Victim Services Advisory Board

2006 & 2007 Annual Report

Montgomery County, Maryland

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Advocating for the Victims of Crime

MISSION STATEMENT

To support Montgomery County's commitment to serving victims of crime, including rape, domestic violence, sexual assault, homicide, adults molested as children, terrorism, hate, violence, robbery, bullying, human trafficking, torture, driving while intoxicated (DWI), vehicular manslaughter, assault, battery, burglary, arson, larceny, stalking, carjacking, purse snatching, harassment and vandalism.

MANDATE

The Board must periodically review available services and facilities for victims and their families; determine needs of the victim and family services/programs; submit at least one report annually to the County Executive and County Council on the progress of programs to victims and their families and of actions needed to improve those programs; make recommendations for appropriate allocation of funds in accordance with agreed upon priorities and consideration of financial resources. The Board also assists the Director of the Department of Health and Human Services in the development of the annual victim services and families plan, and acts as a local advocate for victim services programming. Montgomery County Code -- Art. VII, Section 24-56.

MESSAGE FROM THE CO-CHAIRS, RICHARD ROBINSON AND MONICA KINNEY

The Victim Services Advisory Board (VSAB) is pleased to issue the 2006-2007 Annual Report, describing the most notable activities and achievements of the past two years. We have been very pleased to advise decision-makers on legislation, policy, and practices that are of benefit to victims of crime, whether they live in the County or have the

misfortune to be victimized here, and to advocate for the rights of victims in Montgomery County.

The Boards efforts during 2006-2007 focused on a number of important topics including:

- Deficiencies in addressing victims rights in the serious incident reporting system in Montgomery County Public Schools
- Adoption of a pilot program entitled MC2005 based on the "Denver 2000" program in which a single coordinator facilitates better cooperation and communication among all victim services offered by county agencies and private organizations as well as other efforts to better organize and manage the roles of county government victim service provides and private organizations
- Creation of a Domestic Violence Coordinating Council
- Legislation to address human trafficking
- Budget priorities to address gang violence, domestic violence, bullying, and human trafficking as well as to support the MC2005 program, the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council and the Domestic Violence Review Team

MEETINGS

The Board meets the fourth Thursday of each month, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m., at the Office of the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, 1301 Piccard Drive, Fourth Floor Conference Room, Rockville, Maryland 20850. The Board does not meet in August and combines its November and December sessions into one meeting. All meetings are open to the public.

Visit our website at:

http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/hhstmpl.asp?url=/content/hhs/vasap/advbrd.asp

MEMBERSHIP

Membership includes 19 voting members who are residents of Montgomery County and four non-voting members. Four non-voting ex-officio members are representatives from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the State's Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office and the Police Department. Voting members serve a term of three years. The Board is to work closely with the Mental Health Committee, the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Advisory Council and the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council.

Victim Services Advisory Board Members for 2006/2007

Members	Ex-Officio Members
Monica Kinney, Co-Chair	Ellen Alexander (MCPD)
Richard Robinson, Co-Chair	Ethel Burnett (SAO)
Arleen Anderson	Dudley Warner (Crs Cntr)
Kim Barry	Public Defender (Vacant)
Graziella Benenati Costanzo	
Jenifer Cromwell	
Samantha Davis	
Nick Heynen	
Debbie Kempl	
Michele Kendrick	
David Kimberling	
Parker O'Shea	
Rosa Pichardo	
Matthew Quinn	
William Smith, Jr.	
Reverend Lester Stano	
Beverly Stern	
Chatonia (Toni) Zollicoffer-Brown	

Former Members 2006-2007
Rise Ain
Sandy Bromley
Iheoma Iruka
Tomeca Jackson
Vicki Reese
Lucy Shafner
Ryan Spiegal
Medeleine Tolmach
Samuel Walinsky
Julius Wilberg
Jeredine Williams

Administrative Staff
Eugene Morris
Yvonne Hanniford
Nadja Cabello

MAJOR ISSUES

Deficiencies in the Serious Incident Reporting in Montgomery County Schools

In 2006, Montgomery County's Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) released a report entitled, *Review of Montgomery County Public Schools' "Serious Incident" Reporting.* This report critically assessed Montgomery County Public School's ("MCPS") serious incident reporting system. The report also contained recommendations that MCPS develop an action plan for release of a "School Safety Report," that a Memorandum of Understanding be executed by government agencies for sharing information and conducting investigations, and that state legislation be considered that would require Maryland school districts to track and publicly report certain school safety information.

The OLO presented its report to the Board. The Board noted that the topic of victims was not addressed in the report and has repeatedly attempted to work with the MCPS to include basic victim information in the MCPS action plan to implement the OLO recommendations, but without success.

The Board desires that MCPS:

- Incorporate victim information in the "serious incident" reporting database including whether victim services were offered;

- Inclusion of the VSAB and appropriate offices of the County Office of Health & Human Services as stakeholders in the development and implementation of the action plan; and

- Eventual expansion of the database to include certain incidents that do not rise to the level of "serious" such as bullying and minor crimes.

In support of its goals, the Board has spent considerable time and effort advocating victims' rights including:

- Education sessions before the Board including a representative from the Montgomery County Public Schools who provided an overview of the serious incident reporting system.

- The Montgomery County Office of Legislative Oversight visited the Board to provide background and detail on the OLO's report, its contents and recommendations.

- Board members presented testimony before the County Council regarding the OLO's recommendations and the Board's position.

- Board members visited County Council members and/or their staff to explain its concerns and, as a result, the Council President sent a letter to the Board of Education in support of the VSAB's goals.

Budget Priorities

The 2007 annual meeting between the County Executive and boards and commissions was held and the then acting chair gave testimony on the following topics:

- The Board's efforts to ensure services to human trafficking victims
- The Montgomery County Police Department's five-year staffing plan
- Its support for budget items addressing the reporting of incidents that occur on school grounds
- Its support for budge items to assist providing existing victim services to those who are victimized on school grounds
- Improved coordination of victim services at agencies across the county

The 2006 annual meeting between the County Executive and boards and commissions was held was held and the then acting chair gave testimony on the following topics:

- The need to increase police presence to combat gang violence and domestic violence
- The reporting of bullying incidents that occur on school grounds
- The adoption of the MC2005 program from the model developed in Denver
- Better qualified and knowledgeable commissioners about victim issues
- The scourge of human trafficking in the County
- Its support of legislation for the creation of the DV Coordinating Council
- A more robust support of the DV Fatality Review Team
- Its support for an improved protocol for notifying DV victims about arrested offenders
- Safeguarding victims' personal information in court electronic records

Board Supported Initiatives

The Board was supportive of the County's establishment of a Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team (DVFRT).

The Board was active in consultation about and has supported adoption of a pilot program in which a single coordinator facilitates better cooperation and communication among all of the victim services offered by various County agencies and private organizations. This so-called "Denver 2000" model, which the Board hoped the county

would implement as "MC2005," has the potential to identify and eliminate areas where victim services are duplicative or otherwise inefficient.

The Board supported creation of a Domestic Violence Coordinating Council, including providing closer oversight of the Betty Ann Krahnke Center Abused Persons Program shelter.

The Board has supported state human trafficking legislation to bring state law in line with federal law and to mobilize local crime victim resources to address the problem.

ATTENDANCE AT EXTERNAL MEETINGS, TRAININGS, ETC.

Regular HHS Director Meetings with Boards and Commissions

Throughout 2006 and 2007, VSAB representatives attended several meetings of the heads of Boards and Commissions staffed by HHS with Director Carolyn Colvin and Uma Ahluwahlia.

Additional Meetings with County Council

The Board also provided testimony before the Health and Human Services Sub-Committee of the Montgomery County Council regarding the need for continued efforts in organizing and managing the roles of county government victim service providers and community victim service providers with the HHS victim services providers.

The Board expressed a need for improved coordination with other relevant county agencies or local organizations that have important contact with victims. The Board stated that a significant gap continues to broaden in victims' access to transitional housing. Without transitional housing or significant subsidies, these victims and their families face tremendous economic hardship and may even become vulnerable to further abuse.

Other Meetings and Trainings

Monica Kinney continues as VSAB's delegate on the Criminal Justice Coordinating Commission and attends regular meetings.

FUNDRAISING AND HONORS

Fundraising Efforts

The Board participated in various fundraising events raising approximately $2,845 that was donated to the Montgomery County Crime Victim Compensation Fund.

Honors

The Board recognized VASAP for its volunteer award program.

Ethel Burnett was recognized for her work putting together the Statewide Crime Victim Memorial Service.

Sandy Bromley received a Governors Award for her work in Victims Services.

The Board was active in arranging for a proclamation designating January as Stalking Awareness Month.

Several former VSAB members were honored for their work on the Board.

GUEST SPEAKERS

Throughout the year, various victim services experts made helpful educational presentations to the Board. In addition to those speakers mentioned elsewhere in this report, the following presentations were also made to the Board:

The Executive Director and another staff member of the Collaboration Council presented their work on establishing a strategic plan. The Board provided input regarding its concerns related to victim rights.

Representatives from the Department of Correction and Rehabilitation Pre-Release Services spoke about their services and how to develop a working relationship with the Board on common initiatives.

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

Eugene Morris and Yvonne Hanniford are the staff support for the Board. Nadja Cabello also continues to attend Board meetings and assists with the Board.

FUTURE BOARD GOALS

1. To focus on juvenile victim services and school related violence

2. To increase public communication, education and outreach on victims' issues

The Victim Services Advisory Board would like to thank the County Council and County Executive, as well as the various agencies and private organizations, for their generous support of our Board and its mission to advocate for crime victims.