

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

11 a.m., Monday, March 13, 2017

Third-floor conference room, S.C. Department of Mental Health * 2414 Bull St. * Columbia, SC

Committee members in attendance: Duffie Stone, committee chair, Fourteenth Circuit Solicitor; Sara Barber, vice chair, S.C. Coalition Against Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault; Sen. Katrina Shealy; Heather Weiss, S.C. Attorney General's Office; Jane Key, DHEC; Jay Johnson, S.C. Education Lottery; Jerome Kurent, Medical University of South Carolina; Lee Dutton, S.C. Department of Alcohol and other Drug Abuse Services; Linda Macon, Sixth Circuit Solicitor's Office victim's advocate; Paul Grant, SLED; John Magill, S.C. Department of Mental Health.

Also in attendance: David Ross, S.C. Prosecution Commission; Jeff Kidd, Fourteenth Circuit Solicitor's Office; Elizabeth Renneker, Spartanburg County Sheriff's Office; Kate Mann, S.C. Attorney General's Office; Meghan Weibel, S.C. Attorney General's Office; Alicia Benedetto, Department of Mental Health.

CALL TO ORDER, Duffie Stone, committee chair, Fourteenth Circuit Solicitor, 11:10 a.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA, unanimous

DISCUSSION OF PREVIOUS MEETING'S MINUTES. Minutes from the December meeting were not yet available. The committee voted unanimously to review and approve them at its next meeting.

DISCUSSION OF DRAFT OF SURVEY FOR SOLICITORS, <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TB6YB77>, prepared by Chief Gregory Mullen, Charleston Police Department (Note: Chief Mullen is a committee member but was unable to attend.)

- Sara Barber suggested language of survey be edited to make clearer the distinction between the DV Coordinating Councils and the DV fatality review teams. Although there could be overlap between group members, their functions are separate.
- It was noted that header on Survey Monkey document contains Charleston Police Department logo. Suggestion made to use state seal or image that more accurately portrays membership and mandate.
- Committee unanimously agreed to instruct Mullen to make the suggested changes after a motion by Weiss and a second by John Magill.

DISCUSSION OF STATISTICS FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ORGANIZATIONS, Sara Barber, committee vice chair, S.C. Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

- Barber noted that DV problem is still largely viewed from standpoint of law enforcement. However, it is much broader in scope, with aspects that include health, mental health, education, medical and other considerations.
- Barber also distributed information sheets, provided to committee members before and during the meeting. They contained, among other things, results from a National Census of Domestic Violence Services, in which 12 S.C. domestic violence programs reported

information about the services they provided during a 24-hour survey period. Among the results of that survey were 40 unmet requests for services, 83% of which are for housing.

- Many agencies provide non-shelter services for legal, medical and children's advocacy assistance to victims. However, South Carolina suffers a dearth of transitional housing for those seeking to escape abusive environments.
- Barber noted that with the transition from the administrations of Gov. Haley and Gov. McMaster, the statistics and other information regarding the Domestic Violence Task Force had been removed from the Governor's Office website. Chair Stone agreed to contact the Governor's Office to ask that they be returned; Barber said she would attempt to locate the information so that it could be posted on other online portals, as well.
- Barber cited one survey in which only one in five respondents said they felt safer after calling law enforcement regarding a domestic violence incident. Only one in four said they would be likely to call upon law enforcement again.
- Stone described the "family justice center" concept, in which many agencies that provide assistance to DV victims – for instance, counseling, legal advice, medical assistance, victim advocates – are housed in a single facility. Ideally that facility is near or within a solicitor's or district attorney's office because that's a place virtually all victims much go at some point if they proceed with a case.
- Stone also noted approach in places like San Diego, where measures of success have shifted from the number of DV convictions earned to the number of victims assisted.
- Solicitors monitor "batterer intervention," but soon the data collected from these efforts will be more than two years old. Barber and Ross agreed to try to collect updated information soon. This should be a topic of discussion at next meeting.

INCIDENT REPORT DATA, Paul Grant, S.C. State Law Enforcement Division.

- Law enforcement's incident report data fields have been changed to allow recording of more information about circumstances of DV cases, however, not all agencies are using them consistently, Grant reported. They were introduced in January, and Grant said he expects it might be a year before they are fully implemented and consistently used.
- Stone asked if there is a way to compel use of the new codes. Grant indicated that, at this stage of implementation, it is only strongly suggested.
- Grant explained to those unfamiliar with the process that county and municipal law enforcement agencies use standardized incident reports. These are passed to SLED, which compiles them and uses the information as the basis for the state's Uniform Crime Report.
- The new fields allow officers to indicate whether there is or was cohabitation between those involved in domestic violence incidents. It also allows for notations about children in common. Previously, the form asked only for the relationship between those involved.
- Barber noted that despite changes, not all violence involving intimate partners – between boyfriend/girlfriends, teens, for example -- is recorded and tracked the way violence between cohabitants is.
- Stone asked if there is a way for SLED to correlate domestic violence cases with other types of violent crime. For instances, if charges are upgraded to sexual assault or murder, are they (or can they be) also tracked and counted as domestic violence.

“SILENT WITNESS” PRESENTATION, Heather Weiss and Kate Mann, S.C. Attorney General’s Office; Spartanburg Sheriff’s Office Investigator Elizabeth Renneker; Meghan Weibel, victim advocate. A case study of a domestic violence case that ended in a murder/suicide.

- Presentation given in executive session to keep victim information confidential. Heather Weiss made the motion to enter executive session; Sen. Katrina Shealy seconded, vote was unanimous.
- Sen. Shealy moved that the committee exit executive session, and Magill seconded. The vote to return to regular session was unanimous.

No **NEW BUSINESS** was presented to the committee.

The committee decided that the Department of Mental Health was a convenient place to meet and agreed to reconvene there at 11 a.m. June 12, 2017. Before the next meeting, members agreed that:

- Chair Stone would contact the Governor’s Office to inquire about returning Domestic Abuse Task Force information to the office website.
- Stone also noted two committee seats are vacant and added that he would speak with the Governor’s Office about appointments to fill them, as well. Currently, positions representing South Carolina’s sheriffs and the Department of Social Services are unfilled.
- Jay Johnson volunteered to research family justice centers, to provide an estimate of how many there are across the country, what they typically include and how they were created.
- An offer was made to contact victim cited during the “Silent Witness” presentation, to gauge her willingness to speak to the committee.

John Magill made a motion to adjourn, and Paul Grant seconded the motion. The vote to adjourn was unanimous.