

NC Domestic Violence Commission Meeting Minutes

August 18, 2023

This Meeting was Conducted Remotely by Zoom

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 any 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, Dr. Jada Brooks, April Burgess-Johnson, Cathy Cloninger, Kriquette Davis, Dr. Kim Eagle, David Elliott, Jessica Englert, Karen Fairley, Carianne Fisher, LaKiera Grimes, the Honorable Steven Hollowell, Cheryl Howell, Holly Jones, Sarah Kirkman, the Honorable Nathaniel Knust, Denise Mazza, TeAndra Miller, Krishana Polite, Dr. Angelia Riggsbee, Starleen Scott-Robbins, Joetta Shepherd, Sheriff Christopher Thomas, Avis Watkins-Smith, and Sarah Owens Weeks.

Members Absent: Tiffany Bell, Shelby Benton, A.W. Burgess, Saira Estrada, Regina Gurley, Kathleen Lockwood, Elizabeth Outten, Ricky Parks, Sheriff Gregory Seabolt, the Honorable Christine Strader, Caroline Valand, and Amy Vaughn-Jones.

DOA NC Council for Women & Youth Involvement Staff Present: Danielle Carman, Lori Gerber, Harriet Lunsford, Charnessa Ridley, Karen Roberts, Sandra Ross, Candace Settle, Barbara Smith, Deborah Torres, Bernetta Thigpen, and Angela Winston-Hill.

Guests Present: Michael Adams, Ashley Benton, Erica Blackwood, Abby Catoe, Donovan Grant, Evin Grant, Julia Horrocks, Wes Kyatt, Nikki Locklear, and Sara Michael McNeese.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Weissman at 10:04 a.m.

Welcome/Member Roll Call: Chair Weissman welcomed everyone who was present and gave the ethics advisement.

Approval of Minutes: Davis made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 12, 2023 meeting, and Eagle seconded the motion. All members who were present approved the motion, with Fairley and Scott-Robbins abstaining.

CFWYI Executive Director Report – Danielle Carman

Carman said she was pleased to report that CFWYI has welcomed three new employees since the last Commission meeting, including Family Violence and Prevention Services Act (FVPSA) Administrator Barbara Smith and State Grants Administrators Jamie Davis and Harriet Lunsford. CFWYI has also hired a new permanent Eastern Region Director, and Carman thanked Deatrice Williams for her excellent service as Interim Region Director.



Carman said CFWYI has now had its online grants management system in place since August 2022. She said the staff used the system to issue more than \$12.4 million in state grant payments during FY22-23, as well as \$2.5 million in federal FVPSA payments. Potential state grantees also used the system to submit eligibility applications for FY23-25. CFWYI has made eligibility determinations and is waiting on a final budget to set state grant award amounts for FY23-24.

Carman said the Youth Involvement team recently wrapped up the Summer 2023 State Government Internship program and Lady Cardinal Mentorship Program for high school girls interested in STEM careers. Both programs were a great success.

Carman summarized the House and Senate versions of the FY23-25 budget for CFWYI; the most material difference was that the Senate version includes a \$500,000 recurring increase for both the Domestic Violence Center Fund and the Sexual Assault Center Fund in the first year of the biennium, followed by a \$750,000 recurring increase for both in the second year. Both versions of the budget include \$20,000 recurring for American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters for Domestic Violence Commission and Committee meetings.

Chair Report – Deborah Weissman

Weissman said Commission member Shelby Benton was unable to attend the meeting, but she wanted to share that North Carolina Lawyers Weekly recently named Benton as a 2023 Icon, which is an award that recognizes senior leaders of the legal community who have made their mark in their law firms and with community organizations and bar associations. Weissman said the award is a big deal and the Commission is fortunate to benefit from Benton's skills, dedication, and time both through her service on the Commission and her leadership of the Victim Services Committee.

Weissman gave an update on an OSBM Evaluation Fund grant that DOA received in partnership with UNC Project RESTART, which is a joint project of UNC School of Law and the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health. The team is working to identify innovative ways to work with offenders of intimate partner violence and to evaluate Domestic Violence Intervention Programs (DVIPs). She said the project will ultimately help the Domestic Violence Offender Management (DVOM) Committee generate proposed changes to the administrative code and CFWYI's best practices guidelines, in partnership with the North Carolina Providers of Abuse Treatment (NCPAT). Weissman stressed the importance of being survivor-centered in working with offenders.

Committee Reports

Access to Health Services Committee Report – Starleen Scott-Robbins, Co-Chair

Scott-Robbins announced that Dr. Jada Brooks is now serving as her Co-Chair for the Health Services Committee, and that the group was happy to welcome Watkins-Smith as a new member. She thanked Thigpen for her staff support of the Committee.

Scott-Robbins said the Committee's focus is on increasing primary care screening for intimate partner violence, especially in rural areas. The group has engaged in a number of projects over the years, and it is currently focused on a potential partnership with the North Carolina Community Health Center Association, which serves 43 federally qualified community health centers in underserved areas across the state. Committee members are exploring a potential collaborations with the Association and will be meeting with them in September to offer technical assistance and training on the development and implementation of universal screening protocols and procedures.

Access to Transportation and Broadband Committee Report – Kriquette Davis and Carianne Fisher, Co-Chairs
Davis said the Committee sponsored a great lunch-and-learn the prior week, which had dynamic speakers and good attendance. She said there were three presenters who spoke for 10-15 minutes each, and she wishes they had more time. The speakers included: Cathy Robertson, Executive Director of Cleveland County Abuse Prevention Council, Inc.; Linda Holden Cox, Executive Director of Wayne Uplift Resource Association, and Annette Taylor, Director of the Office of Digital Equity and Literacy, and their combined presentations addressed access to transportation, insurance, and broadband for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Davis thanked Commissioner Englert and CFWYI staff Williams for their work setting up and recording the Webex.

Davis directed the Commissioners to the Committee's written report in their materials, and said the group is working on next steps with broadband solutions and GIS mapping with confidentiality for shelter locations. She thanked Fisher for her work leading the recent transportation and broadband survey and preparing a summary report of the findings. Fisher thanked Polite for her assistance with the survey. Carman offered to post a recording of the lunch-and-learn on the Commission's webpage.

Domestic Violence Offender Management Committee Report – Lori Gerber (designee)

Gerber said the DVOM Chair, Tiffay Bell, was unable to attend the meeting and asked her to give the Committee report. Gerber added that Bell recently gave an excellent presentation about DVIPs for a lunch-and-learn sponsored by the Victim Service Committee. The recording is available on the Commission's website.

Gerber said 10 DVIPs applied to the Governor's Crime Commission for funding in its recent cycle, and three received awards. She said the Committee is working to develop proposed revisions of Chapter 17 of the North Carolina Administrative Code, which governs DVIPs. Committee member Donovan Grant has been very helpful with that project. In addition, Chris Huffine from Allies in Change will be presenting on working with offenders at the upcoming NCPAT conference in July. Finally, the Committee is continuing to explore options for funding a DVIP oversight position at CFWYI.

Victim Services Committee Report – April Burgess-Johnson

Burgess Johnson said the Victim Services Committee Chair, Shelby Benton, was unable to attend the meeting and asked her to give the Committee report. Burgess-Johnson said the Committee's mission is to increase access to services for marginalized populations. The Committee first focused on language access and has posted language access best practice guidelines on its website. The current focus is on the Deaf/Hard of Hearing/DeafBlind population. The Committee has sponsored two three-part lunch-and-learn webinar series. The first series was focused on communications equity and the duty of victim service and DVIP providers to ensure meaningful access to services. The second series was designed to help Deaf/Hard of Hearing/DeafBlind providers understand domestic violence, sexual assault, and DVIPs. All of the webinars are posted on the Commission's webpage. Burgess-Johnson said, now that the Committee has completed the educational phase of its work for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing/DeafBlind community, it is moving forward with new capacity building efforts.

Burgess-Johnson said the Committee continues to seek new members and welcomes anyone who wants to join. Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month.

Legislative and Advocacy Committee Report – Holly Jones, Co-Chair

Jones said Committee Co-Chair Kathleen Lockwood was unable to attend the meeting but left her a written report with highlights. Jones added that the Committee did not meet this month because there had not been movement at the General Assembly on the budget or other bills.

Jones said North Carolina's abortion bill, SB20, contained other provisions such as paid parental leave for state

employees. The bill allows for eight weeks of paid leave for a birthing parent who is a full-time employee and four weeks for other qualifying events, such as adoption. The allowable leave is prorated for part-time employees. Jones said access to paid leave can be very important for survivors.

Jones said the General Assembly repealed the former pistol permit process and overrode the Governor's veto. As a result, federally licensed firearms dealers will no longer see evidence of North Carolina misdemeanor assaults; however, SB20 created a new crime of misdemeanor domestic violence and convictions of that offense after it goes into effect on December 1, 2023 will be entered into the NICS system.

Jones said NCCADV and NCCASA jointly asked for an \$8 million non-recurring increase for domestic violence and sexual assault service providers to be split equally, but the request was not funded at that level. However, as Carman noted earlier, the Senate version of the budget includes a \$500,000 recurring increase for both the Domestic Violence Center Fund and the Sexual Assault Center Fund in the first year of the biennium, followed by a \$750,000 recurring increase for both in the second year.

Jones said NCCADV created a 15-minute recording that can be accessed by anyone with the link that summarizes the impact of SB20 on domestic violence survivors and highlights the resources that are available to help survivors access reproductive care. NCCADV staff also authored an article on firearms and domestic violence in a recent issue of the North Carolina Medical Journal. The article explains the connections between domestic violence, mass shootings, and firearms deaths and includes firearms-related policy recommendations to reduce domestic violence-related homicides. It also includes a reference to the Commission's recent Extreme Risk Protective Order Resolution. Jones said there are links to the recording and the article in the Committee's written report.

Weissman thanked the CFWYI staff for their technical and substantive expertise and their support of all of the Committees.

Adjournment

Weissman said the next Commission meeting would be a hybrid meeting, but it would be helpful to know in advance who will attend in person. Weissman said the Commission is continually seeking solutions, innovations, and best practices. She said the Commission's work happens at the Committee level, and she encouraged everyone to participate in one or more committees. The meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

Next Meetings

November 3, 2023 (hybrid).