

Advisory Committee on Sexual and Domestic Violence

Meadowdale Library
4301 Meadowdale Boulevard
North Chesterfield, VA 23234

Wednesday, September 14, 2022

10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Final Minutes

Committee Members Present:

Maria Altonen
Kathy Anderson
Teresa Berry
Elvira De la Cruz
Sanu Dieng
Marva Dunn
Autumn Edmond
Kristen Howard
Claudia Lopez-Muñiz
Kike Oliver
Unique Phillips
Anya Shaffer (Proxy for Kristina Vadas)
Jonathan Yglesias (Proxy for Kristi VanAudenhove)

Committee Members Absent:

Senator Barbara Favola
Nancy Fowler
Kate Hanger
Toni Zollicoffer
VACANT – House of Delegates Representative
VACANT – Office of the Attorney General Representative

DCJS Staff in Attendance:

Andi Martin
Amber Stanwix
Andrea Sumter

Guests in Attendance:

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

Welcome, Introductions, and Remarks

Committee Chair Teresa Berry called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. Committee members made introductions. A quorum was present.

Approval of June 8, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Marva Dunn made a motion to approve the minutes from the June 8, 2022 meeting. Sanu Dieng seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Report from the Language Access Workgroup

Jonathan Yglesias, Policy Director at the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance (VSDVAA), provided a report from the Language Access Workgroup. The group met in August for a preliminary meeting and has a follow-up meeting scheduled for September 26, 2022. During this discussion, the group learned from the Virginia Supreme Court website that work that has been done and continues to be done to address language access, yet concerns remain at the local level. The group discussed many language access challenges in local court systems.

The group learned about language access work done by the localities of Alexandria and Fairfax, and their respective crisis response teams changing practices at the local levels improving language access in the courts. The group discussed having representatives from these jurisdictions present on their successes to help other agencies and jurisdictions identify what ideas can be transferred to other communities. Some communities may need help strengthening crisis response teams.

The group also drafted some goals:

- Long term goals:
 - Build Virginia's pool of qualified bilingual staff who can directly provide services to Limited-English Proficiency (LEP) individuals. Fair compensation for the extra skill-set and labor is imperative to avoid a high-turnover rate.
 - Initiate and/or work with existing Coordinated Community Response Teams or Local Domestic Violence Councils to address local practice and policy with regards to language access and safety issues for LEP survivors.

- Short term goals:
 - Standardize basic training upon hiring court and magistrate staff to set standards around language access implementation. This includes the understanding that providing an interpreter is not the LEP individual's responsibility and that it is not trauma-informed to not make such a provision.
 - Provide training and technical assistance to advocates on how to change local practices and policy on these issues.

Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Program Professional Standards Committee

Amber Stanwix and Andrea Sumter, DCJS staff support for the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Program Professional Standards Committee, provided an update on the Professional Standards Program and Professional Standards Committee (PSC).

For the Professional Standards Program, Stanwix and Sumter are currently evaluating the second round of applications for local sexual and domestic violence agencies. They have also completed the review for ten agencies that applied in the first round of applications. No applications have been presented to the PSC yet due to delays in appointments of members to the PSC. As a result, no final accreditation decisions have been made, as PSC members must approve all accreditation recommendations.

During the 2021 legislative session, the Code of Virginia was changed so that PSC seats were filled, via Governor's appointment, by people in leadership positions from sexual and domestic violence programs. This requirement was intentional because the PSC operates on a peer review basis. Additionally, the Code section states that members "shall include racial and ethnic diversity and shall be representative of regional and geographic locations of the Commonwealth."

According to an August 1, 2022 media release, eleven of twelve PSC seats were filled by Governor appointment. DCJS is awaiting official notice of the new PSC members, but staff learned through the media release that five of the eleven appointees are ineligible members by Code: four are victim/witness program staff and one is associated with a private school. Additionally, it does not appear that the new members include racial and ethnic diversity or provide regional and geographic representation.

Also, although some applied, no previous PSC members were selected for appointment. This is a concern as these individuals have institutional knowledge of the PSC's decisions so far.

DCJS leadership staff informed the Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security and the Secretary of the Commonwealth (the office that makes appointments) about these concerns and are awaiting a response.

One committee member asked about representation of people of color on the PSC that was recently appointed. Staff responded that there is one Black female and one Hispanic female. Another member asked how committee members can help. The group discussed reaching out to their local legislators and the Secretary of the Commonwealth's office about the issue.

DCJS staff will email out a timeline and summary to all members. DCJS staff also encourage leadership staff from sexual and domestic violence agencies to apply for appointment.

Proposed Sexual and Domestic Violence Agency Needs Assessment Survey

Kristen Howard provided an update on the proposed sexual and domestic violence agency needs assessment survey. Prior to the meeting, members were emailed a copy of a draft survey. A hard copy of the draft survey was also available to members at the meeting. Howard noted this is a very rough draft, as it is currently too long. She welcomed feedback. The committee revisited the purpose of doing a survey, which is: to inform the committee on gaps and challenges to help direct the work of the committee, and to share results with funding agencies to help inform their decisions.

VSDVAA staff will send Howard a copy of the most recent surveys they conducted with their membership so that Howard can modify this draft so it is not duplicative. Howard will also take input from members between now and December.

The committee discussed they would not create a work group for this project, but rather the members will work on it collectively.

Nancy Fowler, VDSS, submitted written feedback to DCJS prior to the meeting as she was unable to attend. Andi Martin (DCJS) will send this feedback to Howard via email.

State Agency Funding Updates

- Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS)
Anya Shaffer provided an update on DCJS victim-related grants:
 1. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) VSGP Restoration: Current grants have been extended through June 2023. Sexual and domestic violence agencies received an additional \$6M of ARPA funding for FY23.
 2. Sexual Assault Services Program (SASP): In third quarter of a one-year grant award (calendar year). Applications for CY23 funding are currently being reviewed.
 3. Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Victim Fund: A new grant purpose area was added to this program's Code of Virginia section, providing funding for sexual assault service providers and hospitals for the purpose of funding the cost of salaries and equipment for sexual assault forensic examiners, sexual assault nurse examiners, and pediatric sexual assault nurse examiners. There is a solicitation currently open for this purpose; closes on 9/20/22.
 4. VSTOP: In third quarter of year one of a two-year grant cycle (calendar year).
 5. Victims Services Grant Program (VSGP): In month 15 of a 24-month cycle (fiscal year).
 6. Victim/Witness Grant Program (VWGP): In second year of a two-year cycle (fiscal year).

Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding outlook is still very uncertain. There are two primary concerns: 1) the balance of the federal Crime Victims Fund (CVF), and 2) Virginia's VOCA award levels vs. grant obligations.

The VOCA Fix Act was intended to, among other things, increase the dollars going into the CVF and stabilize the fund. As a result, monies from deferred prosecutions now go into the CVF. Deposits have been coming in more slowly than anticipated and the balance of the CVF has not built back up. The balance of the fund may not be able to meet the VOCA Cap (amount appropriated by Congress for VOCA). An additional issue is that Virginia's VOCA awards have fluctuated wildly:

- FFY17 - \$47.3 million
- FFY18 - \$85.3 million
- FFY19 - \$57.8 million
- FFY20 - \$42.7 million
- FFY21 - \$26.6 million
- FFY22 - \$36.7 million

States have the current year plus three to spend VOCA funds. This has allowed DCJS to stretch out larger awards. However, the larger awards will not last much longer. Currently DCJS 12-month subgrantee VOCA obligations are approximately \$46 million. DCJS will not be able to support that level in future

years with current award levels. DCJS has been working on plans for SFY24, which are currently under leadership review. DCJS hopes to be able to share more concrete information about SFY24 soon.

OVC Director, Kris Rose, conducts monthly briefings that include information about the Crime Victims Fund balances. Recordings of these briefing are found here: <https://ovc.ojp.gov/about/from-the-directors-desk>

- Virginia Department of Health (VDH)
Maria Altonen reported that VDH's Annual Report for prevention funds was recently sent to the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) and it will be included in the VDSS report.
- Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)
Kike Oliver had no updates on victim-related grants but did share that Nichelle Carver left DHCD and is now at the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness. DHCD is looking for a new Assistant Director to fill this vacancy.
- Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS):
No update provided.

Past Business

- Sexual and Domestic Violence Prevention Funding
Jonathan Yglesias reported that VDSS hired a consultant, Carol Dunlap, to develop an RFP for this funding. VSDVAA developed a draft solicitation, based on prevention funding in other states as well as best practices here in Virginia, and provided this to VDSS as a template. Despite the original intent that this fund build the prevention capacity of Virginia's sexual and domestic violence agencies, the VDSS procurement office will not limit funding to these agencies; rather, any applicant who wishes to implement a sexual and domestic violence primary prevention initiative in Virginia can apply. The VDSS RFP has been finalized and sent to VDSS procurement for final approval.
- New Virtual Public Meeting Policy ([House Bill 444](#))
Members were provided a copy of a draft policy prior to the meeting, and hard copies were available at the meeting. Teresa Berry asked members to review the draft policy and opened the floor for discussion, of which there was none. Kathy Anderson made a motion to adopt the policy. Autumn Edmond seconded it. The motion passed unanimously and the policy was approved.

New Business

No new business.

Other Member Announcements

No member announcements.

Public Comment

Eileen Longenecker with the Office of the Executive Secretary, Supreme Court of VA, informed the committee that, in reference to the Language Access Workgroup efforts, the Supreme Court has a coordinator position

dedicated to foreign language services. It would be helpful if problems identified by the workgroup or committee are brought to their attention. The Supreme Court has a contract with a telephone interpretation service available to all magistrates and judges. The Supreme Court received funding for ten more interpreters in the state budget, and they are hiring for these positions now. There is training that addresses language access at magistrate regional meetings. At the recent district court judges' conference, there was a discussion on domestic violence and firearms. There is a mandatory session for general district court and juvenile and domestic relations court judges. There is an optional domestic violence conference for judges in November. There is a judicial conference coming up in late November/early December.

Final 2022 Meeting:

Wednesday, December 7, 2022, 10:30 a.m.

This will be an all-virtual meeting. Login information will be emailed to all closer to the meeting date.

Closing

Teresa Berry adjourned the meeting at 12:10 p.m.