

MINUTES
Connecticut Advisory Council for Victims of Crime
May 21, 2013

The Connecticut Advisory Council for Victims of Crime met at 225 Spring Street, Wethersfield, in the fourth floor conference room from 2:04 p.m. to 3:38 p.m.

Members in Attendance:

Co-Chair Steve Eppler-Epstein, Joseph Bibisi, Antonia Cordero, Anna Doroghazi for Laura Cordes, Karen Jarmoc, Kevin Lawlor, Robin Montgomery, Brian Moore, and Susan Omilian

Members Excused or Absent:

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

OVS Staff Present:

Linda J. Cimino, James Morgan, and Katie Nesta

Guest:

Garvin Ambrose, State Victim Advocate
Caitlin Lonazzo, Connecticut Legal Services Intern

Agenda:

1. Welcome
Steve Eppler-Epstein called the meeting to order at 2:04 p.m. and welcomed members. Members introduced themselves.
2. Approval of the November 13, 2012, January 23, 2013, and March 20, 2013, Meeting Minutes
Steve asked for a motion to accept the minutes of November 13, 2012, January 23, 2013, and March 20, 2013. The motion was moved and seconded; the minutes were accepted as presented.
3. 2013 Legislative Update
Steve reported on a legislative proposal regarding fee waivers in civil matters. There are discussions among legislators on how to allow a judge to limit the use of fee waivers to file frivolous cases, without unduly impacting the constitutional right of access to the courts.

Robin Montgomery reported on the Lethality Assessment Program (LAP) sponsored by Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) and partnered with law enforcement. Robin explained that the Program will provide law enforcement with the tools to assess a victim's risk of serious injury or death.

Linda Cimino asked if CCADV could provide a presentation at the July Council meeting.

Anna Doroghazi reported that Raised House Bill No. 6641, An Act Concerning the Sexual Assault of a Person Who is Physically Helpless or Whose Ability to Consent is Otherwise Impaired passed. Anna explained that the bill expands the definition of a victim being “physically helpless” to include victims that have physical and/or mental disabilities.

Anna also reported on Raised House Bill No. 6702, An Act Concerning Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. Anna explained that one proposal included in the bill would allow sexual assault victims to break a lease if they are assaulted in their apartment or on a property they rent.

Karen Jarmoc reported on another section of House Bill No. 6702 which would specify the court’s ability to enter financial orders as part of restraining orders.

Karen also reported on site visits to court locations with State Victim Advocate Garvin Ambrose to make sure there are safe and confidential areas available for domestic violence victim advocates to meet with victims.

Kevin Lawlor reported on legislative proposals regarding the Freedom of Information Act including 911 tapes and crime scene photos being released to the media.

Linda reported on File No. 814, An Act Concerning Victim Compensation. Linda explained that the act would make compensation available to more relatives of a victim, amend the requirement that a victim of a crime has to have physical injury and mental anguish to receive victim compensation, and 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 Elementary School shooting. Linda also explained that the Act would allow for up to \$5,000 in compensation reimbursement for witnesses to mass violence.

Members discussed witness reimbursement and zone of proximity limitations.

4. Sandy Hook School Shooting Response

Jim Morgan reported on Special Act 13-01, An Act Establishing the Sandy Hook Workers Assistance Program and Fund, Clarifying the Calculation of Survivor Benefits, and Authorizing a Waiver of the State-Wide Mastery Examination Requirement for Certain Newtown Students. Jim explained

that applications for the Sandy Hook Workers Assistance Program must be in by June 30, 2014, with all reimbursements disbursed by August 31, 2015.

Jim reviewed and distributed a report regarding the Sandy Hook Workers Assistance Fund. Jim reported that to date, a total of 39 applications were received equaling \$8,773 total reimbursements out of the \$115,000 in donations that were collected for the fund.

Steve requested that a report on the Sandy Hook Workers Assistance Fund continue to be provided to members.

Members discussed the requirements that a person had to meet in order to receive reimbursement from the Sandy Hook Workers Assistance Fund.

Linda reported that the Office of Victim Services (OVS) has partnered with the United Way of Western Connecticut and the Newtown Rotary Club Foundation to administer immediate financial assistance to the families affected by the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting. The funds are available to families who have children in the school, personnel who work at the Sandy Hook Elementary School, and first responders who were called to the school the day of the shootings. Expenses that are expected to be covered are mortgage or rent payments, household bills such as groceries and utilities, and mental health counseling. Linda explained that to date, there have been a total of 87 requests for assistance submitted.

Linda also reported that OVS has received 23 survivor benefits applications out of the 27 families who lost loved ones, as well as applications from the 2 personal injury victims, and 207 child witness applications.

Linda also reported on 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.

Linda reported that the Honorable Barbara M. Quinn, Chief Court Administrator, the Honorable Patrick L. Carroll, III, Deputy Chief Court Administrator, and Attorney Joseph D'Alesio, Executive Director of Court Operations, will attend the Council meeting in September.

5. CICF Update

Jim Morgan distributed and reviewed the Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund (CICF) Program Budget statement for month ending April 30, 2013. Jim reported that expenditures are up compared to last year leaving the appropriations balance at \$33,000 as of April 30, 2013. Jim also reported

that there is a total of \$490,000 in loss of support payments pending for homicide claims. Jim attributed the higher percentage of obligations this year to the rise in homicide related compensation claims in which loss of support was awarded. Jim estimated that the remaining fund balance will be sufficient to fund the Program through the end of June 2014.

Members discussed the funds as well as the staffing needs of OVS.

6. OVS Update

Linda Cimino reported that a total of \$287,000 in funding for the Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners (SAFE) Program was added to the Judicial Budget. Linda also reported that a budget pick-up request for state appropriations for March – June 2013 was awarded in the amount of \$125,000.

Linda reported that there are currently 17 Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners (SAFEs) in the Program and an additional 15 SAFEs should be up and running by July 2013.

Linda also reported that only 50% of patients consented to the Secure Digital Forensic Imaging (SDFI) pictures being taken. Linda reported that so far, there have been a total of 3 to 5 requests for the SDFI images from police departments.

Linda reported that to date, there have been a total of 143 cases among the 6 participating hospitals for fiscal year July 2012 – June 2013, 67 of them were reported to the police.

Members discussed the SAFE Program budget as well as expanding outside of the 6 participating hospitals.

Anna reported that since the roll out of the SAFE follow-up surveys on October 1, 2011, 5-10% of the surveys handed out have been returned. Anna explained that data from the surveys rank SAFEs and advocates high, however police had lower scores.

7. New Business

Steve reported that he testified before a hearing of the Judicial Branch Rules Committee in favor of proposed changes to the Connecticut Practice Book rules that would allow limited scope representation. If the rules are approved, the Chief Court Administrator would be empowered to establish a pilot program allowing attorneys to appear in limited portions of civil cases; the pilot is expected to begin in two family courts. The change could make it easier for victims of domestic violence and others to obtain counsel if they cannot afford the attorney's fee for the entire case.

Karen reported on a presentation that was provided before the Criminal Justice Policy Advisory Commission (CJPAC).

Linda inquired as to whether members would like a presentation by the Court Observation Team at a future meeting.

8. Adjournment

Steve adjourned the meeting at 3:38 p.m.

Katie Nesta, Recorder