

CJPAC - Victim Issues Subcommittee Meeting
November 16th, 2022
Microsoft Teams

Facilitated by: Liza Andrews and Lucy Nolan

PRESENT: Marc Pelka, Kevin Neary, Ebonie Suggs, Gerrie Wild, Linda Cimino, Mary Kozicki, Richard Sparaco, Maura Crossin, Jessica Pizzano, Storm Fleming, Joe Garibaldi, Merit Jajoie, Natasha Pierre, Bridget Koestner

Welcome, Introductions, Approval of Minutes

- Liza opened the meeting at 10:05
- Lucy announced that Bridget Koestner, Policy Manager at The Alliance will replace Lucy as co-chair of the committee.
- Linda and Marc moved acceptance of the September 2022 minutes. Passed unanimously.

Statewide Victimization Survey Update

- OVS will be meeting with Kevin in about a week to figure out next steps
- Currently synthesizing and analyzing data, seeking clarity on some questions
- By the January meeting, there will be some resource ready for review by this subcommittee

Data Workgroup

- Kevin will be organizing a subcommittee Data Workgroup to look at data points to include in CJPAC information and see how to use the data from the victimization survey to advocate for victims in CT.
 - Jessica and Mary volunteered
 - CCADV and Alliance have staff members for this group
 - Others who are interested can contact Liza or Bridget
- Look for more information in coming weeks

Discussion on Court Processes, Commutations & Victim Input Information

- The BoPP has seen an increase of applications for commutations
 - 24% of applicants thus far have been granted commutation
 - Process - pre screening review, then full panel hearing
 - Many cases deemed ineligible in pre screening; only move to full panel hearing if there's merit
- Trying to gather data to get some breakdowns (commutations based on crime, etc.)
- How does the victim get involved?
 - Notice goes out to a registered victim when somebody applies for commutation (including prescreen). Advocates can explain the process.
 - If hearing granted, the victim will be informed of the date
 - Hearing approximately two weeks after pre-screen approval.
 - Extended to family of victims in cases of homicide.
 - Victims have responded in varied ways - some are supportive of commutation, some are opposed, some don't respond.

- Victim notification data - no data at this time related to victim responsiveness to this particular process
- Suitability & eligibility requirements change
 - Eligibility: Individuals must be incarcerated, serving more than ten years, have two years before becoming eligible for parole, no active charges, no unresolved court fees/fines, not have requested in the last three years
 - Suitability: seriousness & recentness of crime, impact on the victim and community, conduct during incarceration, rehabilitation since sentencing, benefit of commutation to society, current sentencing practices, disability, illness, extraordinary circumstances, general benefits of that person's release, general benefits of their continued incarceration
 - Reminder: life without the possibility of release is ineligible by statute
 - Trends and additional questions:
 - Many of these are homicide cases from the 80s/90s with heavy sentences
 - Concern about victims being unable to be contacted
 - Can be a challenge when it's been several decades since the initial crime.
 - Discussion on ways to increase victim participation - create a resource available to survivors on the website, consider how to make the process more victim focused and less offender focused, consider what supports are in place, understand that victims may have new expenses (may need to go back to counseling due to this trigger, etc.)
 - How many have been granted over victim objection?
 - Anecdotally, the majority of victims object. However, unsure how many of those cases are granted or how they compare to cases where victims are supportive. More data needs to be collected.
 - Victims have expressed more issues with the pardon process, if anything.
 - This discussion will be revisited in January.

Federal VOCA gap

- NNEDV (national DV organization) anticipates that VOCA cuts will be the same as they were last time. The fund allocation will probably never be the same as it was in 2018. It is up to the states to find an alternative and decide their commitment to victim services. Ultimately, VOCA is no longer a predictable source of funding.
 - Organizations will have to advocate for short and long term funding, so we all need to be on the same page about numbers. We need to start advocating in December.
 - We should look at other states to see a long-term sustainable path for VOCA. Who can we consult outside this subcommittee? We must consider a long term funding path.

Member Updates and Announcements

- Moving Justice Forward Project w/ Division of Criminal Justice - Maura
 - Four different site visits, 90 individual surveys of stakeholders, focus groups to create needs assessment reports for state's attorneys offices. Report discussed at two day roundtable.
 - Maura was the only victim service provider in the room. If anyone else is interested in connecting to CCI, please reach out to Maura.

- A lot of policy shifts anticipated. Blueprint of action steps for Division of Criminal Justice being discussed and forthcoming.
- First conference for Survivors of Homicide was successful- Jessica
 - If anyone's interested in seeing those discussions, feel free to reach out to Jessica
- Meetings moving forward - Liza
 - Meetings held monthly during session, every other month outside of session.
 - Next meeting is January 18th, and will be an hour and a half (10-11:30). This will be the case monthly through the session unless decided otherwise.

Adjournment