

**Center for Crime Victim Services  
Board Meeting Minutes  
April 17, 2023**

**Board Members Present:** Bob Paolini, Susie Carr, Richard Katzman, Alycia Post.

**Absent:** Susan Ide. **Staff Members Present:** Jennifer Poehlmann, Carol Morgan, Jodie Bacon, Maria Gibbs, Michelle Pelletier, Carol Brochu, Melinda Meyer, Gene Nelson. **Absent:** Abby Gladstone-Strobel.

The meeting was called to order at 1:33 PM.

### **REVIEW MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

The Board reviewed the meeting minutes of March 20, 2023, and unanimously approved them as presented.

### **COMPENSATION PROGRAM REPORT**

Jodie Bacon presented Compensation reports for March 2023. A total of 41 regular claims were received this March, compared to 32 the previous March. A total of 13 sexual assault (SA) claims were received, compared to 18 the previous March. Comparing the current fiscal year (FY23) to the previous fiscal year (FY22), regular claims had increased 13.61% year-to-date, compared to the same period in the previous fiscal year; while year-to-date SA claims had decreased by 20.59%. In March 2023 the highest expenses were for claims related to Domestic Assault, followed by Aggravated Assault. Jodie remarked that recently claims related to domestic violence seemed to involve more injuries than was typical in the past. It was also noted that Year-to-Date expenses for Homicide were \$100K higher in the current fiscal year than at the same point in the previous fiscal year. The Compensation Report was accepted as presented.

### **COMPENSATION DISCUSSION RE: ELIGIBILITY OF HALF-SIBLINGS IN HOMICIDE CLAIMS**

Carol Morgan led the discussion, advising that the statute governing eligibility for the compensation program did not specifically include half-siblings. She asked for Board guidance on whether half-siblings of homicide victims should be considered automatically eligible for compensation, or if such eligibility should be decided by the Board on a case-by-case basis. After discussion, Alycia Post made motion that half-siblings be automatically eligible. The Board agreed, voting unanimously in favor of that approach.

### **RESTITUTION UNIT REPORT**

Michelle Pelletier presented the Restitution Unit (RU) report for March 2023. This March, the RU's Case Managers brought in \$57.4K and more than \$70K came in via tax offsets. A total of 68 Restitution Judgement Orders (RJOs) were received from around the state; with the largest amount (24) coming from Chittenden County, followed by Washington County with 10. Michelle advised that a lot of drug-related deaths are of offenders who owe restitution. In an effort to minimize traumatizing family members of deceased offenders, RU staff were investigating whether the state's Vital Records office could provide useful information to the RU. On a positive note, Michelle related

that three youthful offenders had split their total balance-due and successfully paid off \$30K in restitution to the victim. The Restitution Report was accepted as presented.

## FINANCIAL REPORT

Carol Brochu presented the Financial Report through March 2023. She was happy to report that the balances in all CCVS's special funds were now "in the black." Revenues in March were not as good as in February, but were still much improved, compared to the previous fiscal year. The one-time general fund appropriation coming to CCVS had been helpful, and CCVS was doing a good job keeping overall expenses down as much as possible. The Financial Report was accepted as presented.

## CENTER UPDATE

Jennifer Poehlmann provided updates on several matters. She noted that this year, National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) would be celebrated the week of April 23<sup>rd</sup> to April 29<sup>th</sup>, with the theme: "Survivor Voices: Elevate. Engage. Effect Change." The Center would be hosting an in-person event at the Capital Plaza, with an advanced workshop in the morning and a keynote speaker in the afternoon, followed by the annual awards ceremony. During this week, the Center would broadcast two new episodes of its podcast, The Mend, featuring two Vermont survivors. These two survivors also lent their faces and quotations to some beautiful posters promoting the theme of the week and the event on the 28<sup>th</sup>; the posters had been distributed across VT. Approximately 80 people were currently registered.

There had been significant progress made relative to the Victim/Survivor Advisory Group. The first group of survivors had been interviewed and identified, and CCVS would be starting their orientation and training process shortly. CCVS was very eager to have their voices, both as internal advisors to the Center as well as advisors on "external" matters and to allied agencies and communities.

The Legislature continued to operate at a frenetic pace, and Jennifer highlighted a couple of the **policy bills** with recent action:

- H.41, relating to referrals of DV/SV cases to community justice centers, passed both the House and Senate; the Center has a significant role in defining this process and establishing guardrails;
- S.14, relating to trends and reporting on criminal justice reinvestments; the Center currently has a role in guiding these recommendations; on the way back to Senate;
- S.17, relating to sheriff reform; provision within the bill bans LEAs from billing victims with RFAOs for "stand-by services"; On way to House;
- S.89, relating to establishments of a forensic facility and S.91 relating to insanity and incompetency;
  - These two Bills are really "companion bills" that seek to address issues raised a couple of years ago. The Center has worked very closely on these bills with two homicide survivors. Thus far, we have been able to secure additional rights to notification, information and a right to be heard for victims/survivors in mental health proceedings.

Relative to the FY24 Budget, Jenn noted that:

- The House had passed out the budget – CCVS got all of our "asks";
  - Jenn reminded the Board that our "ask" related to:
    - increasing the amount of surcharge dollars the Center receives by reallocating money the GF receives to our SFs;
    - shifting three positions from grant funds to general funds (2 VSP advocates and DV trainer)
    - Increasing GF base by 3% (House gave us more than asked for).

- Also, at this time, it looks like the House will be proposing an increase of \$20 to the marriage license fee – which will in part benefit the DV/SV Fund that supports domestic and sexual violence programming in Vermont. There was more to come on the fee increase. The FY24 Budget was off to the Senate.

**DISCUSSION RE: THE CENTER’S “IDEA” (INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND ACCESSIBILITY) PROCESS**

Grants Manager Gene Nelson informed the board on this federal initiative, which is required for all recipients of federal funding, including C CVS and its sub-grantees. Gene requested that the Board members familiarize themselves with the IDEA materials she provided, and the Board agreed to go over the requirements with her more fully this June.

**MEETING ADJOURNED:** Motion was made, seconded, and voted unanimously to adjourn. Adjourned at 2:55 PM.

**Next VCCVS Board Meeting Date:**

**Monday,**

**May 15, 2023**

**1:30 PM**

**In the conference room at**

**60 South Main Street, Waterbury.**