

**Office of the District Attorney
County of Somerset**

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To Whom It May Concern:

From: Jerry L. Spangler, District Attorney

Re: Criminal Justice System Assessment conducted by Institute for Law and Policy Planning

I am pleased to write this letter of recommendation on behalf of the Institute for Law and Policy Planning. That organization recently conducted a comprehensive "Criminal Justice System Assessment" for our local government.

Somerset County, Pennsylvania is located in southwestern Pennsylvania. The county has a population of about 80,000 and averages 900 misdemeanor and felony cases annually. In 1980, a jail with a design capacity of 45 was opened and quickly became overcrowded. Jail overcrowding became a chronic and serious problem. With the cooperation of the district attorney, president judge and county commissioners, a criminal justice policy board was created and began working with the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency [PCCD]. At one of the training sessions, the president judge and district attorney heard a presentation by Dr. Kalmanoff and arranged for a meeting with the county commissioners. The need for a comprehensive criminal justice system assessment became apparent. When a grant became available through PCCD, the county commissioners committed matching funding to proceed with the assessment.

The assessment included the following (1) an assessment of the current jail population; (2) an examination of crime and inmate population projections; (3) an examination of information systems; (4) an evaluation of law enforcement procedures; (5) a review of jail staffing, structural conditions, budgets, programming and policies; (6) a review of court, prosecution and defense staffing, policies and budgets; (7) an examination of correctional policies, programs and staffing and (8) a review of juvenile programming and supervision practices.

The assessment was conducted in a very informative, professional and efficient manner. Communications were prompt, open and candid. The evaluators were courteous, attentive, informed and informative and engaged in candid and knowledgeable dialogue with various law enforcement and court employees and officials. Regular status updates occurred. The process began in November 2006 and the initial draft was in circulation in mid-May, 2007.

I would highly recommend the Institute for Law and Policy Planning to any county of any size. Their work is exemplary. While I may not agree with all of their recommendations, I agree that the process that was used was open, informed and thought-provoking. I believe our county will benefit greatly from the study that has been done.