



Policy Committee Meeting
January 16, 2024

Judge Judy Warne	Chair
Amy Smith	HCDVCC
Katharina Dechert	Tahirih
Lt. Kira Webster	HPD
Veronyka James	RAD- Office of County Administration
Shannon Fowler	UH/Downton
Celina Lilly	Fresh Spirit
Jamie Wright	HCDVCC/Voices of Freedom
Amanda Elkanick	Texas Advocacy Project
Kourtnei Gartman	Coalition for the Homeless

Judge Judy Warne welcomed everyone and gave a couple of updates. We are still waiting for the US Supreme Court's ruling on the Rahimi case. She stated the Court had refused to extend the deadline for filing of Amicus briefs but over 50 got filed. It appears the Justices are going to struggle with telling DV offenders that they can keep their guns but there might be some concern with the new Texas Protective Order Statute. She also mentioned that she is on the Legislative Committee for the Family Law Foundation, and they are working with the Texas Center for Judiciary to send a survey out to Judges at the 6 month mark of the new PO legislation to see what impact removing the "future danger" has had on POs around the State. The committee also discussed the possibility of updating the PO statute since the broader it gets the less impact it might have. It is also difficult because a PO statute is in 3 different Texas Codes.

Amy Smith mentioned the pending 40% cut in Agencies VOCA budget and how that will impact services starting in October 2024. HCDVCC is working with other agencies so we will have an untied front and message to the public about the issue. Also Dr. Veronyka James is working to get the County to make the DVAF a permanent part of the County budget.

Veronyka James also stated that because of the upcoming cut to VOCA funds her office has interviewed several County agencies that provide victims services to see how to minimize the VOCA cuts. Also looking into funding for the HCSO SMART program and clerks to help enter POs into the system faster. Her department is also hosting a conference and below is a call for proposals:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QtqenmqDG2CDpWl-6_6XGBAVHPCicPag/view?usp=sharing

Lt. Kira Webster announced that in 2023 HPD entered 7,840 POs in the system as compared to 6,859 last year with an average of 680 a month. That is a 14% increase from year to year. Those include, final POs, Temporary PO's and MOEPs. They are not able to keep up with the mandate from HB 660 without additional personnel. They also have not seen any MOEP's that have used the new tracking device language. Several issues have come up including who owns the property and if they are co-owners what does that mean? Also Judge Warne pointed out that there have been numerous issues with the tracking devices especially with the language "acting on your behalf." This might need to be cleaned up next session. By the way it is 10 months until bills can start to be filed for the next session!

Katharina Dechert discussed the Border Security update and the response to SB 4. 2 lawsuits have already been filed in reaction to the bill passing. Tahirih has some information on SB 4 and can be found here: SB 4 Texas Toolkit: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1lfr_C-A0Fq9EMiWtSmJRqUPpniVCPJRP

Tahirih 1-Pager on Anti-Immigrant Legislation's impact to survivors: <https://www.tahirih.org/news/fall-2023-legislative-explainer-texas-legislature-passes-harmful-anti-immigrant-legislation/>

Amanda Elkanick announced that TAP has a Policy Coordinator Position open. She also asked about how the new City Administration will interact with the Committee. Amy Smith announced Bill Kelly is no longer with the Mayor's Office. She also stated that the city is looking at all Directors to see if some could be consolidated. No word on any other changes yet.

Celina Lilly mentioned Fresh Spirit is trying to work out how to keep all services and people within the new VOCA cuts. This led to a discussion on why VOCA is being cut.

Judge Warne announced the standard PO forms have been pulled from the Texas Supreme Court website due to some errors in the language in the orders. New forms should be available soon.

Meeting Adjourned.

Our next meeting is February 20th at 2:00 via ZOOM.