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**Health Department** Milwaukee Commission on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

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## MILWAUKEE COMMISSION ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT REPORT TO PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

### I. Commission Purpose, Responsibilities and Duties

City of Milwaukee Ordinance Number 320-22(2) defines the purpose of the Milwaukee Commission on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (the Commission) as:

**PURPOSE.** The purpose of the Milwaukee Commission on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault is to increase the safety for victims of domestic violence and their children and for victims of sexual assault, and to hold abusers accountable for their violent behavior.

The responsibilities and duties of the Commission are set forth in City of Milwaukee Ordinance Number 320-22(5)(a) - Responsibilities and Duties:

The Commission is charged with the responsibility of coordinating the community's response to domestic violence and sexual assault by promoting communication and collaboration among members of law enforcement, victim's advocates, court staff, school personnel, health care providers, abuser programs, corrections officials, policy makers, children's service providers and prosecutors.

### II. Activities in Support of Responsibilities and Duties

#### A. General Duties and Responsibilities

**Regularly scheduled meetings** - The Commission continues to hold monthly meetings for its membership. During this reporting period, the Commission met at City Hall, the Milwaukee County Courthouse, Manpower, The Parenting Network, United Way of Greater Milwaukee, Black Health Coalition, and the Zilber School of Public Health. Hosting meetings in different community spaces has afforded Commissioners the opportunity to better acquaint themselves with their partner agencies and available resources.

- B. 320-23(5) b-1 – Training for current officers/recruits of MPD** – The Commission provides resource materials for the training of new Milwaukee Police Department recruits. The Coordinator is working with Deputy Inspect Terrence Gordon, the newly-appointed representative to the Commission from the Training Academy, to organize a presentation on the Milwaukee Police Department's current training on domestic violence and sexual assault for July 2014. The Office of Violence Prevention and its Commission on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault cosponsored a cross-disciplinary training for the Milwaukee Police Department and sexual assault advocates in preparation for the new

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advocacy model being implemented through a partnership between the Milwaukee Police Department, the Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office, and Aurora Healthcare.

- C. **320-23(5) b-2 – Policy review to improve response to victims** – The Commission reviews policy, makes recommendations, and implements policy change through its involvement with several collaboratives, including the Milwaukee County Human Trafficking Task Force, the Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission, Milwaukee County's Sexual Assault Response Team, and United Way's Teen Pregnancy Sexual Violence Subcommittee.

In light of a Harvard study, which looked at the effects of the City's nuisance ordinance on domestic violence victims and cited problems with landlords, Commissioners discussed the study and its findings during the September monthly meeting. The Office of Violence Prevention met with the Department of City Development and its Landlord Training Program to offer the resources of the Commission and provide information for landlords who wish to assist tenants with domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking issues. The Commission is coordinating a follow-up discussion with the Milwaukee Police Department and Legal Action of Wisconsin to review ongoing concerns with the nuisance ordinance and the treatment of domestic violence.

The Bureau of Milwaukee Child Welfare shared information on their policies and procedures with the Commission in November. Commissioners expressed concerns about the handling of cases with a history of domestic violence. The Coordinator is working to convene Commissioners and Bureau representatives to discuss some of the issues which were raised.

- D. **320-23(5) b-3 – Monitor and promote legislation** – The Commission monitors legislation related to sexual assault and domestic violence and, in conjunction with the City's Intergovernmental Relations staff, has formulated recommendations on state and federal legislation.

The Commission has continued its partnerships with the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault and End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin through these partnerships, the Commission receives regular legislative updates and action alerts so it can influence state and federal policy.

Commission worked with the City's Office of Intergovernmental Relations to identify policy proposals to include in the City's legislative package pertaining to restraining orders, firearm surrender, human trafficking, and crime victims' rights. Three new Acts take effect in April: Act 223, Act 311 and Act 322. These bills include such changes as: stalking is a basis to obtain a domestic abuse restraining order; a domestic abuse or harassment order can be granted for up to 10 years or a child abuse order for up to five years if the court finds the respondent might commit homicide or sexual assault against the petitioner; firearms surrender can be requested in an individual at risk order; and child abuse petition forms must keep the child's name

The Commission tracked the progress of AB 464, otherwise known as The Safe Act. This legislation created a notification procedure of the prohibition against firearm possession and the requirement to surrender firearms, when an individual is served with an injunction hearing petition. It also established a procedure for surrendering firearms after the court grants an injunction. The Commission wrote a letter of support in favor of this legislation, and the Coordinator testified in support of the law before the Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security. The Safe Act was signed into law in April 2014.

Discussions during monthly meetings have been supplemented with presentations. Assistant DA Sarah Lewis spoke on legislation, such as AB 620, aimed at helping victims of human trafficking. Jessica Gathirimu from the City of Milwaukee Health Department shared updates on the implementation of the Affordable Care Act and enrollment procedures, so agencies can better access healthcare resources for the populations they serve. The Commission also monitored the appeal of Wisconsin resident Robert W. Evans Jr., who contested his denial of a concealed weapons permit in 2012 due to a domestic violence/disorderly conduct conviction.

**E. 320-23(5) b-4 – Community awareness aimed at intervention and prevention –**

- 1. Literature Distribution** – The Coordinator has distributed at least 5,000 copies of the Commission’s popular “You Are Not Alone” brochure, a comprehensive listing of resources for those affected by domestic violence and sexual assault, in English, Spanish, and large print since July 2013. These publications are available on our website and are widely accessible to those who would like to download these materials. The Coordinator is currently updating this literature.
- 2. Responding to Resident and Community Calls** - The Commission receives daily phone calls from community members and agencies, looking for assistance with domestic violence and sexual assault concerns. Since February 2014, the Commission Coordinator has fielded 94 phone calls and requests from community members. These calls include staff of government departments, non-profit service providers, private law firms, health care clinics, and other residents requesting support, information, or resources. It should be noted that this number does not reflect additional requests made of the Coordinator via other means (e.g. face-to-face, email, etc).
- 3. Resource Fairs** – During this reporting period, the Commission staffed resource tables, answered participant questions, made referrals, and distributed literature at the Department of Corrections Crime Victim’s Rights Resource Fair, the Wisconsin Women’s Health Policy Summit Resource Fair, Milwaukee Police Department’s District 7 Domestic Violence Resource Fair, and International Women’s Day. The Commission also collaborated with Sojourner Family Peace Center, Sexual Assault Treatment Center, The Healing Center, and the Milwaukee LGBT Community Center to host a weeklong resource fair on the MATC campus during the week of March 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- 4. Trainings** – The Coordinator provides training, presentations, and resource information on domestic violence and sexual assault in public forums. In November, the Coordinator met with leaders from numerous local colleges and universities, youth-serving organizations, and non-profit agencies at Alverno College to discuss local trends in human trafficking and what each partner can do to address this issue. The Coordinator also spoke on human trafficking for a panel in February before the Milwaukee Chapter of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women. The Office of Violence Prevention hosted a delegation from Georgia through the Department of State’s International Visitor Leadership Program to share information on Milwaukee’s violence prevention and domestic violence efforts. The annual meeting of the Circuit Court’s Family Division was cosponsored by the Office of Violence Prevention, and the Coordinator presented on the Health Department and its Commission for this meeting

at the Zilber School of Public Health. Another training on domestic violence to be cosponsored by the Commission at the Zilber School of Public Health is scheduled for June 2014. The Coordinator also attended a Westlawn residents' meeting to provide information on domestic violence and sexual assault.

**5. Awareness Events –**

**Human Trafficking Awareness Day** – The City of Milwaukee's Office of Violence Prevention and its Commission on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault collaborated with members of the Human Trafficking Task Force of Greater Milwaukee to host a Human Trafficking Awareness Day in January 2014 at City Hall. This event brought attention to human trafficking and motivated attendees to raise community awareness and coordinate resources, as they work to eradicate this issue in Milwaukee. It included representation from elected officials as well as testimony and poetry readings from survivors of human trafficking.

**Denim Day-** The Office of Violence Prevention and the Commission teamed up with Aurora Health Care, United Way, The Healing Center, and a variety of community partners and victim advocates to organize a press conference and continue the local Persons of Influence campaign in recognition of Denim Day, a day to honor survivors of sexual assault and bring awareness to the dangers of victim blaming. On April 23rd, 2014, the project coordinators asked the public to mark Denim Day by wearing jeans in support of sexual assault awareness. Influential individuals were asked to submit a photo of themselves in jeans and provide a statement in support of sexual assault survivors. A press conference was held in City Hall on April 23rd, which was attended by numerous community members, including several Commissioners of the Milwaukee Commission on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. College campuses were a particular focus of the campaign this year, and the Denim Day Planning Committee supported the efforts of several local institutions, including MATC, UWM, Bryant & Stratton, Alverno, and Marquette, to hold events and activities in support of Denim Day and Sexual Assault Awareness Month. This year's campaign received extensive media coverage. Over 1,000 people pledged their participation in this campaign through the official Denim Day website. It should be noted that this number does not reflect the participation of some major organizations, like the City of Milwaukee and Aurora Healthcare, which also supported this event in large numbers.

**Azana Anniversary and Memorial-** The Office of Violence Prevention worked with Sojourner Family Peace Center to mark the one-year anniversary of the shootings at the Azana Spa and Salon with a memorial service in City Hall. The memorial service was attended by family and friends of the victims as well as other supportive members of the community.

**International Women's Day** – This event was cosponsored by the Office of Violence Prevention, and its Commission staffed a resource table for the event.

**6. Project Safe Neighborhoods Anti-Gang and Violence Prevention Summit** – The City of Milwaukee's Office of Violence Prevention and its Commission of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault are cosponsoring and serving on the planning committee for this summit, to be held in Fall 2014 in Oconomowoc. This well-attended summit results from a coordinated effort between local, state, and federal partners; its attendees include representatives from

law enforcement, corrections, community-based organizations, faith-based leaders, health care professionals, and government officials.

**Crime Victims' Rights Symposium – Scheduled for May 14, 2014** - Sponsored in conjunction with Mount Mary University, and the and the State of Wisconsin Department of Justice, the daylong workshop will discuss strategies for helping victims assert their constitutional and statutory victims' rights during their involvement in the criminal justice system. This is especially relevant for justice system and advocacy organizations in light of recent state-wide and national crime victims rights law changes.

7. **Press** – The Coordinator provided expertise on domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and stalking through media interviews. Most recently, the Coordinator spoke on sexual assault and Denim Day for an hour-long interview with Kathleen Dunn on Wisconsin Public Radio. Media outlets also covered the memorial service in recognition of the one-year anniversary of the Azana Spa shooting.

### **III. Continuing Efforts**

- A. **Safe Exchange** – The City of Milwaukee partnered with Sojourner Family Peace Center, Children's Service Society of Wisconsin, and the First Judicial District of Wisconsin to develop and implement the first Supervised Exchange and Visitation Program (SEVP) in Milwaukee for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, sexual abuse, and stalking. The City of Milwaukee leads the project; the MCDVSA Commission Coordinator acts as Project Coordinator.

During this reporting period, the four core partners of the project engaged a diverse slate of public and private stakeholders to participate in a Consulting Committee charged with supporting and overseeing the project. Members include the Milwaukee Police Department, Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office, State Public Defender's Office, Legal Action of Wisconsin, Legal Aid, as well as batterer's intervention programs, sexual assault providers, local philanthropists, and community-based agencies that serve the African American, Latino, Hmong, and LGBT populations.

Three representatives of the core partner team traveled to the VERA Institute of Justice's "On Solid Ground: Building the Foundation for Supervised Visitation Services" conference in Vancouver, Washington in August 2013. This training was instrumental in furthering the team's understanding of OVW's requirements and suggestions with regards to orientation, documentation, confidentiality and information sharing, court and case referral, and safety and security procedures. The knowledge gained during this training guided Milwaukee's deliverables, site, and programming development.

There have been many major developments on this grant during this reporting period. Children's Service Society and the City of Milwaukee pooled their resources and contacts to vet potential locations for the site. A viable site has been found and is awaiting final OVW approval. The program coordinator for the Center was hired by Children's Service Society, and Sojourner Family Peace Center is reviewing candidates to fill an advocate position for the Center. The consulting committee partners met regularly in three subcommittees to focus on Court/Legal, Safety/Security, and Service Parameter policy and protocol development. As a result of these meetings and the work of the core partners, many deliverables for this grant were produced, including a safety and security plan, policies and protocols, handbooks for parents, internal forms, and a virtual tour of the potential site.

These materials have been submitted to the Office of Violence Against Women and are awaiting approval, so site build-out can commence.

- B. Strategic Planning-** The Commission conducted a one-day planning session in June 2013, facilitated by Urban Strategies. Attendees articulated ideas to define the Commission's work over the next couple years. A smaller group of commissioners met to review initial feedback from the larger meeting and solidify goals that will guide the Commission's work for the next few years. These meetings resulted in several focus areas and a new subcommittee/workgroup structure for the Commission.

Members felt that the work of the Commission could not be effectively accomplished in the monthly meetings, and that goal-oriented work should be done on the subcommittee or workgroup level to encourage participation and input from all members. Thus, the Commission created a Domestic Violence Subcommittee as a permanent subcommittee to balance the existence of the longstanding Sexual Assault Subcommittee. This committee will be charged with policy and protocol review, legislation monitoring, community education, and other responsibilities as needed to address domestic violence-specific concerns that arise from the Commission. The chairs of this committee are currently convening to solidify an action plan for this group based on the strategic plan feedback, and Commission members have volunteered to participate on this subcommittee, once it starts meeting regularly. Time-limited workgroups were also established. Out of growing concern about media insensitivity when covering domestic violence and sexual assault cases, the Commission has formed a media workgroup. This workgroup is currently developing materials for survivors with recommendations and resource information to help them deal with media attention. This effort will also create a media resource guide with information to better inform media representatives about these issues and give them resources to use for their news stories. In the Fall, this group will put together a media summit for our Commission membership to facilitate better relationships with the media and help them learn how to use media effectively in their own organizations. In order to better understand the scope of domestic violence and sexual assault, the Commission has organized a data workgroup to pull together systems and service provider data into a single report to reflect the current state of these issues in our community. The workgroup is currently focusing on sexual assault data, as this information is more difficult find. Finally, in light of Lawrence Sherman's findings and published research regarding health outcomes for domestic violence victims and arrested abusers, Commissioners will meet with the Milwaukee Police Department to vet research opportunities and propose next steps to follow-up on this research.

Other recommendations and activities are currently being implemented as well. On March 28<sup>th</sup>, an orientation was held at the request of our membership to better acquaint new appointees to the work and history of the Commission. Furthermore, the bylaws have been updated, revised, and approved to better reflect the Commission's current structure, procedures, and member duties and expectations.

- C. Milwaukee County Human Trafficking Task Force** – The Coordinator attends monthly meetings of the Milwaukee County Human Trafficking Task Force, which aims to streamline and improve services for victims of human trafficking. Since this workgroup concluded its efforts under the County's jurisdiction in September 2012, the Commission Coordinator has continued to provide administrative support to this effort. The Office of Violence Prevention and its Commission cosponsored and participated in a strategic planning session for the Task Force in August 2013.

- D. **Milwaukee Homicide Review Commission (MHRC)** – The Commission participated in monthly reviews of homicides and near fatal incidents which result from domestic violence. The goal of these sessions is to develop prevention strategies based on an examination of each individual case, identifying common factors between cases, opportunities for intervention, and potential areas of improvement in service delivery. In Fall 2013, Dr. Mallory O’Brien from MHRC met with Office of Violence Prevention and Commission staff to consolidate over 400 recommendations that had been made over the past several years. The resulting list yielded a smaller, prioritized list of unresolved recommendations. With the creation of the Commission’s Domestic Violence Subcommittee and this new, cleaned up list of recommendations, the Commission now has the infrastructure to properly and regularly review and implement the recommendations of the Homicide Review Commission.
  
- E. **Community Readiness Assessment** – As follow-up to the state-funded Sexual Assault Initiative planning project, an MHD/UW Fellow in the Office of Violence Prevention is conducting phone and in-person interviews with justice and sexual assault professionals, youth and parents, educators, faith leaders, elected officials, and others, using an evidenced-based assessment tool. This nine stage, multi-dimensional model will measure Milwaukee’s readiness to take action on sexual assault and assess current community efforts, community knowledge, leadership, community climate, and resources. An outreach campaign, informed by the readiness survey, will result from this work.

#### IV. Additional Activities/Comments

- A. **Elder Abuse:** In December, the Commission Coordinator attended a conference on elder abuse, which was co-sponsored by Sojourner Family Peace Center and the Department on Aging. The Coordinator also participated in follow-up discussions with the Department of Aging, Sojourner Family Peace Center, Milwaukee County District Attorney’s Office, and the Milwaukee Police Department to explore a potential application for a U.S. Department of Justice - Office of Violence Against Women grant, which would support training of system partners, CCR enhancement, Direct Services and cross-training focused on elderly victims of domestic violence.
  
- B. **Executive Committee Elections** - The Commission held elections for Chair and Vice Chair positions in December 2013. The Chair is Chief Judge Jeffrey Kremers (Milwaukee Judiciary). The Vice Chairs are Dr. Rev. Alice Belcher (Impact Coalition for Families), Dawn Helmrach (United Way of Greater Milwaukee), and Terri Strodthoff (Alma Center).
  
- C. **Conferences Attended** – The Commission Coordinator attended the statewide “Transform the Conversation” sexual assault and domestic violence conference in the Wisconsin Dells.
  
- D. **Office of Violence Prevention Events** – The Commission Coordinator provided assistance and support for the Youth Gun Summit in November 2013 and Ceasefire Sabbath in April 2014.