



FOURTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Family Violence Coordinating Council  
January 14, 2021  
Minutes

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

**Present:** Alkire, Brandon; Askalani, Judge Shereen; Boswell, Vernona; Braun-Lewis, Jackie; Brey, Katie; Coy, Erica; Ferguson, Tara; Furnstahl, Referee Mike; Gonsalves, Sara; Hogan, Elizabeth; Kaul, Ann; Keefe, Armirthini; Kraker, Rachel; Kraus, Jacob; Lokensgard, Siri; McTigue, Penny; Milgrom, Aaron; Nelson, Melynda; Phung, John; Quaintance, Judge Kathryn; Ratner, Rachel; Saunders, Jennifer; Smith, DeAna; Swenson, Elsa; Torberg, Kari; Vickerman, Maggie; Voss, Sonya; Weinstein, Michael; Wilson, Kate.

1. Judge Quaintance greeted members, and introduced Judge Shereen Askalani. Currently assigned to Juvenile Court, Judge Askalani will take over as co-chair from Judge Quaintance. Transition details are still being finalized.
2. The November minutes were approved.
3. Members were updated on FVCC Executive Committee assigned opportunities.
  - Judge Quaintance reported the Committee reviewed the bullet points surrounding the medical opportunities, and concluded that, similar to the legislative opportunities, they would be inappropriate to pursue. Deena Anders, Fatality Review Team Executive Director, will be encouraged to share the medical opportunities with Hennepin Health or another medical group. The Council currently does not have a member from the medical community and would greatly value their representation. Judge Quaintance encouraged members to contact her or Katie Brey with potential member names.
  - Jennifer Saunders updated members on efforts to work with the bench and court administration surrounding judicial education about domestic violence. Working with Probation's Eric May, she will create a bench card; present at a future bench meeting; and update new judge training material. Judge Quaintance is on the judicial Education Committee and Jennifer will work with her to schedule a presentation for the entire bench.
4. Committee reports were provided via an attachment to the meeting invite and are attached to these minutes.

5. Multiple representatives were invited to present on their agency response to Covid.

**District Court** – Sara Gonsalves, Deputy District Administrator, presented on behalf of District Court. Per Ms. Gonsalves, with a handful of exceptions, the majority of hearings remain remote. A limited number of counters remain open to provide specific services: Centralized Counter (triage); Record Center (public access terminals from 8AM-noon); PSF (bail payments); Psych Services (psych appointments). A limited number of Ipads are available to on site customers who arrive at the courthouse confused about how they should be appearing. State Court leaders and the Chief Justice are meeting this week to address provisions in the order that expires on Jan 31. Use this link [https://www.mncourts.gov/mncourtsgov/media/fourth\\_district/documents/4thDist-COVID-19-Info-Guide.pdf](https://www.mncourts.gov/mncourtsgov/media/fourth_district/documents/4thDist-COVID-19-Info-Guide.pdf) for up to date information about what is open and what is closed.

**Domestic Abuse Service Center** – DeAna Smith, DASC director, presented on behalf of her agency. Ms. Smith assured members that DASC's complete compliment of services are available to victims via remote technology. Culturally specific advocates continue to be available upon request. In addition, Hennepin County Government Center conference room LL0720 is available for on-site victims who need assistance. Tables with phones are available during business hours and one Hennepin County Sheriff's deputy is assigned to the room. Information regarding services is available on the DASC website, and thru social media. In order to determine what services will look like in the future, all customers are offered a survey. Sara Gonsalves and Ms. Smith will connect on finding similar statewide survey information. Questions and results:

- Do you feel safe using the phone to contact an advocate? (100% said yes);
- Was the respondent home when you called? (95% said no);
- Did phone access to services remove barriers? (96% said yes);
- Do you prefer access to services via phone or in-person? (77% said phone; 13% said either);
- Did you have any challenges with the available technology? (93% said no);
- Do you prefer to attend hearing in person or thru remote means? (63% said remote; 21% in-person, and 11% either).

**Family Court Services (FCS)** – Michael Weinstein, FCS supervisor, presented on behalf of his agency. FCS has been entirely remote since February 2020 and will continue to provide remote services thru March 2021. All services are available and when asked, Mr. Weinstein stressed there is no back-log or waiting list for services. Remote services has provided a safer place for party participation. Break out rooms are utilized for ENE's and for domestic violence cases.

**Minneapolis City Attorney (MCA)** – Jennifer Saunders, MCA Criminal Division Supervising Attorney, presented on behalf of her agency. Ms. Saunders reported all hearings are being heard remotely, per the Chief Justice's order. Her staff are able to meet with victims using remote technology and provide info via email. The victims are able to appear at hearing via Zoom through the coordination of the Victim Witness staff. A contact employee, Carrie Crockford, is triaging domestic coded 911 calls in the violent crime hot spots that did not result in a police report so that the families who reached out for help can be referred to appropriate resources and services. She works closely with CeCe Rude, the domestic violence community navigator for

the city, in those referrals. CeCe also has been assisting victims in getting OFFP's and providing other domestic violence related services to families.

**Hennepin County Attorney Victim Witness (HCVW)** - Vernona Boswell, HCVW Director, presented on behalf of her agency. Victim Witness advocates provide remote services up until the trial. They also meet with clients on site as needed and employee social distancing, along with face coverings and hand sanitizer. Additional safety measures are employed during remote hearings include dedicated victim/witness break out rooms, and alternative screen names. An increase in violence (over 80 homicides in 2020) as resulted in more first appearances calendar work for advocates since victim families want to be present at those hearings. Similar to DASC, clients are given surveys to fill out so the agency can learn more about what victims need and want.

### **Next Meeting**

February 11, 2021

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://www.google.com/calendar/embed?src=fvccalendar%40gmail.com&ctz=America/Chicago>

## Family Violence Coordinating Council

January 14, 2021  
Committee updates

### Advocates

Committee chair Rachel Ratner reported the advocates met in December. They discussed the impact of Covid on their agencies, victims, service, and their court experiences. Anyone interested in joining the committee should contact Rachel Ratner at [rachelr@sojournerproject.org](mailto:rachelr@sojournerproject.org).

### Civil

Committee chair Michael Weinstein reported the committee met in November and plans to meet again on January 28. They continue to discuss the issues outlined in the October 2020 committee report. In particular, service issue concerns have been shared with HCSO Civil Division Sgt. Valasity and he has been invited to the January meeting. Anyone interested in joining the committee should contact Michael Weinstein at [Michale.Weinstein@hennepin.us](mailto:Michale.Weinstein@hennepin.us).

### Criminal

Committee chair Jennifer Saunders reported the committee met on Dec. 21. "The criminal committee held further discussions on the suggested legislative change by the Fatality Review Board. A detailed summary of the issue and the committee's discussions over two meetings is attached. We also discussed goals for next year, recognizing that there was not FVCC strategic planning process so we will just keep working on issues of concern and interest. The committees will still conduct trainings so the committee was asked to think of ideas. The suggestion of discussing the explosion of mental health issues, both in intimate partner and other family relationships, especially now was raised as a good topic for discussion for 2021. There are very vulnerable defendants with significant MH issues and the MH issues are not addressed with regard to release and conditions, MH services should be brought in earlier and we should close the gap between criminal and civil commitment. There were a few agency updates. There is a new Chief Hennepin County Public Defender starting on 1/1/2021 Kassius Benson. He has more recently been in private practice but was previously with the public defender's office. They are excited to start working with him and feel he will encourage zealous support of the clients while also working on systemic change. Annie Avery has left as the Executive Director of DAP and Amirthini Keefe will be the interim ED. Jennifer discussed the restructure in the criminal division of the MCAO that means all the courtroom attorneys (18 currently) will rotate through the domestic calendars." Anyone interested in joining the committee should contact Jennifer Saunders at [jennifer.saunders@minneapolis.gov](mailto:jennifer.saunders@minneapolis.gov).

### Juvenile

Committee chair Jacob Kraus reported the Juvenile/Child subcommittee met on January 12. "We continued our discussions about planning items for the upcoming year. Members noted that on January 21, from 3:30-5:30, the Youth Justice Council will have its first meeting regarding the current status of the Hennepin County juvenile justice system. The subcommittee also hopes to plan a training to occur in February. More details will be circulated when it is finalized." Those interested in joining the committee should contact Jacob Kraus at [Jacob.Kraus@hennepin.us](mailto:Jacob.Kraus@hennepin.us) or Lisa McNaughton at [Lisa.McNaughton@hennepin.us](mailto:Lisa.McNaughton@hennepin.us).