

Advisory Committee on Sexual and Domestic Violence Minutes

Wednesday, June 24, 2020, 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

(Virtual meeting required due to pandemic state-of-emergency)

FINAL MINUTES

Members Present:

Kathy Anderson

Teresa Berry

Nichele Carver

Barbara Favola

Thomas Fitzpatrick

Nancy Fowler

Kristen Howard

Autumn Jones

Mark Levine

Melissa McMenemy

Kristi VanAudenhove

Toni Zollicoffer

Members Absent:

Heather Board

Mindy Stell

DCJS Staff:

Andi Martin

Kristina Vadas

Guests in Attendance:

Cathy Easter, Safe Harbor

Meghan Gaulding, Virginia State Crime Commission

Tom Goodwin, Steering Committee Member, Fairfax County Council to End Domestic Violence

Eileen Longenecker, Office of the Executive Secretary, Supreme Court of VA

Cecil L. Robinson Jr., Owner, Raven Elite Protection

Jonathan Yglesias, Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance

Ruth Anne Young, Virginia Center on Aging

Welcome, Introductions, and Remarks

Teresa Berry, Committee Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 10:35 a.m. New member, Delegate Mark Levine, was introduced and welcomed to the committee. Roll call was taken. A quorum was present.

Approval of December 4, 2019 Meeting Minutes

Nancy Fowler made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Senator Barbara Favola. There was no further discussion. **The motion passed, unanimously.**

Discussion of Current Events

The Committee discussed current events related to systemic and institutional racism, police violence, protests, and COVID-19.

- Many members offered that they were encouraged by the focus on dismantling systemic racism and the demand for change. The committee discussed that the time is ripe to seek solutions that could better respond to sexual and domestic violence.
- There is a need to determine how systems of care can help non-traditional victims of violence such as those who do not report to law enforcement, or who are initially labeled “offenders” but later determined to be victims.
- The Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance (“Alliance”) is drafting social justice policy recommendations for sexual and domestic violence agencies.
- Senator Barbara Favola and Delegate Mark Levine asked the group to send to them ideas for legislation that they could bring to the upcoming special session of the General Assembly.
- A question was raised about what is the roll of a domestic violence counselor or mental health professional following a 9-1-1 call?
- In addition to improving the criminal justice or law enforcement response, members suggested taking a close look at systems of care and identifying where these systems fall short.
- Multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) have been successful in many communities in providing on-going assessments of criminal justice responses. Due to turnover in staffing at sexual and domestic violence agencies, and law enforcement officer rotation, it is often difficult to maintain relationships. MDTs can help prevent these relationships from falling apart over time by institutionalizing them.
- Arlington found it helpful to look at the ways victims enter the system by auditing their 9-1-1 calls and determining in what ways dispatchers were adequately trained or needed more training.
- There is a need for better linkages between policing and support services.
- The City of Houston, TX has a crisis response model whereby a dispatcher uses criteria to determine whether the call would benefit from a mental health counselor responding with a law enforcement officer. This is a model that should be examined.
- There were two initiatives for which funds were “un-allocated” from the 2020 General Assembly session: the ***Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Prevention Fund*** and the ***Linking***

Systems of Care Project that addresses victimization of children and youth. Senator Favola and Delegate Levine will consider requesting these items be re-allocated during the upcoming special session of the General Assembly.

Concerning COVID-19, agencies have been working diligently to ensure continuity of care for survivors. Due to COVID-19, many courts have been open intermittently and are just starting to open full-time. Protective Orders have been difficult to access. Some survivors have a fear of going to court due to COVID-19 related safety issues. Jails are releasing inmates more often on personal recognizance bonds. Concerning shelter services, most programs continue to shelter people. Many agencies are relying on hotels for those at high-risk of COVID-19.

The committee discussed the need to release a position statement with some action steps. Toni Zollicoffer offered to help draft this statement. Senator Favola will assist. The draft will be shared with the committee before the next meeting. This statement will also help inform the committee's work in the months to come.

Some suggestions for the statement:

- We believe all people have a right to live without oppression.
- There needs to be a stronger link between police response and community based assistance.
- There are different models of dual response and we encourage communities to consider how they can implement those.
- In addition to addressing police reform, we need to address community models that are alternatives to the criminal justice system.
- We need to invest in prevention.

Sexual and Domestic Violence Program Professional Standards Update & Appointment

Cathy Easter, Professional Standards Committee (PSC) Chair & Executive Director, Safe Harbor was present to provide an update on the PSC, but due to time constraints, she will provide a written update that will be included in the minutes (*see notes at end of document*).

There is an open seat on the PSC, for which this Committee must appoint a new member. Sheree Hedrick from Hanover Safe Place was nominated to fill the vacant position. She is the director of a sexual and domestic violence agency serving Hanover County and Ashland. Senator Favola made a motion to approve Ms. Hedrick's appointment. The motion was seconded by Kathy Anderson. The committee discussed the statutory requirements for the PSC, and the lack of representation of people of color on both the PSC and on this committee. As the statutory requirements for membership are very limiting and do not promote diverse membership, the committee may pursue legislative changes in the future. Following this discussion, **the motion to appoint Ms. Hedrick to the PSC was approved unanimously.**

Due to time constraints, the other items on the agenda were tabled. Those other items were:

- Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner Coordination Program (HB475/SB373) - Information
- Prevention Funding for Sexual & Domestic Violence Agencies - Discussion
- Batterer Intervention Programs - Discussion

New Business

This committee has a vacancy due to Warren Rodgers leaving his position. This committee seat must be filled by a director of a dual program (serving both sexual and domestic violence victims) from a rural area. The committee acknowledged the need and desire for diversity on this committee. If members have recommendations for this position, please email them to Tom Fitzpatrick (thomas.fitzpatrick@dcjs.virginia.gov) and Kristina Vadas (kristina.vadas@dcjs.virginia.gov) at DCJS within the next four weeks.

Public Comment

Chair Berry opened the meeting for public comment. None was received.

Closing

- The committee will conduct a special meeting outside of its quarterly schedule. The meeting will be held on July 22, 2020, from 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m., virtually via Zoom. The committee will use this time to finalize a position statement.
- Chair Berry adjourned the meeting at 12:26 p.m.

Meeting Dates: Wednesday, July 22, 2020, 10:30 a.m., via Zoom
Wednesday, September 23, 2020, 10:30 a.m., Location TBD
Wednesday, December 16, 2020, 10:30 a.m., Location TBD

Professional Standards Committee Report

Notes provided by Cathy Easter, Professional Standards Committee Chair & Executive Director, Safe Harbor

Since the start of the calendar year, the Professional Standards Committee (PSC) has only met once to conduct business due to Covid-19. That meeting was held on February 25. We had a brief phone check-in on March 25, the date of our next scheduled meeting, but we did not conduct any business due to guidance about FOIA at that time. All other meetings have been cancelled. Our next meeting is this afternoon, we will be using Zoom.

At the meeting on February 25:

- Tierra Smith of DCJS provided an overview of the Organizational Self-Assessments Summaries received. In total, 21 summaries were received. Three organizations indicated they were “Not Ready” and 18 indicated they were “Ready” for the Professional Standards application process. Of the 18 organizations that were “Ready,” two of the submissions were late. The committee voted to accept the late submissions.*
- Ms. Smith also provided an overview of trends in technical assistance needs identified within the assessments. Requests for TA included board training and development, data management, volunteer training and management, and legal requirements within various policies.*
- The committee discussed who would be responsible for providing the technical assistance needs identified by the applicants, or in the future when applicants are not ready for accreditation and have needs. Code of Virginia 9.1-116.3, which established the Professional Standards Committee, states that “upon request of the Committee, the Department and the Virginia sexual and domestic violence coalition may provide accreditation assistance and training and resource material that will assist the local programs in obtaining or retaining accreditation.” Noting this, the committee decided that the to-be-hired DCJS Professional Standards Coordinator, DCJS Professional Standards Consultant, and staff of the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance (Alliance) would be consulted for providing technical assistance to organizations that indicate need.*
- We established an online application timeline, which is now obsolete due to Covid-19. The DCJS Computer Services team has developed the online application. Members of the Professional Standards and DCJS staff are testing it. We will revisit the timeline and the on-line application in our meeting later this afternoon.*
- The committee reviewed the application process. We discussed the application narrative and attachments for the on-line application and have created a Professional Standards Application Site Visit Checklist.*
- We also started a conversation of benchmarks for determining what constitutes Accredited, Provisional, Denied. And the creation of a committee to respond to appeals committee. We had planned to discuss this in detail at our March meeting, but it was cancelled.*