

HTPCC Legislation and Policy Committee

Virtual Meeting

MINUTES¹

Thursday, 10 September 2020

ATTENDANCE:

Members Present: Jay Prager (Dept of Health), Richard Gibson (Howard Co State's Attorney's Office), Dina Ward (Howard County Sheriff's Office), Yolanda Sonnier (Howard County Office of Human Rights), Stephen Liggett-Creel (Howard County Dept of Social Services), Leslie Lampieri and Jon Steuernagle (Howard County General Hospital/ Hopkins), Dave Francis (HCPD), Savanna Khoury (HopeWorks), Monica Krebs, Chuck Chandler, Donna Bauer.

Members Absent: Lt. Eric Kruhm (HCPD), Sara Cochran (HoCo AGAST).

Other Howard County Government Officials in Attendance: Andrea Nunez (DCRS), Cheryl Mattis (Deputy Director Howard County Department of Community Resources and Services).

Others in Attendance: Kathy Jordan, HoCo AGAST, David Ruiz, Office of Human Rights.

MEETING SUMMARY:

1. MEETING OPEN

- a. 12:35 pm; Andrea Nunez, Office of Human Trafficking Prevention Manager, called the meeting to order.

Ms. Nunez welcomed virtual attendees to the initial meeting of the HTPCC Legislation and Policy Committee. It was noted that Lt. Eric Kruhm would be unable to attend.

2. New Business

- a. Committee Roles: Ms. Nunez shared that Monica Krebs volunteered to serve as Chair of the HTPCC Legislation and Policy committee. Jon Steuernagle expressed interest in the role; no other interest was expressed.

- b. Long-Term Planning: Andrea Nunez suggested creating an overall plan to focus committee efforts.

Andrea shared her expectations for the committee to focus on monitoring state legislation to draft recommendations for the county Executive's Office and to bring forth new ideas and initiatives to improve the state and/ or county's response to human trafficking.

Monica Krebs shared additional recommendations to review state report cards published by Polaris to identify what legislation other states have in place and areas where Maryland could improve, at both the state and county level.

- c. State Legislation Proposals: Ms. Nunez shared on behalf of Lt. Eric Kruhm, an idea to fix the discrepancy between state and federal guidelines on registering as a sex offender following human trafficking convictions. Currently the state of Maryland is inconsistent with Federal guidelines.

Rich Gibson, Howard County State's Attorney, expressed support for the potential legislation. He noted that guidelines should be consistent at the federal and state levels. Furthermore, it would be beneficial to look at other state's legislation.

Dave Francis, Office of the Chief of Police, noted that Sara Cochran, AGAST, is currently reviewing other state's legislation in this regard.

Andrea Nunez proposed that the committee conduct research into this matter to determine other state's approaches and best practices. Members were encouraged to contact Andrea directly if interested in coordinating research efforts.

Rich Gibson shared a recent casual conversation with Congressman Kweisi Mfume (who's district represents Baltimore City, Baltimore County and parts of Howard County) about funding the creation of a data tracking tool to allow law enforcement agencies to quickly access and partner victims needs with adequate services. He adding to potential legislation to help address an issue the county is experiencing.

Andrea and Kathy Jordan noted that this would likely overlap with the existing National Human Hotline, which Polaris, a national organization based in D.C., offers: a similar database that connects with vetted law enforcement and service providers nationwide with the goal of swiftly pairing victims with needed services. State report cards are produced annually and occasionally, county-wide data is available, which Andrea noted she recently received for Howard and surrounding counties and will share with the HTPCC.

- d. Direct Outreach to Victims of Labor Trafficking: Andrea shared a summary of some of her work to date, in partnership with HopeWorks, to collaborate with organizations around the country to increase understanding of how to connect with victims of labor trafficking and to organize direct outreach initiatives. Andrea Nunez expressed interest in focusing committee efforts on increasing direct outreach to labor trafficking victims, including H2B and H2A workers throughout the County.

Savanna Khoury, HopeWorks, noted that there are low numbers of labor trafficking reported in the county. The organization is currently working to improve language that would better capture labor trafficking.

- e. Training and Public Awareness Initiatives: Stephen Liggett-Creel expressed continued importance to educate the public on what to look for and how to intervene appropriately if they suspect human trafficking.

Kathy Jordan proposed adding recorded presentations and/ or trainings to the county website to provide free information to the public.

Andrea Nunez agreed and referenced her long-term workplan in support for updating the county website to provide readily available information to the public.

Andrea also shared her intention to train the entire county workforce to recognize signs of human trafficking. She will be drafting a template for department training.

Monica Krebs voiced support and expressed it would be helpful to train health department workers who may be going into illicit massage parlors and other environments where trafficking may occur.

Jay Prager, Health Department, also expressed support and explained that the health department does not routinely go into those facilities. Most inspections occur at any facility that handles food, including stores and restaurants, and conducting swimming pool inspections at the beginning of summer. He did confirm that the department is complaint-based and will investigate when a report is made. He noted training would be helpful for workers to report to the appropriate authorities.

5. Announcements and Events of Importance

- a. September 17: Human Trafficking Prevention Coordination Council Meeting, 1:00 pm – 2:30 pm
- b. October 6: Human Trafficking Prevention Council of Howard County Virtual Meet & Greet for representatives of our faith community and civic organizations, 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm.

6. Additional Items for Discussion

- a. Savanna Khoury, HopeWorks, introduced discussion about organizing a survivor panel to be present during the full HTPCC meetings.

Andrea Nunez explained her request for survivors to speak with the committee about survivorship and provide guidance on how to engage positively and respectfully with survivors. Andrea describes a two-part discussion, one in partnership with HopeWorks allowing time for questions, and a second discussion in the future with a survivor present.

Monica Krebs expressed that she had shared this request with colleagues, who identify as survivors of human trafficking, however, has not received any feedback.

7. Next Coordination Council Meeting Date(s)

- a. The next meeting of the HTPCC Legislation and Policy Committee will be held in November. The meeting will be virtual.

8. ADJOURNMENT:

- a. 1:37 pm; Andrea Nunez motioned to conclude the meeting; all members agreed. The meeting concluded.



Minutes were drafted by: Briana Davis

Monica Krebs

Chair

Notes:

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

Attachments:

- A) Agenda (?)