

Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Program Professional Standards Committee

DRAFT Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 12, 2022, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Zoom Meeting (COVID-19)

Members Present:

Angela Blount, Associate Director, Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance
Jennifer Bourne, Director, Clinch Valley Community Action Inc.¹
Cathy Easter, Executive Director, Safe Harbor
Linda Ellis-Williams, Director of Programs, YWCA of Central Virginia
Debbie Evans, Division Chief of the Sexual Assault Center & Domestic Violence Program, City of Alexandria Department of Community & Human Services
Nancy Fowler, Program Manager, Office of Family Violence, DSS
Candy Phillips, Executive Director, First Step: A Response to Domestic Violence
Stacey Sheppard, Director of Housing and Human Services, Total Action for Progress
Maria Simonetti, Executive Director, The Collins Center & Child Advocacy Center
Kristina Vadas, Manager of Victims Services, DCJS
Laura Beth Weaver, Assistant Director, Women's Resource Center of the New River Valley

Absent Members:

Robin Gauthier, Executive Director, Samaritan House
Sheree Hedrick, Executive Director, Hanover Safe Place

Others Present:

Amber Stanwix, Professional Standards Coordinator, DCJS
Andrea Sumter, Professional Standards Consultant, DCJS

Welcome & Remarks

The meeting started at 10:14 a.m. without a quorum present. Cathy Easter welcomed everyone and asked members to introduce themselves. The new members of the Professional Standards Team, Amber Stanwix and Andrea Sumter, introduced themselves and explained their roles in the accreditation process.

¹ Jennifer Bourne logged into the meeting at 12:02 p.m.

Review of Proposed Changes to the Application for Accreditation

As Sheree Hedrick, the Chair of the Membership Subcommittee, was absent, the group agreed to move to the second item on the agenda, which was a review of the proposed changes to the accreditation application. This sparked a discussion regarding whether or not changes to the application needed to be approved by an official vote. Maria Simonetti then asked if the group still has the authority to meet given the changes to the Committee membership structure made by the General Assembly in 2021. Kristina Vadas explained that, as the Governor has not yet appointed the new Committee, the current Committee members still have the authority to meet and make decisions. The group then agreed that, as changes were only being made to the application and not to the Professional Standards themselves, the changes did not need to be approved through an official vote and could, instead, be made by agreement.

Prior to reviewing the application, Nancy Fowler asked if there is expected criteria beyond what is laid out in the Professional Standards Manual. She expressed that some of the requirements do not seem to be as clear as others. Cathy Easter requested an example. Nancy Fowler pointed to the first element of Standard #14, which requires agencies to identify the diverse needs of the community. She explained that there are many ways agencies could attempt to make this identification; and some would not be sufficient. Amber Stanwix and Andrea Sumter provided a brief explanation of the criteria that they have been using to ensure that this, and other Standards, are being met. Nancy Fowler suggested that during any future revisions of the Professionals Standards, the Committee should try to provide specific criteria for some elements.

After this discussion, the group moved on to looking at the suggested modifications to the application for accreditation. While reviewing a new instruction that would ask agencies to provide a brief description of their services, Amber Stanwix mentioned that she and Andrea Sumter already review the websites and applicable social media accounts for applying agencies. Laura Beth Weaver requested that the application state that these items will be reviewed by the Professional Standards Team and that an explanation as to why this review is done be provided. This sparked a lengthy discussion as to what the Professional Standards Team is looking for when reviewing any internet presence of an agency. Amber Stanwix and Andrea Sumter explained that the Professional Standards currently require that agencies have notable inclusions, including on any websites or social media accounts. Therefore, agencies should already be aware that the Professional Standards Team will be reviewing these items. After further discussion, the group agreed that the application will simply state that the Professional Standards Team will view the websites and social media of an applying agency, if available.

The group then moved on to reviewing the application questions. The focus of this review was to eliminate duplicative questions and attachments, ensure that the questions were clear, and make sure that all of the Professional Standards were covered. In the course of this review, Committee members identified several Standards that they wished to note for potential updates in the future. These included:

- Standard #5 - Nancy Fowler would like to review this Standard at a later date to provide further clarification as to what the Standard means by reviewing data regularly. Angela Blount also requested that this Standard be clarified in the future to direct the manner in which agencies should be using this data analysis.
- Standard #6 - Angela Blount suggested that this Standard may need to be updated in the future to account for staff who may be working remotely.
- Standards #15-#17 - Laura Beth Weaver suggested that these Standards be reworked to align them with the socio-ecological model.

After the group completed its review of the application, it was agreed that Amber Stanwix would make the revisions that were agreed upon and then email a revised version to the members for final approval.

Status of Committee Membership

As Sheree Hedrick was unable to attend the meeting, Kristina Vadas gave an update on the status of the membership of the Committee. In 2021, the Professional Standards Committee was modified so that the voting members will now be made up of 12 non-legislative citizen members appointed by the Governor. These members must be leadership staff of local sexual and domestic violence programs. Therefore, any current Committee members who wish to remain on the Committee must apply to do so.

Kristina Vadas informed the Committee that there are currently seven applicants for the twelve positions. Angela Blount asked if there is a diversity matrix for the group. Kristina Vadas pointed out that, under the new law, the appointment of members must take into consideration racial and ethnic diversity and must be representative of regional and geographic locations of the Commonwealth. Cathy Easter asked if there are areas that are unrepresented in the current pool of applicants. Kristina Vadas stated that, if there is a Membership Subcommittee, she could send all relevant information to that group. She then asked if anyone would be interested in running a Membership Subcommittee that could identify and encourage potential candidates. Debbie Evans agreed to chair this subcommittee; and Cathy Easter, Linda Ellis-Williams, and Maria Simonetti agreed to work with her. This subcommittee agreed to meet quickly to develop potential members so that a new Committee can be appointed as soon as possible.

Closing Remarks

The meeting adjourned at 1:09 p.m.

Public Comment

There were no members of the public present.

Action Items

- Amber Stanwix will send out a Doodle poll to determine a meeting day for the beginning of February.
- Amber Stanwix will create a clean version of the application for accreditation and email it to the Committee members for final approval.

Next Meeting: TBD