

MINUTES
Connecticut Advisory Council for Victims of Crime
July 17, 2007

The Connecticut Advisory Council for Victims of Crime met at 225 Spring Street, Wethersfield, in the fourth floor conference room on Tuesday, July 17, 2007, from 2:04 p.m. to 3:34 p.m.

Members in Attendance:

Co-chair Steve Eppler-Epstein, Fernando Betancourt, Joseph Bibisi, Larry Bostrom, John Duffey, Janice Heggie Margolis, Lisa Holden, Laura Cordes for Nancy Kushins, Kevin Lawlor, and Neil O'Leary

Members Excused or Absent:

Judge Patrick L. Carroll, Cheryl Burack, Chester Brodnicki, Larry D'Orsi, and Jan VanTassel

OVS Staff Present:

Linda J. Cimino, Jamey L. Harris, David Burr, James Morgan, and Brenda Jordan

Agenda:

1. Welcome and Introductions

Steve Eppler-Epstein welcomed members and called the meeting to order at 2:04 p.m. Members introduced themselves. Steve inquired if members had additional items for the agenda. No new agenda items were added.

2. Review and Approval of the May 15, 2007 Meeting Minutes

Steve asked for a motion to accept the minutes of May 15, 2007. The motion was moved and seconded, and the minutes were accepted as presented.

3. Update – OVS Compensation Program Issues

Linda Cimino distributed an updated illustration of the financial position of the Program as of June 30, 2007. She reported that the General Assembly approved a one-time infusion of \$900,000 for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2007-2008 into the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund (CICF), as well as an increase of \$600,000 for each year of the biennium. The allocation for SFY 2007-2008 will be \$2,925,000.

Steve inquired on the financial position of the Program for SFY 2007-2008. Linda responded that all of the \$1.5 million, except \$57,069, has been obligated to meet the deficit from SFY 2006-2007. Therefore SFY 2007-2008 will have no additional funding, which will likely translate into another SFY with obligation over expense.

Larry Bostrom asked if OVS is reducing compensation benefits. Linda responded that benefits would not be reduced due to the increase in funds. However, as of July 1, 2007, funeral benefits were increased from \$4,000 to \$5,000.

Steve asked if it still might be appropriate to re-balance benefits for spending levels, compared to other states. Linda responded OVS would continue to monitor spending against the budget, and stated that the current reporting system is such that it is

difficult to get the information needed and often involves hand counting. OVS needs to review national trends for comparison. Probably a year from now, OVS can provide an analysis of what the year was like.

Members continued to discuss the Program's trends, including economic support and mental health counseling.

Steve suggested that Linda include the Council in the process of rebalancing the Compensation Program benefits and provide information in the next couple of meetings. Linda responded that that would depend on the availability of the 2005 Department of Public Safety Uniform Crime Report, which would be the easiest comparison measurement tool.

4. Update – Crisis Response in Light of Virginia Tech Shootings

Larry Bostrom stated that after the Virginia Tech shootings, he received an email from NOVA (National Organization for Victim Assistance) on the response services to this crisis, and wanted to know if OVS had a crisis response plan. Jamey Harris responded that OVS is a member of the Connecticut Helps Oversight Council (CHOC), which came into existence after September 11, 2001. The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) has a network of first responders, comprising more than 240 trained behavioral health professionals. OVS would participate in a crisis response if it was a criminal event, but not as a first responder. OVS would have a fairly narrow slice of involvement and would probably be limited to compensation information and assistance with completing applications.

Larry Bostrom inquired that if there was an incident of this magnitude in Connecticut, but the person filing for compensation is a resident of another state are they eligible for victim compensation. Linda responded that one of the three residency requirements must be met:

- The victim is a resident of Connecticut and the crime happened in Connecticut
- The victim is a resident of another state, but the crime happened in Connecticut
- The victim is a resident of Connecticut and the crime happened in a state that does not have a compensation program

Kevin Lawlor inquired how OVS verifies residency for illegal aliens. Linda remarked that that was a good question and that OVS has not experienced a situation of that nature. Members then discussed the possible pitfalls for illegal aliens in applying for victim compensation and members agreed to have a future discussion on this topic to allow OVS staff time to prepare.

Members agreed to move to Item 7 on the agenda.

7. Update 2007 Legislative Initiatives

Linda reported that File 759 was incorporated into Public Act 07-02, An Act Implementing the Provisions of the Budget Concerning Human Services and Public Health. This bill directs OVS to contract with nongovernmental organizations to develop a coordinated response system to assist victims of human trafficking that includes developing a uniform curriculum to address rights and services, developing information and materials, and promoting and disseminating training and educational information.

Lisa Holden reported that Public Act 07-123 now allows police officers to impose conditions of release when the courts are closed and defines assault by strangulation as a felony. She also reported that protective orders have been expanded to include the protection of pets. Lisa stated that Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence efforts for additional funding for shelters and court advocates did not pass.

Janice Heggie Margolis reported that Mothers Against Drunk Driving's efforts for appropriations also failed, but did receive an increase in the fee for the Victim Impact Panel from \$25 to \$75. Janice stated that MADD will continue to advocate for an open container and ignition lock device legislation. She also stated that MADD will meet with the Department of Motor Vehicles to look at patterns of drunk driving.

Laura Cordes reported that legislation passed securing sexual assault victims access to contraceptives in emergency rooms and is effective October 1, 2007. Laura also reported on legislation eliminating the statute of limitations on certain sexual assault offenses if the perpetrator is identified by DNA and that the statutory rape law increased from a two-year to a three-year age difference for thirteen to fifteen year-olds with the intent to decriminalize consensual sexual activity between teenagers close in age.

5. OVS Strategic Plan

Jamey distributed the OVS Strategic Plan and explained that the strategic planning process began in September 2005. She thanked Larry and Shirley Bostrom and Cheryl Burack, Council members who served on the committee, and Mario Gaboury, chair of the University of New Haven Criminal Justice Department, who served as facilitator. Jamey stated that OVS divided the planning process into two phases. The first phase, which is reflected in the Plan, focuses on the foundation of OVS and includes the mission, vision, and guiding statements (Appendix E) and the detailed work plan (Appendix F). In January 2009, OVS will begin phase two of the plan that will address statewide services.

Jamey stated that the OVS Management Team meets monthly to review the progress presented in the detailed plan and a report on the progress will be provided quarterly to the Strategic Planning Committee. Jamey offered to provide the quarterly report to the Council. Steve suggested that the report is sent via email.

6. OVS Update

Linda reported on the following OVS staffing changes:

- Jeanne Holm-Barth, the victim services advocate assigned to the Ansonia-Milford JD will transfer to Middlesex JD, effective August 10, 2007, to replace Mike Dankulich, who retired July 1, 2007. The Ansonia-Milford position will be posted as of July 20, 2007.
- Minerva Colon, an administrative clerk, accepted a position with Court Support Services Division (CSSD) and resigned July 19, 2007. This position was posted and closes on July 23, 2007.

- Chandra Williams, Grants and Contracts Specialist, resigned in mid-June. The position has been posted.

Linda reported that OVS held a Staff Appreciation Day on June 27, 2007, at the Crowne Plaza in Cromwell. Staff was recognized for their years of service and met author Nora Baskins, who provided a luncheon presentation. Linda thanked the Education and Planning Unit for their planning and coordination of the event.

Linda stated that in March she met with staff for the bi-annual Fifteen Minute Meetings with the director. A report on these meetings will be provided to the Council at the next meeting.

Linda also reported that she, Jim Morgan, and Dave Burr are revising the RFP for Services document, which should be published this fall. They are also working on RFQs for counseling programs for surviving members of homicide victims, an academy, and a sex offender program.

Jim Morgan reported that the budget for the Compensation Program is set, but we have not received the first full allocation for the new SFY due to the late budget acceptance date. OVS did receive a partial allocation, which was spent for payments to victims. Jim anticipates a full quarter allotment in August that will be used to pay for loss of support claims that have been on hold.

Jim reported that this is the first full year of court collections and \$1.5 million was collected, \$900,000 the year before. The revenue is \$3.1 million and collected from all sources: fines, fees, donations, etc. There is about six million dollars in the fund at this time.

Jamey reported that the compensation poster was reprinted and will be distributed to hospitals. OVS will also redistribute the sexual assault flyer (in English and Spanish) to SANE nurses and hospital emergency rooms and that two new compensation applications (personal injury and survivor benefits) were developed and distributed. The new applications are easier to complete and read. Jamey also reported that OVS will co-host a two-day workshop on Morita Therapy with the Joint Center on Violence and Victim Studies on October 16-17, 2007.

8. New Business

Larry remarked that Congressmen Ted Poe and Jim Costa introduced a bill (HR 2941) to preserve the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funds by excluding the fund from the president's budget.

9. Adjournment

Steve called for a motion to adjourn the meeting; the meeting was adjourned at 3:34 p.m.

Brenda Jordan, Recorder