



Commission
to Prevent Violence
Against Women

Arizona Commission to Prevent Violence Against Women

August 20, 2020

10:00 a.m.

Virtual Meeting

A general meeting of the Commission to Prevent Violence Against Women was convened on August 20, 2020, virtually, notice having been duly given.

| Members Present (14) | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Diane Umphress, Chair | |
| Nicole Bidwill | |
| Beth Hoel | |
| Steve Stahl | |
| Jon Eliason | |
| Kristin Flores | |
| Tasha Menaker | |
| Laura Guild | |
| Neil Websdale | |
| Kay Radwanski | |
| Susan Smith | |
| Ed Mercurio-Sakwa | |
| Elizabeth Ortiz | |
| Eve Scarff | |
| Members Absent (6) | |
| Kate Brophy McGee, Co-Chair | |
| Jon Smith | |
| Patricia George | |
| Monica Yelin | |
| Patricia Klahr | |
| Daniel Rincon | |

Call to Order

- **Diane Umphress, Chair**, called the Commission to Prevent Violence Against Women meeting to order at 10:05 AM with 14 members present. **Diane Umphress, Chair**, reviewed e remote meeting platform procedures.

Welcome/Introductions

- **Diane Umphress, Chair**, welcomed everyone and asked all members to introduce themselves.

Approval of Minutes

- **Diane Umphress, Chair**, requested a review of the **February 20, 2020** meeting minutes.
 - **Elizabeth Ortiz** motioned to accept the **February 20, 2020** minutes. **Chief Steve Stahl** seconded the motion.
 - The motion passed with no dissenting votes.

Commission member COVID-19 updates

Elizabeth Ortiz, Arizona Prosecuting Attorney's Advisory Council (APAAC)

- **Elizabeth Ortiz** was introduced by **Diane Umphress, Chair**.
- **Elizabeth Ortiz** discussed the work of the Arizona Prosecuting Attorney's Advisory Council (APAAC) during the pandemic.
- **Elizabeth Ortiz** provided an overview of APAAC, including the mission and overview of jurisdictions that have seen an increase in abuse, decrease in reporting, investigation challenges, impacts on release conditions, and a reduction in court hearings.
- **Elizabeth Ortiz** also reported that some Police Departments are appearing more reluctant to book Domestic Violence cases due to safety precautions for custody which is resulting in rising tensions in the community. Suicides and homicides have increased since stay-at-home orders have been implemented.
- **Elizabeth Ortiz shared with** the Commission the ways that Covid-19 has impacted the criminal justice process. Grand Juries have been suspended and prosecutors have been limited to relying on preliminary hearings as opposed to grand jury proceedings. Additionally, it was reported that jury trials have decreased, further impacting the ability to resolve cases.
- **Elizabeth Ortiz** shared concerns about sentencing hearings due to Covid-19 restrictions, including the limits of having an advocate or additional support for the victim in the court.
- To support the court system through training, APAAC has confirmed virtual training until the end of November and continues to provide legal resources.
- **Chief Steve Stahl** questioned if APAAC had statistics on how extensive the backlog of cases had become during this time. **Elizabeth Ortiz** referred to Commission member **Jon Eliason**, who shared that because trials stopped in mid-March and resumed in June there are presenting issues that are causing court cases to bottleneck.

Steve Stahl, Maricopa Police Department, Maricopa, AZ

- **Chief Steve Stahl** shared that conversations with other jurisdictions have demonstrated an increase in Domestic Violence related calls. Maricopa Police Department has tracked DV related calls, showing a 79% increase. Other cities are showing higher rates of increase in DV related calls
- **Chief Steve Stahl** shared that many of the DV calls are not coming from immediate intimate partner violence, but are calls related to children, either caregivers calling about their children being disruptive or children calling on their parents. Most of these calls were disorderly conduct with no violence used.

- **Chief Steve Stahl** reported that there has been a 32% decrease in injuries from violence during this time and a 29% decrease in repeat callers who have previous DV reports. This is believed to be because of a new protocol in which Maricopa PD does follow up visits with homes that have made calls to PD regarding DV. While taking pandemic safety precautions into account, physical visits to the home have decreased but Police Officers are still reaching out via phone.
- There has been a 62% decrease in requests for assistance from PD for orders of protection. **Chief Steve Stahl** stated that this could be due to AZ POINT functioning well.
- **Chief Steve Stahl** stated that preventative measures that PDs take during this time are critical.
- **Laura Guild** asked if other areas are also possibly seeing an increase in calls from and about children but are lumped together with a general DV statistic. **Chief Steve Stahl** stated that he was unaware of how other PDs track their data.
- **Kay Radwanski** stated that in April and May of 2020, 1,120 petitions for protective orders were filed in person and 3,955 petitions were filed online through AZPOINT. It was discussed by Commission members that AZPOINT has been valuable in helping people file their petitions without having to travel to courthouses.

Kirstin Flores, Attorney General's Office, Phoenix, AZ

- **Kirstin Flores** reported on the work of the Attorney General's Office (AGO) of Victim Services during the pandemic, geared towards Human Trafficking, Internet Crimes against Children, Elder Abuse, and Conflict cases and appeals for DV. Human Trafficking and internet crimes against Children have specialized agents, prosecutors, and advocates for cases. Elder abuse cases are analyzed with financial abuse in conjunction with AHCCCS fraud investigations.
- **Kirstin Flores** shared that advocates provide mandated services such as discussing charges against defendants, general victims rights and going to court hearings. Advocates also provide non-mandated services, including developing a rapport with clients, providing referrals, and court escort.
- **Kirstin Flores** talked about the challenges they have seen during COVID-19 and the resulting strategies that the AGO has implemented. Challenges include: limited in court appearances, victims' rights to be present and heard, inconsistent courtroom procedures, and case delays. Strategies to address this have included virtual hearings, managing expectations, debriefing and crisis services.
- It was also reported that agency support has been converted to virtual education during the past quarter, including working to have AZPOST and COJET certification requirements met. Despite the AGO continuing to provide services, revenues have been declining due to decreased fines and fees.
- **Kirstin Flores** introduced **Michelle Rucker** with the Community Outreach and Education (COED) section of the AGO. COED is a statewide crime prevention and education program, specifically focused on K-12 schools and vulnerable populations with a social and emotional target to stay relevant to what is important in Arizona.
- **Michelle Rucker** reviewed the COED programs available in live and on-demand virtual formats that also have companion assignments for teachers and students. The Internet Safety program is the most popular and longest running for students in grades K-12, parents, faculty and staff, and focuses on the importance of educating kids on different

aspects and scenarios of internet safety, particularly as kids are on the internet at higher rates now.

- **Michelle Rucker** also highlighted the human trafficking and exploitation dual sided book that is for parents and students, which discusses special populations with a focus on facts versus myths and understanding healthy versus unhealthy relationships.

Tasha Menaker, Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence (ACESDV), Phoenix, AZ

- **Tasha Menaker** provided an overview of data gathered from a variety of resources for rural and urban directors, advocates, and service providers.
- **Tasha Menaker** reported that there has been a decrease in calls for shelters' help from survivors and many shelters believe that people may not know that services are still open during this time. Most programs throughout the state have remained open during the pandemic while taking extra precautions to keep staff and clients safe.
- Survivor needs reportedly have been fluctuating during this time due to higher stress and more emotional support needs. This has been illustrated through longer hotline calls and higher suicide ideation being reported from victims.
- ACESDV shared funding opportunities, advocated for increased funding, and provided PPE. A resource that focuses on DV shelter needs was created and is available on the ACESDV website for community members. ACESDV also has Lyft and Uber vouchers that assist in funding transportation for survivors.
- Capacity in shelters has decreased due to covid by 50%, resulting in higher use of motel and hotel vouchers and many shelters are having to make modifications in their procedures. Primarily, in recent months, DV shelters have started to move from immediate crisis prevention to identifying long term modifications that are needed, including plexiglass barriers, updated screening processes, and technical support regarding organizational policies for safety.
- **Tasha Menaker** reported that mobile advocates have reported saving time by reducing travel and have increased time they can spend working with survivors. It was also reported that more participants have been seen through remote services which encourages clients and shelters to continue these services remotely even after the pandemic.
- **Tasha Menaker** reviewed the diverse use of technology during this time as well as the need for technology programs, including licenses for platforms and technology for survivors.
- **Sue Smith** shared with the Commission that there are housing vouchers available for adults 18-24 who were in foster care at age 16 and exited care in any state or tribal social services that now live in AZ- vouchers available in Glendale, and Mohave County.

Laura Guild, Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES), Phoenix, AZ

- **Laura Guild** explained the collaborative work that DES is doing with other state and community agencies during COVID-19.
- **Laura Guild** reported that she had been reaching out to programs to discuss the initial panic and changes that were occurring and was impressed to see how administered programs changed and shifted to meet needs quickly during this time.
- **Laura Guild** stated her opinion that there needs to be a strong focus on funding, help for programs to utilize all their resources, and work on how to best communicate needs. One

such need during this time is transportation even with decreased cases and increased remote services.

Ed Mercurio-Sakwa (Emerge Center- DV Shelter), Phoenix, AZ

- **Ed Mercurio-Sakwa** reported how Emerge Center continues to stay focused on adapting DV programs to best serve victims by making many changes, including technology and how continuum of services are executed.
- **Ed Mercurio-Sakwa** reported that during the pandemic, Emerge has also seen a drop in people reaching out for services, including what would be an annual cumulative of 1500 calls not coming in as compared to previous years, more suicidal ideation from clients, and strong desires of wanting to relocate.
- **Ed Mercurio-Sakwa** summarized how Emerge Center has been responsive to changing dynamics and helping victims find basic needs. All services provided by Emerge are now remote and the shelter is 100% hotel based. Being hotel based has brought new challenges specifically in regards to limiting social connection with other clients. A long term solution being evaluated is to shift to using shared gathering spaces to support community while allowing social distancing.
- **Ed Mercurio-Sakwa** also reported on additional staff interventions that have been produced during this time, such as giving supplemental pay for those that are working from home to support increased utility costs, increased data, etc., and hazard pay for those that are providing direct care.

Nicole Bidwill (COVID-19 Cares Board), Phoenix, AZ

- **Nicole Bidwill** explained how the nonprofit sector has been reacting to the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to continue to focus on the greatest needs in our communities.
- **Nicole Bidwill** expressed her pride in the way that Arizona has been handling and helping the vulnerable populations through adjustments, including CARES funding through the Governor's Office.
- **Nicole Bidwill** provided an example of a school on the Gila River Reservation that has made adjustments from feeding just students to also feeding elders in the community and has decided to open the school through a collaboration with the health department.

Diane Umphress, Amberly's Place/FACs, Yuma, AZ

- **Diane Umphress** reported how Family Advocacy Center's have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and adjustments that have been made to better serve the community by providing services for child abuse, sexual assault, elder abuse and domestic violence.
- **Diane Umphress** shared the challenge of reminding clients that the FACs are open for services, even if they are not responding on-scene as was protocol in the past. Victims have been impacted by new protocols that have been created by law enforcement and community agencies.
- **Diane Umphress** also informed the Commission how Yuma County has been seeing waves of heavily reported activity followed by quiet periods of limited reporting and mentioned an interest in seeing what will happen with research that shows what is truly occurring during this time which is not available yet.

Lighting Arizona Purple Plan

- **Diane Umphress** requested **Gaelyn Davis** report on plans for Lighting Arizona Purple (LAP) in October.
- **Gaelyn Davis** stated that due to current circumstances and to support the health of attendees, this year's LAP campaign will be shifted to an online platform to engage community members and stakeholders. Throughout the month, the State Capitol building will be lit purple and agencies throughout the state will be encouraged to light their buildings purple and use #LightingAZPurple to raise awareness and support survivors.
- LAP will be executed as a virtual statewide awareness campaign that will consist of webinars, housed on the GOYFF website under the PVAW page addressing that services continue during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Request for Future Presentation Topics

- **Diane Umphress** stated that the Commission will accept public comment via written submission through the GOYFF website and encouraged Commission members to email GOYFF staff any recommendations for future Presentation topics.

Future Meeting Dates

- **Diane Umphress** announced the following meeting dates:
 - Tuesday, November 17, 2020

Adjourn

- **Diane Umphress, Chair** called for adjournment at 12:09PM.
 - **Jon Eliason** motioned to adjourn. **Laura Guild** seconded the motion.
- Motion to adjourn was approved unanimously.

Dated the 25th of August 2020
Commission to Prevent Violence Against Women
Respectfully Submitted By:
Gaelyn Davis
Program Administrator, GOYFF