



COMMISSION ON SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Inspiring and coordinating community efforts to address sexual and domestic violence

Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission on Sexual & Domestic Violence

Thursday, January 28, 2021

8:30 – 10:00 am

Virtual via Zoom

Members Attending: Beth Boyd (PeaceHealth), Greg Hansen (City of Ferndale), Chris Kobdich (Unity Care NW), Erica Lautenbach (Whatcom County Health Department), Ken Levinson (Nooksack Indian Tribe), Byron Manering (Brigid Collins), Emily O’Connor (Lydia Place), Katie Olvera (KPO Counseling), Linda Quinn (Ferndale School District), Chris Roselli (Western Washington University), Donnell (Tank) Tanksley (Blaine Police Department), Krista Touros (PeaceHealth), Mary Welch (Northwest Justice Project)

Members Absent: Riannon Bardsley (WA State Department of Commerce), Bill Elfo (Whatcom County Sheriff’s Office), Starck Follis (Whatcom County Public Defender), Moonwater (Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center), Darlene Peterson (Bellingham Municipal Court), Dave Reynolds (Whatcom County Superior Court), Eric Richey (Whatcom County Prosecutor), Katrice Rodriguez (Nooksack Indian Tribe), Peter Ruffatto (Bellingham City Attorney), Garret Shelsta (Christ the King), Bruce Van Glubt (Whatcom County District Court Probation), Raquel Vernola (Whatcom Community College)

Guests Present: Nicole Berman (DVSAS), Kevin Hester (WCSO), Amber Icaay (DVSAS)

Staff Present: Elizabeth Montoya, Nikki D’Onofrio

Agenda Item	Discussion
<p>Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Acknowledgement of Tribal lands ▪ Reminder: Please complete your meeting evaluation. ▪ Introductions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beth opened the meeting at 8:32 • Elizabeth gave overview of the agenda and Beth asked if anyone had any modifications. There were none. • Beth read an acknowledgment of tribal lands. • Each member, guest, and staff member introduced themselves with their name, pronouns, and agency affiliation.
<p>MOTION: Consent agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minutes September 24, 2020 ▪ Minutes November 19, 2020 ▪ 2021 DV Commission Operational Budget ▪ 2021 DV Commission meeting schedule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beth gave members a few moments to review the September & November 2020 meeting minutes. Elizabeth gave a brief overview of the 2021 Operational Budget. Krista asked if the reason we did not receive the federal grants was because those grants had retired. Elizabeth said we had already received 6 cycles of ICJR, which was unusual. We did not receive the ICJR grant nor another grant we applied for, but there are opportunities to apply again.



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Krista asked Beth if the Commission had ever received funding from PeaceHealth. Krista said she would work with Elizabeth outside this meeting to discuss potential funding. • Byron asked how much money was in reserve. Elizabeth didn't have the exact number, but estimated that there is about \$40,000 in reserves. • Byron moved to approve the Consent agenda. Mary seconded. • The Consent Agenda was approved with no members opposed.
<p>Sexual Assault National Demonstration Audit Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SANDA Review ▪ Updates on BPD, WCSO, Whatcom County Prosecutor's Office, St. Joseph Hospital, DVSAS, and DV Commission ▪ Recommendations for all agencies and reflection 	<p>Elizabeth gave an update on the SANDA audit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit Question: How is the Bellingham-Whatcom County criminal legal system organized to meet the justice needs of survivors of sexual assault? • This was the first SA audit conducted in the U.S. by Praxis International, a technical assistance organization for DV & SA organizations. • The audit brought together multidisciplinary team of people involved in response to DV & SA: BPD, WCSO, WC Prosecutor's office, DVSAS, PeaceHealth St. Joe's, Commission members, WWU, Whatcom Community College • Methodology: looking at systems, not individual practitioners—looking at how systems authorize practitioners to respond • Completed over 120 data collection activities, including focus groups and interviews with survivors and practitioners, case reviews from BPD & WCSO, case reviews of County Prosecutor's Office cases, and sitting in on meetings and court proceedings • 2 Themes were identified: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Theme 1: The ways that our community institutions understand and respond to reports of SA are influenced by widespread societal myths and misconceptions about sexual assault. ○ Theme 2: Implicit bias... • 5 Gaps were identified: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Delays in case processing ○ Lack of follow-up, communication, and engagement ○ Case outcomes are impacted by perceptions of survivor credibility ○ Lack of criminal accountability for offenders ○ Lack of expertise in SA dynamics & trauma-informed practices



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- Recommendations for each agency:
 - education and training
 - policy and practice
 - administration
- Implementation:
 - BPD & WCSO participated in Trauma Informed SA Investigations Training & Neurobiology of trauma training
 - Whatcom Co. Prosecutor’s Office participated in Effective & Trauma-Informed SA Prosecution Training. They developed trauma-informed procedures for Victim/Witness Unit, and best practice for procedures for prosecutors in development
 - Since the audit process, there has been consistent 24/7 schedule of Forensic Nurses and a new procedure to follow up with each survivor at St. Joe’s. They are exploring the development of a standalone SA/DV medical center—a whole trauma-informed practice.
 - Beth asked what was causing the delays at the hospital. Elizabeth said it was due to a Forensic Nurse not being available due to gaps in scheduling.
 - DVSAS now has a Criminal Legal Advocate, they developed an advocacy-initiated response for SA survivors (procedure for advocate to follow up with survivor), and started an Equity Workgroup and a Vicarious Trauma Workgroup.
 - Krista asked if funding is still available for SA Legal Advocate. Elizabeth said that’s no longer funded by ICJR grant, but Nicole explained that DVSAS does still have two full-time legal advocates—a civil legal advocate and a criminal legal advocate.
- Recommendations for All Agencies:
 - Elizabeth asked participants to consider if there are any recommendations they may be able to bring back to their own agencies
 - Education & Training:
 - Take online Implicit Association Test
 - Attend LVOC Annual DV/SA Conference
 - Review Commission’s spotlight reports on MMIWG2S & Immigration Policy



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- Get training and seek partnerships with practitioners serving marginalized and oppressed communities
- Policy & Practice:
 - Establish a protocol to routinely refer survivors to community-based SA advocate
 - Establish a protocol to refer survivors to culturally-specific advocacy when possible
 - Establish a protocol to use validation and support at beginning of interactions
 - Establish a protocol to explain *why* certain questions are being asked
 - Establish procedures to address burn-out and vicarious trauma
- Administrative:
 - Assess agency language access policies
 - Explore implementing a data system to disaggregate data on race
- Elizabeth ended this portion of the presentation with two reflection questions: Which recommendations from the Sexual Assault Audit can you implement within your organization? What support do you need from the DV Commission to implement these recommendations within your organization?
- Beth shared that it would be nice to have this information available to the public, as has been done in the past with other campaigns, for example notifications or advertisements, like tent cards, coffee coasters, used for previous Sexual Assault Awareness/Action Months (SAAM). She acknowledged that COVID has changed options, and suggested radio stations, newsletters as potential avenues.
- Elizabeth said that can fit in well with SA message campaign developed last year for SAAM.
- Greg asked about slides or images pushed out through social media. He cited the impact of stickers on mirrors in bathrooms in public buildings and asked if there a way to be similarly effective in social media.
- Elizabeth asked how much do we want to have general community messaging and how much do we want to target systems? We may consider collaborating with DVSAS & LVOOC and other advocacy agencies in our community who do direct-to-community messaging.



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nikki added that practitioners are community members and shared that the Commission does have a Facebook page which could be used more strategically. • Chris said thank you and he'll be sure to share with WWU colleagues. • The group took a one minute break
<p>Looking Ahead</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 2021 workplans, challenges, and commitments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elizabeth shared some internal goals (relationships and partnerships, equity work, funding) and challenges (COVID, funding and staff capacity). Elizabeth will be identifying and applying for additional funding. COVID is impacting the whole community, everyone's capacity, and all of our lives on a personal level, too. • Due to the limited budget in 2021, we will have fewer opportunities to organize and bring trainers, send people to conferences and with limited staff capacity we'll be doing less this year. The Commission now has 1.5 total FTE. • Krista asked Elizabeth how she would feel about a brief presentation to Executives at PeaceHealth. Elizabeth said she would love to. • Elizabeth introduced the 2021 workplans: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ DV Commission Goals: Foster justice, transform systems, connect institutions ○ Law & Justice Committee Workplan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support ongoing learning related to Restorative Justice; possibility of RJ pilot program ▪ Coordinating and hosting survivor impact panels ▪ Implement SANDA recommendations ○ Education Workplan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Seek & include themes from survivor input for annual data report ▪ Share data and host solution-oriented conversation from last year's Spotlight Report on survivor-defendants ▪ Connect with school districts to promote and support policies, procedures, and protocols, and of Safe Futures Resource Guide ○ Executive Workplan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Research guidance on equity and diversity for Commission projects



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- Explore institutionalizing protocol to honor tribal lands at meetings and events
 - Provide specific ideas for leveraging meeting topics and discussion, share information, and implement action steps
 - Leverage role of Commission to obtain funding and resources
- Elizabeth ended this portion of the presentation with a reflection question: How do you envision plugging in and supporting the DV Commission’s 2021 Workplan? She also asked if there were any questions.
- Krista said she sees tremendous opportunity for all Executives at PeaceHealth NW Network to learn & opportunities for the Commission to seek funding. She acknowledged that violence is worse than before COVID due to stay-at-home order. Krista shared that community health assessments are done every three years—to the extent she can tie the Commission’s work to the community health assessment, that helps get Executives on board.
- Tank asked about survivor impact panels, what they were, how would that be part of messaging, and if that could be part of presentations to city councils around the county.
- Elizabeth described how the idea of survivor impact panels came up during the SANDA audit. The audit team heard from individuals in systems, like law enforcement officers, that they’d love to hear directly from survivors about what was helpful and what was not helpful.
- The Commission typically does presentations for city councils, but that did not happen last year due to COVID crisis as presentations typically happen in the spring.
- Elizabeth asked if there were any other questions. There were none at that time.
- Elizabeth shared the last slide regarding Next Steps:
 - Elizabeth will schedule L&J and Ed Committee meetings for the year
 - Elizabeth will request one-on-one meetings with all members
 - Members still present took time to complete a Commission Meetings Survey to gain general feedback on Commission meetings.



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Krista asked about Biden’s Executive Order to honor Tribal Sovereignty – part of the order would require consultation with tribes for some policies and ensure that tribal leaders are consulted for federal policies. • Beth added that there’s a balance of asking tribal leaders to consult because they’re asked so frequently to do that. It’s important to ensure that tribes have a say in policies that impact them, but not to put all the work on them. • Elizabeth thanked participants for completing survey
<p>Closing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reminder: Please complete your meeting evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beth thanked Krista for her participation and support of the Commission. • Chris encouraged everyone to complete meeting evaluations because they really help Executive Committee to shape the meetings. • Participants took a few moments to complete the meeting evaluation. • Beth asked which Commission member positions are open. Elizabeth said that we are looking for someone to represent Lummi Nation, and there are some position-specific spots open as well (like the CSO position). • Krista asked for a position description because she knows someone who is connected to Lummi who may be able to recruit a member. • Amber thanked Elizabeth for her leadership and noted that Elizabeth really cares about survivors, our community, and systems. • Nikki shared that she was looking forward to presenting on the survivor-defendant report at the March meeting.
<p>Adjourn</p>	<p>Beth adjourned the meeting at 9:57 am.</p>



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DV Commission Meeting

Thursday, March 25, 2021

8:30 – 10:00 am

Virtual via Zoom

Members Attending: Erika Lautenbach, Katie Olvera, Byron Manering, Chris Kobdich, Eric Richey, Garret Shelsta, Katrice Rodriguez, Chris Roselli, Ken Levinson, Krista Touros, Moonwater, Rocky Vernola, Donnell Tanksley, Emily O’Connor, Darlene Peterson, Bruce Van Glubt, Linda Quinn, Mike Parker

Members Absent: Beth Boyd, Bill Elfo, Starck Follis, Greg Hansen, Dave Reynolds, Flo Simon

Guests Present: Amber Icay-Creelman (DVSAS), Andria Fountain (BPD), Nicole Berman (DVSAS),

Staff Present: Elizabeth Montoya, Nikki D’Onofrio

Agenda Item	Discussion
<p>Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Acknowledgement of Tribal lands ▪ Reminder: Please complete your meeting evaluation ▪ Introductions ▪ Meeting time and engagement discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Katie opened the meeting and gave an acknowledgement of Tribal lands. ▪ Katie reminded members to complete their meeting evaluations and Nikki posted a link to the evaluation in the chat. ▪ Each member, guest, and staff member introduced themselves with their name, pronouns, and agency affiliation. ▪ Elizabeth opened a discussion on Commission meeting time and engagement during the COVID pandemic. Members had expressed that shorter meeting times could be helpful. ▪ Tank shared that a shortened meeting would be helpful and asked how the Commission is envisioning a return to in person meetings. ▪ Krista shared that she is flexible but appreciates getting together in person, eating breakfast together, and would welcome in person meetings, even if it is just a quarterly social meeting to gather in person. ▪ Rocky noted that she is happy to host meetings at WCC. ▪ Moonwater suggested 9-10am or 9:30-10:30am for a meeting time. ▪ Erika shared that one thing that we have learned during the pandemic is that there could be an option for people to Zoom in and still be a part of the group.



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emily asked if there was a consensus on the meeting time. Nikki will add this question to the meeting evaluation for members to provide their preference.
<p>MOTION: Consent agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minutes January 28, 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Katie presented the minutes from the January 2021 Commission meeting. Garret moved to approve the Consent agenda. Darlene seconded.
<p>DV Commission 2019 Data Report Introduction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elizabeth gave a brief introduction to the Annual Data Report and encouraged members to review the full report: https://www.dvcommission.org/2019-data-report Elizabeth introduced Nikki to present on the Survivor-Defendant Report
<p>Survivor-Defendant Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation Discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nikki began the presentation by sharing a clip from a TedX Talk by Marissa Alexander, a survivor defendant. Nikki defined a survivor defendant as a survivor of domestic violence who has been charged with a crime related to domestic violence. Nikki explained the advocacy model vs. the criminal legal system model of how domestic violence is defined, and how this can create challenges in how we define and address harm. The advocacy model sees DV as a pattern, while the criminal legal model sees DV as an incident and a crime. Nikki shared the Power and Control Wheel and explained that the abusive tactics in the wheel that survivors regularly experience are not illegal – only the physical violence tends to be illegal. The criminal legal system is typically focused on the incidents while survivors experience DV as a pattern. This reflects what was learned from local stakeholders and practitioners as well. Nikki shared a brief background of movements to address domestic violence. In the 70s and 80s there was a push to take DV seriously and WA adopted new laws to address DV. The state mandatory arrest law emerged – “the officer shall arrest” the person who the officer believes to be the primary physical aggressor. We don’t have data on a local level, but nationally, arrests of women increased after mandatory arrest laws were put into place. There has been some effort to give officers some discretion back – officer must determine who is the physical aggressor.



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- There has also been a push to use risk assessments to identify the primary aggressor but there are also challenges with risk assessments - – racial bias and past criminal history issues emerge.
- In 2005 the Commission reviewed arrests of women for DV in Whatcom county and the conclusion was that most incidents appeared to be consistent with mandatory arrest laws.
- In the 2013 fatality review conducted by the DV Commission, a victim who was murdered by her partner had previously been arrested and it was noted that this likely made her less safe and less likely to contact law enforcement again.
- 21 interviews were conducted to inform the report with representatives from a variety of systems, as well as one survivor defendant.
- We don't have data on the prevalence of survivor defendants in our community because we don't have systems for identifying survivor defendants. However, some systems have informal ways to identify survivor defendants.
- Community based advocates and probation shared that this happens frequently, while law enforcement and prosecution reported that it happens rarely. The ability of systems to notice and identify when survivors are arrested may impact their perception of its prevalence.
- Three themes were identified throughout the interviews and research:
 - Theme 1: Arresting and charging survivors causes long-term and complex harm: loss of freedom; risk of further violence and trauma; potential loss of child custody, housing, employment, benefits and more.
 - Theme 2: Misconceptions about how victims look and behave can impact who is arrested and charged with domestic violence: normal responses to trauma that deviate from cultural ideas of a "good victim," as well bias and oppression (including racism, sexism, transphobia, homophobia, ableism, and classism) impact who is perceived as a victim.
 - Theme 3: Context matters: the incident-focused criminal legal system, in particular Washington's mandatory arrest law (RCW 10.31.100), do not consider domestic violence in the context of a pattern of both legal and illegal abusive



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	<p>behaviors How can we hold survivors accountable for their violence without simultaneously empowering abusers?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Continue to develop a thorough understanding of DV dynamics including coercive control, racial oppression, and LGBTQ oppression ○ Regard this as an issue of significant concern ○ Address if/how hiring practices and/or program eligibility depends on criminal charges. ▪ Members engaged in a reflection activity and brainstormed how their organizations could support survivor defendants. ▪ Nikki noted that we have limited view historically of who is a “legitimate” victim, but all people can be victims. ▪ Nikki also noted that when survivors violate gender norms it can challenge providers and practitioners – if there is a woman who has been yelling or engaging in violence, that violates our dominant culture’s gender norms, and it challenges us – those survivors may be more likely to be arrested. ▪ Chris Roselli shared that he appreciated the interactive elements of the presentation. ▪ Nikki noted that she would be happy to bring this discussion or presentation to member organizations and to please contact her if you would like to discuss this. ▪ Katie thanked Nikki for her presentation.
<p>Closing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reminder: Please complete your meeting evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Katie reminded members to complete their meeting evaluations. The link to the meeting evaluation was posted in the chat.
<p>Adjourn</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meeting adjourned at 9:50 am.



COMMISSION ON SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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Annual Commission Meeting

Thursday, May 27, 2021

9:00 am – 10:00 am

Virtual via Zoom

Members Attending: Beth Boyd (PeaceHealth); Gregory Hansen (City of Ferndale); Chris Kobdich (Unity Care NW); Erika Lautenbach (Whatcom County Health Department); Ken Levinson (Nooksack Tribe); Byron Manering (Brigid Collins); Moonwater (Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center); Emily O’Connor (Lydia Place); Katie Olvera (KPO Counseling); Mike Parker (Opportunity Council); Linda Quinn (Ferndale School District); Chris Roselli (Western Washington University); Garrett Shelsta (Christ the King); Flo Simon (Bellingham Police Department); Krista Touros (PeaceHealth); Rocky Vernola (Whatcom Community College)

Members Absent: William Elfo (Whatcom County Sheriff’s Office); Starck Follis (Whatcom County Public Defender); Darlene Peterson (Bellingham Municipal Court); Dave Reynolds (Whatcom County Superior Court); Eric Richey (Whatcom County Prosecutor); Katrice Rodriguez (Nooksack Indian Tribe); Bruce Van Glubt (Whatcom County District Court Probation)

Guests Present: Arden Haines (Whatcom County Executive’s Office); Elizabeth Hart (DVSAS); Kevin Hester (Whatcom County Sheriff’s Office); Hollie Huthman (Bellingham City Council); Amber Icaay (DVSAS); Sydney Miyahara (TI’ils Ta’á’altha); Lydia Peckover (Arise Well Counseling Services); Alex Ramel (Representative, Washington State 40th Legislative District); Janne Sleeper (Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center)

Staff Present: Elizabeth Montoya, Nikki D’Onofrio

Agenda Item	Discussion
<p>Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Acknowledgement of Tribal lands ▪ Reminder: Please complete your meeting evaluation ▪ Introductions in chat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Beth opened the meeting with an acknowledgement of Tribal lands. ▪ Beth reminded participants to complete their meeting evaluations and Nikki posted a link to the evaluation in the chat. ▪ Each member, guest, and staff member introduced themselves in the Zoom chat. ▪ Elizabeth Montoya acknowledged that we are over a year into the pandemic and it has been a year since the murder of George Floyd. She acknowledged that many people have a lot going on in our families and communities. Elizabeth thanked everyone for being here and sharing their time and energy with us. ▪ Elizabeth also gave a primer on our meeting structure: Commission meetings every-other-month typically have an educational focus. The Committee meetings are more where the “work” happens. She acknowledged that there have been interruptions to our committee meetings and we do not have the federal grants that have guided our



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	<p>work in the past. Elizabeth assured members that we will be diving into Committee work during the latter part of this year.</p>
<p>MOTION: Consent Agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minutes January 28, 2021 and March 25, 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Beth presented the minutes from the January 2021 Commission meeting and the March 2021 Commission Meeting. Chris Roselli motioned to approve the minutes. Ken Levinson seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously, with the addendum to the January Meetings that Chris Kobdich was mistakenly marked absent for that meeting. She was present. Those minutes were updated.
<p>MOTION: Slate of Officers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Beth presented the 2021 slate of officers. Rocky Vernola motioned to approve. Moonwater seconded. The slate of officers was approved unanimously.
<p>Reimagining Safety, Healing, and Justice for Survivors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Presentation by Elizabeth Hart, DVSAS ▪ Discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Elizabeth Montoya introduced presenter Elizabeth Hart of DVSAS for her presentation: Visioning Expansive Responses to Sexual & Domestic Violence ▪ What do our responses to DV and SA look like? ▪ Brief history of our movement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Communities have always found ways to support one another; in 1960s and 70s there was a push to address DV/SA systemically and a push to take these crimes more seriously, to begin thinking of DV/SA as crimes ○ In 1994, the federal Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was passed: The Office of Violence Against Women was formed under the Department of Justice; VAWA has increased services and funding for survivors; has also supported criminal legal interventions and mandatory arrest; DV/SA is often viewed as solely a criminal legal system issue ▪ Reporting to the criminal legal system does not always lead to justice or healing ▪ Criminal legal responses are important and necessary. We want to make sure that survivors experience justice and healing if they do choose to report, and ensure that survivors understand process. Coordinated community responses are important for those reasons. ▪ Criminal Legal intervention isn't the ONLY response and may not be the BEST response for all survivors. ▪ DV/SA have long-term impacts: survivors and their children; economic impacts; abusers target abuse to decrease survivors' wellbeing



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- Difficult to track prevalence of DV and SA; shared statistics from CDC and National Center for Transgender Equality
- Marginalized populations are disproportionately experiencing DV & SA
- DOJ says 25-34% of SAs are reported to LE 2018-19; 45-58% IPV incidents reported 2018-2019: EH shared surprise at IPV stat because so much of DV is not reportable (it can be subtle and not-subtle coercive control that is not illegal)
- Why don't survivors report? Participants shared in the chat (see presentation recording)
- Bureau of Justice statistics show reasons for not reporting, including personal privacy—DV is often seen as a private matter; other reasons included “wanted to protect the offender,” “felt the crime was unimportant,” “feared reprisal from offender or others,” and “feared inefficient or biased police”
- Other reasons: (see “Why don't survivors report?” slide): victim-blaming—abusers will use those societal messages to control the survivor
- What do survivors want? Participants shared in chat (see presentation recording)
- What can we do?
 - Move from “Safety Planning” to “Wellbeing Planning”
 - listen really closely to survivors to learn about their concerns
 - not having access to support systems during COVID has had a big impact on survivors
 - What helps you feel safe? kids, economics, substance use, mental health
 - Survivor is expert in their own experience—what they want to see happen and how we can support you?
- Assess agency policies on calling 911 and opportunities for de-escalation training—Mobile Crisis Outreach Team; POT; what has our community yet to develop?
- Increase agency-wide understanding of and capacity to address implicit bias and systemic racism
- Elizabeth Hart shared a story of survivor who felt she couldn't go to law enforcement because her partner was a black man and she feared he wouldn't be treated fairly



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- Ensure that services and resources are not contingent on reporting to law enforcement
- Regard trauma-informed support skills as essential
- If survivor feels they were treated with respect and dignity throughout the criminal legal process, even without conviction, that makes a big difference
- Adopt [DV Commission workplace policy on DV and SA](#)
- Work to support restorative justice opportunities for survivors and offenders
- How can we get creative?
 - Empower communities: family and friends are #1 support for survivors; most survivors will reach out to fam/friends before any system; empowering people to respond supportively. See [WSCADV Friends and Family Guide](#)
 - Work for economic justice, housing security, access to behavioral health services
- Beth asked about the long-term impacts and availability of services for survivors after the abuse.
- Elizabeth Hart: Advocacy services support people at any point in their journey. The effects of DV & SA can last their whole lives. Healing is not linear. Cycle of DV means that somebody might find safety for a while, but then things change. Abuse escalates. We definitely see that things do go up and down. One of our taglines is whether “It’s been 20 minutes or 20 years.” Because the impacts of DV and SA are so far-reaching—physical health, economic impacts—so many of us can see the effects of trauma. DVSAS will always be there to support survivors at any point in their healing.
- Elizabeth Montoya: I liked what you said about moving from safety planning to wellbeing planning. We’re not just focused on immediate safety, but acknowledging that there will be bumps along the way.
- Hollie Huthman, Bellingham City Council: in the music community there have been some incidents where survivor did not want to report to law enforcement, but did want some kind of accountability. I would love to see some kind of more formal guidance. In my experience it would be really taken advantage of for those folks who don’t want to go through that criminal justice process. I love that we’re exploring restorative justice processes.



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- Elizabeth Hart: It’s been inspirational to hear about local ways, in the arts community and other communities that people have found the opportunity to hold an abuser accountable. There’s a sense of justice and healing for many survivors. If there were some guidelines: how can your community begin to talk about it and address these things? Maybe that could be a project.
- Hollie Huthman: Let me know if there’s anything I can do to help
- Nikki: Currently the criminal legal system is only formal way to have public accountability. Offering an alternative could help survivors.
- Rocky: We had the audit as a guide, but I feel as though there is still a gap—like there is something I should be doing, but not sure what that is. Especially in light of how the COVID lockdown has impacted our community, what gap is there now that we can strategize and support and identify resources to address that gap? Students will be retuning to WCC over the next several months. This is an opportunity for me to establish a landing zone before the students return. I’m hoping for some guidance.
- Elizabeth Hart: I appreciate that intention. I felt overwhelmed when you said “what are the gaps?” because there are a lot of gaps. Reframing the discussion as we did today as a discussion of wellbeing. We need to take it further—we are part of systems, all of us, which means we have some power. I’m going to say keep asking the question and let’s keep trying to answer it.
- Elizabeth Montoya: In response to Rocky—that’s a whole conversation I would love to keep exploring. Thank you for asking that question. One thing that can be helpful for all of us, is to ensure we are referring folks to community based and tribal based advocacy services. Advocates are available and have that trauma-informed training. DVSAS, Lummi Victims of Crime, The Nooksack Victims of Crime program. There are also culturally-specific services in Seattle for LGBTQ folks, Asian and Pacific Islander folks, so that’s also something we can all be doing.
- Beth: That’s an ongoing question for the Commission: I’m devoting my time, what is my role? How much can I make that better because I’m attending this, what is my input? What do I think and what do I want to share?



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<p>Closing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Reminder: Please complete your meeting evaluation▪ Announcement: Survivor Input	<p>Nikki: As part of annual Data Report, the Commission will be surveying survivors and practitioners about the impact of COVID. Shared the survivor survey link in the chat and announced the upcoming practitioner survey.</p> <p>Rocky: I've seen at WCC that some employees were trying to get back to campus as soon as possible because home wasn't safe. WCC came up with alternate accommodations for those employees. I encourage input from Human Resources—</p> <p>Erika: The health dept is conducting a county-wide COVID impact assessment. They are pulling data from non-profits and businesses so we can have one centralized place to have one centralized place for policy makers and funders and think more broadly about how the community responds to these various impacts. Please share results of survey with the health department.</p>
<p>Adjourn</p>	<p>Meeting adjourned at 10:00 am.</p>



COMMISSION ON SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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DV Commission Meeting

Thursday, September 23, 2021

9:00 – 10:00 am

Virtual via Zoom

Members Attending: Nicole Berman (DVSAS); Beth Boyd (PeaceHealth); Chris Kobdich (Unity Care NW); Erika Lautenbach (Whatcom County Health Department); Ken Levinson (Nooksack Tribe); Katie Olvera (KPO Counseling); Mike Parker (Opportunity Council); Chris Roselli (Western Washington University); Garrett Shelsta (Christ the King); Donnell Tanksley (Blaine PD); Rocky Vernola (Whatcom Community College)

Members Absent: William Elfo (Whatcom County Sheriff’s Office); Starck Follis (Whatcom County Public Defender); Gregory Hansen (City of Ferndale); Byron Manering (Brigid Collins); Moonwater (Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center); Emily O’Connor (Lydia Place); Darlene Peterson (Bellingham Municipal Court); Linda Quinn (Ferndale School District); Dave Reynolds (Whatcom County Superior Court); Eric Richey (Whatcom County Prosecutor); Katrice Rodriguez (Nooksack Indian Tribe); Krista Touros (PeaceHealth); Bruce Van Glubt (Whatcom County District Court Probation)

Guests Present: Kevin Hester (WCSO); Amber Icaay-Creelman (DVSAS); Paula Matthyse (Northwest Youth Services); Jake Weibusch (Whatcom County Probation)

Staff Present: Elizabeth Montoya, Director; Nikki D’Onofrio, Administrative Manager

Agenda Item	Discussion
<p>Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Acknowledgement of Tribal lands ▪ Reminder: Please complete your meeting evaluation ▪ Introductions via chat ▪ Director hiring and looking ahead 	<p>Katie Olvera opened the meeting at 9:07 am. She shared an acknowledgment of the tribal lands we gather on. Katie then asked attendees to introduce themselves in the chat.</p> <p>Katie gave an update on hiring a new DV Commission Director:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Executive Committee hopes to start reviewing applications in early October • Please contact Katie if you would like to participate in the hiring process • Chris Roselli asked attendees to spread the word about the job opening—we want a great pool to choose from <p>Mike Parker shared that we’ll miss current Director Elizabeth Montoya and wished Elizabeth good luck in her next position with the State Coalition Against Domestic Violence.</p>



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MOTION: Consent agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none">Minutes: May 27, 2021 Commission Meeting	Elizabeth shared May Meeting minutes, which were included in the meeting packet. Katie asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Ken Levinson moved to approve the minutes. Garret Shelsta seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.
DV Commission 2020 Data Report Introduction	Elizabeth introduced the 2020 Data Report and gave some background on the report. When the DV Commission was created, it tasked with identifying benchmark data. We know that this is not a full picture as most DV and SA are not reported, so the reality is more complicated than the numbers we see in the report. As part of the updated 2019 Interlocal Agreement, the Commission committed to also collected input from survivors. Elizabeth called on attendees to keep thinking about what we can we learn from this data and how we can apply what we're learning.
Impacts of COVID-19 on Survivors in Whatcom County <ul style="list-style-type: none">PresentationDiscussion	Nikki D'Onofrio, DV Commission Administrative Manager, gave a presentation on the 2020 Data Report, including a brief overview of the Snapshot Report and changes in 2020 versus 2019, and a presentation and discussion of findings on how the COVID-19 pandemic, and responses to the pandemic, have impacted survivors in our community. Please see the PowerPoint slides for more information.
Adjourn	Katie adjourned the meeting at 9:59 am

2020 Data Report

Snapshot Report: Sexual & Domestic Violence in Whatcom County

Spotlight Report: The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Survivors in Whatcom County



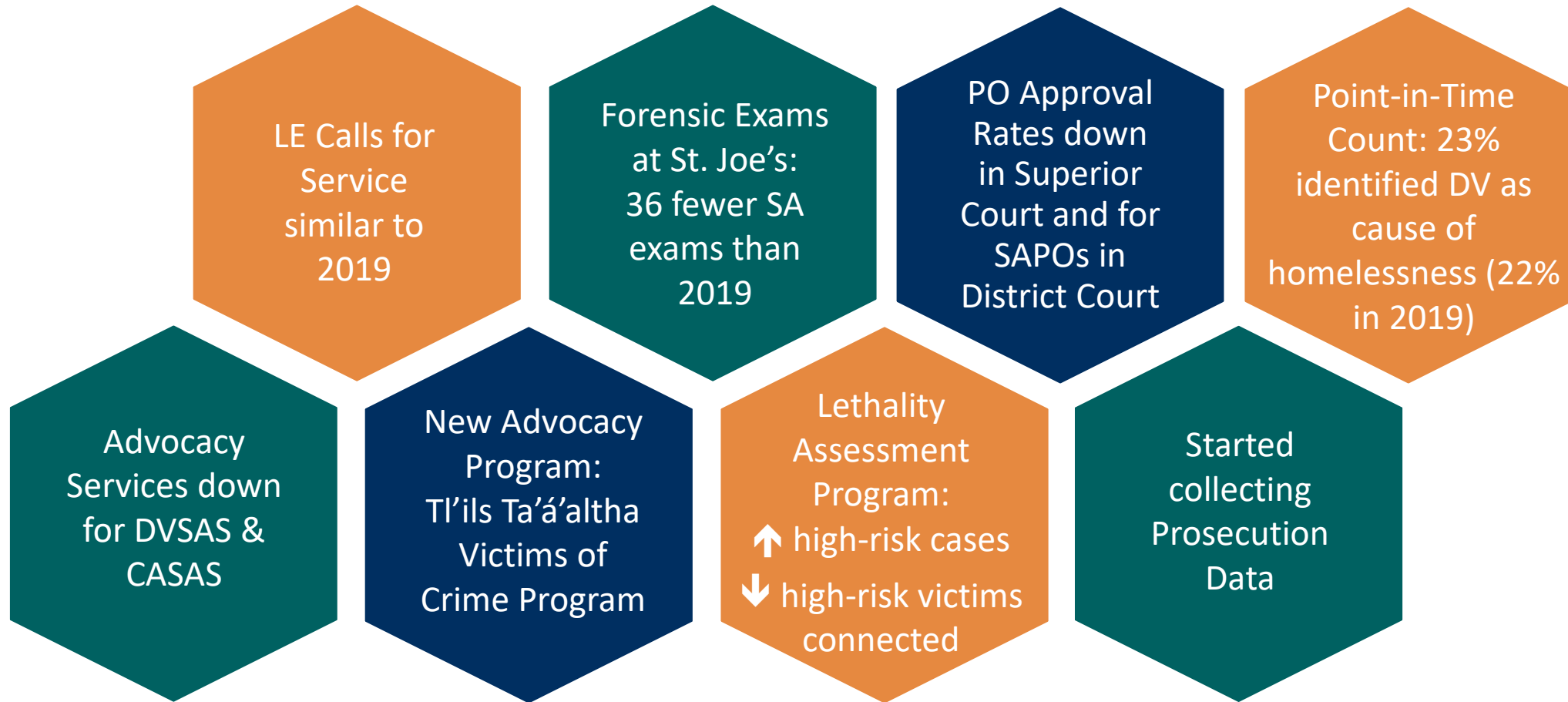
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Thank You

- Survivors & Practitioners who participated in surveys & interviews
- Law Enforcement agencies
- City & County Prosecutor's offices
- Community and Tribal-based advocacy organizations
- St. Joseph's Forensic Nurses
- District & Superior Courts
- Local social service agencies

2020 Snapshot





Spotlight: Impact of COVID-19

How have you seen survivors
impacted by COVID-19?

Please Share in the Chat



Impact of COVID

Global, National, State & Local

- UN: The pandemic is “**a perfect storm for controlling, violent behavior behind closed doors.**”
- Nationally: Survivors of color much more likely to experience **food, housing, and economic insecurity**
- National DV Hotline: Initial decrease in calls; 9% increase over 2019
- Washington: COVID infections disproportionately impacted BIPOC Washingtonians
- Whatcom County: Childcare, Housing Security, Homelessness, & Behavioral Health—**Survivors are coping with these challenges and surviving violence**

Impact of COVID—What We Heard

- Isolation, financial challenges, and substance use decreased survivor safety and wellbeing
- Remote and limited services created challenges for survivors and practitioners
- Lack of appropriate support for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) in our community

“Not just because of the pandemic. It’s a broken system, but COVID exacerbated it.” —survivor

Isolation, Finances, and Substance Use



“The isolation that is needed to stop the spread of the virus is contrary to the ways people would naturally respond in a time of crisis”

–Whatcom County COVID-19 Community Health Impact Assessment

“Any external factors that add isolation, financial strain, or stress can create circumstances where a survivor’s safety is further compromised—this pandemic had elements of all three.”

–StrongHearts Native Helpline 2020 Year-End Report




Isolation, Finances, and Substance Use

“Recovering from an assault is already so isolating. The stay-at-home order only exacerbated that isolation. I stopped talking to everyone in my life, and nobody could come and visit or check on me because of it.”

“I had to pay all the bills.”

“When [COVID-19] happened, true colors were shown. He wasn’t working. He was drinking. We were stuck together.”



Remote & Limited Services



Challenges in accessing health and social services:

- Worry about safety in shelters and healthcare facilities
- Lack of internet access = No virtual services
- No privacy at home for virtual services
- Grief over loss of interpersonal connection
- Not hearing back from services

Virtual support group “helped a little, but after the zoom call ends, I’m alone again.”

Legal System Barriers



*“I didn’t find out until the day of that it got pushed back. 1-2 weeks before next court date I **started having terrible anxiety.** I have a hard time sitting there and not freaking out. **I go through emotions, I get past it, and then it gets pushed back again.** Then I have to go through the whole thing again.”* —Survivor

*“They may understand that our hands are tied, but it doesn't make them feel **any better or any safer.**”* —Practitioner

*“I’m trying to move on with my life and I can’t move on when I feel like this **court is still connected to me.**”* —Survivor

Practitioner Health & Safety Concerns



“I could not work from home. I came to work every day even though I was in fear of getting sick and dying.”

“We should have received more protections earlier rather than later.”

Experienced the stress of working with the public and people who were “not consistently following safety protocols”

Lack of Appropriate BIPOC Support



- No BIPOC therapists taking new clients in Whatcom or Skagit
- Survivors not wanting to work with an agency because of lack of BIPOC staff
- Language access still a challenge

Spotlight: Impact of COVID-19

What is one goal/action item you can work toward within your own organization to address impacts on survivors?

Please Share in the Chat

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DV Commission Meeting

November 18, 2021

9:00 – 10:00 am

Virtual via Zoom

Meeting Minutes

Welcome and introductions

Announcement:

Susan Marks has been rehired as the DV Commission Director, starts January 2022.

Discussion:

Commission members were asked to reflect on these questions:

- What do you think our director's top priorities should be?
- What do you see as our director's biggest challenges for 2022 and what suggestions do you have?
- In the 2-3 years, what is something you are proud of that the Commission has accomplished?
- How would you rate your involvement with the Commission the past year? What could be done to engage you more?

Priorities:

Moonwater - This has been a difficult time to stay involved in this type of collaborative work. – With the different layers of stress and trauma people and orgs are experiencing, it's been nice to have shorter and focused meetings. Set realistic expectations about what we can accomplish. If we feel a sense of accomplishment, then we feel we can take on collaboratively. Feel good about what we're doing so people stay engaged.

Mike Parker – I think folks that have more challenging backgrounds could be a part of our commissions and taskforces and committees has fallen away. (Like a drop off in the incarceration reduction task force). How can we continue to have meaningful conversations with our disparate communities. The visual quality of the reports were stellar. He needs glossy one pager reports that we once did so we can take that information to share with larger audiences in bite-sized chunks. I liked where we were going in terms of tools.

Amber Icaj-Creelman – Working with survivors on a daily basis...the work done on the audit reviews are helpful because it allows us to keep those systems accountable. Susan needs to reground those relationships, have meetings, and keep that progress going.

Beth Boyd – Susan shared that it’s important that members recognized that what they bring to the commission is vital, as an individual. Everyone’s involvement and participation, even though they are busy, that who they are really matters and being present at this table is important.

Katie challenged the group to set goals in how they can be engaged, even though we’re busy.

How can we as a leadership help you be more engaged?

- Mike Parker – Susan had developed some really valuable subcommittees with more contribution/tactile work and less about education. I’d love to see those restarted. And people should jump on them!

What are you most proud of in work you’ve participated on while being a member of the commission?

Rocky – It’s been great to see implementation of solutions identified in the report. There were definite strides made in moving forward. I also have seen that the conversation is broader in the community. The commission’s work has been able to be used to help get the message out there. It might not be a physically tangible gain, but the commission has been instrumental in broadening awareness.

Darlene – We’ve gotten over the COVID budget crunch, and it’s a good idea to seek more funding and work more closely with council (City Council/other commissions, etc.). Darlene would like to see that outreach and advocacy.

Flo appreciates the audits that the Commission has done and how it’s identified enforcement and ways law enforcement can make adjustments in their work.

Ken – Tool kits, how to respond documents, etc. Other tangible input was certainly helpful. I love the tangible advice and terminology. “Glossies” and discreet information that could be really helpful.

Mike Parker – During a contentious and challenging time, having Susan as a convener is an asset. I can’t see a better person to lead us into this. She also brings in some ringers. Her training of implicit bias, for instance.

Rocky – A consideration of the gaps that occurred during the pandemic, and look back and identify solutions, so if we find ourselves in similar circumstances, we can be prepared accordingly. (COVID, floods, etc.) – People restricted from leaving their home.

Themes from Chat: Funding. Reengagement. Purpose.

Adjourn