



Victim Services Advisory Board

Montgomery County, Maryland

Inside this Issue:

Recommendations
to the

Membership
Monthly Meetings
Purpose, p. 2

Current Victim-
Related Issues, p.3
- Police Protocol
- Judges

Other Events, p. 4
- After September 11
- Forensic Science
- Buddy System

Updates, p. 7
- Legislation
- County's Crime
Victim

Meet the Members,
p.8

Special Messages

"What we as a Board are asking for is the rebalancing of the trio of services the County needs to provide - legal, medical, and emotional - in order to make our victims whole to the extent possible."

David Bachrach, Vice-Chair

"When judges fail to do the job they are entrusted with, protecting victims of crime and punishing the perpetrators, then it is time for the citizens of Montgomery County to speak up and protest."

Kay Cummins, Chair

Mission Statement

To support Montgomery County's commitment to serving victims of crime, including rape, domestic violence, sexual assault, homicide survivors, adults molested as children, terrorism, hate violence, robbery, driving while intoxicated (DWI) and vehicular manslaughter, assault, battery, burglary, arson, larceny, stalking, carjacking, purse snatching, harassment and vandalism.

Mandate

The Board must periodically review available services and facilities for victims and their families; determine needs of the victim and family services/programs; submit at least one report annually to the County Executive and County Council on the progress of programs to victims and their families and of actions needed to improve those programs; make recommendations for appropriate allocation of funds in accordance with agreed upon priorities and consideration of financial resources. The Board also assists the Director of the Department of Health and Human Services in the development of the annual victim services and families plan and acts as a local advocate for victim services programming.

Montgomery County Code -- Art. VII, Section 24-56. Bill 7-95.

Voting Members

Professional

Kay Cummins, R.N., Chair, Arnold Gordon, Esq.

William H. Henry, Esq.,

At-Large

David Bachrach, Vice-Chair, Judith P. Aboud, Deborah Ehrenstein,
Charles Floyd, Martha C. Jones, Margaret B. Kabat, Pat Lupson,
Linda Meyer, Carol A. Weiss, Steven Wilkerson

Ex-Officio Members

Nadja S.P. Cabello, Director, Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault
Program; Ethel Burnett, State's Attorney's Office; Ellen Alexander,
Montgomery County Police Department

Guests

Corinne Stevens, Acting Director of Health and Human Services,
Chief, Crisis, Income, and Victim Services; Warren Lupson, Citizen;
Maria Peck, Confidential Aide to Councilman Phil Andrew

Membership

Membership includes 18 voting members who are residents of Montgomery County and four non-voting members.

The voting members consist of five citizens from among the mental health, legal, medical, dental and nursing professions; ten citizens at-large who do not belong to any of the professions mentioned above; one member of the clergy; and representatives designated by the Alcoholism and Other Drug Abuse Advisory Council and the Mental Health Advisory Committee.

Four non-voting ex-officio members shall be the Director of the Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program of HHS and representatives from the State's Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office, and the Police Department.

Voting members serve a term of three years.

Current vacancy: clergy representative.

Why Do We Meet Each Month?

1. To review available services for crime victims and their families and to determine any deficits in services or identify new needs;
2. To make suggestions for improving victim programs;
3. To assess budget needs to keep victim programs running efficiently;
4. To solve County problems that negatively impact victims of crime;
5. To act as a local advocate for victim services programming; and
6. To lobby to improve laws within our County, the State and nationally for the better treatment of victims.

Monthly Meetings

The Victim Services Advisory Board generally meets every fourth Thursday evening, (except August and during winter holidays) from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Meetings are held at the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, 1301 Piccard Drive, 4th Floor Conference Room, Rockville, Maryland.

Meetings are open to the general public.

HIGHLIGHTS OF YEARLY ACTIVITIES

POLICE CHANGES TO THE SEXUAL ASSAULT ASSISTANCE TEAM (SAAT)

The Board has been trying to influence the direction of the police department's protocol when responding to adult rapes and sexual assaults. In short, the Police were granted several victim advocate positions to assist in responding to those crimes where the County did not already have on-scene victim services. Acting Chief Evans, during the three months he was in office, began a series of policy changes that has essentially resulted under Chief Moose in the replacement of already-available services, not the supplementing of them. Some of the reasons we believe the use of outreach volunteers to respond to rapes and sexual assaults from the VASAP program is better:

<i>Cost-Effective</i>	VASAP volunteers save the County hundreds of thousands of dollars every year.
<i>24-hour</i>	VASAP uses dozens of volunteers, while the police
<i>Availability</i>	program relies on fewer than 10 paid staff. Police advocates must also respond to many crimes such as domestic violence, homicide, gang activities, pool drowning, etc.
<i>Confidentiality</i>	Information shared with VASAP outreach volunteers cannot be held against the victim in court.
<i>Victim is #1 Priority</i>	Volunteers have the best interests of the victim. Police victim advocates have an obligation to the police at the forefront. This can result in a conflict of interest for police victim advocates.

After the police implemented a formal policy that explicitly excluded the VASAP volunteers after the initial report of a sexual assault, the board petitioned the executive and the council for legislation that would restore the previous police/volunteer balance. There are currently efforts between HHS, police and council to reach an acceptable memorandum of understanding.

Judicial Disabilities Commission

This summer the Board discussed recent controversial rulings and comments made by Judge Durke G. Thompson, this time regarding a decision to deny a request to move a probationer out of state to protect her from her estranged/former husband. The decision played a key role in that probationer's subsequent murder, allegedly by the same husband.

The Board voted to send a letter to Judge Sally Adkins of the Maryland Judicial Disabilities Commission asking that some level of sanctions be placed upon Judge Thompson. We received an initial response from the Commission, and in an interesting turn of events the judge was reassigned to a newly-created business court position at the end of the summer.

We have complained to the Judicial Disabilities Commission in the past about Judge Thompson, with no discernable results. We are not sure our complaint influenced the decision to reassign the judge, but we feel that removing him from opportunities to continue to exercise poor judgment with respect to victims' issues is a step forward for our community and the State of Maryland.

The Aftermath of September 11, 2001

Our nation has seen a resurgence of patriotism as we struggle with monumental decisions about peace and war. The common citizen, research studies have enlightened us, is more hyper-alert, vigilant and anxious since September 11th.

Even visits to doctors and chiropractors related to anxiety are on the rise. At the Victim Assistance and Sexual Program (VASAP), we have seen, first-hand, how September 11th has impacted on already vulnerable victims of crime.

This horrible incident has educated the public on how crime victims are impacted by crime on their daily lives. Unfortunately, after September 11th, we also received 24 referrals from the Police related to hate-violence crimes.

All these victims needed a word of encouragement and caring concern from our VASAP staff. However, our crime victim compensation fund paid \$2,500 for hate-violence related crimes that happened after September 11th.

Let's promote and embrace tolerance and cultural diversity.

DNA Forensic Science

Ms. Carolyn T. Tontarski, of Major Crimes, Montgomery County Police Department, visited VSAB on June 27, 2002 and provided an excellent overview of crime lab services now available in Maryland. DNA (CODIS) databases help solve crimes, prevent violent crimes and exonerate innocent suspects by providing a means for crime laboratories to electronically compare DNA profiles.

However, a backlog of unanalyzed forensic samples and offender samples exists as well as rape kits. The Board is concerned about this lack of service availability.

Additionally, legislation is needed to include all convicted felons - not only violent crime offenders - in DNA database collections and reporting. MD HB 1053 was enacted into law expanding the offender DNA database to include all convicted felons.

"Buddy System" for New Members

The Victim Services Advisory Board is always pleased to accept new members as appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council. However, in the beginning, new members feel disconnected with the activities of the Board and may spend several months trying to "catch up."

To help facilitate their involvement and expedite the process of getting acquainted and becoming active members, the Board created a system whereby one veteran member befriends a new member prior to the first official Board meeting and continues to guide and accompany them until they feel comfortable with the group. A guidebook has also been prepared for members to use on an ongoing basis.

Recommendations To The County Executive and County Council

After meeting with VASAP and APP staff and seriously considering the needs of each program, the VSAB budget subcommittee, consisting of Martha Jones, Steven Wilkerson and Charles Floyd, present the following budget priorities for fiscal year 2004:

Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program

- ♦ **Bilingual Hispanic Victim Assistant** (full-time) - 29% of new caseload involves Spanish-speaking clients. The only Hispanic Victim Assistant on staff is half-time, and has no back-up coverage.
- ♦ **Restoration of Principal Administrative Aide** (full-time) - This position has been frozen since January 2002 because of County budget deficits.
- ♦ **Funding for public service announcements on rape crisis centers** - Grant money received in the past for public relations has been recently cut and promotion of services available is needed to get the word out.
- ♦ **Increase funding for the Victim Compensation Fund** - Every year, there is always a cost overrun.

Abused Persons Program

- ♦ **Bilingual Hispanic Counselor** (full-time) - to work with children of clients outside the shelter on an ongoing basis, e.g. group sessions, assessments, etc.
- ♦ **Court Monitor** (full-time) - to hold offenders accountable when they are referred to APP counseling by the Court, to tighten the system, and follow-up with clients.
- ♦ **Renewed funding for the Interfaith Community Against Domestic Violence** - to support the Ministry program.

***EMPOWERING, SUPPORTING , AND ADVOCATING
FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME***

Highlights of Yearly Activities

Ensuring a Montgomery County System that Is Victim-Friendly:

- Attempted to correct the sexual assault outreach protocol as changed by the Police, Major Crimes Division.

Met with Chief Moose, and other police representatives in an attempt to reactivate the Sexual Assault Assistance Team (SAAT) as originally set up in 1979.

Contacted the Commission for Women and attended one of their meetings for support to correct the outreach protocol of the Major Crimes Division in Montgomery County.

Wrote a letter to the Council requesting legislation to support the Board's position on the outreach protocol.

Drafted a proposed law on paper concerning the SAAT team and presented it to select members of the County Council.

Met with Sarah Lee Todd, Executive Assistant to the County Executive, to explain the Board's concerns for the way that sexual assault victims were being treated in our County.

Wrote follow-up letter to the County Executive's office outlining the Board's concerns for victims of rape and sexual assault and what we expected.

- Contacted the following organizations for their support to correct the outreach protocol to rape and sexual assault victims in Montgomery County:

Wrote follow-up letters to organizations listed below outlining our position and requesting their support:

Stephanie Roper Committee

State Board on Victim Services

National Center for Victims of Crime

Executive Task Force on Domestic Violence

Association for the Advancement of Colored People

Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence

Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault

Advocating for Funding for Victim Programs and Services:

Met with staff of VASAP and APP to gather information concerning budget issues and problems within their programs.

Attended the annual budget meeting with HHS Director Chuck Short.

Met with CIVS Chief Corinne Stevens to lobby for budget requests.

Testified before the County Council on the budget.

Met with each member of the County Council to lobby for victim program budget needs.

Educating the Community on Victim-Related Issues:

Appeared on Cable TV to discuss the Victim Services Advisory Board and how it serves the community.

Met with each member of the County Council to lobby for victims' issues.

Attended a dinner meeting of the HHS subcommittee of the County Council to discuss common issues.

Wrote a follow-up letter to each Council member outlining our concerns for victims' issues and what we requested of them.

Lobbied State legislators for support with phone calls and personal letters.

Researched victims' issues and what could be done to make corrections.

Ensuring VSAB's Future Leadership:

Wrote Guide/Handbook for Victim Services Advisory Board members and planned a yearly calendar.

Set up a new plan for change of leadership within the Board, and elected new officers with a graduated plan implemented to turn over the leadership to a new chairperson.

Legislative Update

During the 2002 legislative session in Annapolis, the VSAB supported legislation on behalf of victims.

Orders of Protection 24 hours per day

One success was an effort on behalf of the legislation that will eventually provide domestic violence victims with access to Orders of Protection 24 hours per day, seven days per week. The 2002 session of the legislature passed enabling legislation that will allow these victims to obtain Orders of Protection from District Court Commissioners when the Courts are closed. However, before the Commissioners are given this power, the electorate in Montgomery County must pass a constitutional amendment that enables Commissioners to act on these cases. We expect that greater access to these orders will provide more safety for those subject to domestic violence.

County's Crime Victim Compensation Fund

Did you know?

Between July 1, 2001 and June 30, 2002 the VASAP's Crime Victim Compensation Fund received requests for compensation to reimburse crime victimization losses from 75 eligible victims of crime. These victims requested a total of \$425,608 for losses incurred as a result of crime. The VASAP's compensation fund paid

Sexual offenders required to register with the State

To avoid losing federal money, the Legislature passed bills expanding the group of sexual offenders required to register with the State, defined when they may stop registering and expanded the group that must register for their entire lifetime.

State mental health system

The State government allocated an additional \$54 million in federal funds to help the failing state mental health system.

Penalties for convicted criminals

Failed legislation included an effort to impose penalties on convicted criminals who willfully refuse to attend court-ordered counseling. Efforts to prohibit those in positions of authority from engaging in sex with minors for whom they have responsibility and efforts to criminalize willful failure to report

cases of suspected child abuse and neglect also failed.

VASAP/APP

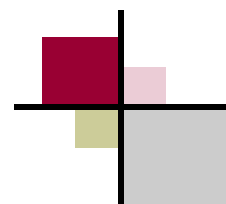
On the County level, a member of the Board testified on the HHS budget supporting proposals that would enhance the ability of the **Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program and the Abused Persons Program** to serve crime victims.

Betty Ann Krankhe Center

Board members also monitored the County's progress in addressing the problems at the Betty Ann Krankhe Center and attended hearings of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Mental Health.

Gun privileges

The Board also participated in a successful effort to prevent the restoration of gun privileges to convicted felons.



The Crime Victim Compensation Trustee

Account c/o VASAP, Suite 4100,
1301 Piccard Drive, Rockville,
Maryland 20850

The County matches all donations "2 to 1." As an example, your \$100 donation will provide \$300 of funds to compensate eligible crime victims for their property, medical, and wage losses as well as funeral expenses.

\$82,108 to these victims. However, our budget for this time period was only \$63,060, leaving a deficit of \$19,048. Fortunately, this deficit was covered by the Department of Health and Human Services in order to continue meeting requests from victims of crime for their losses.

You can help us by sending donations to:

MEET THE MEMBERS OF THE VICTIMS SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD

We are pleased to introduce all of our current members who volunteer their time, special talents and skills to help improve victims' rights and services in Montgomery County.

Judith P. Aboud

Ms. Aboud worked for the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists for 15 years and served as a Program Administrator. She has served as an outreach volunteer for the Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program of Montgomery County for 5 1/2 years and was awarded the George Sullivan Memorial Award as the outstanding volunteer for 1997.

David T. Bachrach, M.A. Criminology & Criminal Justice

Mr. Bachrach has worked for the U.S. Department of Justice, monitoring Police Department compliance with the terms and conditions of federal grants. He also instructed students in criminal justice ethics and criminology theory. He is currently Vice-chair of the Board.

Kay Cummins, R.N.

Ms. Cummins has worked as a registered nurse at Shady Grove Adventist Hospital for the past 22 years. She is a Certified Post-Anesthesia Nurse specializing in the care of immediate post operative patients. She became interested in victim advocacy after having family members become violent crime victims. She is currently Chair of the Board.

Deborah Ehrenstein, LCSW-C

Ms. Ehrenstein is a Certified Licensed Clinical Social Worker who formerly worked for the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, Jewish Social Service Agency and Sheltering Arms Children's Service. Recently retired, Ms. Ehrenstein contributes her experience and skills in the area of child protection.

Chief Charles Floyd, Ret.

A former law enforcement professional, Chief Floyd was chief of a medium size police force, with special emphasis on white collar crime. His background includes highly confidential criminal investigations and extensive experience in management and supervision.

Arnold B. Gordon, Esq.

Mr. Gordon is currently a Director of Barents Group/KPMG Peat Marwick and is responsible for all tax administration personnel in all projects of the firm throughout the world. Mr. Gordon has been a successful businessman and Maryland resident for 24 years and wants to give back to the community by helping to improve services for victims in Montgomery County. He has played a vital role in creating the new non-profit organization, Victims in Need, Inc.

William H. Henry, Esq.

William H. Henry, Esq., has run his own law practice since 1995. He has been a victim advocate since 1996 when he was carjacked, shot and left for dead. He is a 1999 recipient of the Maryland State Governor's Award for Victim Rights and Service and a member of *Who's Who in America*. Mr. Henry is former co-chair of VSAB.

continued

MEET THE MEMBERS OF THE VICTIMS SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD

Martha C. Jones

Ms. Jones has been a resident of Montgomery County for over 27 years and a volunteer for the Abused Persons Program for 12 years as a court companion. Her active role in the community as a victim advocate has provided years of experience to help improve and evaluate services to victims.

Margaret B. Kabat, LCSW-C

Ms. Kabat is a Certified Licensed Clinical Social Worker currently employed with Value Options as the Provider Relations Manager for TRICARE. She has worked in mental health in Montgomery County for the past four years, both with children and adults.

Patricia Lupson

Ms. Lupson serves as chairperson to the Victim Advisory Board to Maryland's Parole and Probation Department and is a board member on the Institutional Victim Advisory Panel for Maryland's Department of Corrections in addition to her membership with VSAB. Having this tri-representation brings to the citizens of Montgomery County the latest and best information on victim services from all aspects of the Maryland criminal justice system.

Linda G. Meyer, M.A. in Special Education

Ms. Meyer has a Bachelors degree in Social Work and a Masters in Special Education. For the past eight years she has worked as a Special Education Early Childhood teacher with Montgomery County's Infants and Toddlers Program of HHS.

Carol Weiss, M.S. in Education Adm./Supervision and M.S. in Government/Criminal Justice

Ms. Weiss is the Principal of Redland Middle School. Her employment experience includes working as a Montgomery County teacher, Security Personnel and Training Supervisor, Director of Security, Criminal Justice Instructor and as a Police Officer in Arlington County. Ms. Weiss has served as a Commissioner on the Commission for Women, as well as, a number of other community groups.

Steven N. Wilkerson

A lifelong resident of Montgomery County, Mr. Wilkerson is financial advisor for UBS Paine Webber. In addition to his membership with VSAB, he is involved with Big Brother - Big Sister and Make-A-Wish-Foundation.

The Victim Services Advisory Board would like to acknowledge the invaluable office support provided by staff from the Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program. They include Nadja S.P. Cabello, Director; Inahi Maria Nichols, Victim Assistant; and Mona Gafour, Office Services Coordinator.



Montgomery County, Maryland

Victim Services Advisory Board
1301 Piccard Drive, Suite 4100
Rockville, MD 20850

Language translation and alternative formats of this report as well as the VSAB brochure are available upon request. For additional information on the Board, please call or write:

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