

Virtual Meeting

MINUTES¹

Thursday, 21 January 2021

ATTENDANCE:

Members Present: Yolanda Sonnier, Alicia Altamirano, Stephen Liggett Creel, Andrew Heiliger, Rich Gibson, Jay Prager, Sara Cochran, Barb Walters, Leslie Lampieri, Lt. Eric Kruhm, John Eckard, John Steuernagle, Jackie Scott, Cheryl Mattis, Monica Krebs, Chief Lisa Myers, Lisa Davis, Mariam Imohi, Jessica Epps, Donna Bauer, Dina Ward, Sara Smoley and Andrea Nunez.

Members Absent: Del Scruggs and Chuck Chandler.

Special Guest(s): Dr. Calvin Ball, Jennifer Jones, Office of the County Executive

Others in Attendance: Kathy Jordan, Leslie Petak, Susan Allen, Nick Weikel, Katie Dank, John Eckard

MEETING SUMMARY:

1. MEETING OPEN

- a. 1:30 pm; Yolanda Sonnier, Chair, Howard County Human Trafficking Prevention Coordination Council (HTPCC), opened the meeting by welcoming committee members.

Jackie Scott, DCRS, welcomed the council members and thanked them for their continued dedication to the work.

Dr. Calvin Ball, Howard County Executive, thanked the council for their dedication and reaffirmed his commitment to prioritizing the work to eradicate human trafficking in Howard County. He noted Human Trafficking knows no borders, especially within Howard County and the surrounding jurisdictions. He expressed that he was impressed with the team and their leadership as they have embraced the urgency of now.

2. Establishment of Quorum

- a. The Roll was taken: Twenty-One Committee members were in attendance. Yolanda Sonnier declared the Committee was in quorum and brought the meeting to order.
- b. Yolanda Sonnier recognized the attendance of special guests: Dr. Calvin Ball, Howard County Executive, and Ms. Jennifer Jones, Deputy Chief of Staff to the Howard County Executive.

3. Consideration of Meeting Minutes

- a. Ms. Sonnier entered the 17 SEPTEMBER 2020 Committee minutes and opened for discussion. Andrew Heiliger motioned to accept the minutes as written and Stephen Liggett Creel seconded the motion. A voice vote of official members was taken and approved without opposition or abstentions.

- b. Ms. Sonnier entered the 19 NOVEMBER 2020 Committee minutes and opened for discussion. Monica Krebs motioned to accept the minutes as written and Lisa Davis seconded the motion. A voice vote of official members was taken and approved without opposition. Yolanda Sonnier abstained from the vote.

4. Review of Recommendations from 2019 Howard County Human Trafficking Prevention Coordinating Council Report with: Howard County Executive Dr. Calvin Ball

Yolanda Sonnier, Chair, in partnership with council members, reviewed overall progress towards the 2019 Recommendations. (Please see attachment A.)

Dr. Calvin Ball, Howard County Executive, thanked the council for their work and thoughtful presentation. Dr. Ball noted the importance of the collaboration among county agencies and expressed excitement to see the continuing work of the council.

5. December- January Events and Old Business

- a. Policy and Legislation Committee Updates: Monica Krebs, Committee Chair, reported no updates as the committee has been unable to meet. The next committee meeting date is to be determined.
- b. Training, Outreach and Partnerships Committee Updates: Andrea Nunez, OHTP Manager, provided the report on behalf of Committee Chair, Rev. Del Scruggs. Ms. Nunez reported the status of the Human Trafficking Awareness Month Red Sand Initiative, noting that the video will be shared with council members to disseminate across agency channels as soon as it has been finalized.

Committee plans to organize and extend future Public Service Announcements has been tabled until the committee has been able to consult with Survivor Leaders.

- c. Real Estate Committee Updates: Andrea Nunez, OHTP Manager, provided the report on behalf of Committee Chair, Cassie Dorsey. The Committee has focused efforts to finalize a formal training for all Real Estate Professionals. Within the upcoming months, the committee will be submitting a final training outline to HCAR for approval.

Ms. Nunez noted the committee has made progress on creating an informational business card containing contact information for reporting suspected cases of Human Trafficking.

Ms. Nunez shared that the committee will be working on developing a flier in partnership with HopeWorks to standardize the affordable housing process for referring available properties.

- d. Medical Committee Updates: Leslie Lampieri, Committee Chair, reported that the hospital has been able to train approximately 70-80 nurse supervisors and above on issues surrounding Human Trafficking. There is support to expand training for additional hospital staff.



- e. Office of Human Trafficking Prevention (OHTP) Update: Andrea Nunez, OHTP Manager, shared that she is currently working to update and formalize the OHTP website to make it easier to navigate.

5. Announcements and Events of Importance

- a. February 26: Training Outreach and Partnerships Committee Meeting, 10:00am-11:00am.
- b. March 17: Real Estate Committee Meeting, 10:00am-11:30am.
- c. March 18: Human Trafficking Prevention Coordination Council Full Meeting, 1:00pm – 2:30pm.

6. Additional Items for Discussion

- a. Sara Cochran inquired about the Bridges to Housing Stability program. Mariam Imohi, HopeWorks, provided a brief program overview and information regarding HopeWorks partnership with the program.

7. Next Coordination Council Meeting Date(s)

- a. The next meeting of the Howard County Human Trafficking Prevention Coordination Council will be held March 18, 2021. The meeting will be virtual.

8. ADJOURNMENT:

- a. 2:32pm; Yolanda Sonnier closed the meeting and directed the Council to stand in adjournment until 18 March 2021.

Minutes were drafted by: Briana Davis

Yolanda Sonnier
Chair



Notes:

- 1) The meeting was conducted virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Attachments:

- A) Presentation: Review of Recommendations from 2019 Howard County Human Trafficking Prevention Coordinating Council Report.



ATTACHMENT A

Presentation:

Review of Recommendations from 2019 Howard County Human Trafficking Prevention Coordinating
Council Report
21 January 2021

Review of Recommendations from 2019 Howard County Human Trafficking Prevention Coordinating Council Report, Updates and Where We're Headed

Recommendation #1: Make the HTPCC a permanent body in County Code

Speakers:

Jackie Scott, Cheryl Mattis, DCRS

Yolanda Sonnier, Administrator, OHRE,
Chair, HTPCC

1. The **County Executive should establish in code the creation of a Howard County Human Trafficking Prevention Coordinating Council.**

- 1.1 Reauthorize the body as a permanent Council of Howard County

Status: Complete via County legislation (CB 52-19) January 2019.
Appointments of first public members completed in April, 2020.

Bi-monthly full open meetings and committee meetings began in mid-2020
virtually, all meetings and minutes posted on OHTP website.

- **Elected Chair Yolanda Sonnier and Vice-Chair Del Scruggs.**
- Committees:
 - Training, Outreach and Partnerships Committee (TOP): Chair Del Scruggs
 - Legislative/Policy Committee: Chair Monica Krebs
 - Real Estate Committee: Chair Cassie Dorsey
 - Medical/Hospital Committee: Chair Leslie Lampieri

Recommendation 1.2: New members

Speakers:

Yolanda Sonnier, OHRE, Chair, HTPCC

Andrea Nunez, Manager, OHTP, DCRS

1.2 Reappoint or newly appoint Members of the Council to include organizations that were previously a part of the Council and add the following (but not limited to) the:

- Chief, Department of **Fire and Rescue Services**;
- **A Member of the Executive Staff of the County Executive; and**
- **Director, Child Advocacy Center of Howard County** (This is effectively HCPD, which already has a seat on the Coordinating Council)

Status: OHTP has engaged all 3 of these offices into this work on a regular basis. HCFRS and the CAC have been outstanding partners outside of Coordinating Council meetings. The Council/CE could put in new legislation to add additional seats for a representative from HCFRS in the future if desired.

OHTP/DCRS recommendation: wait until at least 1 year of new grant is complete so that we have time to receive advice from OVC and partners on our membership structure and identify any other partners to be added and could take care of it all in the same single bill if necessary.

Recommendation #2: Community Training

Speakers:

Andrea Nunez, OHTP

2. **OHTP should provide, coordinate, and facilitate the delivery of targeted trainings to key groups most vulnerable to trafficking in a culturally appropriate and responsive manner, and in multiple languages.**

Status: Underway and will expand significantly as 3 new grant-funded hires at OHTP, HCPD and HopeWorks come on board in 2021.

- In 2019-2020 OHTP Manager conducted 20+ community presentations and trainings in person and virtually, reaching over 700 County residents and staff, frequently joined by HCPD and/or HopeWorks representatives.
- HopeWorks staff and HCPD representatives also spoke at several additional community events and trainings in 2019-2020.

Recommendation 2.1: Targeted Organizational Training on HT

Speakers:

Yolanda Sonnier, HTPCC Chair

Stephen Liggett-Creel, Howard County
DSS

Mariam Imohi, HopeWorks

Lisa Davis, HCPSS

Andrea Nunez, OHTP

2.1 We should **seek to train organizations serving particularly vulnerable populations:**

- youth transitioning from foster care settings, LGBTQ, African American, Latino and/or foreign-born, and/or living with disabling conditions such as mental health challenges and substance use disorders
- **Social media** should be employed to engage groups which utilize this form of technology as a primary means of communication.

Status: In progress and will build steadily with TOP committee, DCRS, DSS, HCPSS, HopeWorks and other partners.

- Many of OHTP's presentations in year 1, in partnership with DCRS' Local Children's Board and HCPSS reached diverse student and parent groups. 2 were presentations given in Spanish to Latino parents, had just begun presenting to several Latino student clubs at HCPSS high schools when COVID began.
- HTPCC Member Lisa Davis, representing **HCPSS**, and OHTP have discussed reinitiating comprehensive training on trafficking for HCPSS teachers and staff post-COVID.
- OHTP:
 - Collaborates with DCRS Local Children's Board staff to take advantage of smaller opportunities to share expertise and resources on trafficking (like Local Care Team meetings) to more vulnerable groups.
 - Will continue to facilitate collaboration between the DCRS communications team and HTPCC on future social media strategy, efforts.

Recommendation #2.2: Broad Community Training

Speaker:

Yolanda Sonnier, Chair, HTPCC

2.2 Other populations, such as **community members at large** and **professionals in various civic and other settings are in need of training** and should also be reached in a concerted effort to help everyone in Howard County understand more about this often-hidden form of exploitation. **A "train the trainers" model should be utilized and, as appropriate, individuals from the most affected populations should be trained to lead on these initiatives.**

Status: This is where much of our year 1 HTPCC outreach has taken place, responding to community requests as well as working through HTPCC members' own contacts with interest.

Recommendation #2.2: Committee work in 2020 on professional group and community Training

Speakers:

Leslie Lampieri, Chair, Medical
Committee

Monica Krebs, Chair, Legislative/Policy
Committee

Rep from Real Estate Committee

Andrea Nunez, Manager, OHTP, DCRS

- The **Medical Committee** reinitiated training for HCGH professionals on trafficking, which will continue as swiftly as possible during/post COVID, which we conducted in partnership with staff UMD SAFE Center, which has led this effort statewide.
- The **Legislative/Policy Committee**, with support from member Chuck Chandler and his affiliation with the MD Hotel Lodging Association, plans to collaborate with Visit Howard, local hotel members and other businesses to deliver useful trainings on trafficking.
- **Real Estate Committee**, working on creating human trafficking training for all real estate professionals in MD Real Estate Commission curriculum (beginning with HCAAR and other, ideally reaching hundreds of agents and other real estate professionals around MD), developing real estate professionals "who do I call" cards for distribution through their brokerages, partners.
- **OHTP** currently working with to train entire County workforce on human trafficking, starting with all County Fire personnel. HTPCC member Andrew Heiliger, a volunteer firefighter, consulted on this effort.

Recommendation # 2.3: Create Training Subcommittee

Speaker:

Yolanda Sonnier, Chair, HTPCC

2.3 Staff should **create a Training subcommittee under the Coordinating Council** to assist with developing a set of targeted, specialized trainings.

Status: Complete.

- The Training, Outreach and Partnerships (TOP) Committee, led by Chair Del Scruggs, which benefits from strong participation from members of HoCo AGAST members and other appointed members and volunteers, held its first virtual "meet and greet" this fall providing brief introductory education on trafficking for faith and civic group leaders, interested residents, had 20+ attendees and feedback, led to scheduling longer presentations/trainings for individual groups and TOP Committee aims to repeat this event quarterly going forward.
- Many of this committee's members have indicated they will readily participate in our "**train the trainer**" model so that they may become future ambassadors for the HTPCC and lead certain presentations and trainings in the future.

Recommendation #3: Develop strategies to increase resources and services to survivors

Speakers:

Monica Krebs, Chair, Legislative/Policy
Committee

Andrea Nunez, OHTP

3. OHTP and community partners, including the Coordinating Council, should **develop a set of strategies to increase resources and services for survivors of sexual and labor trafficking.**

Status: Ongoing and will strengthen over next 3 years and be discussed in Legislative/Policy Committee.

- In connection with our **new U.S. DOJ OVC 3 year grant to HCPD, OHTP and HopeWorks**, this Core Team will now have access to new, high-quality advice and professional development opportunities around these topics from U.S. D.O.J. OVC, their many consultants, and other funded task forces and partner organizations nation-wide and can bring that enhanced knowledge to our Legislative/Policy Committee to inform future decisions.
- OVC grant also requires a "data driven community survey" on trafficking vulnerabilities to be conducted in the County, which is scheduled to take place in 2022-23.
- OHTP and Legislative/Policy Committee Chair Monica Krebs collaborated in research, received advice from Polaris targeted outreach to migrant workers in agricultural settings to inform future efforts.

Recommendation #3.1 focus on identifying funding and other resources for survivors

Speakers:

Monica Krebs, Chair,
Legislative/Policy Committee

Andrea Nunez, Manager, OHTP, DCRS

3.1 Develop a **grants-focused subcommittee** under the Coordinating Council to assist the office in identifying and **applying for funding and/or other resources on behalf of area agencies committed to helping survivors of sexual and/or labor trafficking.**

Status: A committee solely focused on funding and resources does not exist based on interest and expertise of current members, but this will continue to be regularly incorporated into the work of the Legislative/Policy Committee.

HCPD and HopeWorks took on much of this function in 2019 and 2020 and will continue to proactively seek input from other Coordinating Council members on ways to increase local resources for survivors, via grant funding or otherwise.

*a brief summary of recent grants and potential new funding source at end of presentation (time permitting)

Recommendation #3: Monitor County Asset Forfeiture Fund

Speakers:

Lt. Eric Kruhm, HCPD

Rich Gibson/Jen Ritter, SAO

3.2 OHTP, SAO, HCPD: monitor the progress of the collection of asset forfeiture funding and develop policies for utilizing funds that become available through federal, State or local government for victim services.

Status: Currently only \$1,954 in the County human trafficking case asset forfeiture account and \$2,541 in the County human trafficking prevention asset forfeiture County DCRS still confirming transfer history with CAO.

- Fund established by County Executive order in 2015, administered by the SAO and County Finance. Funds only available post-adjudication, forfeiture, all appeals.
- In 2015 the prior administrated stated in a press release: "Howard County Police Department estimates that up to \$25,000 will be seized annually, in both cash and the sale of property, from criminals profiting from human trafficking." (Source: County press release, August 25, 2015) (\$25,000 may have been a bit optimistic)
- It was reported that in May, 2017 that \$12,835 had been seized and \$1,080 remained in the fund. (Source: Baltimore Sun article, May 22, 2017)

Next steps: OHTP, HCPD, to confirm with SAO, Finance, HopeWorks, complete fund history, protocols for disbursements and use of funds going forward.

Recommendation 3: long-term housing and employment for survivors

Speakers:

Monica Krebs, Chair, Legislative/Policy Committee

Cassie Dorsey, Chair, Real Estate Committee

Mariam Imohi, HopeWorks

Andrea Nunez, Manager, OHTP, DCRS

3.3 Work collaboratively with any and all accredited area services or programs which provide long-term housing (versus shelter) and/or employment for survivors of human trafficking to increase the availability of housing and employment options.

Status: Ongoing, via Legislative/Policy and Real Estate Committee, OHTP, HopeWorks and partners on MD HT Task Force.

- **Real Estate Committee:** has generated 1 recent property rental opportunity for HopeWorks clients and is continuously using their networks to pitch and introduce interested rental property managers and owners with nice, affordable rental units to HopeWorks residential staff. Now creating flyer to expand this effort.
- **HopeWorks, Bridges, DHCD, OHTP/DCRS:** currently developing 1 unit rental housing pilot, with the goal of getting more survivors housed long term beyond short-term shelter.
- In summer/fall 2020, HopeWorks and OHTP received advice from non-profit organizations in LA, New York and Philadelphia about their successful **survivor employment programs** to inform future efforts here. Will need more time to begin working on them with the Legislative/Policy Committee and survivor leaders.
- OHTP will look to collaborate productively with DCRS's **Office of Community Partnerships' new Landlord-Navigator** hire on housing options for trafficking survivors.

Recommendation #4: Develop education and awareness campaigns

Speaker:

Yolanda Sonnier, Chair, HTPCC
Andrea Nunez, OHTP

4. OHTP in collaboration with the Council and community partners, should **develop a human trafficking education and awareness campaign** to increase identification of and support to victims; share resources and information as appropriate and allowable; and otherwise ensure that Howard County provides no safe haven to human traffickers or those who predate on vulnerable citizens and others.

Status: OHTP and TOP committee will continue to lead on the creation awareness-raising videos, public ads and other materials to be produced in collaboration with DCRS Communications team, OHTP and survivor leaders.

Initial campaigns completed:

- 4 week bus ad campaign completed in March 2020, may be repeated in 2021 with new HCPD regional navigator program funding.
- 2 January HT Awareness month Red Sand Project initiatives, last year's generating good media coverage.
- Myth busting Facebook post series on the County Executive's and DCRS' pages as well as resharing of relevant County-focused partner posts.

Recommendations 4.1, 4.2: Establish Awareness and Collaboration Committee, prioritize Survivor Leadership and diversity

Speakers:

Yolanda Sonnier, Administrator, OHRE
Chair, HTPCC
Mariam Imohi, HopeWorks
Monica Krebs, Legislative/Policy
Committee

4.1 **Develop an awareness and collaboration subcommittee** under the Coordinating Council to focus on the **annual Human Trafficking Awareness and Prevention conference**, as well as campaigns that increase prevention and reporting information and resources available to the general public.

Status: Complete, just named the Training Outreach and Partnerships Committee instead. Annual conference is on hold, largely due to COVID.

4.2 County agencies, partners, and community stakeholders should maintain a focus on **the development of survivor leadership and diversity as a means by which equity and just outcomes are the focus** at all levels of services to, with and on behalf of those most affected by human trafficking.

Status: In progress. HopeWorks and OHTP are continuing to build relationships with local survivor leaders through the Maryland Survivor Network and otherwise with the goal of engaging them positively in much of the future work of OHTP and the HTPCC. HopeWorks and the Legislative/Policy Committee will continue to play a strong role in ensuring all future awareness campaigns and our work as a whole is consistently as inclusive and survivor-centered and trauma-informed as possible. HTPCC will welcome continuous partnership with the County's LGBTQ Task Force and OHRE's new Equity and Restorative Practices Manager Dr. Denise Boston.

Recommendation
#5: increase OHTP
staffing level by one
staff member

Speaker:

Jackie Scott, Director DCRS

5. As per the Transition Team report (January 2019 – page 14), it is recommended that **funding be provided to OHTP to “increase the staffing level of this office by a minimum of one staff member who will be focused on training and education, supervising volunteers, and as general office support.”**

- 5.1 Given the previously-addressed (Recommendation 2) description of proposed implementation of new outreach and training opportunities, this **one-person office will need to be expanded** such that the appropriate number of trainings, outreach and informational sessions can be conducted.

Status: Set to be funded by new 3 year OVC grant, OHTP program assistant position has been advertised, OHTP, is attempting to get final budget approval from OVC and then finalize this hire swiftly in the first half of 2021.

Summary of
new outside
funding received
in 2020:

The Coordinating Council, through its "Core Team" of **HCPD's Vice and Narcotics Unit, Human Trafficking Section, HopeWorks,** and **DCRS' Office of Human Trafficking Prevention,** was awarded a 3 year grant from the U.S. Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime under their established "Enhanced Collaborative Model – Human Trafficking Task Forces" Program.



What the U.S. D.O.J. OVC grant will help Howard County achieve:

Speakers:

Lt. Eric Kruhm, HCPD

Andrea Nunez, OHTP

Goal of this U.S. D.O.J. funding is to: "assist communities in developing effective and sustainable **multidisciplinary task forces** that implement victim-centered approaches to **identify victims** of sex and labor trafficking, provide **services** to victims, and **investigate and prosecute all forms** of human trafficking."

Timeline: 3 year grant, 10/1/20 - 10/1/23. Extensions and possibility to reapply for 3 more years of funding as an "established" task force funding after this grant period ends.

Key Activities:

Operational protocol development within Core Team and certain partner organizations: outlining roles and responsibilities, procedures on confidentiality, referrals, information sharing, case handling, press, etc.

Training – Community and Core Team

Data driven community assessment to inform future outreach and strategy

Funding will go to:

- New HCPD Corporal in HT section, police equipment, training, overtime
- New OHTP Program Assistant
- Support for HopeWorks Anti-Trafficking Director and Human Trafficking Case Manager positions, case management tools, equipment
- Training, professional development and advising for Core Team
- Survivor leaders consulting funds for specific projects

Other outside funding

- Howard County Police, embedded into our Child Advocacy Center (CAC) was also recently awarded a one-year state regional navigator grant which generally will establish a regional navigator role at the CAC, which law enforcement, DSS, and other agencies must contact whenever youth sex trafficking is suspected, and update their screening tool. The Regional Navigator is generally responsible for coordinating services for youth (under age 24). Other things this grant funds:
 - Professional development for Child Advocacy Center team members
 - New important equipment and training
 - Survivor basic needs bags of clothing and toiletries
 - Public awareness campaigns/initiatives, which OHTP and DCRS Communications staff will try to facilitate the HTPCC input on.
- Potential Future Funding Source: **U.S. HHS' Office of Trafficking in Persons TVAP** program, which would generate referrals of adult and minor foreign national victims of trafficking for comprehensive case management and tangible needs, which are funded on a client-by-client basis. In the future this funding would need to involve another nonprofit organization since it cannot be duplicative of OVC funding.

Where the HTPCC is headed

Yolanda Sonnier, HTPCC Committee
Chairs, Andrea Nunez

- HTPCC Core Team under OVC grant:
 - HCPD HT Section, HopeWorks, OHTP, USCIS-HSI have monthly grant team meetings covered by confidentiality agreements due will be serving as adult and minor case review meetings.
- HTPCC TOP, Real Estate and Medical/Hospital committees: steady work to drive current training, outreach, awareness projects to completion.
- HTPCC Legislative/Policy committee
 - Will lead on productive discussions of County and state legislation, relevant federal issues, including funding-related issues, consider new funding and strategic partnership opportunities, new targeted outreach strategies with an emphasis on being evidence-based, survivor-centered and wisely innovative in all future work. OHTP will continue to seek advice and support from this group on grant-related issues and overall County workplan on trafficking.
- HTPCC full committee meetings:
 - Will continue to have report outs from committees, discussion and decision making as appropriate. Additional full meeting time will be spent as the chairs find most useful, with relevant information sharing from members and other outside partners as requested, which OHTP will facilitate.