

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

Present: Brandon Alkire, Joan Blace, Jackie Braun-Lewis, Katie Brey, Tara Ferguson Lopez, Referee Mike Furnstahl, Grace Henderson, Elizabeth Hogan, Rachel Kraker, Jacob Kraus, Penny McTigue, Aaron Milgrom, Nelson, John Phung, Hon. Kathryn Quaintance, Rachel Ratner, Jim Rowader, Jennifer Saunders, Liselotte Schluender, Kari Torborg, Annie Van Avery, Michael Weinstein, Kate Wilson

1. Welcome

Committee Co-Chair Referee Furnstahl welcomed the group to the Zoom meeting.

2. Approve October Minutes

Minutes approved as submitted.

3. Minneapolis City Attorney Virtual Meet-and-Greet – Jim Rowader, Minneapolis City Attorney

In August 2020 Jim Rowader was appointed the new Minneapolis City Attorney. Jim previously served at Target Corp. as the vice president of general counsel employee and labor relations, and prior to that, he was an attorney for the National Labor Relations Board in Detroit. He also served as the vice chair of the Minneapolis Workplace Advisory Committee.

4. JFF Advocate/Family Bench Listening Session Report – Brandon Alkire, JFF Coordinator

Brandon Alkire, Director of the Justice for Families program, presented on three judicial listening sessions held in September 2020. The listening sessions were attended by Family Court judicial officers and advocates across the domestic violence community, and their conversations focused on three topics: Orders for Protection, quality of service, and courtroom experience. The sessions were facilitated by Brandon alongside Lila Bolke, Staff Attorney for the Family Justice Center.

The following themes emerged from the listening sessions:

- Remote hearings – Advocates and parties would like expanded remote hearing options. This would help with party transportation issues, daycare, pandemic fear, impact of time off from work, and lack/expense of parking.
- In-person OFP hearing at FJC - Confusion on where and how to check-in, deputies appear unhelpful; concern for missing hearings and challenges contacting chambers; advocates would like a universal email or phone number dedicated to answering OFP-related questions.
- Facility services – Concern about lack of plexi barriers on counsel tables, in-consistent wearing of mask by judicial officers, parties, counsel; social distancing requirement being applied to advocates and victims.
- SAMs – Service difficulties; prefer hearings be placed 17 days out instead of 14.
- Law enforcement –Law enforcement refusal to enforce OFPs when there is no personal service; unhelpful on-site deputies who don't answer simple question in a trauma informed manner.

- COVID-19 courthouse policy – advocates were requesting a COVID-19 policy that they can read and hold in their hands to outline next steps when a party is symptomatic for COVID-19 or has had possible exposure
- Guide and File –Concerns with Guide and File, including how to sign up for service, and email messages to petitioners.

Kate Wilson, Court Operation Manager at the Family Justice Center, clarified that Court Administration has already made changes based on this feedback that are within their scope.

Brandon will share this report with Family Court Judges Hatcher and Burns and the Bench will determine next steps moving forward. Brandon and his team will also connect with Judge Hatcher and Court Administration about possibly sharing this feedback with the Sheriff's Office as well.

5. Fatality Review Team Opportunities – Action Step Updates

Committee Chairs updated members on action steps taken to support opportunities outlined in the Fatality Review Team Annual Report.

a. Legislation – Jennifer Saunders, Criminal Committee

Jennifer Saunders addressed the two areas of legislative change in the Fatality Report and noted that the Criminal Committee met in October to discuss these issues. The areas essentially involve three statutes, and the committee reviewed these statutes as far as what they do and do not cover, and preliminarily discussed recommendations for how the statutes could or should be modified. The committee will identify what it wishes to achieve and how, and will bring a recommendation to the Council. A recommendation this year is unlikely, but the committee will continue to discuss best practices based on concerns raised from the Fatality Review Board. The group meets again in December.

b. Court Administration/Criminal Court and Medical – Katie Brey, Executive Committee

Katie Brey reported that the Executive Committee will meet in December to discuss areas of change pertaining to the two Court Administration/Criminal Court opportunities and six Medical opportunities. The Executive Committee will provide a report-out from their discussion at the next FVCC meeting.

c. Family Court/Family Court Services – Michael Weinstein, Civil Committee

The Civil Committee met in September and reviewed the four Family Court/Family Court Services opportunities for intervention. Michael Weinstein reported that there are a few things already in place to address a few of these opportunities; mainly, securing the position of a Resource Coordinator, which is a joint venture between Family Court Services and the Justice For Families grant.

With regard to encouraging use of specially trained staff in highly contested custody cases, there are some structural challenges in terms of hiring. Training efforts of this committee are focused on responding effectively to domestic violence cases and the need for effective intervention in complex cases.

With regard to the fourth opportunity, the Civil Committee noted that it does not have much influence to increase the discretionary appointment of Guardians ad Litem due to budgetary and hire constraints.

The Civil Committee meets again in a few weeks.

d. Law Enforcement – Rachel Ratner, Advocate Committee

The Advocate Committee began discussing the Fatality Report during its last meeting in September. They reviewed the law enforcement areas in terms of gender uniformity practices and language access. The various agencies represented on the Advocate Committee have been tasked with contacting their nearby police departments to gather police policies for further review and discussion during its meeting next week.

e. Juvenile – Jacob Kraus

The Juvenile Committee does not have recommendations outlined in the Fatality Review Board Report.

The Juvenile Committee met on Tuesday of this week to discuss plans moving forward. They discussed ways to get to know what everyone is up to and how work is being handled during the pandemic, and they brainstormed speaker ideas for both the committee and FVCC at large.

6. Agency Updates – All

- Jennifer Saunders, Minneapolis City Attorney's Office: The Criminal Division of the Minneapolis City Attorney's Office is undergoing a reorganization and will no longer have a specialized group of attorneys handling domestic violence cases. Instead, all eighteen attorneys will be on rotation to appear for domestic violence arraignments and trials. Jennifer will train these attorneys and equip them with resources. They will continue to have a dedicated victim witness specialist, and will use available funding to explore a possible diversion program. The City Attorney's Office will continue doing resource referrals for members of the public in violent criminal hot spots who have called 911 yet no report was taken, and hire a triage coordinator to ensure those families get the help they need.
- Rachel Ratner, Sojourner Project: Advocates at Sojourner Project are trying to track down Zoom information for in-custody criminal hearings, which Rachel stated has not been an easy feat. Katie Brey will investigate some connections for Rachel's team to make this easier.
- Annie Van Avery, DAP: All five DAP programs remain fully operational with the majority of the work is being conducted via telehealth, with the exception of advocacy. DAP has the capacity to support more clients through its expanded Change Step Program. Additionally, DAP is able to take on more early childhood clients. While most DAP programs have substantial waitlists, Annie asked agencies to consider referrals for these two areas.

7. Open Forum – All

- Katie Brey announced the Executive Committee decision to cancel the December FVCC meeting. The Council will reconvene on January 14, 2021.
- There was open discussion about service issues. Rachel Kraker expressed concern about the limited ability of the HC Sheriff to service OFPs, referencing DASC customers who need to reapply for order because of lack of service on the original order. Katie Brey affirmed services fees are waived by statute, reducing the ability for the Sheriff to use vendor assistance with this task. Michael Weinstein, Civil Committee chair, outlined continuing efforts by his committee to address the issue of service, and he continues to pursue representation from the Sheriff's Office at either Civil Committee meetings. Katie Brey confirmed there is a member of the HC Sheriff on the full council. or FVCC meetings would

be beneficial. Rachel Ratner recently connected with a Sergeant from the Sheriff's Office regarding service issues and was told that there are new challenges with service – people are hesitant to answer their doors due to COVID, and they are not appearing in court due to COVID. The Sheriff's Office is addressing these issues with the City Attorney's Office.

Meeting adjourned at 1:18 p.m.

Next Meeting
January 14, 2021

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[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>