

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COORDINATING COUNCIL
ELDERLY and DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES for September 7, 2016

The DVCC Elderly and Domestic Violence Committee met on September 7, 2016 at 2:30 p.m. at the Carvel State Office Building, Wilmington. Attending the meeting: John Grimm and Gina Schoenberg, Department of Justice; Sharon Merriman-Nai, Center for Drug and Health Studies (CDHS), University of Delaware; Denise Arreola-Dominguez, DHSS Adult Protective Services and Pat Kwetkauskie, DVCC staff.

Introductions: Attendees introduced themselves.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes from the meeting held on February 17, 2016 were approved by consensus.

On-going Business:

➤ Obtain Information and Input Directly from Constituents in the Community:

Pat provided a brief summary of the Listening Sessions held during April at the Newark Senior Center, St. Patrick's Center – Wilmington, Kent County Public Library, and in Sussex County at the Georgetown and Lewes Public Libraries. She noted that although the landscape, demographics, and constituents varied from one Listening Session to another, several common themes emerged. Comments from those attending one of the five Listening Sessions indicated:

- Seniors who are harmed are more likely to experience more than one type of mistreatment including physical abuse, financial exploitation, neglect, and isolation.
- Adult children and grandchildren are most likely to mistreat seniors.
- Barriers to seniors seeking assistance include shame, isolation, not recognizing that mistreatment is occurring, and a lack of awareness of resources and services available to assist them.
- Outreach and education activities would promote public awareness of resources for seniors who are being mistreated. This includes collaboration with faith communities to ensure that seniors in rural communities are reached and informed.
- Staff development and education that encompasses information on the recognition of the signs of mistreatment and referral to services and resources is recommended for those who interact with seniors on a regular basis. This includes providing education to housing managers, adult day care program staff, and home meal delivery staff and volunteers.

There was also discussion about two specific issues that were identified during the Listening Sessions. Seniors reported that “grand parenting” in urban centers may be a risk factor for abuse for some older adults.

This was attributed to conflicts that arise because of differences in seniors' parenting styles vs. their adult children's approaches as well as grandparents' reluctance to seek outside help fearing that their grandchildren will be removed from the home.

It was also noted that reliable transportation – both public and private – is not easily accessed by many older residents in residing rural parts of Delaware, particularly in the western areas of Kent and Sussex Counties. The lack of transportation contributes to seniors' isolation including those who are being harmed and may be a barrier to those who would otherwise seek help.

- Develop systems to compile data to identify the needs of elderly victims of domestic violence;

Sharon Merriman-Nai provided an overview of the data that the Committee collected from a variety of sources. (See *Crime, Abuse, and Neglect against Older Delawareans 2004-2014*). She noted this is an initial attempt to organize the information gathered so far and to look for trends and issues of particular concern. There was discussion about the limitations of the data and the need to obtain additional clarification from DELJIS about some of the information included in their report. Pat and Sharon will contact representatives from DELJIS to obtain a better understanding of the meaning of their data categories. Also, there was discussion about using a different benchmark for the age of the older Delawareans i.e., 60 or 62 instead of 65 years old.

Sharon will present a similar overview to the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council at the Quarterly Meeting on September 12, 2016.

Next Steps:

There was consensus that the Committee will write a report about the elderly and domestic violence in Delaware. It was agreed the agenda for the next meeting should be to identify the report's intended audience and the type of format to utilize as well as to outline topics to include.

Also, there was discussion about providing education to members of the state's legislature about Crime, Abuse, and Neglect against older Delawareans. Pat will explore this with the DVCC.

Next Meeting: The next meeting of the DVCC Elderly and Domestic Violence Committee will be held in November.

Respectfully Submitted,

Pat Kwetkauskie, DVCC Staff
October 13, 2016