



The Commission on  
Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity

**CWCSEO**

Connecticut General Assembly

## **MINUTES**

### **CWCSEO ADVISORY BOARD MEETING**

**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2020**

**VIA ZOOM**

PRESENT: Karen Jarmoc, Alan Tan, Alphonse Wright, Peggy Young, Diane Stone, Hilda Nieves, Jordon Grossman, Leticia Colon de Mejias, Joan Barere, Mui Mui Hin-McCormick, Denise Cesareo, and Myron "Mike" Genel

Excused: Antonia Moran

STAFF/INTERNS PRESENT: Steven Hernández, Werner Oyanadel, Rosemary Lopez, Denise Drummond

GUEST: Joan Vitarelli, Director of Quality Assurance at Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV); Karen Foley O'Connor, Executive Director at The Network Against Domestic Abuse in Enfield

Meeting was called to order at 10:00 AM on Thursday, December 12, 2020.

### **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Co-Chairperson Jarmoc and Co-Chairperson Tan welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending this meeting.

Co-chair Jarmoc congratulated Mr. Hernandez and the team for the really great work everyone has done in the past several months, for all the information that we've all been able to discuss and work together as a group.

Co-chair Tan echoed Jarmoc's statement, he understood that it was a tough 2020 year with the pandemic. Thanked the staff for putting the time together to put all the events and press conferences and host many conversations with advocates from the community.



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### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE**

Thanked the Co-chairs for the acknowledgement, but wanted to thank the small staff, because we have been able to have a big impact and bring together people who are really doing the work on the ground.

As staff to the legislature Mr. Hernandez presented at freshman orientation to the new incoming legislators in a couple of days.

### **PRESENTATIONS FROM GUEST**

Our guest today presented on what they are viewing around the issue of domestic violence during this time of pandemic. People are being asked to stay home for their safety. For victims of domestic violence or anyone living with an abusive partner it's troublesome and worrisome. They anticipate an increase in outreach for help and is why they are here to present.

The national statistics say that 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men have experienced severe physical violence by an intimate partner at some point in their life. From July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020, the numbers are the following here in Connecticut:

- 37,223 Victims
- 30,708 Calls were received on the Hotline (available 24/7)
- 34,224 Victims received court-based services
- 33,452 Victims received one-on-one counseling
- 2,113 Victims housed in shelters
- 13 Intimate Partner Homicides (average over last 10 years)

Some of the services became challenging as courts began to close and consolidate. Between May 1, 2020, and Sept. 30, 2020, 62% of individuals who contacted CT Safe Connect had never previously sought services. The length of time on calls increased 124% due to more complex needs of survivors. In comparison to calls from the previous year, they saw a:

- 26% increase in specific concerns around COVID
- 21% increase in housing needs
- 19% increase in financial needs



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- 29% increase in calls from law enforcement as result of LAP
- Increase of capacity within hotels
- Nearly \$500,000 spent from March-November on hotel costs alone to adhere to social distancing

Their CT Safe Connect and their 18 member organizations remained open 24/7 throughout the pandemic to serve victims and survivors of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV). Contacts to Safe Connect increased month over month. At its height, contacts increased by more than 30% with more than ½ of the contacts reaching out for the first time. CT Safe Connect and their 18 member organizations made a swift shift to remote communication and mobile advocacy to support the increase. Connecting through phone calls, email live chats, facetime & text at a rate more than 71% higher than the previous year.

As the state began to open in June, they saw an increase in complexity of cases and call volume reflecting:

- Mental health & repeat callers
- Severity of violence increasing
- Complex temporary restraining orders
- Increased need/worry about where basic needs

One good thing was that on April 6<sup>th</sup>, due to the closing of courthouses and the reduced hours of the 6 remained open, Safe Connect and the 18 member programs were able to file restraining order applications completely online.

There is still a continued and growing need for financial support for victims and families as the state reopens. (Back rent, utilities, basic needs). The increase in violence as state reopens and isolation is lifted, as well as increase in shelter and housing needs. There is still a continued need for use of hotels to maintain social distancing and quarantine when necessary. Increase need for cleaning supplies and PPE as in person counseling resumes. There are also renovations to maintain social distancing in offices, children's spaces, and counseling areas.

They are seeing more victims over the age of 60, they intend on getting out to the senior centers and getting some media out on elder abuse.



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### **CWCSEO ANNUAL RECAP PRESENTATION**

A PowerPoint presentation of the Commission's work was presented by staff of the work through the entire year.

### **APPROVE PROPOSED 2021 CALENDAR OF EXECUTIVE REGULAR MEETINGS**

After a brief conversation, the board has approved meeting the second Thursday of every month from 10am-12pm, with the exception on a few dates that will be on Wednesday and no meetings in July & August.

These meetings requirement according to statute are required meeting of the Executive Committee of the Commission. Executive Committee is comprised of the six representatives from the sub commissions and the Co-chairs.

Commissioner Jarmoc **moved** approval of the proposed 2021 calendar. Commissioner Colon de Mejias seconded the motion.

### **SUBCOMMISSION REPORTS**

**Asian and Pacific Islanders Sub Commission** – Interim Chair Ms. Hin-McCormick reported that their sub commission met together with the Asian Pacific American Coalition, African American and Latino & Puerto Rican sub commission to discuss community priorities. They are working to create one platform with three shared priorities that impact their communities. They will be having a second meeting tonight to get the priorities out and continue to do the great work that they do.

**African American Sub Commission** – Interim Chair Mr. Alphonse reported that they've had several meetings, but one big one with the black representatives to learn on what their priorities. They have had various conversations about COVID-19 that seems to be a big issue in the black community. They are looking to pull together a group to have a discussion around these issues.



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**Latino & Puerto Rican Sub Commission** – Interim Chair Ms. Colon de Mejias reported that they have been active and working to raise the money for the scholarships. They have also met with staff from the DECD, the state workforce and strategic plan department that were appointed to the Governor's Workforce Council to continue the work on the state's workforce strategic plan. They want to make sure small Latino business and business in communities of color develop a workforce plan that includes equity and opportunity for Latinos(a).

**Women's Sub Commission** – Jarmoc reported that she has reach out to the Governor's Council on Women and Girls to discuss the recommendations from the women's policy committee during the Lamont transition.

**Children's Sub Commission** – Interim Chair Mr. Genel reported that they participated in a two-day forum with Stepping Stones. It was supposed to be local, because of pandemic they were able to open it globally using technology. They are now working with a local technology company that uses augmented and virtual platforms to deliver content for children learning in diverse and interesting ways.

**Seniors Sub Commission** – Interim Chair Ms. Stone reported that they have not met since the last time but informed everyone that the commission is represented on a community collaborative which is a statewide gathering and it's becoming established with representation from all key sectors of aging in Connecticut. It's to start looking at how we build only livable community's work.

### **NEXT STEPS UPCOMING SESSION**

Mr. Hernandez informed everyone that during the upcoming session we will continue to have these robust public discussions that we've been hosting, but also be very actively involved in the infrastructure of policymaking and advising.

He also mentioned that most of the public testimony sessions will be held virtually. The legislature will be in person for their votes, but in their offices, at least in the House side.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Stone moved to adjourn the meeting of December 10, 2020, at 12:00pm.  
Seconded by Commissioner Young.