



Legal Services Committee
March 21, 2024

Amy Smith	HCDVCC
Sarah Bryan	Advocates for Immigrant Survivors
Lt. John Klafka	HCSO
Jessica Howton Stool	Houston Volunteer Lawyers
Jacklyn Guerra	HAWC
Kristin Cates	Tahirih
Alejandra Alvarado	HCDVCC
Stefanie Hayes	HCDVCC
Celina Wells	KCM

Amy Smith opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

Celina Wells wanted to give a shout out to the High-Risk Team and talked about how well they managed the safety of one of their clients in Protective Order Court. The client was granted a 20 year no contact Protective Order.

Lt. John Klafka announced the Harris County Sheriff's Office was expanded their Sexual Assault Unit. Adding one Deputy starting Saturday and another in April or May. They are also in discussions with TxFNE about contracting a Forensic Interviewer or hiring one of their own. Their Family Violence Unit currently has 6 deputies for the Westside of Harris County and 6 for the Eastside.

Jessica Stool stated they are still running a legal clinic at the VA and have 100 slots that are available. She mentioned that finding lawyers to work Pro Bono on family law cases is still difficult. Their proposal for a Pro Bono Law School is still pending- this would train lawyers on how to work Pro Bono cases. They are tossing around ideas about how to help victims who represent themselves and what Pro Se assistance would look like.

Kristin Cates said that Tahirih has reopened and are taking cases again. There is a tight capacity but refer them over to them. They are waiting and watching SB4 works its way through the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals. Their clients are concerned about the ramifications of the ruling. If anyone has clients that are concerned, they can discuss options with them.

Sarah Bryan said that Advocates for Immigrant Survivors are in the same boat and concerned about the outcome of SB4. They have a new Survivor Advocate that started this week. They are working through their Research Project and hoping to get the results out soon.

Jacklyn Guerra stated that HAWC's new shelter is coming along, and they can give people tours and see some of the finished shelter. They are working with some community partners to train their staff on SB 4 and what it means for clients.

Celina Wells that KCM received a new grant and have hired 2 new counselors, one who is bi-lingual so that has cut their waiting list down to about 2 weeks. They are preparing for Sexual Assault Awareness Month and will honor the Methodist SANEs at their Superhero Event. More details to follow. They continue to be busy with sexual assault hospital accompaniments.

Stefanie Hayes announced that HCDVCC's Expect Respect program is building a Youth Leadership Panel to help high schools with creating advocates that can empower and educate at their schools.

Alejandra Alvarado announced the High-Risk Team has been working hard and thanked everyone for their referrals and collaboration on working these cases.

Amy announced that HCDVCC is hiring a Mobile Advocate for the High-Risk Team in Protective Order Court. She also announced over 20 people have viewed the trainings on the HCDVCC Teachable Platform. It can be accessed through our website. <https://hcdvcc-academy.teachable.com/p/legal-services-training> If anyone has any trainings, they would like to add to the platform please let Amy know. It was decided an Immigration Training was needed but it should wait until we know what will happen with SB4. If anyone is interested in helping to plan a CJ 102 training, please reach out to Amy so we can bring the planning process.

Our next meeting will be April 18th at 11:30 via ZOOM. Remember we are meeting on ZOOM, not Teams so log on to the ZOOM link in the body of the email. Meeting adjourned.