

Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Program Professional Standards Committee Membership Subcommittee

DRAFT Meeting Minutes

Friday, January 21, 2022, 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Zoom Meeting (COVID-19)

Members Present:

Cathy Easter, Executive Director, Safe Harbor¹

Linda Ellis-Williams, Director of Programs, YWCA of Central Virginia

Debbie Evans, Division Chief of the Sexual Assault Center & Domestic Violence Program, City of Alexandria Department of Community & Human Services

Maria Simonetti, Executive Director, The Collins Center & Child Advocacy Center

Others Present:

Amber Stanwix, Professional Standards Coordinator, DCJS

Welcome & Current Status of Committee Membership

The meeting started at 11:39 a.m. Debbie Evans welcomed everyone and began the meeting by listing the current applicants for the Professional Standards Committee membership. The group discussed the geographic regions that are covered by the current applicants and determined that Richmond, the Shenandoah Valley area, Roanoke, and Virginia Beach are covered. The group then began to discuss the various regions that are not covered and who could be contacted in those areas to enhance the geographic diversity of the Committee.

Geographic Representation on the Professional Standards Committee

The group discussed the following regions:

1. Central Virginia – The group discussed agencies that are located in the Lynchburg-area. Linda Ellis-Williams stated that she has spoken with some of the people working at the local agencies and they are not interested in applying for membership. She stated that she will reapply for membership to ensure that Central Virginia is represented on the Committee.

¹ Cathy Easter logged in to the meeting at 11:51 a.m.

2. Southside Virginia – The group brainstormed about the various agencies in this region. They identified HAVEN of the Dan River Region in Danville and the Tri-County Community Action Agency in South Boston as agencies that could possibly offer new Committee members. They also discussed a former Committee member from the Southside Center for Violence Prevention in Farmville who could potentially reapply. Linda Ellis-Williams agreed to reach out to the people from these agencies to see if anyone would be willing to apply.
3. Southwest Virginia – The group identified several agencies in this area. Maria Simonetti agreed to reach out to current Committee member Jennifer Bourne of Clinch Valley Community Action to see if there were any people she could recommend. Amber Stanwix also identified Partners for Stronger Communities in Bristol and Family Crisis Support Services in Norton as agencies that could potentially provide members to the Committee. Maria Simonetti agreed to reach out to those agencies as well.
4. Eastern Shore – Cathy Easter asked if the Eastern Shore would be included in the Virginia Beach-area or if it is its own separate region. The group was unsure about this; but they agreed that it might be beneficial to reach out to an agency in that area. Amber Stanwix identified the Eastern Shore Coalition Against Domestic Violence in Onancock as a potential agency. Debbie Evans agreed to contact that agency.

Racial and Ethnic Diversity on the Professional Standards Committee

After discussing geographic diversity, the group moved on to discuss racial and ethnic diversity. Cathy Easter inquired about the racial and ethnic makeup of the Committee and stated that any of the current Committee members who are reapplying would be willing to step off of the Committee if necessary in order to increase diversity. The group asked if the law specifies the number of people that are required to represent each racial or ethnic group. Amber Stanwix read the relevant sentence from Va. Code § 9.1-116.3, which states, “The appointment of members shall take into consideration racial and ethnic diversity and shall be representative of regional and geographic locations of the Commonwealth.” Therefore, there is no specific number required.

Cathy Easter suggested that the current racial and ethnic makeup of Virginia should be used as a minimum benchmark for the diversity on the Committee. Maria Simonetti researched Census data and informed the group that the Commonwealth is currently 58.6% white, 18.3% Black, 10.5% Hispanic/Latino, 7.1% Asian, 4.7% multiracial, and 0.8% other. The group went through the potential candidates discussed earlier and noted that, while they would achieve at least a matching percentage with most racial and ethnic groups, there would not be a representative of the Asian community. The group discussed this and agreed that this would be an issue to address as the Subcommittee was reaching out to various agencies.

The group also discussed potentially having a list of applicants to use moving forward as members leave the Committee. Cathy Easter stated that, for the purposes of the Safe Harbor board, each board member is asked to complete a diversity matrix. This document allows board members to self-identify their age, race, ethnicity, etc. She asked Amber Stanwix if DCJS would consider using such a matrix in the future for the Committee so that any gaps could be

identified as the committee was recreated and also when members leave the Committee. Maria Simonetti added that her agency uses a similar matrix.

Finally, the group agreed that as well as racial diversity, the new members should be people who understand programs and are familiar with direct services. Allowing for diversity in program staff would increase the ability of the Committee to ensure that all voices are being heard. In addition, this would ensure that the members all have the adequate experience to give them sufficient background and history in the areas of sexual and domestic violence.

Closing Remarks

The group agreed that it should meet again in 2-3 weeks to discuss progress and to determine if any gaps remained. After checking calendars, the group agreed to schedule the next meeting for February 18th at 11:30 a.m.

The meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Public Comment

There were no members of the public present.

Action Items.

- Linda Ellis-Williams will reapply for Committee membership and will contact agencies in Southside Virginia to locate other potential applicants.
- Maria Simonetti will contact agencies in Southwest Virginia to locate potential applicants.
- Debbie Evans will send out information regarding how to apply for Committee membership and will contact the Eastern Shore Coalition Against Domestic Violence to locate potential applicants.
- Amber Stanwix will send out a calendar invitation for the next meeting.

Next Meeting: February 18, 2022, 11:30a.m – 1:00 p.m. on Zoom