

## **VICTIM SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD**

**October 26, 2023**

**Attendance:** Shanquenetta Anderson, Wendy Ayala, Dolores Briceno, Neda Bolourian, Brian Koosed, Kathryn Pontzer, Heather Thompson, Leah Schwartz, Jasmin Whitfield.

**Members Absent:** Larry Center, Reem Sharaf, Alan Schulman, and David Young.

**Ex-Officio Members Absent:** Ellen Alexander.

**Support Staff:** Rosalia Scotman, Linda Lochner and Carla Bradley.

### **I. Additions to Agenda**

No additions to Agenda.

### **II. Approval of Minutes from September 28- Neda Bolourian**

- The September Minutes were approved.

### **III. Update on 10/11 Testimony to HHS – Brian, Leah, Linda, Wendy and Kathryn**

- One of the Board priorities is staffing of Victims Assistants at both Circuit and District Courts.
- Councilmember Luedtke will consider changes needed to provide sufficient housing for women escaping abusive situations in need of breach housing when BAK is not enough.
- Councilmember Luedtke suggests for the Board to come to the meeting with stories, anecdotes, and concrete examples of specific individuals who have gone through the system, experienced these issues and explain how is not working, not just data. She is considering some serious changes to be made.
- Leah said a family that was at the BAK was placed in a hotel when their time ran out. Her physical accessibility needs, and safety were not met. There were drug deals going on at the hotel where she was placed with her kids.
- Councilmember Luedtke asked what is the average timeframe and cost for a person that leaves their abuser, to the BAK and to safe permanent housing.
- Kathryn wants to know if there is a way to track the victims after their time in the hotel has expired, and what happens to them.
- Linda responded that we currently do not have a way to track clients after they leave the BAK and Trauma Services.
- Leah and Wendy asked if other organization can supply data like HOC (Housing Opportunities Commission) or case managers that help to connect people with permanent housing.
- Brian wants to know of how much money is spent in a year in housing vouchers.
- Leah asked about the contract of BAK, staff transitions and how it would affect families and where they would be going.

### **IV. Annual Report 2022-2023: Update and Approval – Brian, Kathryn Pontzer**

- Brian presented the Annual report, Leah and Wendy collaborated on finalizing it.
- The Annual report was approved by quorum.
- The Board requested that the Annual report printed by the December 7 Board meeting.

### **V. Discussion of New Name for Board – All**

- The Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program and the Abused Persons Program are being reconstituted under the Trauma Services umbrella on January 1, 2024. The Board has been asked to change their name as they are primarily the ones who advocate on behalf of Trauma Services.
- Brian asked the Board for their input on the new name by the December 7 meeting.

- Katheryn had concerns about the chosen name, since the Board not only advocates for APP and VASAP Programs, but also advocates across the county, and the chosen name should continue to describe what it is and on behalf of whom.

#### VI. **Executive Subcommittee update - Brian, Neda**

- Brian discussed the game plan for advocating to the County Council Board members and asked the Board to do their homework on the County Council member's Agendas and issues. He asked Linda for data on the program to present to the County Council.
- Leah said, they need to talk more about Prevention/Homicide. How we can advocate for different education of front-line personnel on communicating with trauma victims and funding. Brian, Shan and Leah with work on the proposal to show the County Council.
- Kathryn asked about the Prevention/Homicide issues- how to best present the issue to the County Council to connect that the prevention aspect would be more cost effective than the reactive approach.
- Brian spoke about having the priorities, Annual report, and data ready for the next meeting and the Board agreed to the following assignments:  
**Leah:** Gabe Alborno and Andrew Friedson, **Wendy:** Kate Stewart and Kristin Mink, **Katheryn:** Laurie-Anne Sayles and Natali Fani-Gonzalez, **Neda:** Marilyn Balcombe and Evan Glass, **Brian:** Dawn Luedtke and County Executive Marc Elrich, **Alan, Brian and Larry:** Sidney Katz and **Shan:** Will Jawando.
- The date of the meeting should be by end of February or early March, Leah recommended to be mindful of the budget decision dates and that the meeting should be before that.

#### VII. **Legislative Subcommittee Update – Kathryn**

- The Legislative Subcommittee – Neda, Larry, Brian, Jasmine, Shan and Wendy met on Oct 17 to strategize a plan from June to outline the timeline from now until the general assembly session. The Subcommittee defined the group of organizations to reach out to that align with our priorities, to build our list of legislative bills to support.
- At the December 7<sup>th</sup> meeting will present a list of bills to vote on for the General Assembly Session.
- The vote on the proposed delegation of authority to the subcommittee was approved by the Board on how to communicate new bills that they want to support, to include bill number, title, summary, sponsor, who supports the bill and that the subcommittee could approve on whether to support the bill within a day.

#### VIII. **Public Affairs/Events Subcommittee updates – Leah**

- Leah invited to visit and react to the posts to spread the recognition of the page.
- November 4 is the Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women fall Conference. If anyone on the Board attends, please take pictures and send to Leah.
- Leah asked if there are funds in the budget to sponsor someone who wants to attend the conference or sponsor a table at event.

#### IX. **Announcements/Comments/New Business**

- Wendy asked about Zoom meetings vs Teams.
- Next meeting December 7<sup>th</sup> in person at Piccard Drive in Rockville.

Adjournment 8:30 PM

Next Meeting:

December 07, 2023, 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM (IN PERSON)