

Advisory Committee on Sexual and Domestic Violence

Libbie Mill Library
2100 Libbie Lake E Street, Richmond, VA 23230

Wednesday, September 29, 2021

10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Final Minutes

Committee Members Present: Teresa Berry, Heather Board, Kike Oliver (for Nichele Carver), Senator Barbara Favola, Kristina Vadas (for Thomas Fitzpatrick), Nancy Fowler, Kate Hanger, Kristen Howard, Delegate Mark Levine, Melissa McMenemy, Kristi VanAudenhove, Toni Zollicoffer

Not Present: Kathy Anderson and Autumn Edmond

Other Guests: Elvira De La Cruz and Eileen Longenecker

Welcome, Introductions, and Remarks

Chair Teresa Berry called the meeting to order at 10:34 a.m. A quorum was present. Committee members made introductions.

Approval of June 16, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Delegate Levine made a motion to approve the June minutes. Melissa McMenemy seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Vote on Amended Committee Bylaws

Teresa Berry asked members to review the proposed, amended Committee bylaws. Most edits were a result of Code of Virginia changes made effective July 1, 2021. These drafted, amended bylaws include feedback from Committee members provided to Vice Chair, Autumn Edmond, since the last meeting. Nancy Fowler made a motion to adopt the amended bylaws. Delegate Levine seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Membership and Appointments

Teresa Berry provided the following update of Committee membership appointments. Committee membership composition changed on July 1, 2021 due to Virginia Code changes, which created five vacant seats on the Committee. The Membership Subcommittee (Kathy Anderson, Teresa Berry, Autumn Edmond, Toni Zollicoffer, staffed by Kristina Vadas) met twice to discuss membership, assess current membership gaps, and create a recruitment process. The Subcommittee members reached out to multiple potential applicants. The Secretary of the Commonwealth's Office has since received enough applications to fill the five vacant seats and they are close to making official appointments. We may have these five new members at the December Committee meeting.

Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

Teresa Berry reported that the Membership Subcommittee would like to nominate Teresa Berry for the position of Committee Chair and Autumn Edmond for position of Committee Vice Chair. Teresa Berry opened the floor for other nominations; none were received. Senator Favola nominated Teresa Berry to fill the Committee Chair position for a second term. Delegate Levine seconded the nomination. Nancy Fowler nominated Autumn Edmond to serve a second term as Committee Vice Chair. Delegate Levine seconded the nomination. The Committee voted unanimously to approve both nominees.

Partner Abuse Intervention and Prevention Workgroup

Toni Zollicoffer provided an update on the Partner Abuse Intervention and Prevention Workgroup. The Workgroup hosted a presentation on domestic violence intervention programs by Dr. Arthur Cantos on August 17, 2021. This presentation was well received. Kristina Vadas will send a link to access a recording of the presentation to members of the workgroup. The Workgroup is assisted by two interns from the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance. They have done research and interviews with abuse intervention programs. The Workgroup is working on recommendations for intervention programs. The next meeting is October 6, 2021 when they will debrief Dr. Cantos' presentation.

State Agency Funding Updates

– Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services

Kristina Vadas provided a recap on the six victims' services grant programs of which she spoke about in detail at the last meeting. She also provided an update about the "VOCA Fix Act" that was recently signed by President Biden. The VOCA Fix Act directs additional money to the federal Crime Victims Fund by expanding fees going into the Fund. This will help replenish and build the Fund but it may take 1-2 years before we feel the effects. The VOCA Fix Act also provides states more time in which to spend VOCA awards and it provides match waivers for subgrantees during the pandemic.

There is no language in the VOCA Fix Act that guarantees a certain base amount to be maintained in the Crime Victims Fund. Senator Favola made a motion that the Committee work on strategies to persuade and encourage Congress to establish an ongoing, annual, set minimum appropriation apart from court fees to fund VOCA-supported programs. This motion was seconded by Delegate Levine. The motion passed unanimously.

The recently signed Budget Bill included \$12.2 million of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to DCJS to support victims of crime. Part of the funds are specifically designated to support sexual and domestic violence services and other programs in FY 2022 that received reductions in grant funding due to the decrease in VOCA funds. ARPA funds will also be used to support child and elder abuse projects.

– Virginia Department of Health

Heather Board reported there are two VDH Requests for Application (RFA) currently out and a third one pending. On June 9, 2021, VDH awarded a RFA focused on sexual violence primary prevention efforts to Richmond SCAN. On June 28, 2021, VDH awarded a RFA focused on sexual violence primary prevention efforts to the Sexual Assault Resource Agency. VDH will release a third RFA on or about November 1,

2021. Awards will be provided to four university and college campus offices that will serve as regional hubs for sexual violence education and prevention and to address risk factors.

– **Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development**

Kike Oliver reported that VDHCD received \$1.5 million from HUD for a homelessness initiative that was awarded to Hopewell, Petersburg, Emporia, Dinwiddie and Colonial Heights. Also, VDHCD has a housing trust fund that is open for applications until November 1, 2021.

– **Virginia Department of Social Services**

Nancy Fowler reported that VDSS awarded new funding specific to expanding domestic violence services for underserved populations to ten community-based organizations that serve specific underserved populations. Many of the grantees have expanded domestic violence services in immigrant communities. The Virginia Harm Reduction Agency, one of the new VDSS funded agencies, provides substance abuse services. Their project will address the overlapping issue of DV and substance use. VDSS is also working on distributing ARPA funds to 51 domestic violence service providers and 10 population specific organizations. VDSS also will be posting a new RFA for mainstream domestic violence services coming up in early 2022 for FY 2023.

New Business

– **Adopting an Electronic Meeting Policy**

Kristina Vadas presented a draft policy concerning how Committee members may participate virtually. The Commonwealth's current budget language allows this Committee to meet virtually if votes are not taken. The Committee decided not to vote on the draft policy until more information is gathered concerning the budget language and FOIA language. This topic was tabled.

– **New DCJS Staff**

Kristina Vadas announced that DCJS hired the following new staff:

- Amber Stanwix is the DCJS Sexual and Domestic Violence Program Professional Standards Program Coordinator.
- Andrea Sumter is the DCJS Sexual and Domestic Violence Program Professional Standards Site Visit Consultant.
- Gleibys Gonzalez is the DCJS Sexual Assault Forensic Services Coordinator.

These new DCJS staff will likely attend the December Committee meeting. A request was made that Ms. Gonzalez speak about her work and provide information about forensic nursing services throughout Virginia.

Other Member Announcements

- Nancy Fowler reported that VDSS's Domestic Violence Action Team has been working for years to develop a promising practices guide. The first part of this guide is now live on the VDSS website.
- Heather Board reported that VDH staffs a task force established by the 2020 General Assembly that is drafting model hospital policies for services to survivors of sexual violence.

- Kristi VanAudenhove reported that the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance's Annual Gala is scheduled for December 3, 2021. Senator Favola will be honored as a champion for survivors at the Gala.
- Senator Favola and Delegate Levine spoke of a recent incident in Loudoun County in which a judge jailed a victim of domestic and sexual violence for contempt of court. The judge also dismissed the jury and declared a mistrial.

Committee members discussed this incident at great length, raising many issues around the impact of this situation on victims.

Delegate Levine reported to the Committee that it's anticipated that a complaint will be filed against the judge in this case to the Judicial Inquiry and Review Commission (JIRC). Members were asked if they would consider issuing a statement about this incident in support of victims and/or if the Committee would send a letter to the JIRC. Delegate Levine will draft a statement for the Committee's consideration to be reviewed at the December meeting.

Members also discussed similar incidents in which Virginia's Crime Victim and Witness Rights Act was not upheld or enforced. Some states have Rights Act compliance processes (see links below).

Victims' Rights Act compliance in other states:

Arizona: <https://www.azag.gov/criminal/victim-services/victims-rights-enforcement-officer>

Colorado: <https://dcj.colorado.gov/file-a-formal-complaint-victims-rights-act>

Wisconsin: <https://www.doj.state.wi.us/ocvs/victim-rights/crime-victims-rights-board>

Public Comment

None received.

Next Meeting

Wednesday, December 15, 2021, 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Location TBD

Closing

Teresa Berry adjourned the meeting at 12:31 p.m.