



Marc Elrich
County Executive



Darren M. Popkin
Sheriff

Office of the Sheriff
Domestic Violence Coordinating Council
Thursday, November 12, 2020
5:00 PM – 7:00 PM
Via Microsoft Teams due to the COVID-19 Crisis

Minutes

Members: Debbie Feinstein, Chair (Montgomery County Office of the State's Attorney); Tom Manion, Vice Chair (Montgomery County Office of the Sheriff); Spencer Cantrell (Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse); Nicole Drew (Montgomery County Commission for Women); Laurie Duker (Court Watch Montgomery); The Honorable Karen Ferretti (District Court for Montgomery County); Dorne Hill (Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services); The Honorable Sidney Katz (Montgomery County Council); Tina Michaels (Montgomery County Department of Correction and Rehabilitation); The Honorable Karla Smith (Circuit Court for Montgomery County); Assistant Chief Ron Smith (Montgomery County Department of Police); Michelle Maxberry (Community Member); Maura Lynch (Community Member); Amy Palumbo (Community Member); Mindy Thiel (Community Member); Ronald Whalen (Community Member); Smita Varia, Staff (Montgomery County Office of the Sheriff);

Absent: Ingrid Gonzalez (Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services – Parole and Probation); The Honorable Rebecca Smondrowski (Montgomery County Public School – Board of Education); Vikhyana Gonzalez (Student Member);

Guests: Elaine Arndt (Community Member, Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America); Alia El Radi (House of Ruth); Carolyn Hoffman (Court Watch Montgomery); Captain Amy Daum and Lt. Gerald McFarland (Montgomery County Police Department); Carmen Kaarid (Office of Montgomery County Councilmember Sidney Katz); Tondalayo Royster (Public Member); Tazeen Ahmad (Montgomery County Commission for Women);

I. Welcome and Introductions

II. Guidelines for the Virtual Meeting

Due to the COVID-19 health crisis, the meeting was conducted virtually using Microsoft Teams. Debbie Feinstein reviewed guidelines for participants. She asked everyone to mute microphones when not speaking. Debbie Feinstein asked the participants to use the chat function if they would like to speak. She also requested that participants should identify themselves each time they speak.

III. Approval of September Minutes

The September 10, 2020 DVCC meeting minutes were reviewed. Laurie Duker proposed a motion to approve the minutes without revision. The motion was seconded by Tina Michaels and passed.

IV. Announcements

Tom Manion announced that the Family Justice Center Foundation raised \$70,000 during their virtual 11k walk during the October's Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

Nicole Drew announced that the Montgomery County Commission for Women has hosted 2 of their listening tour sessions, and there will be 3 events next week. You can find more information about the tour on their website at <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cfw/>.

Debbie Feinstein announced that jury trials will be cancelled for the rest of the year. This should not impact protective order hearings.

V. Membership Update

The DVCC is now back to a full Council. Amy Palumbo's term has been renewed. Maura Lynch, who works at RLG Law is the new Attorney member. Michelle Maxberry, who works for Mary's Center is the new Survivor member. Vikhyana Gonzalez, a senior at Montgomery Blair High School is the new student member

VI. DVCC Leadership

In January, we will be voting on the Chair and Vice-Chair for 2021 and 2022. Debbie Feinstein and Tom Manion have both expressed interest in a second term. If you are also interested in being Chair or Vice Chair for the DVCC, please email Smita Varia before the January Meeting.

VII. Committee Reports

A. Victim Services Committee update - Tom Manion, Chair

Tom Manion, Chair of the Victim Services Committee reported on the committee's various initiatives. Many victims of domestic violence also either struggle with addiction, self-medicate with drugs or alcohol, or their addiction is being used as a tool of manipulation by their abuser. Therefore, the committee is working on incorporating services at the FJC or with affiliated agencies to help those with addiction issues.

The committee is also working on creating a volunteer court advocate program through the Family Justice Center. These volunteers would go to court with clients for civil protective order hearings, and to fill the gaps if an attorney has not been assigned or available.

Safe Start has started their Fall Safe Start groups virtually. The therapists send the children a box of art supplies, LEGO, and stuffed animals to have and use during the therapy sessions. Mindy Thiel mentioned that doing telehealth groups via Zoom has been helpful for families that do not have access to transportation, however, serving younger children who do not have the bandwidth to sit in front of Zoom for a long time has been challenging. The Town of Chevy Chase will be fundraising for the Safe Start program during the Holidays and is working with the Montgomery County Family Justice Center Foundation to help fund sending art and play therapy materials to the clients. Debbie Feinstein mentioned that the annual Choose Respect event in the Spring is

thinking of arranging service projects, one of which can be targeted to help Safe Start. For example, they could create care packages for the Safe Start clients. Mindy Thiel suggested the community include anonymous cards and notes with positive messages that can be included in the packets. Elaine Arndt said that Moms Demand Action would be interested in creating packets. Mindy Thiel also mentioned creating a specialized program for children who suffered from a parental death.

Tom Manion also announced that a Victim Services subcommittee has been created to explore service models and best practices to assist all victims of family and sexual violence. Debbie Feinstein said that newer centers being built around the country are addressing all of forms of violence.

B. Offender Program and Policy Committee – Tina Michaels, Chair

Tina Michaels reported that many of the committee initiatives are on hold because of COVID-19. Pre-Trial is still monitoring GPS, however they are not able to meet with their clients in person and offer programs. They want to address the transition between an offender going from pre-trial services to probation after sentencing. The Pre-Trial conditions are strict, but once they are sentenced to Probation, there is a lag time to when conditions start with Probation. The transfer should be more seamless. The Abuser Intervention Program (AIP) contract is still under procurement, and a vendor has not yet been selected. If an offender is ordered to participate in AIP, they have to wait until the program starts again, therefore probation will need to be extended. Dorne Hill also mentioned that the Domestic Violence Shelter numbers have increased again. Tina Michaels also said that the Pre-Release Center is currently closed indefinitely so inmates are finishing out their sentences in the jail and do not have access to the programming and gaining employment while in the Pre-Release Center to be better prepared once they are released.

C. Legislative and Policy Planning Committee – Spencer Cantrell, Chair

The General Assembly is limiting the number of bills that each legislator can introduce this year. This Saturday is the Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women conference. After this weekend the committee will have a better idea of what is being proposed by legislators and what the landscape will look like. Smita Varia will be scheduling the next meeting soon.

D. Education and Outreach Committee - Debbie Feinstein, Chair

Debbie Feinstein reported that October was Domestic Violence Awareness Month. The County Council and County Executive introduced a proclamation for Domestic Violence Awareness Month at a County Council Meeting, and the Montgomery County Board of Education introduced a proclamation for Domestic Violence Awareness Month at their monthly meeting.

During October, Choose Respect hosted an Instagram Takeover. Five partner organizations (One Love Foundation, the Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse, the Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault, the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, House of Ruth Maryland and EmpowHER) took over the Choose Respect Instagram account to spread awareness on various topics related to dating violence.

The Choose Respect Video Contest is now open. The top prize is \$1,000 and all students will earn SSL hours for entering the contest. The deadline is March 1, 2021.

More information about the contest can be found at

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/fjc/chooserespect/>.

The Choose Respect Committee met to discuss ideas for a virtual event for Spring 2021. In lieu of in class Expect Respect presentations, Smita Varia is creating videos for MCPS to upload to their classroom portals for students to watch.

The Family Violence Prevention Campaign is ongoing. Please let Smita know if you have distribution ideas or need more awareness cards.

Smita Varia and Tom Manion presented a webinar on Domestic Violence during COVID-19 to the public. The webinar recorded can be found at <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/fjc/dvcc/materials.html>.

VIII. General Discussion

Laurie Duker asked if arrests for domestic violence have increased. Captain Amy Daum responded that the number of arrests has not increased, but the amount of violence used in the felonious domestic violence arrests has increased. Strangulation is included in about 80% of the domestic violence cases. Captain Amy Daum did an in service training for police officers on the new law, HB 233 / SB0212 - Criminal Law – Assault in the First Degree – Strangulation. Judge Karen Ferretti mentioned that she has noticed a difference in the reports from police about documenting strangulation in both civil and criminal court as a result from the training. The police will also be utilizing an updated DV supplement that will include specific questions about strangulation. Captain Amy Daum also worked with the 911 call center to add a question about strangulation.

IX. Adjournment

Debbie Feinstein ended the meeting at 6:09 pm.

The next DVCC meeting will be on January 14, 2021, 5pm-7pm



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