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Comptroller's Report Calls for More Transparency into Criminal Justice Data *Researchers Examined Operations in Shelby County*

A new report by the Tennessee Comptroller's Office of Research and Education Accountability (OREA) concludes that Tennessee could benefit from greater transparency and data reporting within its criminal justice system to help the public understand patterns and trends in the system's operations and outcomes.

OREA researchers have spent the past year interviewing individuals, observing court proceedings in Shelby County, and analyzing data from multiple state and local entities to gain insights into how the criminal justice system is functioning in Tennessee's most populated county.

OREA's research began after Lieutenant Governor Randy McNally requested an investigation into issues in Shelby County such as the length of time it takes to dispose of cases; the number of crimes committed by people awaiting a case disposition; the discrepancy between the charges at arrest and the charges for which an individual is prosecuted; and the final disposition and sentencing of cases.



While OREA was able to provide some insights into a sample of 145 Shelby County criminal cases, the lack of a unique identifier (such as a case number) attached to a case as it progresses through General Sessions and Criminal Courts made it very difficult to make conclusions about the operations of the criminal justice system in Shelby County as a whole.

The lack of accessible, usable, and timely criminal justice data is both a state and national issue. OREA developed 18 metrics that the Shelby County criminal justice system should collect and publicly report on a regular basis. In addition to reporting more data in Shelby County, OREA is also recommending the Tennessee General Assembly may wish to study and make recommendations about improving the transparency of the criminal justice system.

The report highlights other initiatives as examples of efforts to increase the public visibility of criminal justice processes and provide policymakers with the information they need to make informed decisions.

To read the full report and Snapshot, please visit the Comptroller's website at: tncot.cc/orea.

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