

MEETING MINUTES
SR 95/HR76 Domestic Violence Study Group
Wednesday, December 18, 2013, 10 am – 12 pm
Meeting location: Iberville Building, Room 1-129, Baton Rouge, LA

I. Introductions

Members Present

Gwendolyn Brooks - La. Dept. of Children and Family Services
Rutha Chatwood - La. Commission on Law Enforcement
Cordelia Heaney - La. Women's Policy & Research Commission
Richard Pittman - La. Public Defender Board
Jimmy Pohlmann - La. Sheriffs Assn.
Trashica Robinson - Representative, Domestic Violence Survivor
Carmen Weisner - La. Chapter of the Natl. Assn. of Social Workers
Ebony Tucker - LaFASA

Members Present (Conference-Call)

Judy Bell - Representative, Domestic Violence Program Director
Tommy Clark - La. Assn. of Chiefs of Police
Ramona Harris - La. Supreme Court, Judicial Administrator's Office
Beth Meeks - LCADV
Karen Webb - La. Department of Health and Hospitals

Members Absent

Pam Baker - La. Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges
Tracy Dahmer Farris - La. Dept. of Justice, Office of the Attorney General
Melanie Fields - La. District Attorneys Assn.
Patricia Kock - La. District Judges Assn.
Paul Young - La. Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges

II. Approval of Minutes from October 24 & 25, 2013 Meetings

The minutes were voted on and approved.

III. Reviewing the Domestic Violence Study Group Report Draft 1

- a. 'Introduction' and 'Group Methodology' sections
 - The study group approved these sections as written
- b. 'Domestic Violence in Louisiana' Section
 - Richard Pitman suggested that the statistic included in the draft that Louisiana currently ranks 9th in the nation for homicides of female victims murdered by men should be clarified to state if this is based on the rate of homicides or raw numbers; Cordelia Heaney will update that information.
 - Group discussed adding additional statistics to the section, like advocacy numbers or prosecution rates but concluded that, consistent with the data work group's previous findings, there is not a lot of additional available data that is published that can be included. Group agreed to highlight the LCADV data with a text box or bullet points, and to add an additional reference to the service maps in Appendix III to this section.
- c. 'General Findings'
 - The group had no edits for this section

- d. ‘Charges to the Domestic Violence Study Group: Charge No. 1: *Development of a state needs assessment and a comprehensive and integrated service delivery approach that meets the needs of all domestic violence victims.*’
- Findings sub-section
 - The group agreed that a sentence should be added about additional components that could be incorporated into a statewide needs assessment, to make it clear that the group is not proposing the needs assessment be conducted using only an online survey.
 - The group discussed the finding that there are significant sections of central and northeastern Louisiana where no physical domestic violence shelter exists, and rural victims currently have unequal access to services. The group agreed that this is a key finding. Furthermore, the group decided to add a new version of the map from DCFS in Appendix III that would show the parishes each program is charged with serving currently, as well as a map from LCLE and DHH that shows the locations of their funded programs/services.
 - The group suggested that a box be added to this section to highlight the financial information in the section, as well as having it in narrative form.
 - Recommendations for this section: the group approved recommendations #1 and #2:
 1. *Hire an independent data evaluator to conduct domestic violence-related data collection and analysis in the form of a formal statewide needs assessment, which would survey a wide array of stakeholders and which would include questions meant to ascertain the level of baseline knowledge subjects have around domestic violence best practices.*
 2. *The Domestic Violence Study Group created by SR 95/HR76 in 2013 should continue to exist and should become a standing work group that participates in statewide planning and implementation of the recommendations that result from a statewide needs assessment.*

The group felt that Draft 1 over-emphasized recommendations around DCFS’ funding, and that recommendations should look at ways to align all 3 major funders’ efforts. Additionally, they felt that to meet the charge of creating a “comprehensive and integrated service delivery approach,” the emphasis should not strictly be on funding. They agreed to delete recommendation #3:

 3. *Establish a multi-tiered formula for DCFS funding of domestic violence service providers that includes a competitive/quality component.*

and replace it with the following:

Encourage collaborative efforts between the Department of Children and Family Services, the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement, and the Department of Health and Hospitals to develop methods to create assessment synergies that ensure the most equitable distribution of federal and state resources, and that best serve all regions of the state.

Judy Bell will also provide language for an additional recommendation to address the charge that a comprehensive service delivery approach be created, and that includes the statewide needs assessment.
 - Richard Pittman suggested that starting in the section for Charge No. 2, after each set of Recommendations there should be a section that lists recommendations for the role of the continuing study group in furthering recommendations. He will provide language for Draft 2.
- e. ‘Charges to the Domestic Violence Study Group: Charge No. 2: *Establishment of a method to transition domestic violence service providers towards evidence-based national best practices focusing on outreach and prevention.*’
- Findings sub-section
 - In the first paragraph, the report discusses that the group looked at national best practices existing in Louisiana. This should be edited to make it clear that the group looked at other states’ plans and also looked at national best practices that some Louisiana regions have already implemented successfully.
 - Zero tolerance and home visits were deleted as examples of best practices
 - Culturally specific groups were added to the list of underserved communities

- Recommendations for this section: the group changed recommendation #4:
 4. *Update quality assurance standards, and prioritize that programs meet those standards and be held accountable to adhering to them.*

It will now read:

Update existing quality assurance standards to include the most up to date federal guidelines.

The group approved recommendation #5 for this section:

5. *Prioritize the incorporation of cultural competency best practices into the training of domestic violence service providers and in the services offered survivors to better serve traditionally underserved communities.*

The group agreed to delete recommendation #6 from Draft 1 of the report:

6. *Establish measureable goals and outcomes for domestic violence funds in Louisiana.*

Since the 3 main funders already provide measureable goals, the group felt it was more important to get at additional ways to transition the service providers to best practices. Judy Bell will provide substitute language that addresses enhancing capacity of programs throughout Louisiana through training, technical support, leadership development.

- f. 'Charges to the Domestic Violence Study Group: Charge No. 3: *Development of a plan that ensures that Louisiana laws on domestic violence are being properly implemented and provides for training on domestic violence and its many dimensions to law enforcement and the judiciary.*

- The group mainly discussed the issue of needing a way to track the co-occurrence of domestic violence in criminal charges that have 'domestic violence' included in the language of the charge, like a breaking and entering charge that is part of a domestic violence case, so that more accurate data can be compiled to more accurately count the amount of domestic violence occurring in the state.
- The group approved the following recommendations:
 7. *Establish a statewide data system for law enforcement/judiciary information.*
 8. *Implement a policy for officer-involved domestic violence cases for all sheriffs and police departments.*
 9. *Increase funding available to provide civil legal representation for victims, and prioritize providing more domestic violence training to civil attorneys.*
 10. *Increase funding available to provide victim advocates, which support victims during court proceedings.*
 11. *Explore new methods for accessing outside funds to help provide more victims with civil legal assistance.*
 12. *Review inconsistencies in laws for the numerous types of civil and protective order provisions as they relate to domestic violence.*
 13. *Encourage courts to explore creating dedicated dockets for domestic violence in criminal misdemeanor civil and family court protective order cases.*

The group felt that recommendation #14,

14. *Add a domestic violence code or extension into the law enforcement tracking system, so that instances of domestic violence-related crimes can be more accurately reported and tracked, even when perpetrators are charged with a charge that is not domestic violence-specific,*

should be made a recommendation that a continuing domestic violence study group would tackle.

- The group approved recommendation #15, #16 and #17:
 15. *Incorporate T- and U-Visa information into trainings for law enforcement/prosecutors/the judiciary.*
 16. *Create a domestic violence training task force to ensure training consistency, track types of trainings being offered and to whom, and to prioritize new topics on which to develop training.*
 17. *Adopt a standard, simple lethality assessment for police to use with victims, as well as providing victims with information on additional community resources available to them including shelter.*

g. 'Charges to the Domestic Violence Study Group: Charge No. 4: *Development of a framework to collect and integrate data and measure program outcomes.*

- The group had no edits to the Findings section. The group approved recommendations #18 and #19:

18. *Create a standing group that collects and analyzes domestic violence-related data from national and state organizations annually, reviewing it for trends and recommendations for further data collection needs or actions.*

19. *Designate a location on the web where links to all available data sources for domestic violence in Louisiana are provided.*

The group had edits for recommendation #20, which originally read

20. *Report annually on Primary Prevention, Secondary Prevention, and Tertiary Prevention activities occurring in the state.*

Now it will read:

Report annually on prevention activities and other best practices occurring in the state.

The group approved recommendation #21:

21. *Complete a statewide assessment of current data software used by domestic violence service providers, and explore the feasibility and cost implications of adopting a uniform software.*

The group discussed that a continuing issue for the study group to work on would be how to establish standards so that all programs/funders are collecting data in a consistent fashion, and using consistent terminology.

h. The group had no proposed changes for the 'Conclusion' section.

IV. Study Group Next Steps

- The group discussed next steps, and felt that they would like to have the opportunity to review a second draft of the report that incorporates the changes from today's meeting and meet one more time. So, Cordelia Heaney will send an updated, second draft of the report to the group on December 19 with the changes, and then members are required to send her their changes by January 1. The study group will then have one final meeting on January 3, 10 am to noon. The report is due to the Legislature by January 15, 2014.

V. Meeting Adjourned