



Governor's Commission on Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking

Approved Committee Report/Minutes - June 23, 2022

In Attendance: Mary Krueger, Staff Attorney, New Hampshire Legal Assistance, Chair; Lyn Schollett, Executive Director, New Hampshire Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence; Andrea Bonito, Attorney, New Hampshire Public Defender's Office; Dianne Martin, Director, Administrative Office of the Courts; Edwin Kelly, retired Circuit Court Judge; Janet Bouchard, Hooksett Chief of Police; Abbey Simon, Administrator, Behavioral Health and Sex Offender Treatment, New Hampshire Department of Corrections; Angelika Wilkerson, Staff Attorney, 603 Legal; Dr. Scott Hampton, Director, Ending the Violence, and Project Coordinator, Strafford County's Supervised Visitation Center; Danielle Snook, Program Administrator, Office of Victim/Witness Assistance; John Formella, New Hampshire Attorney General; Jodi Nelson, State Representative; Robert Quinn, Commissioner, New Hampshire Department of Safety; Ann Landry, Associate Commissioner, New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services; David Hobbs, Hampton Chief of Police; and Alyssa Kuehne, Circuit Court Prosecutor, Nashua Police Department.

Members not in Attendance: Andrew Livernois, Belknap County Attorney and Sharon Carson, State Senator.

The Governor's Commission on Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking met on June 23, 2022 to:

- I. Welcome and Introductions
- II. Brief History of the Previous Governor's Commission
- III. Getting Organized
- IV. Information Sharing: Overview of Existing Committees, Commissions, Council's, etc.
- V. Information Sharing: Overview of Existing Data Collection
- VI. Communications
- VII. Agenda Items and Action Steps for Next Meeting
- VIII. Temperature Gauge

The Chair opened the meeting with a review of her proposed Ground Rules for the Committee, which requested members to adopt the concept of ethical communications and best intentions, to which members were in a consensus.

The Chair reminded members of the historic lack of communication between the entities who work together in DV advocacy, which often results in conflicting messages. This Commission will be a collaborative effort to improve these issues.

Introductions:

The group went around to introduce themselves, explain their role in handling these issues, a goal or gap they have identified through their work.

Identified gaps/goals included: performing a comprehensive assessment of work being done around domestic and sexual violence now in NH; increased training for law enforcement and prosecutors; identifying resources for victim/witness advocates in police departments; increase victim participation rates in the criminal process; remove barriers for victims to participate in criminal case; create procedures/protocols for “Richard’s Hearings;” raise overall awareness of these crimes, reduce shaming and blaming, change the narrative; coordination of criminal and civil or family law cases involving the same parties; better information sharing among agencies – reduce the “silo” phenomenon; increased data collection and dissemination regarding domestic and sexual violence; increase consistency in prosecutions; improve resources for non-IPV stalking; monitoring standards of practice in batterer intervention programs and increase programming for LGBTQ+ and other marginalized communities; leverage collective knowledge; address and improve processes for firearm relinquishment in DV cases; reinforce public trust in the criminal justice system.

History of Prior Governor’s Commission:

Retired Judge Ed Kelly next provided a brief history of the previous Governor’s Commission that was established in 1993 by Governor Merrill following a high-profile case. Members of the first Commission consisted of governmental agencies, including, but not limited to, law enforcement, mental health professionals, members of the court system, and members of the legal community and victim advocates. Sub-committees were formed in collaboration with external stakeholders. The Commission meetings consisted of hearing from the work of the sub-committees. Judge Kelly outlined the successes of the first Commission: cross-disciplinary representation in its membership; respect for the agencies that were involved; and the commitment of its members to achieve common goals. The goal of the Commission was to

keep an eye on the safety of the victims while respecting the limitations each agency had in the implementation of solutions. The focus was on creating solutions, rather than casting blame, which created an honest and open line of communication among the members and stakeholders. The strived to not only analyze what went wrong but also what went right. The Commission was active until 2013, when its then-Chair stepped down and no new Chair was chosen.

Getting Organized - review current charge:

After a ten-year absence, Governor Sununu signed an Executive Order on April 11, 2022, re-establishing the State's multi-disciplinary Commission following the Domestic Violence Task Force Report, which was released in March. The Task Force consisted of a multi-disciplinary group representing victim advocates, plaintiffs' attorneys, criminal defense attorneys, county prosecutors, judges, and other court staff, which recommended re-establishing the Commission. The Task Force was created by a New Hampshire Judicial Branch internal review committee, which was formed immediately following a domestic violence incident.

The Chair outlined the charges of the Commission, which were outlined in the Governor's Executive Order: examining trends and patterns of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking; identifying risk factors, current practices, and gaps in systemic responses and barriers to safety for victims; recommending policies, practices, and services that will prevent and deter domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking; encouraging community collaboration in better meeting victims' needs, and increasing offender accountability; and monitoring and reviewing proposed legislation.

Members discussed the gap that currently exists in data collection, as each entity collects data in their own way. There is currently no comprehensive way to collect data among the agencies that are involved. The Chair recommended distributing a survey to members to determine what data each entity collects, and how it is collected.

The Chair and members supported the adoption of a sub-committee structure as the past Commission had done. We must recommend both a Vice Chair and a Secretary whom the Governor will approve.

The Chair noted that Robert's Rules of Order should be implemented for decision-making purposes, but that the meetings will retain an informal, collaborative style in an effort to find solutions and create recommendations as they have been directed by the Executive Order issued by the Governor.

The plan for the next meeting will be to brainstorm specific topics for agencies to present upon so we know what is currently being done on these specific issues and what challenges agencies are facing. Some topics identified include: civil legal services; circuit court prosecutions; criminal investigations of cases; civil protection orders.

The group agreed for the Chair and Scott Hampton to communicate with the Center for Court Innovation about technical help with organizing the Commission's work hopefully at the next meeting.

Communications:

The Chair informed members that there will be a website implemented that will outline information on the Commission, including contact information and a meeting schedule. The Chair will be working with the Governor's Office to get it up and running. The Chair and members decided that the Commission will meet on a standing monthly basis and will continue to hold meetings at the Administrative Office of the Courts and will explore virtual options.

The group agreed that, while the meetings are open to the public, the Commission will not accept public comments at its regular meetings. The Commission could decide to gather public input at a special meeting in the future.

Regular meetings:

The group agreed to meet the fourth Thursday of the month from 10-11:30. We can continue to use the AOC space but the option of meeting at other agencies is open if others would like to host.

Meeting adjourned at 11:30.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelly Friberg, Executive Assistant, Judicial Branch, Administrative Office of the Courts

Edited by: Mary Krueger, Chair, Governor's Commission on DV, SA, and Stalking.