



SOUTH CAROLINA

Victim Services Coordinating Council

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 22, 2024 | 10:00 a.m.

Barbara Jean (BJ) Nelson - Chair
SC Crime Victim Services
Division Office of the Attorney
General

Nettie Jacobs
SC Department of Probation,
Parole and Pardon Services

Lisa Catalanotto
SC Commission on
Prosecution Coordination

Karin Ho
SC Department of Corrections

Marcia Nobles
SC Department of Juvenile Justice

Veronica Swain Kunz
SC Department of Crime Victim
Ombudsman, Crime Victim
Services Division, Office of the
Attorney General

Salley Foster
SC Sheriffs' Association

Nataki Brown
SC Solicitors' Advocate Forum

Tressa Dixon
SC Law Enforcement
Victim Advocate

Sara Barber
SC Coalition Against Domestic
Violence and Sexual Assault

Trisha Allen
SC Attorney General's Office

Joe Corey, Deputy Director
SC Department of Crime Victim
Assistance Grants, Crime Victim
Services Division, Office of the
Attorney General

Chief Sonny Ledda
SC Police Chiefs' Association

Dean Kilpatrick, Ph.D.
Medical University of SC

Laura Hudson
SC Victim Assistance Network

Debbie Curtis, Deputy Director
SC Department of Crime Victim
Compensation, Crime Victim
Services Division, Office of the
Attorney General

Thomas Knapp
SC Network of Children's
Advocacy Centers

Jada Charley
SAFE Homes-Rape Crisis
Coalition

Kassy Alia Ray, Ph.D
Serve & Connect

Ginger Dukes, Deputy Director
SC Department of Crime Victim
Services Training, Provider
Certification and Statistical
Analysis, Crime Victim Services
Division, Office of the Attorney
General

Ashley Thomas
The Hive Community Circle

Chief John C. Hicks, Jr.
SC Jail Administrators'

MEMBERS PRESENT: Barbara Jean (BJ) Nelson, Debbie Curtis, Nettie Jacobs, Lisa Catalanotto, Sherry Rhodes (Karin Ho), Marcia (Jan) Nobles, Veronica Swain-Kunz, Nataki Brown, Trisha Allen, Joe Corey, Dean Kilpatrick, Shannon Geary (Laura Hudson), Thomas Knapp, Ginger Dukes, Ashley Thomas

MEMBERS ABSENT: Karin Ho, Laura Hudson, Jarrod Bruder, Tressa Dixon, Sara Barber, Sonny Ledda, Jada Charley, Kassy Alia Ray, John Hicks Jr.

OTHERS PRESENT: Steve Yarborough, Bonnie Brooks, Jenifer Aplin, Sheila Hoffman, Sarah Coe, Cyril Belton

I. Call to Order

Today's meeting was called to order by Director Nelson.

II. Approval of Minutes

Director Nelson asked members for any discussion of the Minutes from the November 16, 2023, meeting. No changes were recommended. The minutes were accepted as prepared and approved by members of the Council.

III. Business

OVC, Strategic Plan Update: Steve Yarborough announced the survey went out February 9, 2024 to 2,971 individuals. Steve asked the Council members to encourage their staff or anyone they knew to participate in the survey to ensure they obtain different perspectives. Debbie asked the Council if they received the survey, and all members confirmed receipt of the survey. BJ asked members to let Steve know if they did not receive the survey and he will send one to them. Nataki informed the Council she shared the survey with her staff and at least one had already responded. Steve mentioned the survey was sent to active VSP's and to programs within the Crime Victim Assistance Grants database which was between 130-150 contacts. Steve said he wanted anybody of interest to respond to the survey. They did not choose a specific population. They chose the largest electronic population they had access to for the purposes of the survey. Steve asked for responses by March 1, 2024, if possible, but will leave the survey monkey open as long as survey monkey will allow it. They also plan on doing a follow-up the following week to remind people to take some time to answer the survey. The survey has a variety of questions. Some examples of the questions, "What type of agency do you work for?", "What type of demographics do you serve?". The survey also contains questions that use a frequency scale. Survey monkey estimates the survey takes 18 minutes. Steve also stated they are planning on hosting focus groups in the low country as well as the possibility of hosting a victim/survivor focus group at SCVRW this year.



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Restitution Meeting Update: Veronica Swain-Kunz mentioned they met with the Attorney General to talk about the final report. Veronica said nobody was looking at restitution on a statewide level. Veronica stated one of the recommendations from the task force is to have one entity look at restitution and start pulling people together to figure out how we can better improve on restitution with crime victims. Veronica mentioned another recommendation was to find a place to house this small group consisting of a director, a lawyer, a program coordinator, and a statistician. Veronica said she will email the Council asking for any suggestions on where this group can be housed. Veronica announced there are plans to release the final report at a press conference during SCVRW. Veronica mentioned the difficulty of having crime victims speak about restitution on the record as all the responses they received were anonymous. Veronica asked the Council if they knew of any crime victims that did not mind speaking on the record to please contact her.

VOCA Updates: Joe Corey advised there is still a potential 41% cut from the federal level. If this takes effect, the current funding of \$21.2 million will decrease to roughly \$12 million. They still have \$4 million in funding they can use to offset the decrease. They are also requesting \$15 million from the General Assembly with the hopes of bolstering the SAVS (Supplemental Allocation for Victim Services) Program. As of today, the request for \$15 million was reduced by the House Ways and Means to \$3 million (draft line item for right now). This request will move to the Senate.

There was discussion by Council members as to why the request was cut and what steps members can take to address this concern. Tom Knapp asked if it would be okay to let his agencies know there is an anticipated 30-40% cut in federal funds. Lisa Catalanotto stated they had a group that went to Washington D.C. and a zoom meeting with Senator Tim Scott's office. This group is aware of the situation and stated if there is anything they can do they are ready to support this effort to increase funding.

Joe Corey advised they are looking at contingency plans. Director Nelson asked the Council for any ideas to address the anticipated cut to VOCA.

V. Additional Updates

Director Barbara Jean (BJ) Nelson changed the order of the agenda and moved to item V: Additional Updates. BJ congratulated Thomas Knapp and Dean Kilpatrick on their reappointment by the Attorney General. BJ also announced the new members to the VSCC: Chief Sonny Ledda with the SC Police Chief's Association, Chief John Hicks with the SC Jail Administrators and Marcia (Jan) Nobles with the SC Department of Juvenile Justice.

BJ advised the Council there were three at-large members that were up for re-appointment and required a vote by Council members. The at-large members are Laura Hudson, Ashley Thomas, and Jada Charley. BJ previously spoke to all three members who agreed to serve again. BJ then asked the Council members if they had anyone they wanted to appoint to these seats. Upon hearing no appointments from the Council, the following motions were made:

- The motion to reappoint Laura Hudson came from Ginger Dukes.
- The motion to reappoint Ashley Thomas came from BJ Nelson.
- The motion to reappoint Jada Charley came from Debbie Curtis.



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BJ asked for a vote from the Council members to reappoint Laura Hudson, Ashley Thomas and Jada Charley. The Council members unanimously agreed to reappoint Laura Hudson, Ashley Thomas, and Jada Charley.

IV. Council Member Updates

Ginger Dukes commented on the previous discussion regarding the cuts from the federal level and informed the Council they received 240 VSP applications last year which equates to 240 jobs and a concern any cuts will address these new hires. She also stated they are working on a course for people that are noncompliant with their required VSP hours. They would like to provide a separate course and asked the Council if they had any suggestions to please contact her via email. Ginger also announced that they plan to conduct another class in October. Dean Kilpatrick suggested offering the core training as an online course. Ginger agreed to that idea. Ashley Thomas expressed appreciation for updating the VSP roster and determining who is and who is not an active VSP.

Sherry Rhodes (on behalf of Karin Ho) had no updates from the SC Department of Corrections. Sherry thanked everyone in the field who helped her with assisting this one individual.

Stephen Yarborough expressed his gratitude to Shannon Geary and her efforts to assist with the focus group at SCVRW as well as her referral to Sherry Rhodes to assist with facilitating the group.

Joe Corey had no additional information.

Lisa Catalanotto mentioned they are working on core training for the Solicitors' victim advocates. The anticipated dates for the training will probably be in May and June. Lisa also stated the National District Attorneys Association (NDAA) drafted a letter regarding the funding issue at the federal level.

Veronica Swain-Kunz announced that they have hired a new employee from Arizona.

Nettie Jacobs had no updates at this time for the SC Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon Services. She expressed her gratitude for the ability to work together and for the services provided to victims.

Thomas Knapp reminded Council members the Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) will hold a Carolinas Symposium on Child Abuse on April 29-May 2, 2024, and to get the discount rate one would need to register by March 31, 2024. Information for this training is available on their website. Tom also mentioned VSP trainings for the CAC next week (week of February 26, 2024) for two and a half days at 15 hours and nine hours online with only 29 people registered. Tom said another training will be held August 7-9, 2024, with registration starting in May. Tom further mentioned last year, 2023, the CACs served 13,413 kids with a 4% increase from 2022 and a 41% increase over the last five years.

Ashley Thomas mentioned they have a pro bono legal partnership with Nelson and Mullins for victims of survivors in need of restraining orders and orders of protection. Ashley also mentioned they will be able to provide an additional 50 survivors with counseling through a wellness partnership with Everyday Wellness which consists of 20 practitioners. Ashley shared they created an economic and social justice collaborative that consists of organizations such as the Children's Trust, the Lexington County Sheriff's Department, the



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Westview Behavior Center from Newberry, the Richland County Library, and Prisma Health. The goal in the next fiscal year is to conduct a strategic plan on how they can provide services in one space.

Dean Kilpatrick announced the National Mass Violence Center will be funded for another three years. Dean stated there will be a National Conference in Pittsburgh, PA in July. This training will be free and there will be an in-person and virtual option. The training will last two and a half days.

Trisha Allen did not report any updates from the SC Attorney General's Office.

Debbie Curtis gave an update on the Regional Training which was held in York County on February 15, 2024. The training was a success and advised the Council of possible trainings in the future in Aiken and Florence counties. Debbie asked the Council if they had any other suggested places to conduct training to please contact her. Debbie said the goal is to reach the advocates in person or where they are. Debbie also requested Council members of any ethical dilemmas they are aware of to let her know as she would like to add them into the Ethics presentation at SCVRW this year. Debbie also added that if there is anyone who might be of interest in teaching Ethics, please contact her.

Marcia (Jan) Nobles asked the Council about adding a military victim advocate and a higher education representative at the table to expand the conversation of victim services. BJ responded that that consideration would have to be legislatively changed and follow statute but is willing to discuss further. Shannon Geary advised the Council if they were interested in adding a member from higher education, she indicated she just met a criminal justice professor at USC who just moved from Ohio.

Nataki Brown mentioned her concern about the VOCA fund and the impact it will have on those that are present as well as those that are not. Nataki spoke about the conversation she had with members that needs to continue about the revision of the statutes.

Shannon Geary (on behalf of Laura Hudson) announced that registration for the SC Victims' Rights Week Conference is doing well. Currently they are 75% full and still have a few more weeks in which registration will be open. Shannon said they have over 80 scholarship applications for SCVRW. From the SCVAN Legal Team: The Victims Matter Rally will be held on March 21, 2024. SCVAN Legal is continuing to host and facilitate their 'Lunch and Learn' trainings. Information for these training courses can be found on their website and training calendar. Shannon mentioned Roger Acton with SCVAN is working on a First Responders' Chaplain Workshop for SCVRW this year. Shannon also mentioned the Emergency Fund has spent over \$70,000 in the first quarter serving over 400 victims from the grant.

VI. Next Meeting Date(s)

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| Thursday, May 23, 2024 | 10:00 – 12:00 p.m. |
| Thursday, August 22, 2024 | 10:00 – 12:00 p.m. |
| Thursday, November 21, 2024 | 10:00 – 12:00 p.m. |

VII. **Adjournment:** Director Nelson moved for adjournment. Joe Corey seconded that motion and was unanimously accepted by Council members.