

Virtual Meeting

MINUTES¹

Thursday, 16 September 2021

ATTENDANCE:

Members Present: Yolanda Sonnier, Jon Steuernagle, Jackie Scott, Cheryl Mattis, Andrea Nunez, Andrew Heiliger, Alicia Altamirano, Jennifer W. Ritter, Jessica Epps, Lt. Eric Kruhm, Stephen Liggett Creel, Mariam Imohi, Leslie Lampieri, Sara Cochran, Mariana Izraelson, Christina J. Bostick, Vinitha Nithianandam and Tamera Bulla

Members Absent: Monica Krebs, Dina Ward, Chuck Chandler, Lisa Davis, Maura Rossman, Lisa Myers, Rich Gibson, Dave Francis and Donna Bauer.

Others in Attendance: Jennifer Jones, Briana Davis, Kathy Jordan, Leslie Petak, Susan Allen, Nick Weikel and Monica Agusti.

MEETING SUMMARY:

1. MEETING OPEN

- a. 1:00 pm; Yolanda Sonnier, Chair, Howard County Human Trafficking Prevention Coordination Council (HTPCC), opened the meeting by welcoming committee members.

Andrea Nunez introduced the two newly appointed members of the Coordination Council, Christina J. Bostick and Vinitha Nithianandam.

2. Establishment of Quorum and Recognition of Special Guests

- a. The Roll was taken: Seventeen Committee members were in attendance. Yolanda Sonnier declared the Committee was in quorum and brought the meeting to order.

3. Consideration of Meeting Minutes

- a. Ms. Sonnier entered the 20 May 2021 Committee minutes and opened for discussion. Jessica Epps motioned to accept the minutes as written. Mariana Izraelson and Jon Steuernagle seconded the motion. A voice vote of official members was taken and approved without opposition. Christina J. Bostick abstained from the vote.

4. June-August Events and Old Business

- a. Training, Outreach and Partnerships Committee Updates: Nick Weikel, Chair, reported the committee started planning Domestic Violence Awareness Month and has spoken with Mariam Imohi about partnering with HopeWorks. Currently, there is a Candlelight Vigil² being held on October 7, 2021 at 7:00pm.

Nick Weikel also shared the committee has continued discussion around expanding community contacts and identifying different venues for presentations, such as civic groups and faith-based

organizations. He encouraged members to share opportunities with their contacts and reach out to the TOP Committee to request and schedule trainings for their groups.

Andrea Nunez added that OHTP has drafted a few preliminary social media posts for members to share on personal social media accounts. Once these have been finalized, the committee will review and share with the full Coordination Council.

Yolanda Sonnier expressed the recommendation to create a partnership with Howard County Public Schools to provide training among high school students.

Jon Steuernagle shared that high school students have community service requirements, noting the opportunity to recruit students to volunteer with training and raising awareness within the school system.

- b. Policy and Legislation Committee Updates:** Andrea Nunez provided the committee report on behalf of Committee Chair, Monica Krebs. The committee has shifted focus to be more data driven and evidence based by reviewing current peer-reviewed research articles and discussing considerations for policy initiatives. In the future, the committee has expressed interest in reviewing quarterly performance reports and supporting to draft protocols to govern the Coordination Council.

5. New Business

- a. Planning for Future Events:** Yolanda Sonnier, Chair, opened discussion for planning October Domestic Violence Awareness Month and January Human Trafficking Awareness Month.

Jessica Epps expressed the potential to organize a virtual panel discussion, however, noted concern that due to the virtual nature the event may not be well attended and/ or have little participation from attendees. She also suggested running a social media campaign throughout the month of October. The Department of Community Resources and Services has a Facebook and Instagram account which they could post content for OHTP.

Yolanda Sonnier posed the question to members whether their organizations were planning any events and would be interested in partnering with the HTPCC.

Mariam Imohi confirmed that HopeWorks has scheduled the Candlelight Vigil, but she is not aware of any additional events. She noted that she will connect Andrea Nunez and Nick Weikel with the Community Engagement Department which coordinates events.

Andrea Nunez shared the HTPCC has organized a Red Sand event for the past two years to commemorate January Human Trafficking Awareness Month. She suggested the council consider trying something new.

Stephen Liggett Creel shared that the Family Investment Team at CPS recently created a short video highlighting their work. He expressed the Coordination Council could create something



similar with HTPCC members, local leaders and/or prominent community members. The video could be shared on social media and other platforms.

- b. Presentation: OVC Performance Report Summary:** Andrea Nunez presented a summary of the initial OVC Performance Report for the period of April 1- June 30, 2021.

Yolanda Sonnier, Christina J. Bostick, Vinitha Nithianandam thanked Andrea Nunez for the presentation, expressing the information was helpful.

Mariam Imohi also thanked Andrea Nunez and further clarified the duplication within the reported numbers.

Lt. Eric Kruhm reflected on the number of identified Labor Trafficking Cases. He shared his team is seeking training to increase capacity around labor trafficking investigations and recently attended a national training in Florida. One of his key takeaways from the conference, was that they were operating comparatively to law enforcement efforts in other states and jurisdictions, confirming they are on the right path. Lt. Eric Kruhm also shared that other jurisdictions are increasing identification of labor trafficking through civilian led outreach efforts coordinated with police. Depending on the region and demographics, the outreach may be conducted by task force members or an advocacy group, like the local organization, Luminus (previously FIRN).

Yolanda Sonnier agreed Luminus would be an ideal partner. She asked Andrea Nunez if she would be willing to contact the organization to ask about partnering with the Coordination Council, as well as the potential for them to present during a future Council meeting.

Andrea Nunez stated she previously approached the organization about partnering with the Coordination Council, however, they did not have the capacity to do so at that time. She expressed she would follow back up with the organization.

6. Announcements and Events of Importance

- a.** September 27: Federal Sentencing Hearing and Press Conference, 8:00am- 1:00pm.
- b.** October 29: Training Outreach and Partnerships Committee Meeting, 10:00am-11:00am.
- c.** November 18: Human Trafficking Prevention Coordination Council Full Meeting, 1:00pm – 2:30pm.

7. Additional Items for Discussion

- a.** The Federal Case Sentencing Hearing and Press Conference was postponed to September 27, 2021. The press conference will be held at 8:00am with the Sentencing Hearing scheduled for 9:30am. Members of the HTPCC are invited to attend and stand in solidarity for the victims. More information will be shared with members at a later date.



8. Next Coordination Council Meeting Date(s)

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

9. ADJOURNMENT:

- a. 2:12 pm; Yolanda Sonnier closed the meeting and directed the Council to stand in adjournment until 18 November 2021.

Minutes were drafted by: Briana Davis

Yolanda Sonnier, Chair



Notes:

- 1) The meeting was conducted virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2) More information regarding the Candlelight Vigil can be found on HopeWorks events page, <https://hopeworksofhc.org/event/hopeworks-annual-candlelight-vigil/>.