



Dane County

Minutes - Final Unless Amended by Committee

Commission on Sensitive Crimes

Consider: Who benefits? Who is burdened?

Who does not have a voice at the table?

How can policymakers mitigate unintended consequences?

Tuesday, September 15, 2020

8:30 AM

Remote meeting

A. Call To Order

Others present: Julie Foley, Karen Larson, Elizabeth Olson, Dana Pellebon, Carrie Pomije, Amy Scarr, and Faye Zemel.

Chair Crowley called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m.

Present 7 - SHANNON BARRY, AMY BROWN, Chair HEATHER CROWLEY, BETH FREEMAN, SHARYL KATO, Supervisor MAUREEN McCARVILLE, and JAN MIYASAKI

Absent 5 - BARBARA MCKINNEY, KERRY PORTER, KAT RILEY, ERIN THORNLEY-PARISI, and VANESSA STATAM

B. Consideration of Minutes

[2019](#) 2020_0121 Commission on Sensitive Crimes Minutes
[MIN-509](#)

Attachments: [2020_0121 COSC Minutes](#)

**A motion was made by KATO, seconded by FREEMAN, to approve the minutes.
The motion carried by the following vote:**

Ayes: 7 - BARRY, BROWN, CROWLEY, FREEMAN, KATO, McCARVILLE and MIYASAKI

Absent: 5 - MCKINNEY, PORTER, RILEY, THORNLEY-PARISI and STATAM

C. Action Items

None.

D. Presentations

None.

E. Reports to Committee**1. Agency Updates/Staff Changes/Service Changes/Funding**

- *Barry reported the case management positions at DAIS are nearly fully staffed. The organization had to cancel its two largest fundraisers, but continues to raise funds online.*
- *Brown reported the addition of Marsy's Law to the State Constitution has greatly increased the workload for the Victim Witness Unit within the Dane County District Attorney's Office. The change gives victims the right to appear and be heard at all stages of their case, meaning the unit has contact much sooner with witnesses. Marsy's Law, combined with a lengthy backlog of cases due to the pandemic-forced suspension of all in-person jury trials, has increased one social worker's caseload from around 500 prior to the Safer at Home order to 844 currently.*
- *Freeman reported staffing for Dane County's Adult Protective Services Helpline increased to two full-time employees in March and that those individuals are extremely busy. Joy Schmidt began her duties as Dementia Crisis Program Specialist in March. The position's primary focus is working with law enforcement to decrease hospitalizations and institutionalizations.*
- *Kato reported The Rainbow Project recently hired a Consumer Service Facilitator and a Community Service Facilitator, both of whom will help connect consumers to clinicians more quickly. The addition of two new therapists will help reduce the waiting list for services.*
- *Pellebon reported Erin Thornley-Parisi is no longer employed by Rape Crisis Center, which is otherwise fully staffed. Pellebon and Missy Mael are serving as Interim Co-Executive Directors at RCC. Volunteer shifts at hospitals have been fully staffed since Sept. 1. RCC's Spanish language line will be fully staffed beginning Oct. 1.*
- *Crowley reported the Trauma-Informed Care Coordinator has been cut from the Youth Justice budget, but she's hopeful it will be reinstated within another DCDHS department.*

2. COVID-19 Responses/Trends/Challenges/Potential Collaborations

- Scarr reported referrals to Dane County Department of Human Services' Elder Abuse Helpline dropped in April and May but have returned to normal levels. Domestic violence accounts for the majority of referrals. Scarr reported one positive of virtual court appearances is the ability to attend more hearings via YouTube. She hopes judges consider maintaining one YouTube hearing date per week when in-person court proceedings resume in an effort to improve accessibility.
- Barry reported DAIS has suspended in-person support groups during the pandemic and continues to explore how support groups can be held virtually while maintaining confidentiality. Helpline traffic was down in the spring but increased markedly during the summer and the issues are more complex. The waiting list for shelter access stands at 66. DAIS is studying the feasibility of a confidential texting helpline.
- Foley reported mental health issues and responding to an overwhelming increase in gun violence is consuming a great deal of resources in the District Attorney's Victim Services Unit. The unit has had success in securing grants for emergency funds to help victims.
- Freeman reported DCDHS' Adult Protective Services Helpline saw reduced traffic in the spring but it returned to normal levels during the summer. APS is doing in-person visits when needed, but that will become more difficult to do safely as cold temperatures return. The Domestic Violence in Later Life Conference scheduled for Oct. 1 will be held virtually.
- Kato reported The Rainbow Project has provided rapid response, basic trauma and consulting services, either in person or virtually, throughout the pandemic. Workers who previously checked in with families periodically are now often doing so virtually up to three times per week as more consumers struggle to meet basic needs and the risk factors for suicide, depression, anxiety, domestic violence, sexual abuse, child abuse and internet grooming increase due to pandemic-related stresses. Adult virtual support groups have been very successful. The agency has seen increased spending on equipment and internet fees to remain connected with consumers.
- Miyasaki reported Project Respect has opened office space in St. John's Lutheran Church on East Washington Avenue in Madison. The organization has seen improvements in accessibility for some victims via virtual meetings and has provided technical assistance to facilitate that contact. Project Respect was busy during the summer organizing volunteers to deliver food and personal items to those in need.
- Pomije reported the DCDHS helpline for individuals with developmental disabilities experienced a decrease in calls in the spring and has not picked up as fast as other helplines during the summer due to many individuals having not returned to work, the source of many reports. Face-to-face intake sessions are being conducted due to the necessity to see the environment. Several consumers are frustrated that hearings aren't taking place.
- Pellebon reported Rape Crisis Center helpline contacts have increased during the pandemic. There have been many instances of people calling due to retraumatizations, some who haven't made contact with the agency in 15 years. Word is spreading that the court system is backlogged due to the pandemic, causing an increase in the number of victims who do not wish to engage with law enforcement or the court system. In recent months, Caucasian clients have been more reticent to work to engage with law enforcement, a phenomenon long seen in Black and Latina clients. RCC is starting middle school and high school support groups with Madison Metropolitan School District and is also reaching out to rural school districts. The agency is meeting with students via Zoom or phone, is offering virtual education and is doing virtual wellness sessions via Facebook in English and Spanish. Emergency funding is available to survivors of sexual assault, including a food grant.
- Crowley reported DCDHS Youth Justice has been very busy over the summer and is

having difficulty reaching young people. Many incidents of gun violence involve people YJ is familiar with from past dealings, which, in conjunction with the hurdles of Covid-19, has taken a toll on staff. YJ is seeing more trafficking online and survival sex has emerged as a serious problem as young people try to find ways to meet their basic needs.

3. Legislative Updates/Announcements

Supervisor McCarville provided an overview of two recent Dane County Board of Supervisors resolutions -- Nos. 145 and 180 -- that seek criminal justice reform. Resolution 145, which endorses addressing systemic racism in the Dane County criminal justice system and investing in alternatives to incarceration outside of law enforcement, and Resolution 180, which endorses criminal justice reform and developing both a Triage and Restoration Center and a Community Justice Center, remain in committee.

4. COSC Chair Position/Open Community Positions

Crowley announced she will resign as Committee Chair at the end of 2020 but plans to remain a committee member. Kerry Porter and Erin-Thornley Parisi will be leaving the committee due to changes in employment.

5. Commission's Expectations for Work of CCRs

Committee members discussed the varying effectiveness of CCR subcommittees, the struggles that some subcommittees are having and potential ways to improve productivity.

6. CCR Updates

Child Abuse & Neglect: The Prevention & Early Intervention and Mental Health subcommittees have been meeting. The Advocacy/Legislative and School CPS subcommittees are not currently meeting. Priorities, strengths and gaps are being identified for the purpose of establishing a priority platform for the Children, Youth & Families Consortium. The Trauma-Informed Community Advisory Council's planning summit is scheduled for Nov. 20.

Intellectual Disabilities: The last meeting was prior to the Safer at Home order. A virtual meeting is in the works for October.

Domestic Violence: Initial meetings following the Safer at Home order focused on how the pandemic has impacted survivors as well as how services adapted. Most recently, the focus has turned to how public safety would look within an anti-racist framework and how the DV-CCR can move toward being anti-racist.

Elder Abuse: Now meeting via Zoom; next meeting is Oct. 14, 2020 at 11:30 a.m. with Ticia Kelsey with OutReach Inc. The Domestic Violence in Later Life Conference will be held virtually on Oct. 1, 2020. CEU's for social workers and attorneys are available.

Sexual Abuse: The last meeting was in March, at which time it was decided to take a hiatus. Representatives from Freedom Inc., Unidos and the Sheriff's Department have been extremely busy this summer and unable to meet. Representatives from the Rape Crisis Center and DAIS met last week to discuss how the organizations can collaborate and conjoin efforts.

F. Future Meeting Items and Dates

Next meeting: Tuesday, 20 October 2020, 8:30 a.m.

Barry requested an agenda item discussing how agency employees are being impacted by the dual stressors of the pandemic and escalating violent crime.

G. Public Comment on Items not on the Agenda

None.

H. Such Other Business as Allowed by Law

None.

I. Adjournment

A motion was made by KATO, seconded by BROWN, to adjourn. The motion carried by the following vote:

Ayes: 7 - BARRY, BROWN, CROWLEY, FREEMAN, KATO, McCARVILLE and MIYASAKI

Absent: 5 - MCKINNEY, PORTER, RILEY, THORNLEY-PARISI and STATAM

The meeting adjourned at 10:07 a.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Howard Thomas.