



**Fourth Judicial District  
Family Violence Coordinating Council  
Serving Hennepin County**

**Present:** Shereen Askalani, Lila Bolke, Jackie Braun-Lewis, Holly Knight, Jacob Kraus, Sarah Lockhart, Siri Lokensgard, Amy Likens, Penny McTigue, Melynda Nelson, John Phung, Jessica Rahier, Rachel Ratner, Jennifer Saunders, Grace Spearman, Elsa Swenson, Kari Torborg, Michael Weinstein, Kate Wilson

**1. Welcome**

Committee Co-Chairs Referee Holly Knight and Judge Shereen Askalani welcomed the group.

**2. Approve November Minutes**

Minutes approved as submitted.

**3. Committee Reports – FVCC Committee Chairs**

Committee Chairs shared end-of-year reports:

- a. **Juvenile Committee:** Jacob Kraus reported that the Juvenile Committee was able to successfully continue its collaboration efforts despite the ongoing pandemic. The committee was pleased to facilitate a speaker in May and bring back the Domestic Violence Resource Fair in October (held virtually). The committee also hosted three virtual trainings in 2021. They look forward to assisting with Council with action items in the year ahead.
- b. **Criminal Committee:** Jennifer Saunders reported that the focus of many of the Criminal Committee's meetings in 2021 were around the impact of the pandemic on cases and victims. Committee meetings were also an excellent venue to receive court updates.
- c. **Civil Committee:** Michael Weinstein reported that the virtual format of Civil Committee meetings has led to an increase in attendance and engagement from its members. Committee meetings continue to be an excellent venue to share agency updates and gather information. Michael highlighted the OFP Work Group as a success stemming from the Civil Committee in 2021. The committee plans to host three listening sessions in early 2022 and continue its efforts to promote trainings on OFP calendar best practices and find opportunities to cross-train with justice partners.
- d. **Advocate Committee:** Rachel Ratner reported the Advocate Committee has been using its monthly meetings to share important agency and service-related updates and to keep one another apprised on what advocates are seeing and experiencing. The Advocate Committee had good representation on the OFP Work Group. They intend to focus on training opportunities in 2022.

**4. Agency Updates – All**

**Kate Wilson & Jessica Rahier, Family Court, Fourth District** – Staff are working hard to process cases efficiently given the existing pandemic case backlog. Family Court has recently created Requests for Hearings in multiple languages that are being shared with court customers. Remote hearings will continue with no immediate plans to return to in-person, and Presiding Judges in Family Court are reviewing a proposal looking at new ways to serve respondents based on how they appear (remote or in-person).

**Elsa Swenson, Missions, Inc./Home Free** – The organization is currently short-staffed. A goal is to create a work group specific to HROs that resembles the work of the OFP Work Group.

**Siri Lokensgard, Domestic Abuse Service Center** – Continuing to provide remote services, and the DASC conference room remains open on the Lower Level of the Government Center for participants who need a safe space to talk or a safe phone to use. DASC will remain open during the current high-profile trial.

**Judge Shereen Askalani, Juvenile Court** – Business as usual at the Juvenile Justice Center; no changes to report.

**Michael Weinstein, Family Court Services** – On January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, Family Court Services will transition from the DOCCR to the Department of Health and Human Services and will change its name to Family Mediation and Evaluation. Aside from the new name and rebrand, all else will remain the same (contact information, services, staff). The Family Court Services office at the Family Justice Center remains closed to the public and staff continue to provide services virtually and in-person via COVID-safe home visits. The team is in process of hiring following two retirements.

**Jacob Kraus, Hennepin County Attorney's Office** – Child Protection trial volume has increased despite fewer court filings. A core group of court partners, led by Judges Mark Kappelhoff and Juan Hoyos, gathers regularly to address child protection issues as they arise.

**John Phung, Tubman** – The South Minneapolis Tubman emergency shelter closed 1.5 years ago and the Maplewood shelter remains open. Staffing levels have been consistent, which may be credited to Tubman's fluid work-from-home schedule. Clients report that they appreciate the accessibility of remote hearings.

**Jennifer Saunders, Minneapolis City Attorney's Office** – Staff are generally working in the office on days of court appearances. Their office is dealing with a lot of continuances for trials, evidentiary hearings, etc. that are being held in person, and report their greatest struggle is pushing cases through in this remote environment (as clients' follow-through has waned since the start of the pandemic). Their office is also struggling with judges' limited availability for trials and staff turnover.

**Sarah Lockhart, CornerHouse** – CornerHouse has opened its mental health services to the community. Any children or adolescents who have experienced violence may access therapy services and treatment almost immediately. The organization offers telehealth and onsite services at its two locations.

**Rachel Ratner, Sojourner Project** – The organization has a few upcoming retirements, including the Director role. Sojourner continues to provide remote and in-person services.

**Jackie Braun-Lewis, Judicial Research Unit, Fourth District** – No updates to report, but a plug that the Research Unit is available to share specific court data upon request.

**Ally Likens, Cornerstone** – Almost fully staffed after experiencing some turnover. Cornerstone recently added an embedded sexual assault advocate to its program.

**Melynda Nelson, Hennepin County Probation** – The team is working in a hybrid model, with some interviews taking place in-person and others over TEAMS. No other agency changes to report.

## 5. Open Forum – All

Judge Askalani informed the Council that the January meeting will be held virtually as we await further guidance from the Minnesota Supreme Court on in-person gatherings.

Meeting adjourned at 12:59 p.m.

### **Future Meetings and Presentations**

#### **January 13 – FVCC Meeting**

Use this link to find us on the web:

[http://www.mncourts.gov/Find-Courts/Hennepin/Family-Violence-Coordinating-Council-\(FVCC\).aspx](http://www.mncourts.gov/Find-Courts/Hennepin/Family-Violence-Coordinating-Council-(FVCC).aspx)

Use this link to access our Google Calendar of events:

<https://calendar.google.com/calendar/embed?src=fvcccalendar@gmail.com&ctz=America/Chicago>