

NC Domestic Violence Commission Meeting Minutes

May 17, 2024

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Ethics Statement: The State Government Ethics Act mandates that, at the beginning of every meeting, the Chair remind all members of their duty to avoid conflicts of interest and inquire as to whether any member knows of any conflict of interest or potential conflict with respect to matters to come before the Commission. If any member knows of a conflict of interest or potential conflict, please state it for the record.

Members Present: Deborah Weissman, Chair, Tiffany Bell, Dr. Jada Brooks, Brittany Bromell, Kriquette Davis, Dr. Kim Eagle, David Elliott, Saira Estrada, Karen Fairley, Carianne Fisher, Donovan Grant, the Honorable Steven Hollowell, Sarah Kirkman, the Honorable Nathaniel Knust, Kathleen Lockwood, Denise Mazza, TeAndra Miller, Krishana Polite, Dr. Angelia Riggsbee, Starleen Scott-Robbins, Joetta Shepherd, and Sarah Owens Weeks.

Members Absent: Michelle Bardsley, Shelby Benton, April Burgess-Johnson, Cathy Cloninger, Jessica Englert, LaKiera Grimes, Holly Jones, Tracy Lee, Elizabeth Outten, Michelle Scott, Sheriff Gregory Seabolt, the Honorable Christine Strader, Caroline Valand, Amy Vaughn-Jones, and Avis Watkins-Smith.

NC Council for Women & Youth Involvement Staff Present: Danielle Carman, Jessica Benson, Lori Gerber, Harriet Lunsford, Lisa McLaughlin, Bernetta Thigpen, Devorah Torres, and Angela Winston-Hill.

Guests Present: Parris Booker, Chrissy Griffin, Judith Johnson-Hostler, Julia Hegele, Seema Kak, Kelly Newcomb, Maggie Slocumb, and Skye Sullivan.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Weissman at 10:00 a.m.

Welcome/Member Roll Call: Weissman welcomed everyone who was present and gave the ethics advisement. All guests who were present introduced themselves.

Approval of Minutes: Scott-Robbins made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 1, 2024 meeting, and Hollowell seconded the motion. All members who were present approved the motion, with Weeks abstaining.

Oaths of Office: Knust administered the oath of office for newly appointed member Bromell.

Chair Report

Weissman stated that Commission members having stronger connections to legislators would be helpful to addressing domestic violence issues in the state, and that the Commission previously circulated a template to aid Commissioners in reaching out to legislators. She invited any Commissioners who had contacted legislators to share any feedback they received.



Weissman reminded the Commission members that UNC Project RESTART had previously received grant funding from the Office of State Budget and Management to develop a theory- and evidence-informed model Domestic Violence Intervention Program (DVIP) for those who commit acts of domestic violence. The grant, which ended in March 2024, enabled the identification and development of measures for DVIP outcomes that can be used to assess the effectiveness of a model program and current DVIPs. Weissman said the Commission's Domestic Violence Offender Management Committee (DVOM) is now moving forward with efforts to implement the project's recommendations.

Weissman said the committee Chairs met recently and discussed ways to engage Commissioners more fully in their work. She said the group also discussed how to make the quarterly meetings more engaging and agreed to try to have regular guest presentations. Weissman said the Commission has received recent presentations from two Domestic Violence Fatality Review Teams and will work to hear from others. In addition, the Commission will be hearing from a recent law school graduate about her work with domestic violence and traumatic brain injuries at this meeting.

Weissman added that North Carolina has recently implemented some initiatives around reentry programs that are important to families impacted by domestic violence, and she suggested that the local reentry councils would benefit from the expertise of Commission members to ensure that reentry-related domestic-violence issues are fully addressed.

Report of the Access to Health Services Committee

Scott-Robbins said the committee's goal is to promote increased screening for intimate partner violence (IPV) by primary care providers, especially in rural areas of the state and when working with marginalized populations such as older adults and youth. She said the committee has been working to identify funding for a project with the North Carolina Community Health Center Association to support implementation of routine IPV screening and referrals. The committee wanted to work with five to eight centers across the state to help establish policies and procedures for universal screening, and for training and ongoing technical assistance, but has been unable to identify a source of funding. Scott-Robbins asked Commissioners to let her know if they have any suggestions.

In meantime, Scott-Robbins said the committee has begun working on a lunch and learn for primary care providers who are already screening for IPV to ensure they are familiar with the resources available to them when they identify individuals in need of services. She said Thigpen has reached out to different victim service agencies across the state to identify some medical care partners in their communities who would want to participate in a lunch and learn, and the committee hopes to offer a program early next fiscal year. She said the committee members will also be working with Weissman's class that is focusing on domestic violence and traumatic brain injuries, and she is looking forward to Newcomb's presentation later in the meeting. Scott Robbins added that the committee meets at 3:00 on the second Tuesday of every month, and they welcome any new members

Report of the Access to Transportation & Broadband Committee

Davis said the committee met a few weeks ago and is working on a lunch and learn/think tank that is scheduled for June 5, 2024. She said Polite created a flyer for that event. Davis added that the committee needs a new co-chair and new members, and she invited any Commissioners who were interested to join.

Report of Victim Services Committee

Carman said Benton was unable to join the meeting and asked her to give the committee report. She said the committee's overall goal is to increase access to victim services for marginalized populations. The prior focus was on access for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind survivors, and the committee sponsored a number of webinars that are posted on the Commission's webpage. Carman said the committee is now shifting its focus to the teen

population and is seeking out programs from across the state that are being used to educate teens about domestic violence and dating violence. Carman said the committee plans to review those programs and then provide information about best practices. She asked anyone who is aware of a program focused on educating teens to email Benton or her so the committee can engage with that program. To date, the committee has heard presentations from Macon County and Safe Child's Funny Tummy program. Carman added that Benton is also interested in speaking with someone at DPI to discuss the programs in the public schools and encouraged Fairley to reach out to her.

Report of Domestic Violence Offender Management Committee

Bell said UNC Project RESTART has concluded its work creating best practices for DVIPs and drafting proposed revisions to the administrative code that governs DVIPs. She said the next step is for the DVOM Committee and NCPAT to review and refine the code revisions and to submit them to the Commission and then to DOA. Bell said the committee has made great progress on this project.

Bell said the DVOM Committee did not approve any new DVIPs in the most recent application cycle, and she worked with CFWYI's DVIP Director, Gerber, to update the application process moving forward. There will now be two designated six-week periods each year when they will review DVIP applications and, if a program cannot meet the standards during those designated periods, it will have to wait six months for the next review cycle. Bell added that CFWYI is updating the quarterly statistical information it requests from DVIPs to better match what it collects from domestic violence and sexual assault providers in terms of race, ethnicity, and gender identification.

Bell said NCPAT is holding its annual conference on September 26th and 27th, and Grant said representatives of the [Family Peace Initiative](#) in Kansas will be presenting the keynote. Bell said anyone is welcome, and Grant said they will be sending out save the date emails soon.

Report of Legislative & Advocacy Committee

Lockwood said VOCA funding for federal fiscal year 2023-24 sets the Crime Victim Fund cap at \$1.353 billion nationally, which is a 29% cut from FY 2022-23. She added that the funding agreement included a one-time transfer to VAWA. Lockwood said the President's proposed budget for federal fiscal year 2024-25 would infuse \$7.3 billion into VOCA over several years, including \$2 billion added to VOCA each year. The proposal also included increases in VAWA funding for sexual assault services formula grants, legal assistance, culturally specific services, and transitional housing. Lockwood noted that there is nothing binding about that proposal and it is just a signal to Congress about the President's priorities.

Lockwood said NCCADV continues to hear from programs about the impact of ongoing VOCA cuts, with many programs reducing staff and cutting innovative programming so they can continue to provide the core services that are required to receive state funds. Programs are also continuing to report lower volunteer rates that have not rebounded to pre-pandemic levels.

Lockwood said H.R. 7909 creates new bases to deport immigrants for domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, stalking, and sexual offenses without waivers for the new grounds. She said NCCADV believes this legislation will harm immigrant survivors by increasing the likelihood that criminalized survivors will be swept into the expanded scope of the grounds of inadmissibility or deportability, and by creating a chilling effect where victims may decline to seek assistance from law enforcement or service providers if they fear that it will result in a family member being barred from legal status. A diverse coalition of organizations serving and advocating on behalf of victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking are currently signing onto [this letter](#) in opposition using [this Google Form](#). Lockwood said signatures are being accepted through May 21st.

Lockwood turned to state law updates, and said the short session started on April 24th. NCCADV and NCCASA are requesting \$2 million each in non-recurring funding for domestic violence and sexual assault services to help address the federal VOCA cuts. It is too early to know if that will be included in the state budget, but legislators have seemed receptive.

Earlier this month, Lockwood said the Senate passed H10, which is a version of the ICE detainer bill that the legislature has considered in recent sessions. If this bill becomes law, it would require law enforcement to check the immigration status of anyone arrested of certain crimes, including domestic violence-related offenses, and to honor any ICE detainer requests against these individuals. She said that means defendants arrested for these crimes would be handed over to ICE before their cases could proceed at the local level. Lockwood said NCCADV has long opposed this type of bill because it increases fear of law enforcement within immigrant communities, making it less safe for immigrants to report crime, including domestic violence offenses. She added that NCCADV has signed onto [this open letter](#) for organizations in opposition to H10 because they believe it will further isolate immigrant victims, increasing their risk of domestic violence-related homicides. She said [this link](#) includes action items that individuals can take in opposition to H10.

Finally, Lockwood said the General Assembly is considering a bill that would change the definition of a relationship for 50B purposes to align with the federal definition, with the exception of including same sex dating partners. NCCADV supports amending the language to fully align with federal definitions and to remove the definitional language that was previously found unconstitutional. By leaving unconstitutional language in 50B (per ME v. TJ), Lockwood said the statutory language will be inconsistent with the state of the law and create confusion.

Guest Presentation: Domestic Violence & Traumatic Brain Injuries

Weissman introduced Newcomb, a recent graduate of UNC School of Law who was a student in her criminalized survivors class. Weissman said Newcomb has an interest in sentencing mitigation that inspired her research on the impact of traumatic brain injuries, and her paper on that topic was nominated as one of the best law school papers. She will be joining Poyner and Spruill in the fall.

Newcomb shared a PowerPoint presentation on brain injuries in IPV survivors, which is on file with CFWYI. Weissman said it will be important to get this information to people who work with survivors and to defense attorneys who represent criminalized survivors. Newcomb said she would like to see this material shared as a continuing legal education program for attorneys. Carman said she would connect Newcomb to staff at the Office of Indigent Defense Services in an effort to help get this information in the hands of indigent defense attorneys. Weissman said the information also needs to be shared with domestic violence victim services agencies so they can incorporate it into their screening and make appropriate referrals to health care professionals.

Newcomb said she would revise her PowerPoint to include some contact information for a health care professional she consulted, and Carman said she would send the revised PowerPoint to the Commissioners when it is ready. Fisher shared a link in the chat to a [National Protocol for Domestic Violence Medical Forensic Examinations](#).

CFWYI Executive Director Report

Carman said CFWYI is now fully moved into its new space on the 7th floor of the Albemarle building, and gave a brief update on staffing. She said CFWYI has issued all four quarters of fiscal year 2023-24 domestic violence and sexual assault disbursements to state grantees that are in compliance and appear to be on track to fully utilize their funding, as well as the first three quarters of Marriage License Fee (MLF) and Divorce Filing Fee (DFF) collections. So far, the office has issued a combined total of almost \$12.6 million in FY23-24 state grant disbursements.

Carman said CFWYI has closed out the federal FY22-23 FVPSA Core award, having paid a total of \$2.99 million to subgrantees. To date, the office has also paid out a total of \$1.15 million in federal FY23-24 FVPSA Core reimbursements to subgrantees, as well as a total of \$3.17 million in FVPSA American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act Supplemental Domestic Violence reimbursements. CFWYI is now focused on preparing to award the ARP Sexual Assault and ARP COVID funds.

On May 20, 2024, Carman said the office is hosting orientation for the 2024 Summer Internship Program. Ninety-eight interns have been placed in various state agencies for this 10-week summer internship. On July 8, CFWYI will also welcome 18 girls to the four-week Lady Cardinal Mentorship program, which is designed for high school girls who are interested in STEM careers within state government.

Carman directed the Commissioners to a draft of the Commission's 2024 report to the General Assembly. She said it is due to the legislature by July 1st, but she needs some lead time to get it through review by DOA leadership and the Governor's Office. She asked any Commissioner who wants her to add updates to their committee work to share them in the next week or two. She also reviewed the legislative recommendations in the report, which the full Commission approved last fiscal year.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:34 a.m.

Next Meeting

September 27, 2024