

# Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Program Professional Standards Committee

## **DRAFT** Meeting Minutes

May 28, 2025, 10:00 a.m. –11:19 a.m.

Virtual Meeting

Pursuant to *Code of Virginia* § 2.2-3708.3

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### **Members Present:**

Judy Castele, Executive Director, Project Horizon  
Timika Cousins, Executive Director, The Faces Behind a Purpose for You  
Cori Davis, Program Director, Bedford Domestic Violence Services<sup>1</sup>  
Elvira De la Cruz, Chief Executive Officer, Latinos in Virginia Empowerment Center<sup>2</sup>  
Leonard Hall, Jr, Director, Millstone International Logistics  
Tamy Mann, Director, Giles County Victim/Witness Assistance Program  
Markella Maschas, FVPSA Contract Administrator, Office of Family Violence, DSS  
Faith Power, Executive Director, The Laurel Center  
Heather Sellers, Director, Bedford County Victim/Witness Assistance Program  
Kristina Vadas, Manager of Victims Services, DCJS<sup>3</sup>  
Laura Beth Weaver, Director of Advocacy and Member Support, Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance

### **Members Absent:**

Leah Kipley, Assistant Director, National Safe Haven Alliance  
Teresa McKensie, Assistant Director, Radford/Floyd Victim/Witness Assistance Program

### **Professional Standards Team Members Present:**

Amber Stanwix, Professional Standards Operations Coordinator, DCJS  
Andrea Sutton, Professional Standards Compliance Coordinator, DCJS

### **DCJS Staff Present**

Andi Martin, Sexual and Domestic Violence Initiatives Supervisor, DCJS  
Mikayla Martinez, Law Student Intern, DCJS

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<sup>1</sup> Cori Davis arrived at 10:09 a.m.

<sup>2</sup> Elvira De la Cruz arrived at 10:12 a.m.

<sup>3</sup> Kristina Vadas left the meeting at 11:00 a.m.

## **Members of the Public Present:**

Nadia Barnes, Executive Assistant to the CEO/Hotline Specialist, YWCA Richmond  
Jennifer Cooper, Hotline Specialist, YWCA Richmond  
Greisy Gil, Community Outreach Manager, YWCA Richmond  
Jing Lei, Emergency Housing Case Manager, YWCA Richmond  
Melissa Martinez, Court Advocate/Case Manager, YWCA Richmond  
DerShawn Matthews, Program Director, YWCA Richmond  
Robin Sawyer, Prevention Program Manager, YWCA Richmond  
Randi Taggart, Clinician, YWCA Richmond  
Rachel Yazdgerdi, Crisis Response Services Manager, YWCA Richmond

## **Welcome & Remarks**

The meeting was called to order at 10:04 a.m. A quorum was present.

Judy Castele informed the group that Teresa McKensie resigned her position as a Committee member earlier in the morning and, therefore, would not be in attendance. In addition, Amber Stanwix reminded all Committee members that, to be counted towards the quorum, their cameras needed to remain on.

## **Updates from the Professional Standards Team**

Andrea Sutton reported that the Professional Standards Team offered an information session to reaccrediting agencies on May 21<sup>st</sup>. The session was well attended. A recording of the session was sent to all reaccrediting agencies and posted on the Professional Standards Webinars page.

## **Review of Agency for Accreditation**

### YWCA Richmond

After a presentation by the Professional Standards Team demonstrating that YWCA Richmond met all the Professional Standards, Tamy Mann made a motion to approve the accreditation status recommendation, and Timika Cousins seconded the motion. The Professional Standards Committee voted 6-0 to grant full accreditation status to YWCA Richmond as a dual sexual and domestic violence agency. Members of the YWCA Richmond expressed their appreciation for the process.

## **Elections of Committee Chair & Vice-Chair**

The Committee next addressed the elections of the new Committee Chair and Vice-Chair. After a brief review of the requirements, Tamy Mann nominated Faith Power to be the Chairperson. Timika Cousins seconded the nomination, and the Committee voted 8-0 in favor.

Next, Timika Cousins nominated herself for the Vice-Chair position, and Tamy Mann seconded the nomination. The Committee then voted 8-0 in favor.

## **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

The minutes from the November 18, 2024, Committee meeting were reviewed by the members. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Tamy Mann, and Leonard Hall, Jr. seconded the motion. After a vote, the minutes were approved 7-0.

The Committee then reviewed the minutes from the March 26, 2025, Committee meeting. A member raised concerns regarding the propriety of having minutes, as a meeting had not actually occurred because a quorum was not achieved. The group discussed the document and agreed to remove the references to calling a meeting to order and adjourning and to change the title from “Minutes” to “Notes”. As such, no vote was required.

## **Discussion Regarding Membership Roles and Responsibilities**

Andrea Sutton provided a brief reminder of the various responsibilities of the Committee members per the *Code of Virginia*, as well as the rules regarding electronic participation.

A Committee member inquired as to whether DCJS has heard anything from the Secretary of the Commonwealth’s Office regarding additional appointments to the Committee. Kristina Vadas responded that she has not received any information at this point, but she is aware that several people have applied.

## **Report from the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance**

Laura Beth Weaver from the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance delivered remarks regarding the Action Alliance’s position on the Professional Standards. The comments are attached to these minutes.

In response, several Committee members expressed disappointment and stated that members of the Action Alliance have had a role in the Professional Standards Committee since its formation. In addition, during the most recent revision process, the representative from the Action Alliance did not offer input as to concerns the Action Alliance may have. They also shared some frustration that these concerns have not been voiced by the Action Alliance earlier.

A Committee member then asked how the Action Alliance plans to move forward now that these concerns have been articulated. Ms. Weaver responded that the Action Alliance does have the desire for the accreditation process to succeed and to be helpful to agencies. She also stated that she is personally committed to fully participating in meetings and giving feedback as appropriate.

## **Discussion Regarding Agencies Applying for Renewal of Accreditation**

Amber Stanwix then briefly described the process that reaccrediting agencies will follow for their application process and provided the dates for the next application round. Reaccrediting agencies may submit their applications from June 30<sup>th</sup> to September 26<sup>th</sup>. Agencies applying for initial accreditation must submit organizational self-assessment summaries from September 15<sup>th</sup> through September 26<sup>th</sup> and then may submit applications from October 6<sup>th</sup> through November 21<sup>st</sup>.

Ms. Stanwix then shared that the Team has deleted an additional question from the application dealing with clients who have limited English proficiency. She reported that agencies usually have difficulty answering this question on the application and the Professional Standards Team usually obtains the information during the site visit.

A Committee member expressed concerns about this question being removed and stated that she felt that removing the question may indicate to agencies that the Standards do not place a priority on multicultural competency. Ms. Stanwix and Ms. Sutton reassured the member that the Team is still inquiring about this information and that it does remain a priority. It was agreed that the Team would send the question to the member to determine if any changes could be made to make it more effective.

Another Committee member then raised questions regarding some of the requirements of the Standards. This sparked a discussion regarding the revision process and how it should be conducted. The group agreed to add these points to the agenda or the next meeting.

### **Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

### **Closing Remarks**

The Chairperson offered her thanks to the two absent members for their service, as Teresa McKensie has resigned and Leah Kipley's term will expire on June 30<sup>th</sup>. In turn, several Committee members and the Professional Standards Team thanked Ms. Castele for her years of service as the Chairperson.

The meeting adjourned at 11:19 a.m.

### **Future Meeting**

- October 1, 2025, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., Location TBA

## Statement from the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance

The Action Alliance has shared with our membership updates on Professional Standards, including reporting that this committee was seeking more applications. While we have not discouraged agencies from engaging in the process, to encourage participation would amount to endorsing the process. We cannot do that at this time. There are too many deep and valid concerns.

There remain concerns about the composition of the current committee. While fine and well-intentioned professionals, the committee is not representative of the sexual and domestic violence services field. The seating of members on this committee is in direct conflict with the established code, which calls into question the authority and legitimacy of any actions taken by the committee.

While many options were considered at the start of this process, the first committee made the decision to focus on comprehensive services and minimum standards. As the standards have evolved, they have exceeded reasonable minimums in some areas and removed elements that would typically be a part of comprehensive services, for example, children's services and prevention.

A Professional Standards process that the Action Alliance could endorse and encourage programs to participate in would include a true peer-led process, and standards which acknowledge the shifting landscape and expanding diversity of programs.

**We are committed to a process such as this working, because we remember the benefits of such a process for the field, and for our funders. We are committed to remaining at the table as a partner in a journey to a product and process which uplifts the field and is valuable for programs to participate in and for funders to point to.**

For me, personally and professionally, I have put 20 years of work into this process and am honored to be back at the table. With my 3-ring binder. I am hopeful that we can create once again a product that is beneficial to programs, to funders, and ultimately, to survivors.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Laura Beth Weaver*

*Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance Representative*

*May 28, 2025*