

V. R. E. A. C

Victims' Rights Enforcement Advisory Commission

Minutes

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 18, 2014
Legislative Office Building, Room 1B
300 Capitol Ave., Hartford
2:00 – 4:00p.m.

Members present: Linda J. Cimino; Tina Greaves (*representing Laura Cordes*); James E. Dzurenda; Mario T. Gaboury; Carelton J. Giles; Ana Gonzalez; Janice Heggie Margolis; Kevin T. Kane; Dawn Luddy, RN; Jessica Norton; Bethany Phillips, Esq.; James C. Rovella; Dora B. Schriro; Susan O. Storey, Esq.; Andrew Woods

Members absent: Garvin G. Ambrose; Patrick L. Carroll, III; Karen Jarmoc; Jillian Knox; Anne Mahoney, Esq.

Commission Staff: Hakima Bey-Coon; Merit Lajoie; Rachael Dillion (intern); Jackson Etting (intern)

Welcome and Introductions --- Call to Order at 2:07 pm

a. Membership Introductions

Commission members introduced themselves and stated which agency they are representing.

b. Approval of the Minutes – June 18, 2014

Unanimous approval of the minutes from June 18, 2014

First motion: James E. Dzurenda

Second motion: Linda J. Cimino

c. Commission Correspondence

i. Resignation of Marcy Carlone

The resignation of commission member Marcy Carlone was announced; at this time, the commission is unsure as to whether or not there will be a replacement for Marcy Carlone.

ii. Replacement of Subcommittee Chair

It was announced that commission member James E. Dzurenda is now the chair of the Subcommittee for Post-Conviction and Violation Status.

Discussion Topics

- d. Update: Definition of Crime Victim
 - i. 50 State Survey of Definitions

The Office of the Victim Advocate is conducting further necessary research and analysis for the possibility of a universal definition of “crime victim”. As part of the research, OVA is in the process of conducting a 50 state survey of other states’ regular definition of crime victim and the corresponding definition for compensation purposes; OVA is also researching the definitions within the definition of crime victim (e.g., the definition of “immediate family” or “physically disabled”); the completed 50 state survey will be distributed to commission members by the August 20th meeting.

- e. Agency Barriers/Victim Barriers

The Commission reviewed the agency/victim barriers that were identified last meeting (e.g., caseload, dual-arrest, language, training, resource and notification barriers); sub-committees are to identify and examine further agency/victim barriers.

- f. Handout: State and Federal Enforcement

Documents were handed out detailing the enforcement mechanisms in other jurisdictions when a victim’s rights are not honored or complied with; commission members are to review the handouts so that the commission may discuss such topics at the August 20th meeting; Hakima Bey-Coon also mentioned that several years ago, the effort by many jurisdictions was to establish constitutional and statutory rights, and now, the effort is enforcing such rights; it was also brought up that, although Connecticut has constitutional and statutory rights, there is currently no enforcement mechanism in place for such rights.

Comments:

- Jessica Norton questioned what constitutes “relief” for crime victims under 18 U.S.C § 3371(d)(5).

- Hakima Bey-Coon responded that “relief” means something affirmative for the victim that provides the victim with recourse. Limits on “relief” have been established (e.g., many jurisdictions have established that sentences and pleas cannot be vacated).

- g. Public Hearing(s)
 - i. Dates/Time/Location

The Commission discussed possible dates, times and locations for public hearings including urban and rural areas; there was a consensus that the public hearings should be held on evenings during the week; the commission discussed advertisement methods for the public hearings (possible advertisement methods included press releases, flyers, social media, and agency email lists and data bases); the Commission also discussed whether or not the Commission should hold “town hall” style meetings rather than public hearings.

The Department of Correction will query towns where there are registered victims in an attempt to target areas where there are higher numbers of victims who are interested in providing testimony at public hearings; James E. Dzurenda will report the DOC's findings to the Commission by August 1.

The Office of the Victim Advocate will distribute a potential online survey for victims to the Commission by August 1.

Comments:

- Ana Gonzalez stated that she has a venue in mind if the commission wishes to try and have a meeting in the New Haven area.
- Janice Heggie Margolis recommended cancelling the public hearing scheduled for August 20 due to summer vacations and other possible turnout restrictions.
- Jessica Norton suggested that those agencies that are able to should ask victims directly to attend the meetings. She stated that in her experience, this tends to get the best response.
- Ana Gonzalez suggested the possibility of holding a daytime public hearing on a Saturday; suggested holding a public hearing within a resource fair; and also suggested having an online survey as an option for a victim to share their experience and provide feedback.
- Andrew Woods recommended, as it pertains to demographics, targeting the audience for having public hearings that revolve around certain topics (e.g., urban areas will attract more homicide and shooting victims).
- Linda J. Cimino questioned what the Commission was looking for the victims to share at the public hearings.
 - Merit Lajoie responded that they were looking for victims:
 1. To share their experience throughout the process;
 2. Identify any barriers that s/he encountered;
 3. How the system responded to him or her;
 4. If s/he has any suggestions on how to improve the system.
- Janice Heggie Margolis commented that, if this is what the Commission is looking to get out of the public hearings, these are individuals whom the agencies have already worked with; therefore, it is not necessary to hold a resource fair. Also commented that it will be difficult to get these people to come and provide testimony.
- Dora B. Schriro also recommended focusing on the option of written testimony, as some victims may not be comfortable providing testimony in person at a formal public hearing; also recommended having small, informal groups to try to make it more comfortable for victims to provide testimony.
- Kevin Kane agrees that the public hearings are important, but feels that the commission should try and keep the focus on the actual process, and not so much on a victim's anger over other things (e.g. the outcome of a case).
- Susan O. Storey commented to consider the availability of public transportation while selecting locations for public hearings. She also stated that she would be interested in hearing Dawn Luddy speak about her personal experience as a survivor.

h. Future Commission Presentations

i. Notification to Victims of Crime

Commission presentations are designed for the Commission to grasp a better understanding of how the current system works; Department of Correction will give a presentation at the August 20th commission meeting; the Office of Victim Services will give a future presentation on the SAVIN notification system; James E. Dzurenda recommended to have a presentation on the process of how a victim can register to receive notification through the courts and DOC (this will be included in the upcoming DOC and OVS presentations)

No other presentation recommendations were given.

Subcommittee Reports

Commission members are invited to attend any and all subcommittee meetings, if they choose. Subcommittee chairs were also reminded to make sure to alert the OVA about their meetings so that an OVA staff member can make themselves available to take notes for the subcommittee.

i. Pre-arrest/Arrest

Subcommittee Chair Dora B. Schriro reported to the Commission the attendees and what the subcommittee discussed at their first meeting. The subcommittee examined statutes and standards as they pertain to pre-arrest and arraignment; the subcommittee held discussion in regards to identifying barriers as well as areas to improve; the date for the next subcommittee meeting is pending.

Further information can be found in the subcommittee minutes.

j. Prosecution/Conviction

Subcommittee Chair Kevin T. Kane reported to the Commission the attendees and what the subcommittee discussed at their meetings. The subcommittee held a meeting on July 9 and July 16. The subcommittee focused on the initial notification to victims and SAVIN; the subcommittee found that SAVIN is a vehicle that is underused; the subcommittee also discussed written orders of restitution. The date for the next subcommittee meeting is pending.

Hakima Bey-Coon commented that she was advised by a victim advocate who stated that in her GA court, the written orders are being utilized by the judges; however, victims do not know what to do with these orders.

Further information can be found in the subcommittee minutes.

k. Post-conviction/Violation Status

Subcommittee Chair James E. Dzurenda reported that the subcommittee did not meet yet, but the subcommittee is scheduled to meet on July 31 at 1:30 PM at 24 Wolcott Hill Road, Wethersfield, CT.

Public Comment

No public comment was given.

Other Business

The Department of Correction will give a presentation at the August 20 Commission meeting.

1. Doug Beloof, J.D., Professor of Law

Doug Beloof is scheduled to give a presentation at the September 17 Commission meeting. Doug Beloof's bio was distributed. The commission members should think of questions to make the most of Doug Beloof's time at the meeting.

Kevin T. Kane is attempting to reschedule a state attorneys' meeting for the morning of September 17 so that the state attorneys may meet with Doug Beloof in private.

Wrap Up and Next Meeting Date – August 20, 2014

Adjournment at 3:10 pm