

PUBLIC SAFETY COORDINATING COUNCIL

MINUTES

TUESDAY,
March 22, 2022

11:30

ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE

MEETING CALLED BY	Eric Guyer
ATTENDEES	Joshua Aldrich, Lee Ayers, Scott Beauchamp, Stacy Brubaker, Alicia Brown Travis Christian, Dave Dotterer, DJ Graham, Eric Guyer, Diana Hamilton, Tira Hubbard, Justin Ivens, Danny Jordan, Susan Moen, Gilda Montenegro-Fix, Nathan Olson, Michael Parsons, Tammi Pitzen, Tina Qualls, Mark Reagles, Nate Sickler, Randy Sparacino, Rita Sullivan, Brittany Whitmire

- Eric Guyer opened the meeting at 11:30 am
- Opening Remarks: Eric Guyer welcomed everyone to the March PSCC meeting. Eric introduced Stacy Brubaker as the new LPSCC member who filled the open Health and Human Services Director position.

MINUTE ADOPTION –FEBRUARY

ERIC GUYER, CHAIR

DISCUSSION	
No suggested revisions were identified for the February minutes. Mayor Randy Sparacino provided a motion to adopt, seconded by Lee Ayers. A roll-call vote was requested, all were in favor, and none were opposed. The February minutes were officially adopted.	

Agenda Topics

CHILD ABUSE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS

DISCUSSION	
<p><i>Tammi Pitzen, Executive Director, Children’s Advocacy Center</i> <i>Diana Hamilton, Director of Victim Assistance Program, District Attorney’s Office</i> <i>Susan Moen, Executive Director, Jackson County SART</i></p> <p><u>Tammi Pitzen, Executive Director of the Children’s Advocacy Center –</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tammi has worked for The Children’s Advocacy Center (CAC) for 8 years. • CAC provides services to children who have experienced abuse or have witnessed violent crimes in Jackson County. • CAC provides forensic interviews, advocacy, medical evaluation, treatment, and therapeutic intervention for child abuse victims referred to the agency. • Referrals come to the agency through the Department of Human Services or the local Law Enforcement agencies. • Services are provided by using a multidisciplinary approach which means that they want to have a 360-degree understanding of the child to be able to identify needs of the child and the family, to identify gaps in services, or obstacles to engagement. • Prior to COVID-19, CAC was serving around 800 children a year. Since COVID-19, they have been serving around 740 children a year, and about 400 of their non-offending caregivers. • CAC is an accredited center through the National Children’s Alliance which means that they get audited every 5 years to ensure they are following the standards that have been set by the Alliance. These standards are around providing evidence-based treatments and interventions. Services provided at CAC are all evidence-based. • CAC’s newest place of growth has been the pediatric sexual assault nurse examiners program. They provide acute examinations for children ages 14 and under. • CAC is able to respond in 24 hours to either of the emergency departments in Medford, but they are not established in the Ashland Hospital, but those individuals in the Ashland Hospital are transferred to RVMC. • CAC’s therapy provides screenings, assessments, individual and group therapy. • CAC’s goal is to provide a safe space where kids can talk about what happened to them by utilizing the forensic interviewing method that maximizes information and minimizes trauma. The past standard was to only do one forensic interview, but science is evolving and they recognize that children’s disclosures around abuse is a process and that it is not episodic. CAC will not interview multiple times about the same stuff, but only if there are reasons to go back and talk to a child again, or maybe they came in and could only tolerate part of the interview. But they will not re-interview the child if not necessary because it is not trauma-informed. • CAC has a bi-lingual forensic interviewer that has allowed the completion of interviews in Spanish • CAC is growing and they are working on ways to add staff so there is more access to meaningful therapeutic interventions. 	

- CAC has close partnerships with several local agencies, and those partnerships are the reason why CAC is able to help and reach so many children that are experiencing abuse.
- CAC has 2 sets of clients. They provide services to their MDT partners, which are law enforcement agencies, the courts, and DHS. They assist in the interviewing of the children and getting the information to these partners to assist with cases. The second set of clients are the ones that they provide all of the wrap around services to children impacted by violence and their families. Being able to provide early interventions to these families has shown that the risk level for children will lessen.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they have found that children are presenting with a much more complex trauma than they were before.
- CAC has been here for 30 years and have been able to do that because of the support of our community, community partners, and departments that they partner with.
- CAC feels very strongly that children are not defined by their abuse, and sometimes when you say "abused children" it defines children by their abuse. CAC uses verbiage "children that experience abuse", and this verbiage is used in a lot of different venues. This verbiage is more trauma informed and allows children to define who they are and who they want to be.

Diana Hamilton, Director of Victim Assistance Program at the District Attorney's Office

- Jackson County Districts Attorney's Office is composed of 3 divisions: Criminal Prosecution, Family Support, and Victim Assistance.
- The Criminal Prosecution department handles criminal cases and is composed of attorneys and the District Attorney.
- The Family Support Division department handles child support.
- The Victim Assistance Division is designed to ensure that victims of crimes have someone to help them through the process and to explain what their federal and state rights are.
- The victim's assistance provides services for every type of crime that is prosecuted in Jackson County.
- They have a specific Victim's Advocate that works directly with adult victims of sexual assault, and one that works with victims of child abuse.
- When a case comes through the DA's Office, and it is a child abuse case it gets reviewed by the MDT's.
- Once the DA's Office files charges and it is a child abuse case or an adult abuse case then that case gets a specific Victim Advocate assigned to that case, and that advocate walks that person step by step through the entire process and help them understand what is happening, what hearings they need to go to vs which ones they do not need to attend. The advocate goes to all hearings with them and help them understand what is happening. The advocate helps the victim to get restitution and all the resources that they need.
- If the case is resolved by a negotiation then the victim has an advocate that helps them talk to the attorney about what the victim wants to see in the resolution of the case and they sit down and talk about that.
- If the case goes to a settlement, then there is an advocate with the victim at the settlement hearing.
- If the case goes to trial then the advocate would go to trial with that person and be with them the entire time. Starting with the jury selection, through getting a verdict.
- Once the case is resolved, and if there is going to be a post-conviction thing that happens, which cannot always be foreseen, their office refers to the Oregon Department of Justice to get them another advocate who will be able to explain the post-conviction process to them if that is going to be in play.
- The criminal justice process is very specific, and different in every case, so it can be very confusing. The advocates fill that real specific niche of understanding the Criminal Justice process and keep the victims up to date on all court proceedings. If the defendant is in the jail or prison, then the advocate explains what that notification process is.
- Advocates refer victims to a program called "crime victims' compensation". This program helps to pay for counseling for people, helps pay medical expenses, and funeral expenses for homicide cases.
- Victim services provides a compassionate hand through the victim's process of going through the criminal justice system. They work super closely with their attorneys, so they have specific attorneys that specialize in child abuse cases, and specific attorneys that specialize in adult sex abuse cases. The advocates work very specifically and very closely with them so they know what is going on in the case, and they can have a preview of what is going to happen next, which allows the advocate to be able to explain everything to the crime victim. They are able to advocate the crime victims needs with our attorneys.
- They provide all of these services for all types of crime victims, but there are the specialized trained advocates that work solely with child abuse and adult sex abuse cases.

Susan Moen, Executive Director of the Jackson County Sexual Abuse Response Team (SART)

- Susan stated that the SART is a non-profit organization since 2005
- Susan mentioned the language used with social service agencies and other sexual abuse support services
- SART provides both direct services to survivors of gender-based violence and preventative efforts in the community
- Direct services include the sexual assault nurse examiner program for survivors 15 years and up. The program picks up where Tammi Pitzen's CAC program ends
- Susan stated that 15 is the age of medical consent
- The sexual assault nurse examiner program provides free exams at all Jackson and Josephine County hospitals
- The exams can be for forensic evidence collection, but also include anonymous evidence collection if a survivor is not sure if they want to report to law enforcement
- Other direct services include support groups for youth and adult female identifying persons and LGBTQ support groups
- Support groups are run by a non-mandatory reporter

- Another resource available for survivors and for other agencies that work with persons who disclose as survivors is a resource specialist
- Susan mentions Erin Carr as the Resource Specialist for SART. Her job is to help connect survivors to resources such as counseling and finding therapists, medical aftercare, housing, utility issues and financial insecurity, and health insurance sign up.
- Susan mentioned that finding a therapist can be difficult
- Susan said that the Resource Specialist can also do crime victims compensation research and work with case managers if a survivor does not want to work directly with SART
- SART will accompany a survivor to a law enforcement interview
- SART goal is to figure out what services and resources a survivor needs and help them get the help they need
- Susan stated that all of the services they provide are free
- Susan mentioned that her passion is with education and prevention efforts. She added that combining prevention, education and awareness with all of the direct services to survivors helps with resiliency
- In the realm of prevention, SART has a 13-year curriculum for schools on sexual violence prevention education that runs from kindergarten through high school.
- SART does presentations on awareness in our local colleges and includes information on what elements of our society allow this level of sexual violence to continue and what we can do as individuals to help prevent this kind of violence
- SART lessons are built year to year through each grade
- SART focuses on primary prevention that is geared towards changing the culture and not just risk reduction
- Susan stated that oppression is the root cause of violence
- Susan mentioned that students in schools, historically marginalized populations, are potential targets for offenders
- The curriculum is sometimes done for the full 13 years, which 4 sessions every grade, every year
- SART recognizes that this education cannot be done with just the youth, but with all ages of society and does outreach prevention efforts with parents at parent night groups in each district
- SART has a bartender training program to educate bartenders on premeditated alcohol facilitated sexual assaults and come up with intervention methods
- Training is offered to business owners to help them navigate through difficult or harassing customers, identify and respond to sexual violence and to create non-hostile work environments
- SART training and presentations are offered to social organizations to educate on the causes of sexual and domestic violence and the available resources to survivors
- Susan mentioned that educating the community about the impact of sexual harassment and violence, and the intentionality of sexual offenders and the fact that sexual violence is not about sexual desire
- Susan added that sexual violence is intentional harm
- Susan stated that it is important to educate and bring awareness to the community that offenders also groom society in that they may be good, well-meaning people in one area of their life, but also capable of harming others
- Susan mentioned that there is an importance to understand the barriers that survivors face when they come forward
- Oregon has the lowest reporting rate of sexual violence in the country at about 10% of adult women report rape to law enforcement
- Susan stated that consent culture will not prevent offenders from harming others because offenders fully understand that their committing a crime and doing it without consent
- Susan mentioned that she is still haunted by a trial about 10 years ago on a rape case where a man was acquitted after stating on the stand that she said no, but I can tell she meant yes. She added that this sort of social norm where a woman says no when she really means yes can be corrected with continued education, but will take a long time
- Susan stated that vicarious resilience is the idea that you get to celebrate when your clients have successes and that can ease the negative parts
- Susan mentioned that understanding defense circuitry, triggers and trauma responses in us can help when working with survivors who experience the same. She added that attachment circuitry can de-escalate the defense circuitry and remind survivors that they are not alone

Questions/Discussions:

Gilda Montenegro-Fix asked Diana Hamilton what the capacity that her staff has in the demand for their services, and is there a strong need for more advocates? And if here is, what is the agency doing to find more advocates? Diana Hamilton said that the Victim Services is about 75% grant funded, and the additional funding comes from Jackson County. Staffing will fluctuate depending on the funding that is available, but they place specific importance on child abuse and sexual assault and they always ensure they have funding for those two positions. Right now, because of COVID-19 they have cases that have been open for a very long time. They have child abuse cases that have been open for 2 or 3 years, and are still open because the courts were shut down. The child abuse advocate has a case load of about 120 cases. The adult sexual assault cases are not as high, and in more ways, they are more difficult to prosecute so there is about 40 to 50 of those cases a year. They do deal with all types of crime victims and they help out everyone that comes through the door. As the Director, Diana Hamilton will take on cases if the advocates are overwhelmed or have too many cases, and she will be the advocate for that case. The advocates work to know the victims as a person rather than being an expert on the specifics of what happened when the crime was committed. They are there to help the victim as a person.

Gilda Montenegro-Fix asked Tammi Pitzen about the bilingual forensic interviewer, if they need more, what their training for that position is and what that training looks like. Tammi Pitzen responded by saying that they used to have 2 and one of them will be leaving due to moving to a different state. Right now, they have 2 positions open and it has been really hard to recruit anyone to

fill those positions. They need all the bilingual staff that they can get. Currently, they are restructuring a lot of what our staff is doing. Tammi said that she has recently realized throughout COVID-19 that they have been working way over the capacity for many years, and she is looking at what is reasonable for some to do so her employees are not over worked, and are able to do self-care. During COVID-19 cases were down 40% due to families being in isolation. CAC was able to stay open throughout the pandemic, and they are waiting for that second wave to hit, so they are trying to stay ahead of it. Tammi said that there is always room for more. They have a diverse funding. Some of it is by doing fundraisers, and there is a lot of grant writing, and there is some governmental funding.

Eric Guyer asked Tammi, Susan and Diana if they have any ideas for resiliency. Tammi responded by saying that their agency offers EAP. They also bring an outside person in that is not affiliated and do some debriefing things with staff. They teach them breathing techniques, self-care, and resiliency. They provide training on vicarious trauma, on recognizing burn-out, and they encourage staff to make self-care plans. Diana Hamilton said that her biggest piece of advice is to not make the job your identity. A lot of people come into this profession because they care and want to help people. If they allow the job to be their identity then it will lead to burnout. She tells her advocates that they do not get to go down to the end of the road with their victims, they only get to walk with them through a part of the journey, and they have to be ok with that. It is one person at a time and one day at a time. They have created a culture in their agency where they are able to come as they are. They are comfortable to vent if they need, and they do not have to create a persona at work. Susan Moen agreed with what Tammi and Diana said and added that normalizing the idea that this job makes a profound impact on people and that they should be able to be open and able to talk about their feelings. Susan said that they focus also on vicarious resiliency, which is the idea that you get to celebrate your client's successes. To celebrate small bites of resilience that you see in folks. She also talked about the importance of understanding the neurobiology of trauma so we know why are brains react to certain things. This is important for both staff and the survivors. Susan explained how brains react to trauma.

Next Scheduled PSCC Meeting: March 22, 2022
Meeting Adjourned: 12:30 pm