

Criminal Justice Policy Advisory Committee
Victim Issues Subcommittee

December 15, 2021

Present: Marc Pelka and Kevin Neary (OPM), Linda Cimino (OVS), Ebonie Suggs (DOC), Richard Sparaco (BOPP), Jessica Pizzano (Survivors of Homicide), Jenn Rossi (MADD), Meghan Scanlon, Gerrie Wild, and Liza Andrews (CCADV), Lucy Nolan, April Embelton, and Ashlei Fleming (CT Alliance to End Sexual Violence)

Liza Andrews began the meeting at 10:02 by welcoming the group.

The minutes from the August 18, 2021 meeting were voted on and accepted on a motion by Richard Sparaco and a second on the motion by Marc Pelka.

Linda Cimino gave an update on the Statewide Victimization Survey. The goal for the number of individuals and representation from all areas was met. The survey results reflect crimes in Connecticut, the highest types are vandalism and identity theft. The 4th highest crime is DV and the 8th is sexual assault. Linda was clear that the data is not complete and these are preliminary numbers. Those who responded an interest in further communication are getting call backs, in the evening by trained callers.

Marc Pelka noted that these numbers align with the National Crime Victimization Study which is done every six months. We are trending just like the census with a special focus on underrepresented populations.

Marc reported on several federal webinars that OPM participated in, one on services to victims in 2019. The webinar showed that victim services are consistently underwater which causes resource constraints; law enforcement was shown to have a large and important role, 59% of referrals for accompaniments and training came from law enforcement; three quarters of victims who received Restraining Orders and Civil Protection Orders needed help provided by non-profit and faith-based organizations immediately through hotlines and other supports, but larger needs for both immediate and long term effects of victimization, such as the need for housing came to the forefront.

The group discussed the need for mental health services, as they are very difficult to access for victims at this time. Rapid re-housing continues to be an issue as well and as the inherent long term issues which will likely be apparent over the next year.

Kevin Neary reported on the Bureau of Justice Webinar on their victim survey which was heavily technical. He is happy to talk to anyone to translate what it means. The survey is taken every 10 years and is a good tool to look at trends and for state level information.

Marc Pelka reported on the October CJPAC meeting that focused on annual trends, including criminal justice metrics, survey data on victimization (national and state) and data on victimization service delivery. The group discussed comparing monthly reporting on restraining orders and civil protection orders to standing criminal protection orders. The questions arose whether to pull the data on yearly or on a monthly basis to get the best picture. Additionally, the group discussed whether there are there other data points that would be helpful to look at.

The slide with the information charts by CCADV, OVS, Survivors of Homicide and The Alliance show it is hard to tell a story due to the affects of COVID on data. Each organization has data specific to them, so we need to work on a narrative and presentation of the data. OPM will use the next months to develop slides so the information will resonate with the readers. What makes sense to add to the monthly indicator report for victims groups, and should it be monthly, quarterly or annually?

Gerrie Wild suggested that violation of orders and how the violator was held accountable would be a good piece of data to gather.

Meghan Scanlon reported out on a collaborative effort to work on state funding for the drop in federal VOCA funding. A letter, signed by seven organizations was sent to the Governor requesting his assistance to ensure victims of crime receive the support they need.

Legislative Updates:

CCADV is working to have a child advocate in each of their 18 member centers and increasing housing options for victims of DV.

Alliance is working on a bill to codify consent for sexual assault into the statutes and to increase the time limit that victims for child sexual abuse can sue in civil courts.

Survivors of Homicide is working with a professor at Hobart-William Smith who is writing a book about survivors. The expectation is to use the book in criminology courses to talk about victims when they speak about criminal justice reform.

The Alliance has a toolkit for medical personnel that is available on the website.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:55.

The next meeting is Wednesday, February 16 at 10 am.