

JAMAICAN JUSTICE SYSTEM REFORM

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR REGIONAL WORKING GROUPS

1. Background

The Jamaican Justice System Reform Task Force (JJSRTF) has been established with a mandate to inquire into the state of the justice system on a comprehensive basis and develop strategies and mechanisms to facilitate the modernisation of the justice system so that it is better able to meet the current and future needs of Jamaicans.

This JJSRTF will deal with both the criminal and civil components of the justice system. Although the justice system includes a wide range of actors and issues such as police, corrections and crime prevention, the JJSRTF will focus on court and court-connected resolution processes and will not address broader justice-related concerns in the areas of policing, crime prevention and corrections except to their direct impact on the courts. However, the JJSRTF will work closely with other existing justice reform initiatives.

The JJSRTF was established in November 2006 and must provide a report on its recommendations for reform in June 2007. More information about the JJSRTF is available at <http://www.cba.org/jamaicanjustice>.

This reform process will result in practical recommendations for action focusing on proposals that will produce meaningful results in enhancing access to justice for Jamaicans and that will be suitable for implementation within a reasonable amount of time. The JJSRTF final report will provide a framework and road map designed to bring the Jamaican justice into the 21st century.

The JJSRTF has undertaken a broad research, consultation and communications programme to enable it to carry out its work and to promote individual and collective engagement in the process of justice system reform. In particular, it will actively involve representatives of the legal, judicial, governmental and administrative actors within the justice system as well as with representatives of the users of the justice system and the general public. One mechanism for this broad involvement is the establishment of Regional Working Groups.

2. Scope of the Work

The JJSRTF will establish four Regional Working Groups (RWG) based on the county divisions: (1) Cornwall; (2) Middlesex; (3) Surrey (outside of the Corporate Area); and (4) Corporate Area.

The RWG will assist the JJSRTF in the review and reform process by identifying regional problems, challenges and opportunities in the justice system and with the identification of viable solutions or suggestions for justice reform. The RWG will begin to meet by mid-January 2007 and complete their work by April 1, 2007. In particular, the RWG will:

- consult individuals and organizations in all of the parishes within their county about regional justice reform issues;
- organise and convene one or more public consultation session(s) at which members of the public will be invited to provide their views about justice system reform issues (to be held between February 15 and March 15, 2007);
- prepare a report with recommendations for reform and submit it to the JJSRTF by April 1, 2007; and
- present their report at the national conference on May 10 and 11, 2007.

The RWG reports will include: (a) identification of local reform issues and priorities; (b) summaries of the discussion Justice Summit and (c) recommendations for reform tailored to local conditions.

Three representatives from each RWG will be invited to participate in the national conference to be convened by the JJSRTF on May 10 and 11, 2007 and present their reports at that time.

3. Composition and Criteria for membership

Each RWG will be composed of 7 to 10 individuals and should include:

- a representative of the regional bar association;
- a representative of the regional Chamber of Commerce;
- a Resident Magistrate; a Clerk of the Court;
- a Court Administrator;
- a lay magistrate;
- an individual working in the area of policing or corrections;
- a member of the public who is not professional engaged in the justice system.

Equitable gender representation is encouraged. The members of the RWG will select a Chairperson.

Members of the RWG should be:

- interested in and committed to justice system reform;
- available to attend RWG meetings and the public consultation session(s);

- willing to assist in organising and convening the public consultation session(s); and
- available to participate in the preparation of a report to the JJSRTF.

In addition, some members of each RWG should be willing and able to participate in the national conference.

4. Support from the JJSR

The JJSR will provide assistance to each RWG by arranging and paying for venues and related items to facilitate the public consultation sessions.

The JJSR staff will assist the RWG by holding an orientation session in January 2007.

One or more Task Force members and staff of the JJSR will attend the public consultation sessions and assist in these sessions.

For further information, please contact Mr. Peter Parchment, JJSR Project Manager, Ministry of Justice by phone 906-3850 or email pparchment@moj.gov.jm .