



Legal Services Committee
January 16, 2025

Amy Smith	HCDVCC
Rebecca Councill	HCDVCC
Thecia Jenkins	HCDVCC
Norma Martinez	HCDVCC
Morgan Penrice	HCDVCC
Stefanie Hayes	HCDVCC
Thomas Velz	Texas Advocacy Project
Alexia Rauen	Advocates for Immigrant Survivors
Mayumi Waddy	MOMS Demand Action
Libby Hasse	Tahirih
Maisha Coulter	AVDA
Jacklyn Guerra	HAWC
Jessica Howton-Stool	Houston Volunteer Lawyers
Mercedes Santillanes	Pasadena PD
Meagen Belovsky	South Texas College of Law

Amy Smith opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. Introductions were made.

Amy reported that HCDVCC announced the grant recipients of the Early Childhood Resiliency Funds. More information can be found at www.hcdvcc.org

Meagen Belovsky introduced herself and talked about South Texas’s Domestic Violence Clinic. It is student powered by 8 law students. Each student gets a DV client and handles mostly Family Law Cases. Each student also spends time observing in the 280th District Court (P.O. Court).

Thomas Velz stated TAP is keeping an eye on the Texas Legislature and what will affect the DV community. They are doing a big push on focusing on Protective Orders. Currently, it appears that there is no consistency or expectations for P.O’s especially in the 280th. TAP is available for case consultants on some P.O. cases.

Libby Hasse let everyone know Tahirih is scrambling to get their clients proof of pending cases and representations so client could feel like they have some protections before the new administration takes over. Their Policy Team is joining with several agencies to do “Know Your Rights” presentations and Rapid

Reactions to ICE Rapid- what to do if ICE knocks on your door- DON'T LET THEM IN! And Tahirih is hiring staff attorneys.

Alexia Rauen stated that Advocates for Immigrant Survivors are participating in the "Know Your Rights" and the Rapid Reaction presentations. They are still taking cases, and their research project is ongoing.

Jessica Stool announced Houston Volunteer Lawyers are working on Power of Attorney trainings and updating Estate Planning. At this time, they do not have any clinics set up so it will just be a normal intake process. They are working on a Pilot Project with J.P. Courts on Negotiated Settlements on Eviction cases. They are also working on a Pro-Se Project to give more assistance with those cases. They are hoping to support where they can.

A brief discussion was held on the "Decline to Answer" Campaign. Education is being done around the State on everyone declining to answer are you a citizen question at hospitals so it does not single out any one group.

Jacklyn Guerra stated HAWC is working with the National Institute of Justice on a study of HPD's Domestic Abuse Response Team (DART). She also announced that HAWC is working on a date for their Grand Opening of their new campus.

Maisha Coulter announced they currently have 3 openings for Staff Attorneys. Their 9 attorneys and 9 paralegals are currently paid through various grants. Maisha recently asked their Board to increase their salaries to be more competitive with the Private Sector. They will be using their ECRF grant to add additional staff to their Trauma Staff so they can serve children from age 2 to 19. 2025 marks AVDA 45 years of service to our community!

Thecia Jenkins announced that HCDVCC will be hosting a training on April 29th with the Pink Concussion Project. She mentioned that HCDVCC just held a Stalking Training with SPARC. Those who participated discussed what they learned at the training including more education and prevention is needed for people to recognize that stalking is a crime, victims need to know how to articulate to the police stalking activities. SPARC has numerous resources on their website www.stalkingawareness.org

Mayumi Waddy stated MOMS Demand Action and assessing what the Texas Legislative session will look like after the November elections.

Amy Smith announced HCDVCC is continuing a Community Safety Assessment of the Criminal Justice System. The Assessment has been delayed while we waited for the new D.A. to take office. Sean Teare, the new D.A. announced that the Domestic Violence Division is now a Bureau and hopes eventually all DV cases will be handled by this Bureau. Amy also mentioned meetings are scheduled to begin discussions on expanding gun surrenders to Criminal Courts.

Mercedes Santillanes said Pasadena PD has been catching up with meetings and high risk intakes since the holidays.

Amy announced TCFV spoke at HCDVCC's Community Meeting. For handouts and the link to the meeting contact Rebecca at RebeccaCouncill@hcdvcc.org

Meeting adjourned.

Next meeting Thursday February 20th at 11:30 via ZOOM.