

**MINUTES FOR THE
BELLINGHAM-WHATCOM COUNTY COMMISSION
AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
February 3, 2009
Retreat**

Members Attending: Cynthia Bauleke, Karen Burke, Anna Carey, Regina Delahunt, Bill Elfo, Sheri Emerson, Cindy Enger, Nikki Finkbonner, Kirsten Hammer, Rebecca Johnson, Jon Komorowski, Byron Manering, Shannon Meyer, Joy Monjure, Kathy Ramsay, Todd Ramsay, Becky Skaggs, Linda Storck, Karen Summers, Gary Tomsic, Bruce Van Glubt

Members Absent: Sheila Brillson, Joan Hoisington, Mike Knapp, Dave McEachran

Guests: Shane Brady

Staff Attending: Andrea Cary-Grant, Director
Linda Ward, Administrative Secretary

Cynthia Bauleke, Chair, called the Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission Against Domestic Violence Retreat to order at 8:00 a.m., Tuesday, February 3, 2009 at the Bellingham Golf and Country Club, 2739 Meridian, Bellingham, WA.

1. Introduction – Cindy Bauleke

Cindy stated that she hoped the Commission members would come away from the retreat with an understanding, or reminder, of the work done by the Commission, why the Commission is unique and where it needs to go. The Commission has the ability to identify and address the systemic issues in working toward prevention of domestic violence in the community because of the variety of people on the Commission.

2. Current Domestic Violence Data – Shannon Meyer

Shannon stated that the Benchmark Report will soon be ready for publication. She noted that the work of the Commission really matters and that it has a positive rippling effect on the community.

3. Commission Accomplishments – Regina Delahunt

Regina reported that in 1998 the Whatcom County Executive and the Mayor of Bellingham decided to look at domestic violence in a comprehensive way. Community members gathered to develop an in-depth Comprehensive Plan and the Commission was organized in 1999. In 2002 the Commission was the first entity on the West Coast to begin conducting safety audits. Due to this work the Commission is recognized nationally and staff has helped with national safety audit trainings. The Commission is also responsible for developing an annual benchmark report, a school district DV policy, community education and trainings, focus groups, DV and Dating Resource handbook, and a DV Awareness Month vigil.

4. How Does DV Manifest Itself in Our Work World?

Cindy Enger – religious community

Cindy stated that sometimes DV is not viewed as high priority. She thinks discussion and education need to continue around DV within religious communities.

Jon Komorowski – legal community

Jon noted that the legal community is limited by statutes and that judges do not always use the discretion they are afforded. There needs to be a change in society's view of DV. Domestic violence cannot be trialed and jailed out of existence. The legal system is not currently set up to break out of the cookie cutter approach.

Nikki Finkbonner – Lummi Nation

Nikki commented that DV has a heavy affect on children and schools. It also affects employees in the workplace. One of the major problems is that there are so many women who do not realize they are in a DV relationship.

Bill Elfo – law enforcement

Bill stated that the Tacoma incident has brought a lot of attention to DV and law enforcement officers. His department has developed a model policy for internal DV reporting. There are not enough funds to build the info structure needed to handle the number of DV incidents.

Rebecca Johnson – medical community

Rebecca noted that the medical community tries to serve the underserved. It would be ideal to follow DV up from the emergency room. She stated that the medical profession has a unique perspective on DV.

5. Questions For Those Representing Domestic Violence Advocates: What Are We Missing?

Kirsten Hammer – Womencare Shelter

Kirsten announced that this is Womencare's 30th anniversary. She noted that an audit of the protection order process would be very helpful. It would also be beneficial to have cross training with other providers.

Karen Burke – Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services

Karen reported that DVSAS has had an increasing number of onsite victims which could be due to increasing economic problems. She noted that there needs to be an increase in collaboration and to use creativity to fill gaps. She would like to keep DV on the front lines and address children issues and legal barriers.

Nikki Finkbonner – Lummi Victims of Crime

Nikki reported that Lummi victims have their own native ways of healing. A lot of the women do not realize that they are victims and those who do may not have the ability to leave.

6. What Are the Common Threads?

- It is hard to keep DV a high priority
- DV is not an isolated issue - very complicated
- These are economical hard times
- Need to beef up DV education
- Need early intervention
- DV is not going to end on its own
- There need to be systemic changes
- There are results in working together
- There is not a lack of things to be done

7. Wrap Up

Cindy Bauleke challenged members to take the information back to their committee meetings to discuss next steps.

Topics to be discussed include:

- GTEA conversations on how courts can participate.
- DVS in small cities
- Protection orders
- DV workplace policies (committee)
- Small city presentations
- Victim focus groups
- Summit – people interested in continuing conversation
- Audits
- Benchmark report
- Training and education

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.