



CDVSA Executive Director's Update
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October-December 2021
FY2022 Quarter 2

An update of CDVSA activities/highlights October – December 2021

Staffing and personnel

While CDVSA staffing continues to challenge our ability to function effectively and efficiently, we are making progress. As reported last quarter, Shannen O'Brien ended her time with CDVSA on October 1. The good news is that we were able to engage in a lateral transfer of an existing Grants Administrator 3 from DHSS. Ella Nierra, who worked for us in the past, has rejoined CDVSA as our new Grants Administrator 3 and she is doing a great job. Because she is familiar with CDVSA and our processes, she has had a smooth transition and is making great progress – especially with the implementation of GrantVantage and preparing sub-grantees to use this new tool to enter their budgets, requests for reimbursements, budget amendment requests and other tasks. Certainly, the transition from a manual process to an online process will take time and training, we are confident everyone will eventually benefit from this grant management system where all grant information is saved in one place! Please welcome Ella back to CDVSA.

CDVSA continues to have two vacancies—Administrative Officer 2 and Research Analyst 3.

Regarding the RA 3 position, we established a new Short-term Non-perm RA 3 to assist with critical data collection needs such as federal reporting requirements. Morgan Erisman, our previous RA has agreed to fill in temporarily as a STNP. In addition, we did one final recruitment and received a well-qualified applicant, interviewed her and have submitted a request for approval to hire. We are waiting for the initial background check to be approved so we can offer the position to this individual. Hopefully, by the time we meet I will be able to provide you with good news and more detail about the identified applicant.

Recruitment for the AO 2 position began on September 2. Due to a lack of qualified applicants the recruitment was extended. On our third extension, we received an excellent application; Rick Wolverton, Meggie Stogner and I interviewed the young man and were all extremely impressed



with this individual and felt he was a perfect match for CDVSA. Unfortunately, HR denied us approval to make a job offer because he did not meet the MQ of working two years at a level of a state Accountant 2. Regardless of the fact he has a BBA, is completing his MBA, is currently working for an accounting firm and has excellent competencies—he doesn't meet the identified MQs. We requested, with documentation, a waiver of the MQs based on his excellent knowledge, competencies and education (this is one job class that does not have an educational substitute for experience) and were denied. This has been a very frustrating situation, especially since we are drowning in terms of carrying out our fiscal responsibilities! At this time, we are considering other options, since we have no expectation another state recruitment will generate qualified applicants. There are many open financial positions in Juneau and very few applicants. We are continuing to contemplate our options.

One consolation to our shortage of permanent staff are our two UAA Practicum Students who will be with us until April 2022. Both Karragh Arndt and Jen Anderson are doing a great job; they are focused, committed and eager to learn and take on a variety of projects. Jen has spent many hours doing research, attending workgroup meetings, meeting with providers of services, and supporting the Perpetrator Rehabilitation Workgroup. Jen is also assisting MaryBeth with the first steps of implementation of our Language Access Plan. Karragh has been an invaluable support to Ann Rausch as they work on Alaska's 4-Year State STOP/VAWA plan (on a short timeline) to solicit, collect and analyze input received from CDVSA sub-grantees, collaborators, and all federally recognized Alaska tribes. During the Q. 2 Council meeting, Ann and Karragh will provide an update on the progress being made, timelines for next steps, and a discussion of the process we will use to have the CDVSA Board review and approve the final State Plan before submission (we are still waiting for a final due date).

CDVSA, along with all state agencies, continues to monitor and implement CDC mitigation protocol to keep our office, our colleagues and families safe, while still getting our work done. CDVSA staff continue to work a portion of their time via telework and we are allowing for more flexibility in terms of how many hours are telework vs. in-office work. If staff do not feel comfortable with other staff in the office, they can work at home. We are back to requiring quarantine and testing for anyone traveling out of state and/or exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID. Work-related travel for CDVSA is limited at this time; most activities such as training, meetings, agency reviews are all being held virtually. While everything is working smoothly, we are hopeful the new year will bring additional normality to our work world!



CDVSA Funding Challenges

Basically, everything I said in my September ED report about funding challenges remains the same at this time, along with a few additional challenges resulting from our staff challenges! As they say, everything is connected, and all pieces of the puzzle are necessary to make a whole.

Due to the resignation of Kelly Gohl effective April 1, 2021 and our inability to find and hire a qualified replacement, we have been without a financial officer for CDVSA for 8-months. In addition, our Administrative Assistant was on medical leave for approximately 6 months. For these reasons, CDVSA has struggled to adequately meet the financial needs and adequate management of CDVSA funding. Nothing is causing critical financial issues, but numerous errors need to be repaired and adjusted. We are continuing to "fix" several fiscal issues including missed FY2021 reimbursement payments, final funding allocations identified to the incorrect funding source, over allocating funds to a federal grant year that no longer has funds available, lagging FY2022 advance payments and reimbursements, and delays in payments being processed. We have always worked very hard to have accurate information, timely payment of grant funds to sub-grantees and to have a clear and accurate picture of our overall annual budget. This situation has been incredibly stressful and uncomfortable for all of us.

While we are very grateful for the support and assistance we have received from Rick Wolverton and Craig Douglas, DPS Finance, their staff team has also been without key positions. This has created an untimely combination of CDVSA staff shortages, DPS staff shortages, and non-financial people being asked to manage and make financial decisions, without the full picture. We have been working very diligently (thank you MaryBeth) to untangle the web of grant allocations based on each funding source and federal fiscal year of each funding source.

On a positive note, federal DHHS has received a significant amount of federal ARPA funds that have been distributed to all current FVPSA grant recipients. As indicated below, FVPSA has issued CDVSA (and all other states) 3 new ARPA allocations equaling a total of \$2,397,877. Because this is ARPA funding, it can be spent until September 30, 2025. Additionally, each of the three funding allocations have specific criteria for how the funds can be spend. The first allocation has been coordinated with ANDVSA to combine our two awards to better utilize these smaller funding amounts. The last two awards, one specifically related to COVID testing, treatment, mitigation and one focused on services related directly to sexual assault services. Normally, FVPSA funds can only be used for domestic violence services, not sexual assault. Due



to these funds being from ARPA, they have broadened the allowable service categories, outside of the FVPSA statutory focus on DV.

As stated in my last report, the VOCA Fix Act, while significant, does not completely solve the dilemma of reduced VOCA funding in the future. We have been told to expect a 2-3-year lag for the impact of the legislation to rebuild the CVF. Once that happens, it will not build the fund back to where it was, and our stable funding will likely be considerably less than what we received in 2017-2019. What this means is that we will continue to have a number of “glitchy” years, putting together an annual budget from a patchwork of sources. It will be important that we pay close attention during the upcoming legislative session and the final FY23 budget recommendations.

The Impact of COVID-19 and CDVSA's Response

As we have discussed, CDVSA was awarded \$77,459 through the FVPSA CARES Act in May of 2020. We expended a majority the funds (with a few shipping glitches), all of which went directly toward purchases for service providers. Purchases included HEPA air systems and filters, cleaning products, a variety of PPEs, hand sanitizing stations, and even household items that become scarce in smaller communities during the pandemic and similar crises.

Additionally, twenty-six (26) of our 35 sub-grantees requested a portion of the DHSS CARES funding CDVSA received for pandemic technology purchases. Final spending reports are still trickling in, but it appears 24 of the 26 agencies were able to use these funds for several creative and useful purposes – two agencies were unable to meet the September 30 spending deadline and will be returning funds. Purchases include laptop computers, tablets, headphones, earbuds, computer cameras, technology add-ons to improve output, technology set-up, license fees for virtual software such as Zoom, online chat software, and cell phones for emergency services outreach (for participants). One report included a before and after picture of their monitors – after was MUCH nicer 😊. We appreciate receiving these additional funds to help our providers during these stressful times. Sometimes a little money can go a long way.

Additional FVPSA ARPA funding has been awarded to CDVSA for pandemic related support of DV programs, as well as a special allocation for those working with sexual assault victims. A total of three (3) FVPSA ARPA awards have been made in the amounts of \$257,502 (#1); \$1,262,365 (#2); and \$879,010 (#3) for services for sexual assault services, which is unusual for FVPSA. For the first award we partnered with ANDVSA to coordinate a spending plan since they



also received a small amount this award. We have not made a solid plan for the second award, although we hope to use a portion of it to boost our Victim Services budget in FY23, and we are waiting for more information on the 3rd and final award!

CDVSA Priority Projects Update

- **CDVSA Sunset Audit** – The Council's Sunset Audit has been finalized and will be reviewed by the Legislative Budget & Audit committee on or around December 15. Once the audit receives approval from LB & A to move forward, Chair Teresa Lowe and Commissioner Cockrell will receive the final report and review and response, at that time, a copy of the audit report will be shared with the full Board for discussion and input to the Board's response.
- **Perpetrator Rehabilitation Workgroup** – The Perpetrator Rehabilitation Workgroup continues to meet monthly for 2-hours each month. We are concluding our initial phase of educating the Workgroup on several critical topics important to decision-making during our phase two work. Because the membership is broad and diverse from several different disciplines, it is important that we all have a similar baseline of information about programming in Alaska, programming in other states, best and promising practices related to this type of service. Additionally, we have invited speakers to discuss the role of the courts, mental health providers, tribal and rural needs, and child welfare and juvenile justice needs. We have explored the role of monitoring, accountability and the best way to ensure safety for victims of perpetrators enrolled in BIP programs. Our meetings, facilitated and organized by Denali Daniels + Associates, are held virtually over MS Teams, recorded, notes are taken and there is continuous feedback with the Workgroup. The Workgroup will take a break for December and begin meeting again in January—moving into a more active phase, determining how we want to use the information gathered over the first 8 months and how we begin creating a new “look and feel” for Alaska's battering intervention programming. During our Q. 2 Council Meeting Drs. Heidi Brocius and Kathi Trawver will present about their evaluation of the Workgroup process and using data and research to frame the areas the WG needs to focus on, such as assessments, accountability, cultural responsiveness, victim safety and others. During their presentation you will have an opportunity to dialogue and ask questions regarding the WG's next steps.

- **CDVSA Regulations Update project** – I am excited to report that the CDVSA regulations revision project has made significant progress. Thanks to Meggie Stogner's hard work with Brad Sharp, DOL Legislation and Regulations Section, and document review by Kelly Howell, DPS Special Assistant, we are moving closer to having a final draft for review and public comment. As I mentioned last quarter, Meggie has gone through Chapters 90 and 95 to determine which regulations belong in which Chapter, reorganizing our regulations to have a Chapter focused on the administrative and financial requirements of being a subgrantee of CDVSA, and another Chapter specific to DVSA programs receiving our funding.

Kelly Howell is completing her review of the draft regulations as I type, and we will have an update on the status and next steps when we meet. Once Kelly has completed her review the document will come back to Meggie who will work with Brad and Steve Weaver to do a preliminary review of section numbering and a review of overall content. Currently the Department of Law, is experiencing a high volume of agencies trying to get regulation projects completed for a January 1 effective date. Since our regulations are not on a strict deadline for completion, our project may be delayed, with public comment starting in the new year and not before.

A big thank you to Meggie Stogner, Kelly Howell and Brad Sharp among others who will help us get this project over the finish line.

- **CDVSA Language Access Plan** – With the assistance of UAA MSW Practicum Student Jen Anderson, CDVSA is making progress implementing initial pieces of the Language Access Plan approved in November of 2019. Due to the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 the Language Access Plan implementation was put on hold until renewed efforts began this fall.

One initial task was to develop a complaint form that is available and can be used by the public to express concerns regarding CDVSA policies/practices related to language access. Through our work with AIJ we have adopted a template form for CDVSA to utilize. The next step is to begin translating the form into the top 8 languages identified in our LAP and have those posted and available as needed. The top languages identified in our plan are: Spanish, Tagalog, Korean, Russian, Hmong, Samoan, Yup'ik and Chinese.



Additionally, we have identified the need for translated information about our 35-funded service agencies as critical. Jen developed a Survey Monkey request, sent to all sub-grantees, requesting a short narrative of available services and contact information that will be translated and posted on our website. To build our language access over time, we will continue to identify and begin translation efforts that appear most critical. Translating takes time and focused attention to make sure the appropriate considerations are included in our work.

We are continuing to work with the Alaska Institute for Justice to implement the recommendations in our Language Access Plan (LAP).

- **STOP/VAWA 4-year State Plan Development** – CDVSA is the administering state agency for the S*T*O*P* grant from the US Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women (OVW). S*T*O*P* stands for Services, Training, Officers, Prosecutors.

The S*T*O*P* federal formula grant is available to all states and territories and is based on state population (in FFY22 Alaska is receiving \$861,716). S*T*O*P funds are intended for training law enforcement officers, prosecutors and court personnel on domestic violence, stalking, and sexual assault issues, and for strengthening services for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. The grant requires the following allocations--30% for victim services, (10% set aside for culturally specific victim service programs); 5% courts; 25% for law enforcement; 25% for prosecution and 15% discretionary. Alaska allocates the 30% victim service portion in the following ways: 20% to the statewide agency, Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (ANDVSA) to provide civil legal services to survivors and to provide attorney training statewide. Additionally, 10% of the victim service allocation goes to two Alaska Native Tribes; Ketchikan Indian Community (KIC) and Kenaitze Indian Tribe (KIT) to improve system responses and support culturally relevant practice in two regions of the state. Alaska uses the 15% discretionary to fund training for trauma-informed Sexual Assault Response Teams (SART). Five percent (5%) of S*T*O*P goes to the Alaska Court System, 25% to the Alaska State Troopers; 25% to the Alaska Department of Law per the required allocations.

Every four years, VAWA requires administrators to create a multi-year STOP Implementation Plan. The **Implementation Plan (IP) serves to prioritize statewide training and service needs to better prevent and respond to domestic violence, dating violence,**



sexual assault, and stalking. As part of the planning process, we are required to reach out and engage Alaskans who are reflective of the diversity of the state. It is through this collective process, that captures the professional expertise and lived experiences of Alaskans that the next four-year plan will be developed.

Ann Rausch is our CDVSA grant administrator for our STOP/VAWA federal grant and is leading the planning and development process to create a new 4-year State STOP Plan. As mentioned previously, Karragh Arndt, MSW Practicum student is assisting Ann with this critical and time-sensitive project. To date, Ann and Karragh have created a survey to collect information from a broad swath of Alaska providers and those impacted by sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking and teen dating violence. In addition, we are required to contact each federally recognized tribe in Alaska to seek their input. All 229 tribes have been contacted and input is being collected in partnership with the Alaska Women's Native Resource Center.

Hopefully each of the Board members have completed the survey, providing critical input. If you have not yet completed the survey you can access it at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YQ8TBBK>.

A full update on the status of the development of our 4-Year State Plan will be presented on December 9 during our Q. 2 Board meeting.

- **CDVSA 5-year Strategic Plan** – As with our Language Access Plan, our Strategic Plan action strategies have been impacted by the pandemic and emergent issues that took precedence over new tasks identified in our Strategic Plan. I met with John Gregoire, Professional Growth Systems, on November 16 to discuss a plan for reengaging the staff and the Board in planning for year-two activities. We are tentatively planning a meeting with staff in mid-February to review and renew our efforts to make progress on our 5 strategic initiatives. We will also plan a meeting with the Board, possibly during our Q. 3 Board meeting.

Two strategic initiatives for year-one have received significant attention and made progress: 1) Implementation of GrantVantage, our new grant management system and 2) updating/improving our Perpetrator Rehabilitation programming to better align with the needs of those who use violence in their relationships, the victims/survivors/family

members of those individuals and the health and safety of our Alaska communities. Additional information about both initiatives are in this report and both topics will have time on our Council Meeting agenda December 9-10.

Communications, Outreach and Media

As you know, October was Domestic Violence and Awareness Month both nationally and within Alaska. Prior to October, Walsh|Sheppard, our communications contractor, created several new TV, radio and social media messages to inform and educate Alaskans about domestic violence. Hopefully you were able to view/hear them during October. The TV ad played quite often during the month. While our goal is to build a comprehensive and ongoing media and social media presence regarding key issues about DVSA; unfortunately, our Prevention funds do not provide us that opportunity. While we are unable to spend much money on media messaging, we have increased our ability to find low-cost messaging practices. Social media placements are less expensive than TV and radio, so we use social media as broadly as possible and save our media funding for specific targeted messages during the three (3) key DVSA months of February for Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month; April for Sexual Assault Awareness Month; and October for Domestic Violence Awareness Month. We received several positive comments about our new messaging in October! Now we are preparing for February's Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month.

Upcoming Events:

- Alaska Health Summit, January 18-20, 2022 (Virtual). The Intersection of Public Health and Public Safety.
- 32nd Legislature, Second Regular Session begins Tuesday, January 18, 2022
- February is Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month.
- FY 2022 Quarter 3 Board meeting, March 2022 (dates TBD), Rural Outreach meeting in Ketchikan (pending COVID conditions), 2021