



CDVSA Executive Director's Update Prepared by L. Diane Casto, Executive Director April - June 2021

An update of CDVSA activities/highlights April – June 2021

Staffing and personnel

The staffing situation at CDVSA, continues to create significant challenges to accomplishing the very busy workload that is upon us as we end Fiscal Year 2021 and begin Fiscal Year 2022. We are currently down three staff – two vacancies and one employee on AFLA. We have vacancies in the Administrative Office 1 position and the Research Assistant 3 position. Our first attempt to seek applicants for the AO 1 resulted in 5 applicants; four were interviewed and it was decided that none of the four meet the experience and skill-level we need for this position. The interview team included me, MaryBeth Gagnon and Rick Silaj, DPS Finance. Following the interviews, it was determined that the level of skill needed for this position will not be met through an AO 1 classification and we decided to move ahead with reclassing the position to an AO 2. While this will take longer, it is better to get the right person, with the right skills and experience, over time.

In the interim, I want to give a "shout out" to DPS Administrative Services, and especially Rick Silaj, Craig Douglas, Robyn Ramos, Liz Freeman and Elizabeth Dunayski for their incredibly gracious assistance to make sure our financial and budgetary tasks are getting done! We could not do it without them. THANK YOU!

The Research Analyst 3 position has proven to be a difficult position to get qualified applicants to apply. We have extended this job recruitment for the fourth time and it will be open through June 29. We have broadened the recruitment to statewide, having decided that this position can function primarily as a telework arrangement. If you know anyone who is passionate about data, evaluation and ending domestic and sexual violence, please pass along this link to WPA:

<https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/alaska/jobs/3096763/research-analyst-3-pcn-12-0090?keywords=Research%20Analyst%203&pagetype=jobOpportunitiesJobs>.



Angela Wells, our Administrative Assistant 2, continues to be on medical leave. She is hopeful she will be able to return part-time before the end of June. But she has not yet been released for work by her medical provider. Her absence is felt even more heavily without having the AO 1 position filled. Again, we extend our thanks to Robyn Ramos and other DPS staff who have stepped in to fill the void.

As mentioned in my last report CDVSA created and received approval to hire a Long-term Non-Perm Office Assistant III to offset the temporary loss of Angela Wells. We recruited, interviewed and hired Rebekah Howard Coronell for this LTNP Office Assistant III. Rebekah began working on May 27 and after some delay in getting her trained and approved to use IRIS, ALDER, GrantVantage, NEOGOV and her email connected and working she is now learning our processes and procedures for accomplishing daily tasks. Moving forward Rebekah will be taking on several tasks that Angie has traditionally done, as well as to assist with catching us up on backlogged data entry into our GrantVantage grants management system.

Shannen O'Brien, our Grant Administrator 2 has submitted her resignation as she is moving out of Alaska to Washington state. She will be moving to Washington at the end of June and has agreed (through a Letter of Agreement with GGU) to work July through September via telework as we begin the process of recruiting a new Grants Administrator. Similar to our AO 1, we are now at a point that a GA 2 classification does not require the level of skill/experience that we need moving forward to manage our extensive grant awards and fiscal monitoring system. MaryBeth Gagnon is beginning the process to reclass our current GA 2 to a GA 3 prior to recruitment. It will take longer but should provide us with a better classification to meet the ongoing needs of this position.

During the current fiscal year, we were very fortunate to have Crystal Bourland as a MSW Practicum student. Her ability to jump in and take over a significant portion of work setting up and organizing our Perpetrator Rehabilitation Workgroup was irreplaceable. For the coming year, we had three students interested in placement with CDVSA; we have accepted two students to work with us from mid-August through April 2022. One student will work with Ann Rausch on the development of our VAWA STOP 4-year state plan and the other student will work with me to support and work with the Perpetrator Rehabilitation Workgroup. Of course, other projects will also be available for the students to work on, but



these two projects will be their primary focus. It is great to have access to such talented and energetic students!

While most CDVSA staff are continuing to work a portion of their time via telework, we are working a greater portion of time in-office. I am full-time in-office, as well as Marjie Hamburger. Everyone else is working 3-4 days in office and 1-2 days telework. The office continues following CDC and DHSS pandemic protocol and safety measures.

CDVSA Funding Challenges

As we discussed at our last Board meeting CDVSA is experiencing a funding deficit for FY2022 Victim Services and Enhanced Services sub-grantees. Due to a sharp and sudden decline in our federal VOCA formula funding, available funds for these grant programs are significantly reduced. Since our meeting in March, CDVSA has devoted significant time, effort and strategizing to work with the administration to find solutions. Additionally, the CDVSA impacted sub-grantees were out in force meeting with legislators, providing public testimony before the House and Senate budget committees and making sure their elected officials understood the impact these cuts (potentially 30-33%) would have on victims, families, communities and the agency's ability to continue providing services to this vulnerable population. At this time, both the House and Senate have agreed to provide CDVSA with \$8.0 million dollars in American Rescue Plan Act funding, money that can be spent through FY2024. These funds will be used to supplement our grant VS and ES grant funding in FY2022, with a portion of the funding to be carried forward into FY2023, to help fill the ongoing VOCA gap.

One of the challenges CDVSA faced was being able to make decisions about FY2022 budget allocations to our VS and ES sub-grantees that represented what funding we *thought* we would have available without having accurate information about the final FY2022 Operating Budget. By May 25 we determined that we needed to move forward, with the best information we had at that time, to provide each VS and ES program with their funding allocation and funding sources. This allocation included a 5% reduction allowing us to be financially responsible, and to hold back a small amount to reserve for FY23. This was especially important since we still do not have solid budget numbers and we don't want to face huge deficits again in FY23. Each of you received a copy of the memo sent to our sub-



grantees to keep you informed of the progress of FY22 funding. We were very happy the projected 30% cuts were not necessary!

During our Q. 4 Board meeting we have over 2 hours to review FY2022 funding allocations, by grant type, and approve funding for the coming fiscal year. This discussion will include the overall CDVSA funding, future budgets, and how we move forward to create and support a stable and sustainable budget to meet the needs of Alaska's victims, families and communities!

On June 28, in Anchorage, Sen. Lisa Murkowski is hosting a VOCA Roundtable to hear from agencies impacted by the significant cuts to VOCA formula allocations. DPS Commissioner James Cockrell, Liz Vazquez, ED of the Violent Crimes Compensation Board (VCCB) and I will be presenting as the agency (DPS) who receives the states allocations of VOCA victim assistance and crime victim compensation. Additionally, several agencies who currently receive VOCA funding will present on the impact of reduced funding as well as the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center and the Denali Commission who will report on the impact to VOCA tribal set-aside funds.

As we have discussed, deposits to this fund have dwindled and without a fix to how and what money is deposited into the Crime Victim Fund (CVF) VOCA funding to states will continue to decrease. The VOCA Fix legislation continues to wait for Senate action.

This will present an opportunity for Alaska to clearly state the importance of this funding stream to meet the needs of victims of crime across Alaska and the importance of having consistent and sustainable funding to reduce the sharp increases and decreases that have occurred over the past 5-6 years.

The Impact of COVID-19 and CDVSA's Response

Our partnership with the DHSS Division of Public Health is continuing; Dr. Liz Pietralczyk has worked tirelessly with our shelter and service programs to focus on ongoing health emergency partnerships with local public health and other health providers. Through this work and using the FVPSA CAREs money Dr. Liz has coordinated the purchase HEPA filters and air systems for shelters (if they need them) and other supplies for access to handwashing, sanitizing and other protective gear. Seventeen of 24 emergency shelter



programs responded and requested items. Everything has been ordered and will be shipped directly to each program.

CDVSA Priority Projects Update

- **CDVSA Sunset Audit** – As discussed at our last Board meeting, the Council is set to terminate June 30, 2022; this is the normal process for state established councils. The required state audit of CDVSA was conducted by the Division of Legislative Audit as required by AS 44.66.

Last quarter I informed you that the CDVSA Sunset Audit kicked off on February 23 with the official audit engagement letter being sent to Board Chair Teresa Lowe and Interim DPS Commissioner Kelly Howell. The audit work was quite intense during the months of March, April and May, with the review of documents, files and established policies and procedures. The auditors, Katina Holmberg and Shanna Entin, spent many hours requesting materials and coming to the office to review paper files. Once they completed their review of documents, they began testing their findings to see if we are following our policies, procedures and practices. Our last communication with Katina Holmberg was June 14, and it appears they have concluded their testing and review.

They are now writing their audit report and they have given us a heads up that there may be three (3) recommendations for improvement to our work. We look forward to seeing the final report, knowing that while we have made great progress with written and clear policies for sub-grantee funding and monitoring in alignment with state and federal requirements, there is always room for improvement and consistency.

- **Alaska Victimization Survey** – We now have PRELIMINARY data/analysis for the 2020 Alaska Victimization Survey. The survey was concluded in late November and Dr. Ingrid Johnson spent several months cleaning and reweighting the data prior to beginning the analysis. Once the data was validated the analysis began with our first peek at the data now available and included in the Board packet. Dr. Ingrid Johnson

will be presenting during the Q. 4 Board meeting immediately following lunch at 1:15 p.m. Dr. Johnson and I will be meeting monthly as additional and more in-depth data analysis is completed. We will keep you informed of progress and when the data will be ready for publishing. For information on past AVS surveys and results go to: <https://www.uaa.alaska.edu/academics/college-of-health/departments/justice-center/research/alaska-victimization-survey/>.

- **Perpetrator Rehabilitation Workgroup** – The Perpetrator Rehabilitation Workgroup has officially started. The membership includes 25 individuals from diverse disciplines, all that have an interest in successful services to impact individuals who perpetrate violence (a copy of the membership list is attached). Our contract facilitators, Denali Daniels and Katie Lauwers, have done a great job getting the WG organized and coordinated; at this time Denali, Katie and I are meeting weekly to stay on top of the initial WG rollout!

By the time of our Q. 4 Board meeting the PR Workgroup will have met three (3) times (the last one on June 23). Our initial meetings aim to provide all WG members with foundational information about the work of perpetrator rehabilitation, what is happening nationally and what is currently happening here in Alaska. In May we had a presentation by the Abusive Partner Intervention Project, from the Center for Court Innovation, to hear about their work nationally and with specific states. As a national TA provider, we can call on them in the future to help us define and design a system informed by data and evidence (although not specifically an evidence-based approach, since no programs have yet to show consistent evidence of reduced violence). During the June meeting we had a presentation by three of our current BIP programs in Juneau, Homer and Fairbanks, providing the WG with valuable information about each program and what's working well, ongoing challenges, and ideas for new approaches.

We are working on creating an online Share File site where all meeting minutes and recordings, as well as resource materials can be stored for access by all Workgroup members and stakeholders. We are considering the program Basecamp, as it appears easy to use and will meet most of our needs. We will pilot the program in

the next couple of weeks with the intent to have a Share File system set up by the end of July.

As I have said many times, this task has been a longtime coming, much overdo and we now feel confident that within the next 18 months, this amazing workgroup will direct the shaping of a high quality, well defined service to meet the needs of this critical population, those who perpetrate domestic and intimate partner violence.

- **Alaska Tele-Support Services project** – Marjie Hamburger, Program Coordinator, staffs and coordinates the Alaska Sexual Assault Response Leadership Team (ASARLT) with a major emphasis on regional and statewide training SART trainings. One need that the Leadership Team discussed is how we can establish a tele-support type system to provide ongoing support to communities and SART teams between training opportunities. This issue became even more critical and urgent as we experienced the pandemic and the inability to hold in-person training. The Teams Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner, Angie Ellis, proposed a plan to launch a tele-medicine type system of technical assistance for communities lacking fully trained and certified forensic medical examiners or those in need of support and guidance due to inexperience. Working in partnership with Dr. Angelia Trujillo, they identified a software program call Doxy.Me that is specifically for use in confidential, clinical type setting. CDVSA secured an account and we now have the Alaska Tele-Support Services system in place. The plan is to start slow, with pilot testing in three rural communities – Ketchikan, Utqiagvik, and Nome. Once the pilot testing is complete and the bugs have been worked out, we intend to make Alaska Tele-Support Services available across the state. During our FY2022 Q.1 Board meeting we will schedule a presentation of this new system.

Other continuing projects are the **CDVSA Language Access Plan** and the **CDVSA 5-year Strategic Plan**, progress continues, but not as quickly as we hoped!

Communications, outreach and media

Walsh|Sheppard, our communications contractor, has created a survey to send to our 35 sub-grantees to solicit information about type of messaging they would like to see, topics,

populations they would like to see targeted, and what type of visuals make the most impact. Once the survey results are analyzed, CDVSA will work with W|S to begin creating new social media messaging for the coming fiscal year. We continue to build a comprehensive and ongoing social media presence regarding key issues related to DVSA – how to access services, you are not alone, help is available, healthy relationships, the importance of consent, and other messages that can be used throughout the year, with specific targeted messages for identified months such as February for Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month; April for Sexual Assault Awareness Month; and October for Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

W|S is continuing to audit our website and recommendations to improve its usability and access, make clear choices about what the website content should be and focus on accessibility for everyone.

We are continuing to promote our message of You Are Not Alone, in response to all DVSA, with an emphasis during the continuing health cautions when many victims and survivors may be isolated.

Upcoming Events:

- Annual Alaska Homicide Memorial Ceremony, July 10 at Hostetler Park in Anchorage, to honor Alaskans who have been lost to homicide over the last year.
- 2021 DOJ 16th Annual Government-to-Government Violence Against Women Tribal Consultation Virtual Event – August 17-20. For information go to: <https://www.ovwconsultation.org/>
- FY 2022 Quarter 1 Board meeting, August or September 2021