

Criminal Justice Policy Advisory Commission
Victim Issues Subcommittee Meeting Notes
Wednesday, September 11, 2019

Committee Members Present:

Natasha M. Pierre, Chairperson, Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA); Liza Andrews, CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV); Linda Cimino, Office of Victim Services (OVS); Melissa Conway, Office of Policy & Management (OPM); Eleanor Michael, OPM for Marc Pelka, Chair, Criminal Justice Policy Advisory Committee; Tracy Miller, CT Alliance to End Sexual Violence; Lucy Nolan, CT Alliance to End Sexual Violence; Jessica Pizzano, Survivors of Homicide (SOH); Richard Sparaco, Board of Pardons and Parole (BOPP)

Others present:

Koren Butler-Kurth, Office of Victim Services; Valina Carpenter, Office of Victim Services; Tais Ericson, Executive Director, CT Superior Court Division; Mary Kazicki, Office of Victim Services; Rosa Rebimbas, State Representative.

Discussion:

Natasha Pierre welcomed committee members and guests. All present introduced themselves and their respective agencies.

Meeting notes from June 19, 2019 were reviewed and no changes were made.

Natasha Pierre highlighted the presentation of the subcommittee presented at the June CJPAC meeting. A copy of the presentation used will be emailed to all members. Natasha will create a checklist to determine the status of the requested changes.

Council on State Governments Presentation:

Eleanor Michael from the Office of Policy and Management introduced Chantel and Emily with the Council on State Governments who are leading the work of Improving Outcome for Youth Initiative and the task force specific to Connecticut. They asked to attend this meeting to learn what is working and what is not as it relates to victims of crime in our state. Chantel and Emily provided background information regarding the initiative and goals. The primary goal is to utilize the three branches of state government to gather information as it relates to juvenile recidivism, appropriate resources and needs. In their research, information as it relates to victims of crime is minimal and it is their hope the Victim Issues Subcommittee could provide guidance on potential data sources. The remaining timeline for this study includes one more task force meeting fall/winter of 2019 with an expected release of the findings for March 2020. Data collected to this point regarding juvenile offenders has been provided by the CT Judicial Branch, the Department of Correction and the Department of Children and Families.

Members present shared the following comments and concerns regarding juvenile offenders, crime victims and the study:

- Ensure that crime victims are not lost in the process of any policy or legislative changes that come about as it relates to juveniles.
- Data lacking in this area because of reforms and lack of follow up to ensure the changes are indeed working as intended.
- It was requested that the data collected in this study encompass all crime victims including property crimes and that it does not just focus on cases involving bodily harm.

- Victims do not have access to hearings regarding diversionary programs or the juvenile review board.
- In the State of Connecticut, there are 11 juvenile courts and 2 full time and 1 part-time juvenile advocates. Ideally, to ensure victims are being served, there should be at least one advocate assigned to each court.
- There are no victim service advocates for juvenile matters post-conviction.
- There are no advocates in domestic violence matters involving juveniles.
- Raising the age of juvenile offenders will stress the system and services in place that are already deficient.
- The theory of juvenile reform is supported by the victim community only if crime victim rights are not violated and services are not taken away.
- Offenders are getting younger and committing more serious crimes, victims need a voice in the criminal justice system.

Members agreed to share any afterthoughts or other potential data sources that can be used for the task force and study.

Victimization Study:

Linda Cimino, Director of Victim Services shared with the group that the Judicial Branch can help fund the victim needs assessment. Research into how the study will be conducted is currently taking place including considerations to contract with a university or research firm. The subcommittee will need to determine survey methods and questions that will be used to collect information. A budget has not been provided as of yet. It is expected to take a year to implement various parts of the study, collect the data and issue a final report.

Next Meeting:

Wednesday, December 18, 2019 at 10 a.m. Office of Victim Services, 225 Spring Street, Wethersfield, CT.