

NC Domestic Violence Commission Meeting Minutes

September 27, 2024

This Meeting was Conducted Remotely by ZoomGov

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, Michelle Bardsley (joined after roll call), Shelby Benton, Dr. Jada Brooks, April Burgess-Johnson, Cathy Cloninger, Kathy Current, Kriquette Davis, Dr. Kim Eagle, David Elliott, Jessica Englert, Carianne Fisher, the Honorable Nathaniel Knust, Tracy Lee, Denise Mazza, TeAndra Miller (joined after roll call), Steven Nunn, Michelle Scott, Starleen Scott-Robbins, Joetta Shepherd, Caroline Valand, the Honorable W. Eric Whitten, and George Wilson.

Members Absent: Tiffany Bell, Brittany Bromell, Saira Estrada, Karen Fairley, Donovan Grant, LaKiera Grimes, the Honorable Steven Hollowell, Holly Jones, Sarah Kirkman, Kathleen Lockwood, Elizabeth Outten, Krishana Polite, Dr. Angelia Riggsbee, the Honorable Christine Strader, and Avis Watkins-Smith.

NC Council for Women & Youth Involvement Staff Present: Jennifer Boedicker, K. Lenore Brown, Danielle Carman, Jamie Davis, Shagufta Hakeem, Eugena Harrington, Harriet Lunsford, Jean McBride, Lisa McLaughlin, Sandra Ross, Deborah Torres, and Angela Winston-Hill.

Guests Present: Michael Adams, Erica Blackwood, Amgela Harper King, Beth Moracco, Skye Sullivan, Kaliah Thompson, John Weil, and Nisha Williams.

The meeting was called to order by Chair Weissman at 10:05 a.m.

Welcome/Member Roll Call: 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 17, 2024 meeting, and Scott-Robbins seconded the motion. All members who were present approved the motion, with Benton, Cloninger, Current, Englert, Nunn, Scott, Valand, Whitten, and Wilson abstaining.

Oaths of Office: Knust administered oaths of office for reappointed members Davis, Eagle, and Shepherd, and for newly appointed members Current, Nunn, Whitten, and Wilson. The oaths of office for members Bell, Kirkman, and Strader were postponed until the next meeting.

Chairperson's Report

Weissman complimented the CFWYI team on the August 2024 Conference for Women hosted by the appointed Council for Women. She said the sessions she was able to attend were amazing and informative, and the event was energizing and inspiring. She asked Carman to share a [link to the session recordings](#).

Weissman said there has been media attention about the more than 12,000 women who are incarcerated in the United States for homicide, including a [recent New York Times article](#) on gender-based violence and women who kill in self-defense or defense of others. Weissman said the article references a study of almost 800 women in a California prison that captured information about their abuse over time, as well as a danger assessment instrument used by law enforcement and victim service providers that predicts the risk of domestic violence victims of being killed by their partners. Weissman said, of 134 women convicted in the death of their partners, 110 were abused in the year leading up to the homicide and 80 were in extreme or severe danger. She said that pattern has been called the “abuse to prison pipeline.”

Weissman said non-fatal strangulation events are also very common among this population and only 15% of strangulation injuries were visible enough for law enforcement to photograph, with injuries being even harder to detect on black and brown skin. She said the cumulative impact of strangulation on the brain can cause a lot of behaviors that negatively impact victims’ credibility with law enforcement and juries, including poor recall. She said the rate of incarceration for women is increasing as the rate for men is decreasing, and a lot of those women are suffering from undiagnosed or untreated Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBIs). Weissman said, as more women who have suffered from intimate partner violence go to prison, more will ultimately come out of prison and there needs to be more attention to the gender differences in reentry. Weissman added that there are a lot of amazing organizations and people who are working in this area, and the Commission needs to support this important work and help make sure that reentry programs are responsive to the unique needs of these women.

Report of Domestic Violence Offender Management Committee

Weissman asked Carman to give the DVOM Committee report in Bell’s absence. Carman said the Committee had discussed the availability of Byrnes State Crisis Intervention Program (SCIP) grants for Domestic Violence Intervention Programs (DVIPs), and Valand clarified that those grants are from the bipartisan Safer Communities Act. Valand said the funding is slow because it is new to the Governor’s Crime Commission (GCC) and every subaward has to be approved at the federal level, but GCC will be getting that funding again so there will be recurring funds available for DVIPs.

Carman said NC Providers of Abuse Treatment (NCPAT) is currently hosting its 2024 conference on a trauma-responsive approach to domestic violence intervention. She said the Committee has prepared proposed revisions to the administrative code provisions governing DVIPs, which will be before the Commission for approval at this meeting, and is continuing to work to identify evidence-based best practices for DVIPs.

Overview of DVIP Proposed Administrative Code Revisions

Carman said the Commission’s materials included proposed revisions to the administrative code, adding that she emailed them to the Commissioners over the Labor Day weekend and did not receive any questions or comments. She said the proposed revisions were developed by the DVOM over the course of almost a year and are the product of work by a number of people, including committee members and outside experts. She said the proposed revisions are intended to do the following:

- Clarify the goals and purposes of DVIPs;
- Conform with current research and best practices, including modernizing the language and terminology and allowing innovation through approved pilot programs;

- Create new partnerships with a variety of community groups to mitigate intimate partner violence;
- Improve evaluation and measurement outcomes;
- Conform with state and federal law by requiring language access for participants with limited English proficiency and Deaf/DeafBlind/Hard of Hearing participants;
- Require programs to establish policies to assist participants who are unable to pay the programs' fees;
- Clarify the circumstances under which participants may be terminated from the program and the program documentation that is required when a participant is terminated; and
- Provide a more specific procedure to govern removal from the approved list and a removed program's right to seek review of that decision.

Carman said the proposed revisions have the support of DOA leadership, including Secretary Cashwell and Deputy Secretary Elliott, and they are deferential to the expertise of the DVOM Committee and the state and national experts it consulted. She said the process of getting code revisions approved is long and tedious so it will not be complete before the change in administration, but the Commission's approval will allow the staff to begin that process. Current moved to approve moving forward with the DVOM Committee's recommended revisions, and Benton seconded the motion. All Commissioners who were present approved the motion.

Report of Access to Health Services Committee

Scott-Robbins said Weissman invited the Committee to submit a project for her law school clinic students related to working with domestic violence survivors with TBIs, and she then met with Weissman and the Committee's TBI lead to discuss a number of different ideas. Scott-Robbins said, in August 2024, the Committee asked Weissman and her students to support an effort to educate legal system actors with evidence-based information on the intersection of domestic violence and TBIs, so they will better understand what TBIs are and how they manifest. She said the Committee believes that information should be made available in multiple formats, including electronic and written materials that may include short white papers, bench cards or fact sheets, and bibliographies with active links to supporting research. She thanked Weissman for the opportunity to work with her law students on this project.

Weissman said she will send Scott-Robbins a link to a Zoom meeting she has scheduled on Monday with her students and representatives of the Brain Injury Association of NC. She said the Committee's project will make this work very real for her students and she is excited to start working with them on this matter. Weissman added that Carman connected her with the Forensic Resource Counsel at the Office of Indigent Defense Services, and they are also going to work together on getting this information into the hands of criminal defense attorneys.

Scott-Robbins said the Committee has been working on a lunch and learn for medical providers about screening for intimate partner violence. The current plan is to host the lunch and learn in mid-January 2025 and the Committee is working to identify an appropriate speaker. She thanked the Committee members and CFWYI employee Bernetta Thigpen for her work staffing the Committee, and said they would follow up with CFWYI on arranging access to interpreter services. Carman said CFWYI has a Zoom webinar license for large trainings and can make arrangements as needed for foreign language and sign language interpreters.

Burgess-Johnson described some related resources that are already available, including a 2017 project on screening for domestic violence in healthcare settings and a "[Peace of Mind Florida](#)" project undertaken by the Florida Coalition and Brain Injury Association of Florida in 2014. Fisher said she sent Scott-Robbins an email with the name of a potential lunch and learn speaker.

Report of Access to Transportation & Broadband Committee

Davis said the Committee did not meet this summer and needs to gear back up to resume planning for a fireside chat lunch and learn in the fall, as well as a lunch and learn on some Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rule changes.

Report of Victim Services Committee

Benton said it has been difficult to convene Committee meetings over the summer but the Committee has continued its work on raising awareness of domestic violence in the marginalized population of teens. Benton said, at the last Committee meeting, Carman also brought a new potential project to the group involving a survivor who had a difficult time obtaining services from multiple CFWYI grantee agencies. She said the Committee discussed using that individual's experience to do a detailed case study with the goal of identifying the systemic pitfalls that the client experienced and examining structural ways that the Commission or staff could help programs shore up potential weaknesses. She said the Committee is waiting for the medical service providers who brought the issues to the staff's attention to provide a written de-identified summary of what the client experienced and will then start working to develop recommendations for improvement. Benton added that one suggestion the Committee will follow up on is the idea of holding listening sessions with shelter providers. Benton added that Carman will be contacting Fisher about adding a NCCADV representative to the Committee.

Report of Legislative & Advocacy Committee

Williams introduced herself as NCCADV's Legal Director and said she has been standing in with this Committee while Commission member Lockwood is on maternity leave. Williams said the Biden administration recently celebrated the 30-year anniversary of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and announced that it would be working on training for law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges on ways that court system actors can understand and utilize existing laws to address offender access to firearms and to create greater safety for survivors.

Williams said GCC voted to approve \$3.5 million in grants for violence intervention programs, including those in community-based organizations, hospitals, and local governments. She said a number of specialized programs applied, and she is excited to see more intervention work being funded. At the same time, however, the victim services programs are facing drastic declines in federal VOCA funding (from \$108 million in 2018 to \$24.5 last year to \$3.5 million in 2025 if no changes are made), and the General Assembly has not voted to appropriate additional non-recurring state funds to mitigate that shortfall. Williams added that the influx of American Rescue Plan Act funding over the past few years has helped stave off a crisis, but the agencies will feel it strongly next year as those funds expire. Williams said Congress has an opportunity to pass the Crime Victim Fund Stabilization Act; seven House members representing North Carolina have signed on to it as co-sponsors but there are still seven who have not. Williams encouraged Commission members to reach out to their Representatives, as well as their Senators about the companion Senate bill. Valand said the VOCA decreases are draconian and will shutter doors in the victim services world.

Guest Presentation: Project RESTART Innovative DVIP Program Measures Inventory and Matrix

Weissman introduced Moracco as a faculty member of the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health and the Director of the UNC Injury Prevention Research Center. She said Moracco's research focuses on developing and testing evidence-based program and policy interventions to prevent and reduce gender-based violence. Weissman noted that Moracco would be presenting about UNC Project RESTART, a joint project of UNC School of Law and the Gillings School, which developed an innovative DVIP component and measures inventory. Weissman said members of the project also worked with the DVOM Committee and outside experts, including experts from NCPAT and NCCADV, to prepare the proposed administrative code revisions that the Commission approved earlier in the meeting, as well as revisions to CFWYI's Guide to Achieving Recommended Practices. Moracco gave a

PowerPoint presentation on UNC Project RESTART, which is on file with CFWYI.

Next Steps & Announcement of 2025 Meeting Dates – Deborah Weissman

Weissman said the final 2024 Commission meeting is scheduled for December 6, 2024, and the quarterly meetings in 2025 will be held on February 14, May 16, September 12, and November 14, 2025.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:05 pm.