

VICTIM SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD

February 27, 2025

Attendance: Shanquenetta Anderson, Wendy Ayala, Dolores Briceno, Larry Center, Debra D'Agostino, Sadia Green, Chelsea Hughes, Celeste Iroha, Franklin Marks, Christina Ingram, Anand Verma, Celeste Iroha, Dyan Owns.

Members Absent: Alan Schulman

Ex-Office Members Absent: Ellen Alexander

Support Staff: Liz Briganty and Carla

I. Additions to Agenda

- No additions to Agenda.

II. Roll Call & Virtual Meeting Procedures

- The chair will call the roll to establish a quorum.

III. Approval of Minutes from Past Meetings

- The January 23, 2025, Minutes were approved.
- Motion – Shan; Second- Christina and Larry

IV. Presentation: Montgomery County States Attorney's Office, Chief Victim Witness Unit (Dolores Briceno)

- Dolores Briceno, Director of the Victim/Witness Unit (VWU) at the State's Attorney's Office, shared her experience of more than 28 years.
- She presented an overview of services offered by the Victim/Witness Unit to support victims of crime in Montgomery County, which include:
 - Eight victim/witness coordinators, one victim specialist, and three contract victim/witness coordinators funded by a state grant.
- Services in English and Spanish, with dedicated coordinators for each language.
- Division of coordinators: Four in the Felony Division, Three in the Special Victims Division, and One in the Juvenile Division.
 - Assistance with relocating victims to safe locations, sometimes in different counties.
- Debbie Feinstein is the Chief of the Special Victims Division at the State's Attorney's Office.
- She has been a part of the State's Attorney's Office, working to prosecute cases involving sexual assault, child abuse, human trafficking, domestic violence, elder abuse, child exploitations, child kidnapping, any homicide that occurs with the categories.
- She talked about two laws that have passed recently that will do impact or it is already doing in pact to the victims of the Special Unit: MD passed the law of strangulation as a felony; MD change the definition of what is considered rape in any crime that happens prior to October 1st.

V. Executive Subcommittee Update

a. Women's Legislative Briefing

- Shan provided an update on the Women's Legislative Briefing.
- Shan and Cristina attended the meeting together.
- She shared information about the board and Trauma Services with other organizations.

b. Update on Outreach to County Council and County Executive

- Only one remaining Council member, Will Jawando, is left to meet.
- Shan will share the link for the March 19th meeting with the board.
- Wendy updated the short meeting with Gabe Albornoz.

- Council Gabe proposed scheduling a meeting after the budget process is completed to begin preparations for next year's discussions.
- Wendy stated that one of the Council Member would like to hear and see data from Trauma Services.

VI. Legislative Subcommittee Update

a. Update on Legislative Advocacy Work

- The VSAB successfully engaged in advocacy efforts, supported by the collective participation and votes of its members.
- Larry assisted with editing the advocacy letters to ensure clarity and effectiveness.
- Cristina compiled the entire memo, incorporating research to strengthen its content.

VII. Ex-Officios, Non-Voting Members:

- The following ex-officio members participated in the VSAB meeting:
 - Montgomery County Police: Ellen Alexander
 - Office of Public Defender: Dyan Owens
 - State's Attorney's Office: Dolores Briceno
 - Department of Health and Human Services: Vacant
- No updated from the non-voting members.

VIII. Membership and Recruitment

a. Update on Vacancies

- No updates were provided.
- Liz will be contacting county contact to follow up on this.

b. Share Reminder About Attendance

- Wendy reminded the board about the importance of maintaining attendance.

IX. Public Affairs/Events Subcommittee updates

a. Share Community Events to Attend

- Chelsea and Celeste need to coordinate with Liz to decide which community events to attend.
- Celeste clarified that she is responsible for managing the Facebook page, while Chelsea focuses on outreach efforts.
- Chelsea plans to collaborate with Celeste and Liz on all the events she discovers, whether through Facebook or other sources like window postings.
- Liz will research further the parameters around the board participating in outreaches.

X. Discussion of future presentations

- The VSAB can only have three presentations a year, per their bylaws.
- Wendy suggested that for the council and other organizations to participate in presentations, these should be scheduled outside of the regular VSAB meetings.
- Liz will be researching on this rule and recommended the VSAB bylaws be reviewed.

XI. Announcements/Comments/New Business

Next Meeting:

March 27, 2025 (In- Person)