



## Virtual Meeting

### MINUTES<sup>1</sup>

Thursday, 18 November 2021

#### ATTENDANCE:

**Members Present:** Yolanda Sonnier, Jackie Scott, Cheryl Mattis, Andrea Nunez, Monica Krebs, Dina Ward, Chuck Chandler, Alicia Altamirano, Jessica Epps, Lt. Eric Kruhm, Lauren Blake, Sara Cochran, Mariana Izraelson, Vinitha Nithianandam.

**Members Absent:** Jon Steuernagle, Christina J. Bostick, Lisa Meyers, Lisa Davis, Leslie Lampieri, Andrew Heiliger, Stephen Liggett Creel, Maura Rossman, Lisa Myers, Rich Gibson, Jennifer W. Ritter, Dave Francis, Tamera Bulla and Donna Bauer.

**Others in Attendance:** Jodi Finkelstein, Briana McNemar, Michael Phan, Kathy Jordan, Leslie Petak, Susan Allen, Nick Weikel and Suellen Seigel.

#### 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 Lauren Blake, a representative from Howard County Public Schools who is replacing Lisa Davis as an appointed member of the Coordination Council.

##### 2. Establishment of Quorum and Recognition of Special Guests

- a. The Roll was taken: Thirteen 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 16 September 2021 Committee minutes and opened for discussion. Jessica Epps motioned to accept the minutes as written. Vinitha Nithianandam seconded the motion. A voice vote of official members was taken and approved without opposition or abstentions.

##### 4. September-October Events and Old Business

- a. Training, Outreach and Partnerships Committee Updates: Briana McNemar, provided the report on behalf of Chair, Nick Weikel. The committee has discussed ideas for future awareness and outreach events, including January Human Trafficking Awareness Month. Recommendations included: organizing a speaker series; engaging school clubs/ organizations to raise awareness; and collaborate with Regional Task Forces. To assist with future events planning, the committee is creating a 2022 events calendar that will be shared with the full Coordination Council at a later date.

## 5. New Business

- a. January Human Trafficking Awareness Month Planning: Andrea Nunez led discussion in planning events to commemorate January Human Trafficking Awareness Month. She presented several suggestions to the Full Committee and opened for discussion.

One suggestion was to conduct a social media campaign throughout the month, publishing content weekly focused on debunking myths of human trafficking. Monica Krebs expressed support but noted it may be more successful if planned in conjunction with other events; creating greater opportunity for community engagement.

Another suggestion voiced by Andrea Nunez was to organize a community supply donation drive, collecting clothing, essential household and personal care supplies, gift cards, cell phones, laptops, etc. Vinitha Nithianandam inquired about servicing the donated cell phones, specifically about obtaining SIM cards and access to data service. Monica Krebs stated she is aware of other organizations that collect cell phones and donate to survivors but is unfamiliar with the logistical details. She noted she would follow up with more details.

Andrea Nunez described conducting outreach through partnership with local fair-trade businesses, such as Mad City Coffee, to donate a portion of the proceeds to TurnAround. HTPCC members would also be onsite handing out flyers to raise awareness in the community. Additional outreach to include the Columbia mall was recommended to reach youth in the community. Suellen Seigel and Chuck Chandler offered to facilitate introductions to mall management.

Lastly, Andrea Nunez detailed plans to host a documentary screening of *Trafficked in America* followed by a panel discussion in partnership with the Public Library System and the Office of Human Rights and Equity (OHRE). Yolanda Sonnier voiced support and shared that the OHRE has been successfully hosting in person book clubs at the library. She suggested an option for hybrid, such as streaming the panel discussion via Facebook live.

Jodi Finkelstein, Coordinator for Montgomery County Human Trafficking Taskforce, shared that the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force is organizing a state-wide walk on January 16, 2022. Local taskforces are encouraged to participate within their jurisdictions and to post pictures of their group on social media.

Vinitha Nithianandam expressed interest in engaging with school groups to raise awareness, noting there has been past involvement from two local high school groups. Jackie Scott noted the Local Children's Board has established relationships within the school district and can facilitate in-house connections.

Yolanda Sonnier concluded the planning discussion, requesting event details be sent to the Full Coordination Council once finalized, including a sign-up genius for volunteers.

- b. Core Team and Grant Updates: Andrea Nunez announced that Mariam Imohi and Tyra Hill have resigned from HopeWorks, rendering the Anti-Trafficking Department inactive. OHTP has thus terminated the subaward agreement with HopeWorks and is in the process of moving grant

funds to a new victim services provider, TurnAround. TurnAround is currently receiving bridge funding while awaiting final OVC Approval.

Mariana Izraelson, Grassroots, noted there has been a significant increase in calls to the crisis hotline and expressed the need to connect with TurnAround for service provision. Andrea offered to facilitate introductions with TurnAround to establish a referral process between the two organizations.

## **6. Announcements and Events of Importance**

- a. November 30: Retirement of Police Chief Lisa Myers. Yolanda Sonnier extended gratitude and well wishes.
- b. December 17: Training Outreach and Partnerships Committee Meeting, 10:00am-11:00am.
- c. January 20: Human Trafficking Prevention Coordination Council Full Meeting, 1:00pm – 2:30pm.

## **7. Additional Items for Discussion**

- a. Andrea Nunez provided a summary of the Federal Sentencing Hearing of Charles Nabit in late September. A recording of the press event is available on the Howard County Office of Human Trafficking Prevention website<sup>2</sup>.
- b. Nick Weikel inquired whether the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force was focused on any upcoming legislation. Andrea Nunez confirmed the state taskforce is supporting the Safe Harbor Bill.
- c. Chuck Chandler extended appreciation to Andrea Nunez and Lt. Eric Kruhm for taking the time to have conversations with Hotel Management throughout the county. They held a meeting on October 13, 2021 in which management from six local hotels registered, one was in attendance.
- d. If members are interested in joining the TOP and/or Policy and Legislative subcommittees, contact Briana McNemar to be added to the respective listserv.
- e. In closing, Yolanda Sonnier thanked the Full Council for their continued work in the full committee as well as smaller subcommittees. Jackie Scott in turn, thanked Yolanda Sonnier and Andrea Nunez for their leadership.

## **8. Next Coordination Council Meeting Date(s)**

- a. The next meeting of the Howard County Human Trafficking Prevention Coordination Council will be held January 20, 2022. The meeting will be virtual.

## **9. ADJOURNMENT:**

- a. 2:20 pm; Yolanda Sonnier closed the meeting and directed the Council to stand in adjournment until 20 January 2022.

Minutes were drafted by: Briana McNemar

Yolanda Sonnier, Chair



**Notes:**

- 1) The meeting was conducted virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2) Access the recording of the press event on the OHTP website, <https://www.howardcountymd.gov/OHTP>.