

Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Program Professional Standards Committee

DRAFT Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 10, 2022, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Zoom Meeting (COVID-19)

Members Present:

Angela Blount, Associate Director, Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance
Jennifer Bourne, Director, Clinch Valley Community Action Inc.¹
Cathy Easter, Executive Director, Safe Harbor
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
Nancy Fowler, Program Manager, Office of Family Violence, DSS
Robin Gauthier, Executive Director, Samaritan House
Sheree Hedrick, Executive Director, Hanover Safe Place
Candy Phillips, Executive Director, First Step: A Response to Domestic Violence²
Stacey Sheppard, Director of Housing and Human Services, Total Action for Progress
Maria Simonetti, Executive Director, The Collins Center & Child Advocacy Center
Kristina Vadas, Manager of Victims Services, DCJS
Laura Beth Weaver, Assistant Director, Women's Resource Center of the New River Valley

Others Present:

Amber Stanwix, Professional Standards Coordinator, DCJS
Andrea Sumter, Professional Standards Consultant, DCJS

Welcome & Remarks

The meeting started at 10:07a.m. Cathy Easter welcomed everyone and invited the Committee members to participate in an icebreaker. The question posed was, "What is your number one tip for combatting distractions while working from home?"

Status of Committee Membership

Debbie Evans, the Chair of the Membership Subcommittee, provided an update on gaining new applicants for the Professional Standards Committee. She informed the group that she and her fellow Subcommittee members reviewed the geographic areas of the Commonwealth, determined areas without membership representation, and then reached out to various agency

¹ Jennifer Bourne logged into the meeting at approximately 11:00a.m.

² Candy Phillips logged into the meeting at approximately 11:00a.m.

directors in those regions. While there have been several responses, the Subcommittee feels that they need to attempt to contact additional people. A second meeting of the Membership Subcommittee is scheduled for February 18th at 11:30a.m. via Zoom.

Description of the Accreditation Process to Date

The Professional Standards Team, Amber Stanwix and Andrea Sumter, provided an update regarding the accreditation process. They reported that all current applications have been reviewed and the Team is waiting for some responses to requests for further information and also the scheduling of site visits. In addition, the Professional Standards Team hosted a webinar regarding the second round of applications for accreditation on Friday, February 4th with approximately 52 registered people representing 26 different agencies. Thus far, four Organizational Self-Assessment Summaries have been sent to the Standards e-mail box. These Summaries will be accepted through March 4th. Finally, the Team reported that they have begun the testing process for the new version of the application.

Review of Questions Regarding the Professional Standards

Amber Stanwix and Andrea Sumter then led the group through some questions that have arisen regarding the requirements of the Professional Standards. First, they asked to clarify the training requirements regarding those who work for dual or separate agencies. In particular, they asked if there are no ongoing training requirements for Level 1 staff (those who do not provide direct services). After some discussion, the group agreed that this was the correct interpretation. However, the Committee requested that this be added to a list of items that may be revisited when the Standards are revised in the future.

The question then turned to staff who are employed by umbrella agencies. In these types of agencies, there is one organization that oversees two distinct programs: one serving survivors of domestic violence and one serving survivors of sexual violence. The overall umbrella agency would apply as two separate agencies for accreditation. There has been some confusion among applicants and the Professional Standards Team regarding the amount of initial and continuing education hours required by these employees.

This sparked a lengthy discussion regarding how umbrella agencies are defined and if they should be allowed to apply as separate agencies. The group discussed whether or not there would be the same program directors, the same volunteer pool, and the use of the same hotline. In addition, the topics of historical identity and training needs were discussed. The group eventually came to a consensus that, in terms of training, the Standards require that employees of umbrella agencies would need training similar to dual or separate agencies, i.e. 40 hours for new employees and 20 hours of ongoing training per year. The agencies should be able to determine any types of specialized training that would be needed. The group also decided to add the topic of umbrella agencies to the list of topics to be covered in the future. Debbie Evans requested that, if the group does revisit this issue, that consideration be given to government agencies, which may not have authority to mandate training for those working in

other areas of the government. The group then moved on to resolve a list of specific questions that had been developed by the Professional Standards Team.

Question #1 - How do we accredit if a dual agency meets the Standards for the DV portion of the program but not the SV program? Accredit just the DV portion? Do provisional accreditation for the whole agency? Accredit DV and do provisional for SV?

The group quickly agreed that an agency must meet the Standards for all aspects of the agency. If it does not, the agency will fall into the provisional accreditation status. A member emphasized that a provisional status is not a negative outcome; but rather gives the agency opportunities to learn and grow.

Question #2 - One of the areas of Administration training required for Level 2 employees is, "Services, structure, and content information of Agency's key partners (e.g. funders, the Action Alliance)." What is expected for this section?

A member stated that the purpose behind this requirement was that the agency should be emphasizing to trainees that sexual and domestic violence work is not something that is done alone. Rather, each agency partners with multiple other agencies in order to ensure that survivors are receiving the services that they need. Trainees should be provided with information about the partnering agencies and what services are provided by those agencies.

Question #3 - Standard #3 states, "Supervisors receive ongoing training to support their management, supervision, and trauma stewardship responsibilities." How many hours of training do supervisors need to receive if they are not Level 2 employees? Are there any ongoing training requirements? Does a specific amount of training need to be dedicated to supervision?

A member stated that the Standards do not break this down in terms of hours; but supervisors must get guidance as to how to perform their job duties. Another member added that the Professional Standards Team needs to ensure that supervisors have the tools they need or the opportunity to acquire those tools through training. A member again emphasized that the intent of this Standard was to ensure that supervisors were getting supervisory training. She advised the Professional Standards Team to ask the agency what it is doing to teach staff how to supervise and how it is supporting the various teams. Andrea Sumter advised that she does talk to both supervisors and employees during site visits in order to ascertain how well supervisors function within the agency.

The Professional Standards Team also raised the issue of training in terms of supervision and experience with domestic and sexual violence. For example, there may be people who are experienced in direct services who are then promoted to supervisory positions with little to no experience in supervision. On the other hand, an agency may recruit someone with a vast amount of experience in supervision but with little background in the field of sexual and domestic violence. A member echoed these concerns by asking, if a person is supervising staff who provide direct services, shouldn't the supervisor need at least the same level of training?

The group agreed that there may be some discretion in this area in terms of training required by supervisors. They concluded that some leadership training is required and that the domestic and sexual violence training is up to the agency's discretion. The group agreed that this is a topic that would need further discussion when the Standards are updated. In particular, there may need to be some examples provided; or there may need to be a new Level 3 category for training requirements.

Question #4 - If a director is providing training to supervisors, are there any requirements for the director to have training?

The group agreed that there is an expectation that directors understand the work involved in the domestic and sexual violence field. They believed that this would include receiving the same Level 2 training as direct staff. A member asked whether they could require executive directors to receive this training if it could not be required of supervisors. There was then some discussion of the terms "supervisor" and "director". The group agreed that they may need to clarify this issue when the Standards are revised. Andrea Sumter stated that, for the time being, the Professional Standards Team can provide soft recommendations to agencies in order to encourage supervisors or executive directors to get additional training as needed.

Question #5 - If the agency has a director and the agency is small, the director may also be tasked with providing direct services. Would they still be required to receive training as a Level 2 staff member?

The group agreed that, if a director or supervisor is providing direct services, they would need to receive training as a Level 2 employee. A member pointed out that, as the Professional Standards Team is conducting site visits, they will have a better opportunity to determine if a supervisor or executive director is providing direct services. This will allow the Team to correctly verify the required amount of training.

Question #6 - Are the required background checks ongoing, or is it a one and done process?

A member expressed that this has been a hot topic among those providing funding for sexual and domestic violence agencies. These funders may have their own requirements for ongoing background checks. Another member pointed out that, as the Standards are currently written, it does appear that this is a one and done process. The group agreed that they would like to revisit this topic in the future. Someone again pointed out that government agencies could have different limitations regarding when and how background checks could be conducted.

Question #7 - Do we need information regarding how agencies destroy their records under the records retention policy?

The group agreed that the Professional Standard Team does not need information beyond the records retention policy. One member pointed out that the specifics of record destruction are already thoroughly monitored by grant monitors. Another member did raise the issue of

agencies moving to electronic records and how those records may be destroyed. The group agreed to add this to the list of discussion during a future revision of the Professional Standards.

Question #8 - In terms of the 24/7 judicial accompaniment, what is the expectation? Is it expected that accompaniment will be provided to the magistrates' offices?

The group agreed that, as long as accompaniment is addressed by a local partner, the agency itself would not need to provide accompaniment to the magistrate's office. However, the group also stated that the Professional Standards Team should review the relevant Memorandum of Understanding in order to ensure that this service is being provided.

Question #9 - What is the difference between the second point in Standard #16 (Agency is collaboratively engaged with others doing similar work in the community) and the first point in Standard #17 (Demonstrate participation in and/or leadership in sexual and/or domestic violence focused community groups (Domestic Violence Council, Sexual Assault Response Teams, Inter-Agency Councils, or others))?

A member stated that Standard #16 is about addressing prevention education. Therefore, the second point is measuring how agencies collaborate with other agencies in a community that are also doing some kind of prevention work. Alternatively, the first point in Standard #17 is about cooperation with other agencies working in the field of sexual and domestic violence. Another member pointed out that, as there is currently no money available for prevention, prevention can also look like being in the same room with others doing similar work.

Question #10 - Is there a difference between a policy, a plan, and a procedure under the standards?

The Professional Standards Team shared an example from Standard #4, which requires a written "policy/plan" of a criminal background check. There was some disagreement among members about the meaning and differences between a policy, plan, and procedure. The group came to a consensus that there must be something in writing, but the form of that can be left up to the discretion of each agency. In addition, the group decided that this would also be an issue that could be addressed during any further revisions of the Standards, perhaps by adding some terms to the Glossary.

Closing Remarks

The meeting adjourned at 12:10p.m.

Public Comment

There were no members of the public present.

Action Items

Kristina Vadas will inform the Membership Subcommittee if there have been any new applicants for the Professional Standards Committee.

The Membership Subcommittee will meet on February 18th, 2022 at 11:30a.m. via Zoom.

Next Meeting: TBD