justice system, as well as that data which will become part of the system. With an increase in staffing, along with a growing familiarity of court operations among those already on board, there is every reason to expect that the PJIS staff can move quickly toward completion of this project.

C. Conflict-Free Scheduling

1. Introduction

Conflict-free scheduling has long been recognized as a desirable but difficult to visualize objective. In the attempt to make Philadelphia the model for such a system it was decided to obtain the best possible design for and then implement an automated "conflict-free" scheduling process for the criminal justice system. The conflict-free system would include some methodology for priority scheduling of cases as well. It would allow for the absences of all possible concerned parties, while providing daily calendars for all judges and courtrooms, and weekly calendars for each attorney. The basic goal of this system would be to coordinate the arrival of all parties to a trial at the same time and place to ensure the smooth flow of cases through the criminal justice system.

2. Examination of Standards, Conflict-Free Scheduling

Through an examination of court operations, it was found that though efforts were being made to improve the scheduling process, and though Philadelphia had the beginnings of an extensive data base, there was lacking the means of bringing the two together in such a way that the courts and all other criminal justice agencies would be provided with sufficient information on case flow to permit efficient calendar management. Therefore, it was decided to propose an approach, through consulting assistance, that would combine the following:

- a. An analysis of all published works on the topic.
- b. A review of Phase I of a two-part study completed by the Institute for Law and Social Research funded by the National Science Foundation.

- c. An attempt at implementation of the best alternative.
- d. The use of the advanced computer and terminal networks operated by the Philadelphia Justice System.

3. Results Expected and Achieved to Date

Some of the advantages which can be expected from the implementation of a conflict-free scheduling system are as follows:

- a. The system would be programmed so as to automatically assign priorities to cases.
- b. The system would allow for absences of all important parties, as well as provide daily calendars to each courtroom and judge, and weekly calendars to each attorney.
- c. The system would be self-adjusting so as to compensate for increased calendar loads.
- d. The system would provide rapid statistical analysis of case underload or overload and provide information for effective reassignment of judges and cases to most effectively process the workload.

It was decided that we would not duplicate the efforts of INSLAW but rather would build on those efforts. We delayed this project awaiting INSLAW's final Phase I report which we hoped would provide direction for our project. Recent developments indicate that it is possible that Philadelphia will join with INSLAW in Phase II of their National Science Foundation grant effort in an attempt to pilot test the recommendations of the Phase I study while attempting to implement one of the nation's first conflict-free scheduling processes.

D. Prosecution Management Information System - PROMIS II

1. Introduction

PROMIS II's objective is to further design and implement a management information system for the prosecutor's office which will be compatible with

the present computer system and the Philadelphia Justice Information System (PJIS). It will provide the much needed tools for a modern management approach to the operation of a very large prosecutor's office in a high crime metropolitan area.

2. Examination of Standards, PROMIS II

Criminal Justice Standard 5.4 of the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice, "Case Management for Prosecutors", states that "for the purpose of case management, prosecutors shall be provided with the data and statistics to support charge determination and case handling". An examination of the District Attorney's Office in early 1972 revealed the fact that its internal system could not fulfill its informational needs. It was evident that an adequate information system would facilitate the work of policy makers, operations supervisors, and particularly trial and appellate prosecutors.

The District Attorney's Office's efforts to resolve this problem began with an arrangement made between the Court, the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration and the District Attorney's Office to design and implement a computer-based prosecution management information system. Systems design was completed during 1973. Initial programming began in January 1974. The intent of the present project is to expand and build on this initial effort. Distinctive features of this expanded system will include: a "war room", case history information, caseload and performance information, monitoring of case inventory, online access, generation of history and needed action documents for each listing or other action point, data exchange with other agency information systems, use of general purpose data management and

teleprocessing programs for low cost and easy technology transfer.

3. Results Expected and Achieved to Date

Full implementation of the PROMIS II system is expected to lead to the following results:

- a. Real time information on case status
- b. Data entry and retrieval
- c. Aggregate statistical management reports and prosecutor management reports
- d. Generation of updated case history and needed action manual documents

These above benefits of the PROMIS II system relate primarily to the content of its information base. Another anticipated benefit relates to the manner in which the information is collected, entered and retrieved. At least two aspects are involved:

- a. Currency - all data entry and retrieval will be online.
- b. Convenience - the data entry and retrieval displays have been designed so that they may be utilized with minimal or no typing and will reduce substantially the clerical effort required, while dramatically improving the quality and quantity of data available.

After a period of staffing delays, the project is now well underway in the area of data update and entry. In addition, a survey and analysis of prosecution documents and forms has been completed to determine the need for improvement, consolidation or perhaps replacement by computer report generation. The "fully operational" status of this project is being coordinated with a move to new quarters scheduled for the DA in early 1976. By that time, the District Attorney's Office will have established a complete information center (using the court's computer) that will include direct on-line access

with ready retrieval and updating capabilities along with a control center - "war room" - for coordinating management decisions based on this information. With this support Philadelphia's District Attorney's Office should be well on its way by Bicentennial time to achieving the model national standards of the ABA and NAC, re: prosecution management.

E. Pretrial Screening/Release, Investigation and Warrant Service Unit Expansion

1. Introduction

Philadelphia has a Pretrial Services Division which includes a Release-on-Recognizance program a Ten Per-Cent Cash Bail Program, and a Conditional Release Program. Not included originally was the facility for an Investigation and Warrant Service Unit which would attempt to address the problem of the failure to appear (FTA) of defendants. At the insistence of the police and the prosecutor, the courts reluctantly accepted responsibility for this function. Although the Warrant Service Unit existed at the time of the Exemplary Court Project grant application, it was inadequately financed and understaffed. Indications based on performance of the Warrant Unit during the early part of 1974, however, revealed that operating at full capacity this unit could have a great impact on the overall success of the Court's Pretrial Services Division. This would be accomplished by reducing the number of warrants issued through pretrial contact with defendants; by experimenting with various voluntary surrender-oriented approaches and by physical apprehension. It was predicted that this activity would decrease the cost per warrant, reduce the number of untried defendants in detention and dramatically cut the number of warrants outstanding.

2. Examination of Standards, Warrant Unit Expansion

The NAC Court Standard 4.7, "Non-Appearance after Pretrial Release", states that programs for the apprehension and prosecution of offenders who fail to appear for criminal proceedings should be established. An examination of the Court's Investigation and Warrant Service Unit in early 1974 revealed that it was operating with less than half the staff necessary to effectively discharge its "inherited" responsibilities, yet the unit was required to maintain the same results as its predecessor. Using the established figure of 3.28 warrants closed per week, it was mathematically calculated that a 42-man unit would have the minimum capacity of bring-back to the system 548 defendants per month. In addition, given that the average number of cases closed per month by arrest on a new charge was 96, it was projected that a fully manned unit would result in a monthly closure rate of 644. This substantially exceeds the number of new warrants issued monthly (600), whereas with a "half-staffed unit" the Courts would predictably fall behind each month. Based on these calculations, Philadelphia submitted its recommendation for expansion of its Investigation and Warrant Service Unit.

3. Results Expected and Achieved to Date

With a personnel increase in the investigation and Warrant Service Unit, the following results were anticipated:

- a. A decrease in the number of new warrants issued with a corresponding decrease in backlog.
- b. An increase in the number of warrants served with a greater number of defendants being returned to the criminal justice system without any additional period of incarceration.
- c. Through an expanded field verification system, the Investigation and Warrant Service Unit would be instrumental in improving the

quality and quantity of conditional release and bail reduction petitions presented by the Pretrial Services Division.

- d. The length of time from failure to appear to apprehension would decrease.
- e. More defendants would voluntarily turn themselves in after failing to appear due to increased understanding and acceptance of the Investigation and Warrant Service Unit and a belief that the unit's intent was to help the defendant if possible. This would be strongly reinforced by the knowledge that otherwise they would be apprehended.

To date this has been one of the more successful Exemplary Court Project subprojects. Experiencing little or no recruitment problems, the Investigation and Warrant Service Unit became fully staffed by August of 1975. Every month since has seen a steady decrease in the number of outstanding warrants. The program has been so successful that the unit is now getting down to the hard core of defendants who have fled the jurisdiction to avoid prosecution. It is expected that there will now be a decrease in the rate of reduction of the number of warrants outstanding. The results already achieved give clear indication of the success of this program.

F. Pretrial Diversion, Project Intercept

1. Introduction

The criminal justice system has long recognized the need to establish and effectively administer a complete diversionary program. This concern is evidenced by the Courts' establishment of the following diversion programs:

- a. Release-on-Recognizance Program
- b. Philcourt Pretrial Diversion Program
- c. Accelerated Rehabilitative Disposition Diversion Program

d. Driving While Intoxicated Diversion Program

While these programs have been quite successful in diverting individuals out of the trial system, thereby helping to reduce the number of outstanding cases (over 12,000 persons were diverted in 1974), it was long recognized that a more concerted and thorough effort was needed to develop a diversion program which would provide services to the diverted defendant and would adequately meet the needs of the Court which includes the Adult Probation Department, the District Attorney's Office and the defendant.

2. Examination of Standards, Pretrial Diversion-Project Intercept

Given these concerns, an examination was made of the NAC and ABA standards on diversion programs. Particular attention was paid to two standards: Court Standard 2.1 "General Criteria for Diversion", and Court Standard 2.2, "Procedures for Diversion Program". As noted, Standard 2.1 relates to the question of the criteria used to determine who is eligible and who could benefit from a diversion program. The courts had long used legal-medical criteria as their basic standard. However, it was recognized that other factors such as the psychological state of the defendant, unemployment problems, family difficulties, etc., should all be considered in the decision to divert. Therefore, one result of examining the standards was the conclusion that the courts needed to establish a more sophisticated set of criteria upon which to make diversionary decisions. It was also seen that these standards needed to be stated explicitly and that the means needed to be developed to constantly examine these standards and the individuals diverted in order to measure the effectiveness of such criteria.

Secondly, along with developing diversionary criteria, it was discovered through review of Court Standard 2.2 that improvements were needed in the actual procedures used to divert and to provide extensive services for the defendants. Closer cooperation needed to be established between the Courts, the District Attorney's Office and the Adult Probation Department. Internally, the Adult Probation Department needed to improve its management methods to more effectively deal with its defendant population and make more sound decisions in selecting and providing programs for the "divertees". In addition, adequate methodology needed to be established to do follow-up work through collection of data on its diverted population.

3. Results Expected and Achieved to Date

With an increase in staffing and procedural modifications, the following results can be expected:

- a. Increased capability for counselling and referral services
- b. Improved follow-up of diverted population
- c. Immediate court listing
- d. Development of new procedures for screening
- e. Increased capacity for evaluation and classification
- f. More immediate provisions of services

Hiring difficulties have slowed the achievement of this project.

The planning for data collection and development of evaluative criteria has been accomplished. In addition, an inventory of community resources has been produced. Much of this information is already being used by the Adult Probation Department to improve its diversionary efforts. It is anticipated that this project will become fully staffed in the near future and that this will lead to even further success and total goal achievement.

G. Witness Utilization

1. Introduction

Although the Philadelphia Criminal Justice System has long recognized the need for improving the treatment of witnesses and the general public who have contact with the system, very few concrete solutions have been implemented. This is especially true with regard to the treatment accorded prosecution witnesses and those individuals needing bilingual information.

One outstanding concrete improvement which addresses the police witness problem has been the operation by the police department, with the cooperation of the court, of the Court Recall Plan. Basically, this plan calls for a center city beat assignment of all police officers appearing for trial in the Municipal Court. When the case is ready to proceed to trial, the Police Liaison Unit contacts the officer on the street (he is provided with a "walkie-talkie" to carry on his beat) and directs him to go to the assigned courtroom. However, the Court Recall Plan does not include civilian witnesses in its Telephone Alert System. As a result, civilian witnesses often make unnecessary court appearances or end up going to the wrong courtroom. Recognizing this problem, the courts turned to the NAC and ABA standards for guidance.

2. Examination of Standards, Witness Utilization

NAC Court Standard 10.6, "Production of Witnesses", states that prosecution and defense witnesses should be called only when their appearances are of value to the court. In addition, Court Standard 10.2 talks about the need for providing adequate information to these witnesses. Finally, Standard 10.1 speaks to the need to provide adequate physical facilities for the housing of such witnesses prior to their being called to trial. Armed with these general criteria and the more specific details

enumerated under each, the Courts and the District Attorney's Office examined present court operations and planned the following system:

- a. A feasibility study for a Witness Utilization Room which would provide adequate physical facilities for Commonwealth civilian witnesses prior to their courtroom appearance. The maintenance of such a facility would be the responsibility of the District Attorney's Office.
- b. A Telephone Alert System which would provide notice to Commonwealth civilian witnesses of their pending court appearances and allow approximately 40% of the civilian witnesses to be on-call on the day of trial.
- c. A Criminal Court Information Center System supplying information to all interested parties. Such a system, operated by the Courts, would be manned by a bilingual clerk who is accessible via one of twenty-eight (28) direct line phones located in various locations in the criminal court complex.

3. Results Expected and Achieved to Date

The following benefits are anticipated from the Witness Utilization Project:

- a. A reduction in the number of unnecessary witness appearances.
- b. A reduction in the time required of prosecution witnesses and, importantly, improvement in general witness satisfaction.
- c. A higher production rate of witnesses when needed and a related reduction in the number of continuances for failures of witnesses to appear.
- d. An increase in the disposition of cases and a decrease in Court backlog.

Presently, preliminary steps have been taken to install and make fully operational the Telephone Alert System. Staff has been hired, trained and put in place. However, delays in installing the telephone hardware have somewhat lessened the benefits of this project. Even with limited access to the system on the part of Commonwealth witnesses, Philadelphia has already seen a reduction in the number of unnecessary courtroom appearances on the part of such witnesses. With preparation well underway for the creation of adequate physical facilities to house these witnesses while awaiting trial, the Witness Utilization Project is on target with regard to meeting its stated objectives.

H. Court Reporting-Voice Writing Implementation and Computer Aided Transcription

1. Introduction

Traditional stenotype court reporting has become an extremely expensive service. In addition, its ability to provide fast turn-around for transcripts while servicing all operating courtrooms in a system as large as Philadelphia's is much in question. Recognizing this growing problem, Philadelphia developed a project aimed at evaluating and implementing alternative approaches. Basically, the two systems being tested are as follows:

- a. Voice Writing - a method of court reporting which is an improved adaption of the steno mask system used at court-martial and Security Exchange Commission hearings. Presently, it consists of tape recording the court reporter's verbatim transcript as well as the actual proceedings on a multiple track recording system. Typed transcripts can then be prepared directly from these tapes without the need for translation of stenotype notes.

- b. Computer-Aided Transcription - Through using a specially adapted stenographic machine a court reporter is able to produce both a paper stenographic tape and a magnetic tape. A computer printed English translation is then produced directly from the magnetic tape.

2. Examination of Standards, Voice-Writing Implementation

NAC Court Recommendation 6.1 "Transcription Preparation", urges courts to seek methods of producing trial transcriptions in the shortest possible time. As in all courts where it is used, the stenotype method is essentially a three step process as follows:

- a. The testimony is recorded in machine shorthand by the reporter.
- b. The reporter then translates the notes of testimony into a dictaphone.
- c. A typist translates the testimony into a final typed transcript from the dictaphone recording.

While Philadelphia's Court Reporters are a hard working group of professionals, careful analysis revealed the fact that they were not all able to keep up with the heavy workload imposed upon them. Therefore, any system that would eliminate a step in the transcription process would speed up transcription time and help lessen court reporters' workloads. Recognizing the advantages to be gained, Philadelphia decided to test both the Voice Writing and Computer-Aided methods of court transcription.

Essentially, the voice-writing system involves the court reporter recording his words of trial testimony directly on a tape from which the typist can prepare a final typed copy. The actual testimony given

in the trial is also recorded on another track or tracks of the tape recorder, so that the typist can compare the court reporter's track with the actual testimony, thereby providing a system of verification.

3. Results Expected and Achieved to Date with Voice Writing

Based on a six-month evaluation of Multi-track Voice Writing, the National Center for State Courts concluded that the following results can be expected from implementing this system:

- a. Increase in the transcription production rate.
- b. Provision of better control over court reporting services.
- c. A decrease in reporting and transcription costs.

Presently, eight employees are undergoing intensive training in the voice writing technique. When the training program is completed, sometime in December (actual completion will vary given skills of individual trainees), five of the candidates will be selected to become permanent voice writers. A close monitoring of their work will take place to compare results obtained against the present methods of transcription preparation. There is every indication from the preliminary results obtained in the training sessions that expected results will be achieved and that this project will prove to be eminently successful.

4. Information on Computer-Aided Transcription

As an adjunct to the Voice Writing Project, the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas and the National Center for State Courts have contracted to have Philadelphia as the pilot site for the first attempt at fully computerized transcription of the court stenographers' notes on a court operated computer system. The funds for this project are in the form of a grant from the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice to the National Center for State Courts supplemented by upwards of \$75,000 hard match

provided by the Philadelphia Court System.

This effort is based on the availability of vendor supplied, very high quality, computer translation software which includes effective linguistic logic and a translation dictionary. The dictionary accomodates a complex and variant steno-English relationship and is constructed iteratively, i.e., by passing millions of words through the system. The primary goal of this project is a reduction in the amount of time required to transcribe stenographic notes. It has been warmly received by the Court Reporters Association and the Courts and it is hoped that its expansion will include all of our 120 court reporters within the next two years. At present the project is successfully supporting 15 court reporters.

The service center, which has been divided into two main modules - the translation system which includes software and utilizes the Courts Computer Center, and the transcription center which has a mini-computer editing and printing sub-system -- provides for rapid translation and duplication of readable and easily editable stenographic notes. The two modules are independent and may be connected by physical transfer of data on computer storage media (magnetic tape) or by transmission over communication lines which are also installed and working.

The system process begins with the court reporter who inserts a tape cartridge recording device into his stenograph machine, modified with electric switches, so that a stroke of the keys is uniquely recorded on the magnetic tape. Once the steno notes are recorded in digital form, the cartridge is fed into a cartridge reader at a mini-computer editing and printing center by Court staff. The recording of the reporter's notes is

then transferred by the mini-computer to an IBM compatible magnetic tape and delivered to the Court's IBM 370/145 Computer. The tape translation is performed by the Court computer and returned to the mini-computer edit-print subsystem where it is both stored on disc and printed on a high speed printer as a "first-run" copy. The court reporter proofreads and marks corrections on this first-run translation copy. The marked-up copy then goes to an editor who is seated at the cathode ray tube (CRT) utilized for entry of error-correcting postings. The mini-computer then presents on a CRT screen, page-by-page, the translation text exactly as it was printed. Corrections are made via the CRT device keyboard and the computer translation is corrected. The final copy is produced on a high-speed printer in multiple part carbon copies as necessary (original and copies).

At present reporters are producing tape cartridges in the courtroom and delivering them to the service center for editing. These tapes are 90% - 95% error free and the process reduces transcription time by weeks. It is possible on request to perform the translation and editing process in less than four hours including the visual editing of the first-run copy by the court-reporter. The system as presently constituted is capable of producing a minimum of:

- a. 150,000 pages per year,
- b. First run transcripts of fully qualified trained reporters containing less than a 10% error rate per page for the 15 reporters now on the system.
- c. Qualified and trained editors, editing transcripts of fully qualified reporters and producing between 200 to 500 corrected pages each eight hour day. A twelve hour day utilizing the

four CRT (Cathode Ray Tube) editing terminals is expected to produce more than 250,000 pages per year.

- d. A printing subsystem which will adequately handle the printing requirement.

The time for processing the translation of the stenotype code to English which is accomplished on the Philadelphia Court's IBM 370/145 DOS System will be governed by the tape-handling speed of the operators plus the computer processing time. The computer time to translate one page of data on an IBM 370/145 is approximately 110 words per second.

Translation time is reduced from four to six weeks to one week or less and is far less dependant upon the availability of the court reporter.

From the management perspective, the computer aided transcription system allows for much more control of the court reporting function and although this is not precisely measurable quantitatively it is invaluable qualitatively.

The costs of the system are expected to be covered by payments from the court reporters, out of their copy fees, for the services provided by the computer and editing staff.

5. Comment

We are anxiously awaiting the full operational status of both systems so that a fair comparison can be made of their respective advantages and disadvantages.

I. Sentencing Consistency, Presentence Study

1. Introduction

The Adult Probation Department of the Court of Common Pleas has the responsibility for providing a presentence investigation report before sentencing. Traditionally, presentence reports have been completed only at the request of the sentencing judge. During 1974, there were only 1,938 such judicial requests out of 14,086 eligible cases. Consequently, only 14% of convicted offenders receive a presentence investigation. Recognizing that their presentence program was only being utilized for a small percentage of those for whom they felt it was needed, the Adult Probation Department with the encouragement of the entire Philadelphia Judicial System inaugurated a study into how the presentence program could be improved and expanded.

2. Examination of Standards, Presentence Study

NAC Court Standards 5.1, 5.14 and 5.15 all speak of the necessity of preparing a presentence report where there is a potential sentencing disposition involving incarceration and in all cases involving felonies or minors.

Clearly the courts were deficient in this area given the fact that only 14% of convicted offenders received a presentence investigation. Obviously, there was a need to vastly expand the presentence effort. An examination of Adult Probation Department operations was made to determine the best way in which the goal of increased presentence investigation reports could be attained. From this investigation, there developed the proposal to form a presentence analysis team composed of a researcher and a planner whose aim would be to study presentence reporting procedures and hopefully to develop criteria and a procedure

which could be used to expand and improve presentence reporting.

3. Results Expected and Achieved to Date

The objectives of this presentence team would be as follows:

- a. To determine the best administrative structure for a presentence function.
- b. To improve the information flow necessary for conducting presentences.
- c. To revise the presentence format.
- d. To develop alternative shorter presentences for use in appropriate cases.
- e. To prepare for substantial increase in the percentage and number of presentences to be conducted in future years.
- f. To utilize data captured at earlier stages of the process, such as the pretrial release on recognizance interview which is already prepared for each arrestee.

Unfortunately, staffing delays have prevented the Adult Probation Department from realizing all of these goals. To date, only the researcher has been brought on board. The Adult Probation Department has initiated a study into the criteria used in making presentence investigations, recommendations and presentence reporting has already been improved. It is hoped that when the planner joins the researcher, they can successfully build upon the early in-house accomplishments.

J. Community Programs, Court Volunteer Services

1. Introduction

The Philadelphia Criminal Justice System has long been aware of the importance of community involvement in the justice system. Where the

public is not involved, the criminal justice system is viewed as some abstract entity which seems to fail to meet the needs and wants of the public it purports to serve. Such public alienation can only lead to apathy and disrespect for the judicial system. When the public is involved and informed as to the working of their judicial system, there develops a working partnership which can only serve the cause of justice.

Realizing the need to involve the public, Philadelphia has developed a Community Resource Unit. The purpose of this unit's program was to develop a volunteer manpower source for the Adult Probation Department. Volunteers were sought to function as probation aides. In addition, various agencies within the community were contacted so that their services could be made available to the probationers and parolees. While this effort marked a significant first step in the area of community involvement, it was recognized that far more extensive participation by the community in the criminal justice system was needed.

2. Examination of Standards, Court Volunteer Services

Careful attention was paid to NAC Corrections Standards 7.2 and 7.3, particularly with regard to the need to marshal and coordinate community resources as well as to keep the community informed about court operations. An examination was made of the Community Resource Unit. While efforts in this area came close to meeting many of the particular goals mentioned by the NAC and ABA in the area of community involvement and information, it was clearly recognized that much more could be done. Therefore, it was proposed to develop a Court Volunteer Service Unit whose task it would be to provide volunteer services to persons who came under the court's jurisdiction both before and after trial. These volunteers would work directly with the Adult Probation Department and the Pretrial Services Division in an attempt to alleviate two serious problems, the "no show" rate among persons awaiting

trial and the recidivism rate among probationers. In addition, this program would foster increased awareness and involvement of the community in the criminal justice system and its goals.

3. Results Expected and Achieved to Date

The expected results of this project are as follows:

- a. A decrease in the Probationers recidivism rates and the Pretrial Services Division's "no show" rate.
- b. A decrease in the recidivism rate of those persons supervised by the Court's Accelerated Rehabilitative Disposition (ARD) Program.
- c. An increase in the involvement and awareness of the community in the problems and accomplishments of the judicial system.

At this date, the project has already attained several of its stated goals. About forty volunteers have been selected and a training program initiated. Those volunteers who have passed through the training program are already working in the community. While it is a little too early to measure the success of their efforts, early indications are that the community has responded positively to the volunteer's efforts and that persons on bail awaiting trial as well as probationers have received incalculable benefits from this program.

III. Conclusion

As can be readily seen, the goals of the Exemplary Court Project are as ambitious as they are numerous and complex. Much effort by a dedicated staff of professionals has gone into the conceptual formation of each of the sub-projects' goals, along with the developed procedural changes. While delayed by staffing problems, occasioned by the imposition of Equal Employment Opportunity Guidelines and the need to sift through an estimated 1,500

applications received for 109 positions, many of the projects are now well under way. In addition, the computer-related projects, although delayed by the need to conform to Confidentiality Guidelines, as well as by personnel problems, have begun to bear fruit. Philadelphia's Standards and Goals Project can now move forward with confidence. From this point forward, there is every reason to believe that Philadelphia will become a National Standards and Goals Model and its Criminal Justice System will benefit greatly from this effort.



END