**DC VICTIM ASSISTANCE NETWORK (VAN)**

**MINUTES**

*Friday, February 21, 2014*

**Leadership Council Present: Karma Cottman,** *DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence;*  **Daniel Rappaport**, *American University*; **Allison Jackson**, *Children’s National Medical Center;* **Michelle Palmer***, Wendt Center for Loss and Healing;* **Rachel Friedman***, Men Can Stop Rape*

**Leadership Council Absent: Gillian Chadwick,** *Ayuda;* **Tonya Turner***, Office of the Attorney General*

**Members Present: Karen Margolis**, *DC Volunteer Lawyers Project*; **Brant Miller**, *DC Center for the LGBT Community*; **Nikki Charles**, *Network for Victim Recovery of DC*; **Andrea Rodriguez***, CARECEN*; **Natalia Otero**, *SAFE*; **Peg Hacskaylo**, *District Alliance for Safe Housing*; **Jennifer Clark**, *US Attorneys’ Office*; **Lauren Vaughan**, *My Sister’s Place*; **Allison Medina**, *The Women’s Center*; **Jessica Li,** *API DVRP*; **Laura Banks Reed**, *Crime Victims’ Compensation Program*; **Sherelle Hessell-Gordon,** *DC Rape Crisis Center*; **Wemi Peters**, *Legal Aid Society of DC*; **Eric Angel**, *Legal Aid Society*; **Tyria Fields**, *Metropolitan Police Department Victim Services Branch;* **Janese Bechtol***, Office of the Attorney General;* **Liz Odungo***, DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence;* **Melanie Becker***, The Women’s Center;* **Desta Hailu***, Ethiopian Community Services and Development Council;* **Winifred Wilson***, House of Ruth;* **Heather DeVore**, *DC Forensic Nurse Examiners*; **Malik Washington**, *William Kellibrew Foundation;* **K. Rose Gordy**, *Safe Shores*; **Jaime Farrant**, *Ayuda*; **Shirley Clark**, *The Women’s Center*; **Mayra Ibarra**, *CARECEN*; **Theresa Vandergriff**, *Ramona’s Way*

**Members Absent**: **Anne Seymour**, *Anne Seymour Consulting*; **Carolina de los Rios**, *Polaris Project;* **Jackie King**, *Ramona’s Way*; **Lindsey Sebastian**, *APALRC*; **Sasha Ponappa**, *Deaf Abused Women’s Network*; **Colleen Gallopin**, *Break the Cycle*; **Anne Wicks**, *DC Superior Court;* **Sarah Wampol**, *Fair Girls*; **Imoni Washington***, DC Bar Foundation*

**Guests Present: Gitana Stewart-Ponder,** *Office of the Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice;* **Amy Loudermilk***, Mayor’s Office on GLBT Affairs;* **Cecilia de los Santos***, Latin American Youth Center;* **Jennifer Schweer***, Georgetown University*

**Staff Present: Cortney Fisher, Elizabeth Krauss, Luis Teran**

**The meeting was convened by the VAN Leadership Council.**

**Review of Minutes**

* Minutes from December 2013 were reviewed. Two changes were requested: Winifred Wilson was marked as absent and she was present at the meeting and Lauren Vaughan’s name was misspelled. The Minutes were approved with one abstention by Amy Loudermilk

**VAN Committee Updates**

* The **Standards and Accountability Board** is the only committee established by the VAN Charter; a report was provided by the two co-chairs, **Nikki Charles and Natalia Otero.** The Standards and Accountability Board was unable to meet since the December meeting due to a fire in the court house. Their next meeting is scheduled for early March. They will present recommended structures for the Committee to the Leadership Council in time for their April meeting.
* The **Mental Health Services Committee** is chaired **by Michelle Palmer.** The Mental Health Committee has developed a basic survey and will be distributing the survey within the next couple of weeks. The survey is intended to get a clear idea of the services that are provided to crime victims within the VAN and within the District’s core service agencies. The survey has 13 questions and is designed to be completely very quickly. The next Mental Health Committee meeting is to be determined and will be distributed on the VAN listserve when the date is set.
* The **Mass Disaster and Emergency Response Committee** is chaired **by Anne Seymour with Allison Jackson** as the liaison to the Leadership Council. **Cortney Fisher** provided the report in Anne Seymour’s absence. The Mass Disaster and Emergency Response Committee has met once since the December meeting. The Office of Victim Services has been officially designated as the lead for the revision of the District’s Family Assistance and Reunification Center plan with regard to victim services. The Office of Victim Services has been working very closely with Kevin O’Brien, Director of Disaster Mental Health at the Department of Behavioral Health, and the Department of Human Services. The next meeting of the Committee will be in early March and the exact date will be disseminated to the whole VAN.
* **The VAN representatives to the DV Hotline Task Force** are **Daniel Rappaport and Jessica Li. Daniel Rappaport and Jessica Li** jointly provided the update to the VAN of the Task Force progress, with assistance from **Elizabeth Krauss**, staff to the Task Force. The role of the VAN representatives on the DV Hotline Task Force is to ensure that the hotline is relevant to the whole victim services community, culturally competent, and language accessible. The OVS held several individual meetings with representatives from the community with expertise in hotline operation to develop an RFA. An RFA for the DV Hotline has been released by OVS and is currently available on the OVS website. The applications are due March 20, 2014.
* The **Policy and Legislative Committee** is chaired by **Tonya Turner** and **Karma Cottman**. Karma Cottman provided the report. The Policy and Legislative Committee have been working on the Sexual Assault Victims’ Rights Amendment Act (SAVRAA) as a Committee. The Policy and Legislative Committee is working on meeting in the middle of the various advocacy groups who are proposing different language, including integrating the DCRCC-led advocacy group into the VAN Committee. The Committee will be exploring the idea of building policy around youth sexual assaults, and building a Task Force for ongoing issues related to sexual violence policy.

**Goal Setting 2014**

**Rachel Friedman** of the VAN Leadership Council presented a draft 2014 Goals and Objectives document to the VAN to guide the next year of implementation.

**Brant Miller** clarified whether the goals and objectives were based on Fiscal Year or Calendar Year. Pursuant to the VAN Charter the goals and objectives are based on the Fiscal Year.

**Sherelle Hessell-Gordon** clarified the role of cultural competency across all goals and objectives. Cultural competency is mentioned specifically in some, but not all, of the goals and objectives. Rachel Friedman affirmed that cultural competency was a goal of all committees, but was only mentioned specifically when the Committee identified that as an intended goal. The Leadership Council will clarify to ensure that cultural competency is integrated throughout the document.

**Eric Angel** recommended that Goal 5 be amended to include litigation and/or legal remedies, e.g. amicus briefs.

A vote was taken to approve the FY2014 Goals and Objectives with changes. The document was unanimously accepted with changes.

**Updates from Office of Victim Services**

***Cultural Capacity and Language Access (CCLA) Project***: **Cortney Fisher** announced the Cultural Capacity and Language Access (CCLA) project and the RFA that is currently available for that project. The CCLA project is a new initiative of OVS which seeks to bridge the gap between culturally-specific service providers and the core continuum of services available in the District. The goal is to build the culturally capacity of the core service providers, while integrating the culturally-specific services into the continuum of care. Additionally, the project seeks to build language access by creating a victim-centered interpreter bank to be accessible to members of the VAN on a 24/7/365 basis and in an emergency or crisis situation, e.g. when someone needs to access a medical forensic exam. **Luis Teran** (Capital City Fellow) and **Catherine Sayikanmi** (Intern) are the key personnel on the project. If anyone is interested in being engaged with the CCLA project, please contact an OVS staff member.

***Domestic Violence Hotline RFA***: **Elizabeth Krauss** announced the release of the Domestic Violence Hotline RFA on February 20, 2014. The RFA was developed as the result of several group and individual meetings of the Task Force and will close on March 20, 2014. Any organizations interested in applying should apply via the OVS website.

***OVS Performance Hearing***: **Cortney Fisher** announced that Melissa Hook’s performance hearing was rescheduled to March 12, 2014 at 10:00 am.

*(OVS staff left the meeting at this point to allow for open conversation among the VAN members about the testimony of the VAN.)*

The VAN decided that they would provide both oral and written testimony. The content of the oral testimony would include a recognition that OVS convened the VAN, sharing the mission and vision of the VAN with Council, and introducing the Committee structure of the VAN. The written testimony would include all of the above, but would additionally include the FY14 Goals and Objectives of the VAN.

**New Business and Announcements**

* **Sherelle Hessell-Gordon** introduced herself as the new Executive Director of the DC Rape Crisis Center and invited members of the VAN to reach out to her for meetings.
* **Shirley Clark** introduced herself as the new Interim Executive Director at The Women’s Center and encouraged VAN members to use The Women’s Center DC location as a resource for victims of sexual violence and domestic violence who need mental health care.
* The **Office of the Attorney General** brought an emerging issue to the group for consideration and feedback. The DC Superior Court has announced that they will no longer provide travel expenses for witnesses who live out of the area to come to DC to testify in juvenile cases. Any feedback or assistance that members of the VAN can provide is welcome.
* **Heather DeVore** of DC Forensic Nurse Examiners announced that they would be providing forensic exams for intimate partner violence clients on a 24 hour basis at MedStar Washington Hospital Center.

**The meeting was adjourned by the Leadership Council.**

***Next meeting scheduled for April 18, 2014 @ 10 am***

***Wilson Building, Room 527***