



Policy Committee Meeting
April 17th, 2022

Judge Judy Warne	Chair of the Committee
Sonia Corrales	HAWC
Tyrone Lin	HAWC
Lt. Kira Webster	HPD
Lt. Gale Johnson	HCSO
Amy Smith	HCDVCC
Sgt. John Klafka	HCSO
Sara Lewis	HPD- Victim Services
Lt. Julie Pleasant	HPD Victim Services
Thecia Jenkins	HCDVCC
Wykesha Dixon	BATP
Shannon Fowler	UH/Downtown
Celina Wells	KCM- Crisis Center
Mimi	HPD Victim Services

Judge Judy Warne, the Chair of the Committee, called the meeting to order. She stated that she had given 2 speeches at Judicial Conferences, one Regional and one Annual. Both were in person and well attended. Discussion was had about getting the Judges back on the Bench and most will be using a hybrid of in person and ZOOM. There are an enormous number of new Judges with limited legal experience. She also participated in completing the Bench Book for Judges.

Shannon Fowler announced he is teaching a Graduate class on IPV and will have them write grant proposals instead of final papers. He is looking for any ideas and suggestions from the Committee to help out the students or if the students can help anybody out.

Sonia Corrales asked if anyone knows what is happening with the back log of cases? They had been contacted by Stephen Dockery from Judge Hidalgo's office about these issues. Amy Smith discussed the Criminal Justice Council's Study findings about needing a Court Watch program and a High-Risk Team. Mary McFaden stated it takes 3 parties to clear up the backlog- the D.A., the Defense Attorney, and the Judge. Some courts are getting to back to trials and some have not been on the bench since the start of the pandemic. The Emergency Relief Dockets have been helping. They have started a Pre-Trial Intervention Program but very few have taken up the offer. The D.A.'s Office approved overtime to triage cases and are assessing cases and making offers, but the Defense Attorneys and Judges have to help move the cases as well. Judge Warne asked if there is anything the group can do? She said COVID was a

legitimate excuse, but it is now becoming a pat answer for not doing their job. It was suggested that maybe 2 or 3 of us could meet with the Presiding Judge and bring her some specific things we would like to see done. We cannot ignore thousands of victims. Amy and Judge Warne will meet to discuss next steps.

Sonia stated that these are life and death circumstances, and the dynamics around the violence especially around those who are still living with the abuser and having difficulties connecting to services. Sonia also mentioned that HAWC is decentralizing into the Community and have sold their Waugh property and are soon to be breaking ground on a new shelter space increasing their bed space from 120 beds to 320 beds.

Sgt. John Klafka stated last month they received 1 order for surrendering of 2 guns. Still getting orders but it has slowed down. Currently they have 84 guns off of 39 orders. Amy sent information to Judge Warne she received from the Gifford's Foundation. Judge Warne will review it and discuss it at the next meeting.

Celina Wells announced that Susan Hastings has retired, and she is the new Director of the Crisis Center she is currently trying to fill 3 positions. Their sexual assault numbers have risen, and they have run in to it taking longer to get P.O.'s into court, almost 2 months to get a court date. They are also struggling with finding resources for male victims.

Thecia Jenkins stated TCFV's Public Policy Committee is meeting and trying to determine what their agenda will be.

Lt. Kira Webster stated HPD is tasked with some Interim Charges including explaining the obstacles with P.O.'s and examining how reporting to law enforcement impacts victims. Judge Warne asked Lt. Webster to keep us updated on what they find and if they need our help.

Wykesha Dixon stated that BATP is scaling back on their hotel program. They still have it, but it is expensive but can be used for male victims. They are down a few staff in their Advocacy Program so be patient with them.

Mary McFaden is trying to put a Pilot Program in the Pre Trial-Intervention Program around gun surrender. She is working with the Probation Department with the language and hoping to see if it could be used later when things expand. Most courts are back in trial but the 280th is still using ZOOM.

Lt. Gale Johnson stated that Harris County is working on providing Bond Conditions in compliance with HB 766. Hopefully, he will be able to provide an update at the next meeting.

Lt. Julie Pleasant stated that HPD Victim Services is now a Division, and the Forensic Sketch Artists are now with them and will be attending HAWC's 60 hour training to help them with their interactions with victims. She stated that in March they reached out to 1975 victims which is up 23%. They had 163 UVisa requests. DART has 3 to 6 units out every day. She also mentioned that she would like to see adding pets to P.O.'s as service/emotional support pets so the victims can keep them with them in shelter. Sonia mentioned we would have to look at the shelter policies as well. Thecia Jenkins added the website Redrover.com in the chat that could help with guidance about pets in shelter.

Amy Smith updated the Committee on HCDVCC's series of Deliberate Dialogues that will cover the Intersection of Domestic Violence and the Criminal Justice System. The March conversation on Bail went well and the speakers on Post-Conviction at the April Community Partners meeting were great. Both were recorded and on the HCDVCC website if anyone wanted to watch them. The next one will be on April 28th at 6:30 pm.

Judge Warne stated that she would like to look to see if the P.O. language needs to be updated in the Family Code. She would like to meet with law enforcement to see what they need to help enforce the orders. She also stated that the Supreme Court is looking at adding rules around virtual hearings. She stated that we need to see what comes out of that before recommending legislative changes.

Judge Warne stated something must be done to unclog the system because victims are now being hurt by the lack of movement. Justice is stopping at the courthouse door where it needs to begin.

Meeting adjourned and the next meeting will be on May 17th at 2:00 pm via ZOOM.