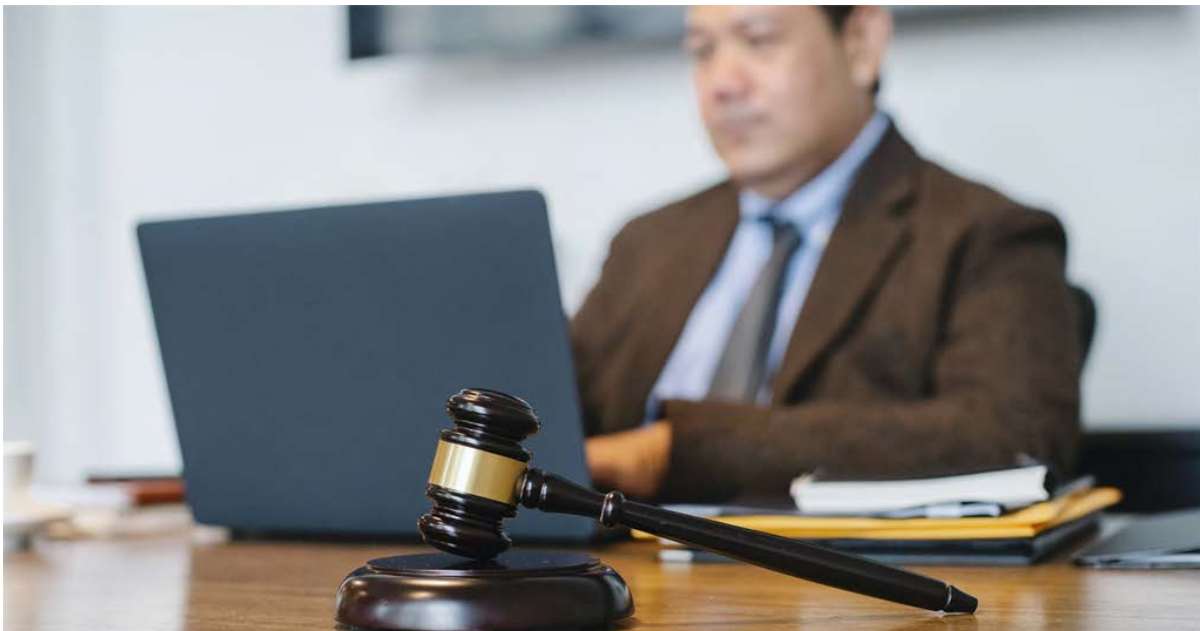## Colorado Lab Newsletter
December 2021

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- Racial Disparities in Prosecutorial Outcomes
- Prosecutorial Dashboards Learning Community
- Lab's Courtney Everson Receives Innovative Leadership Award
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Racial Disparities in Prosecutorial Outcomes

In April 2021, the Colorado Evaluation and Action Lab released a report, Racial Disparities in Prosecutorial Outcomes, examining felony cases accepted for prosecution by the Denver District Attorney's (DA) Office between July 2017 and June 2018. The study found that race and ethnicity were not associated with general plea offers extended. The study did find differences between white, Black, and Hispanic defendants across the other three points of prosecutorial discretion examined: dismissals, deferred judgments, and referrals to Drug Court. However, the study was not able to examine the reasons underlying or driving racial/ethnic differences at these points of prosecutorial discretion.

In November, the Lab worked with the Denver DA's Office to complete a follow-up study to dig deeper into dismissals of filed cases and deferred judgments for defendants. The Lab was excited to be a part of this research-practitioner collaboration which helped identify opportunities for the Denver DA's Office to continue to advance racial equity.

While the current study sheds further light on the reasons cases receive a dismissal or deferred judgment, many questions remain unanswered. As noted by District Attorney Beth McCann in a recent Denverite article about the report, "the DA's Office hasn't traditionally been the best collector of data."

To support ongoing work in Denver and eight other judicial districts, the Colorado Lab is pleased to partner with the Prosecutorial Performance Indicators Project to develop internal and public-facing dashboards that will help inform understandings of issues such as racial disparities in decision-making. Learn more about our first cross-site learning meeting below.

Contact Dr. Lauren Gase to learn more about the follow-up report to Racial Disparities and Prosecutorial Outcomes for the Denver DA's Office.

Prosecutorial Dashboards Learning Community

Prosecutors are expected to take proactive, engaged responses to community problems, reduce disparities in justice outcomes, build greater trust through community engagement, and increase prosecutorial transparency and accountability. This requires robust data-driven prosecutorial work. The Colorado Lab, in partnership with the Prosecutorial Performance Indicators Project (PPI), is working with District Attorneys' (DA) Offices from across the state to develop internal and external facing data dashboards – designed to assist offices with tracking their progress toward greater efficiency, effectiveness, and fairness through data.

Each of the eight pilot sites has created an internal workgroup with representatives from various parts of the office, including deputy DAs, victim witness staff, investigators, administrative staff, and public information officers. Workgroups are facilitating office-wide communication and identifying the data points most important to support internal operations and external transparency.

In November, we facilitated the first cross-jurisdiction learning meeting with elected DAs and key representatives from each pilot site. The meeting provided an opportunity for offices to hear from, connect with, and learn from each other.

District Attorney Alexis King (left) and PPI's Melba *Pearson (right) discuss community outreach strategies.*

Sites shared internal communication strategies, including how to solicit input and feedback from staff and keep them informed as development of the dashboard progresses. They discussed how to advance impactful community engagement to ensure this work is both informed by and meets the expectations of each District's community. The group also identified opportunities to work together to tackle common data challenges, such as tracking diversion data and pretrial information.

The work of the pilot offices will lay the foundation to support statewide scale, with the aim of launching dashboards in all of Colorado's judicial districts. The leadership of these pilot sites is supporting Colorado in its goal to improve data-informed, statewide prosecutorial decision-making.

To learn more about the Prosecutorial Dashboards project, contact Dr. Lauren Gase.

Lab's Courtney Everson Receives Innovative Leadership Award

Each year, Illuminate Colorado honors the contributions of an exceptional individual or organization who has made significant contributions to the field of child maltreatment prevention. This year's award was presented to the Lab's own Dr. Courtney Everson.

Illuminate Colorado strengthens families, organizations, and communities statewide to prevent child maltreatment. They unite and lead the work of four organizations – the Colorado Alliance for Drug Endangered Children, Prevent Child Abuse Colorado, Colorado Chapter of FASD United, and Sexual Abuse Forever Ending.

With more than a dozen years of experience in research, community engagement, and leadership in health and human services, Dr. Everson serves as a senior researcher and project director for the Colorado Lab. She has successfully led and supported dozens of foundation, state, and federally funded studies and initiatives focused on improving maternal health and positive child/youth development. Her recent work includes studies on Prenatal Substance Use and Improving Family Health and the Colorado Partnership for Thriving Families. Courtney also serves as a voting member of the Home Visiting Investment Task Force (via Early Childhood Leadership Commission), among other advisory groups.

Please join us in congratulating Courtney and in watching her fireside chat with Jade Woodard on lighting the way toward brighter childhoods. RSVP here to get the link to watch a recording of the (free) fireside chat, to be released on Tuesday, December 14th, 5:30 - 6:00 pm.

Erin Wu Joins Lab Staff

Welcome to the Colorado Lab's newest staff member, Erin Wu! Erin is passionate about using data to improve programs and systems that support the health and well-being of children and families at increased risk for poor outcomes, and particularly to achieving socioeconomic and racial equity. She has a background in evaluation, research, and public health with state and community-based organizations in Texas.

Erin joins the Lab to support the data management and analysis needs of the Linked Information Network of Colorado (LINC) and the research and evaluation needs of Lab projects focused on health and child welfare. She previously worked with the Child and Family Research Partnership at the University of Texas at Austin as a research associate and at the Texas Department of State Health Services in the Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention Section as an epidemiologist. Erin holds a Master of Public Health in Epidemiology from the University of Michigan School of Public Health and a Bachelor of Arts in Biology from Depauw University.

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