

MINUTES
Connecticut Advisory Council for Victims of Crime
January 23, 2013

The Connecticut Advisory Council for Victims of Crime met at 225 Spring Street, Wethersfield, in the fourth floor conference room from 2:38 p.m. to 3:59 p.m.

Members in Attendance:

Co-Chair Steve Eppler-Epstein, Joseph Bibisi, Antonia Cordero, Laura Cordes, Karen Jarmoc, Kevin Lawlor, Brian Moore, Susan Omilian, and Rocco Tricarico

Members Excused or Absent:

Co-Chair Deputy Chief Court Administrator the Honorable Patrick L. Carroll, III, Chester Brodnicki, Janice Heggie Margolis, Robin Montgomery, and Jan VanTassel

OVS Staff Present:

Linda J. Cimino, James Morgan, Tina Bouchard, Rachel McKnight, and Katie Nesta

Guest:

Denise Covington, SAFE Program Coordinator

Agenda:

1. Welcome
Steve Eppler-Epstein called the meeting to order at 2:38 p.m. and welcomed members.
2. Approval of the November 13, 2012 Meeting Minutes
Steve noted that without a quorum the minutes from November 13, 2012, cannot be approved. Council members had no questions regarding the November 13, 2012, minutes.
3. Review of Meeting Schedule
Steve asked members if there are any conflicts regarding the 2013 meeting schedule; none were raised. Steve said that 2013 meetings will start at 2:30, with a goal of adjournment at 4:00, although the committee would meet until 4:30 if the additional time is necessary.
4. 2013 Legislative Update
Susan Omilian reported on the recent school shootings and the importance of the resulting debate on changing the gun laws in the state of Connecticut.

Kevin Lawlor reported on proposed statutory changes to the punishment for defendants charged with manslaughter when the victim is younger than 16 years old.

Karen Jarmoc reported on efforts to strengthen the criteria for individuals who have been arrested for family violence to participate in the Family Violence Education Program (FVEP). The Program provides basic information about family violence and is intended for first time offenders. The Program's criteria should be strengthened to ensure that only those individuals facing their first arrest have access to this program and that automatic sanctions take effect for offenders who do not satisfactorily complete the program.

Karen also reported on efforts to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), which provides critical funding and tools for combating domestic violence in Connecticut. Efforts around reauthorization include advocacy to expand protections to undocumented immigrants, gays and lesbians, and Native Americans.

Laura Cordes reported on proposed statutory changes to the definition of a victim being "physically helpless" in sexual assault cases. The change would expand the definition of a victim being "physically helpless" only when they are unconscious to include victims that have physical and/or mental disabilities. Laura also reported on a proposal to allow sexual assault victims to break a lease if they are assaulted in their apartment or on a property they rent.

Laura also reported on continued funding for the SAFE Program and forensic kit reimbursement.

Linda Cimino reported on proposed statutory changes to the requirement that a victim of a crime has to have physical injury and mental anguish to receive victim compensation. The change would open up compensation to include victims of crime that have physical injury or mental anguish. Linda also reported on proposed changes that would open up victim compensation to adult witnesses and first responders as well as making the change retroactive in order to provide services to the first responders and adult witnesses of the Sandy Hook school shooting.

Steve requested that the proposed bill regarding victim compensation be sent to members.

5. Sandy Hook School Shooting Response

Rachel McKnight reported that on the day of the Sandy Hook school shooting OVS staff immediately started contacting funeral homes, churches, and the state police regarding services that are available.

Rachel also reported that OVS victim advocates, claims examiners, and members of management staffed a Family Assistance Center along with the American Red Cross in Newtown from December 17-31, 2012; during which 32 family members of 10 of the families involved in the incident came to the center. Rachel also reported that OVS staff attended parent meetings held in Newtown where 160 parents attended. Rachel reported that OVS staffed the Kevin's Community Center January 14-16, 2013. Rachel also reported on various outreach to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Newtown Youth and Family Services, and the Newtown Board of Education.

Linda reported on a seeking additional funding from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office for Victims of Crime under the Antiterrorism and Emergency Assistance Program for Terrorism and Mass Violence Crimes grant.

Members discussed the Sandy Hook shooting as well as its impact, outreach to the victims, and compensation limitations of non-child witnesses.

6. CICF Update

Jim Morgan distributed and reviewed the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund (CICF) Program Budget statement for month ending December 31, 2012. Jim reported that total disbursements are \$1.4 million, with \$1.7 million remaining for current obligations. Jim reported that there is \$560,000 in total obligations as of December 31, 2012, equaling 62 percent of total appropriations. Jim explained that the fund balance is about the same as last year, but it will be hard to tell how the budget will be impacted by the volume of claims received due to the Sandy Hook school shooting as well as if the Antiterrorism and Emergency Assistance Program for Terrorism and Mass Violence Crimes grant is awarded.

Jim distributed and reviewed the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund Statement of Financial Position Fiscal Year 2012-2013. Jim reported that the beginning balance is \$1.5 million. Jim reported that total revenues are \$1.4 million, with expenditures of \$1.7 million, leaving a \$1.2 million balance. Jim explained that it is projected that the fund balance will be depleted in March 2014.

Members discussed the fund balance as well as federal and private funding.

7. OVS Update

Linda reported that the Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners (SAFE) Program has just recognized its 2 year anniversary.

Denise Covington reported that since the SAFE Program launched on December 2, 2010, there have been a total of 374 case responses among the 6 participating hospitals. Denise also reported on various issues the Program has encountered, such as unconscious patients and patients who are under the influence not being able to give informed consent. Denise also reported on proposed changes to the sexual assault kits.

Laura reported that a federal grant was awarded to Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services (CONNSACS) to invest in updating training materials and technical guidelines.

Tina Bouchard reported that the 17th Annual Melanie Ilene Rieger Memorial Conference titled "Broken Silence....Sounds of Survivors" will be held at the Central Connecticut State University on June 5-6, 2013.

Tina also reported on various trainings for OVS contractors as well as police officers.

8. New Business

Susan reported on an upcoming "My Avenging Angel Workshops; Living Well is the Best Revenge."

9. Adjournment

Steve adjourned the meeting at 3:59 p.m.

Katie Nesta, Recorder