

*Michigan Department
of Community Health*



The Michigan Crime Victim Services Commission

Tenth Annual VOCA Council of Advocates November 28, 2007 Report Summary

**Prepared by:
Michigan Public Health Institute**



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Meeting Summary

Historical Background

Each year the Michigan Crime Victim Services Commission (CVSC) and the Michigan Public Health Institute (MPHI) host a day-long meeting with a small group of crime victim advocates in Michigan – The Victim of Crime Act (VOCA) Council of Advocates. Meetings have occurred annually since Fiscal Year 1999. The meetings take the form of a question and answer session and roundtable discussions. Every participating advocate is an employee of an agency that receives VOCA funds administered by the CVSC. Additionally, each advocate represents an agency specializing in services to one or more diverse victim populations, such as child abuse victims, domestic violence victims, drunk driving victims, sexual assault victims, crime victims in American Indian communities, victims accessing hospital-based services, and victims working with prosecuting attorneys.

The annual gathering of the VOCA Council of Advocates serves several purposes. The CVSC is required to receive feedback from VOCA grantees with respect to prospective changes to the grant administration process. Of equal importance, these meetings serve as a forum to share information concerning crime victim services and to allow the participants to network with each other and with CVSC and MPHI staff.

This report, produced by MPHI, is a summary of the Tenth Annual VOCA Council of Advocates held during fiscal year 2008 at the Henry Center in Lansing, Michigan.

I. Welcome/Participant Introductions

The Fiscal Year 2008 Annual VOCA Council of Advocates meeting was attended by:

John Hubinger	Crime Victim Services Commission
Leslie O'Reilly	Crime Victim Services Commission
Randy Parker	Crime Victim Services Commission
Therese Porn	Crime Victim Services Commission
Amy Anderson	Muskegon County Prosecutor's Office
Heather Bartlett	Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan
Diane Bedenbaugh	Child Abuse and Neglect Council of Oakland County
Julie Boggs	Wayne County Prosecutor's Office
Jeanie Colella	Child Abuse Council of Muskegon County
Shela Dubenion-Smith	Sparrow Hospital (Lansing)
Susan Johnson	Every Woman's Place, Inc. (Muskegon)
Darcy Komejan	Children's Assessment Center (Holland)

Mona Makki	ACCESS (Dearborn)
Tanisha Jones	City of Flint
Martha Merritt	Catholic Social Services of Wayne County
Sandra Pilgrim-Lewis	Shelter, Inc. (Alpena)
Melissa Pope	Triangle Foundation (Detroit)
Homer Smith	Mothers Against Drunk Driving (Lansing)
Josephine Smith	Relief After Violent Encounter, Inc. (St. Johns)
Barry Tanner	Detroit Receiving Hospital and University Health Center
Erica Thrash-Sall	St. John Community Health Investment Corp. (Warren)
Maria Valayil	Ingham County Prosecutor
Phyllis VanOrder	Battle Creek Health System
Barbara Welke	Berrien County Council for Children (St. Joseph)
Courtney Chapin	Michigan Public Health Institute
Mary Zack Thompson	Michigan Public Health Institute

II. Remarks from the CVSC-Open Discussion

The meeting centered around 14 topics. Each topic is presented in the following pages with a description of the information shared by the CVSC and illustrative Advocate comments about the topic.

Input on CVSC Executive Director Leadership Skills

Mike Fullwood retired from the CVSC in November after 27 years of service. Ms. O'Reilly and Mr. Hubinger asked the CVSC participants to comment on their perceptions of important skills for candidates for the Executive Director. Ms. O'Reilly discussed Mr. Fullwood's dedication to victim response and his long-standing partnership with VOCA grantees.

The advocates discussed the importance of open communication with the grantees and that excellent communication skills are very important for the Executive Director's role. Mr. Fullwood had an open door policy that was appreciated by the advocates.

"What I appreciated about Mike, and would be really important to continue ... was really open communication. I felt like we always knew where things were, when things looked bad or could potentially be bad. He didn't keep that to himself. He shared that with us." - Advocate

"An open door policy where it felt comfortable enough to go to Mike with questions or concerns or ideas. He was always very receptive ... a friendly demeanor and always made an attempt to at least introduce himself to victim advocates and get to know them. I always appreciated that." - Advocate

"I could always call Mike and he was always there and able to help me. You know he knew not only what was going on at the state level, but at your local level. I found this to be very important." - Advocate

“(When) I saw Mike, he certainly listened, he always greeted me by name, and he knew who I was. He always asked me about my own county, what was going on there. I feel like that was remarkable given the number of grantees the Commission has and the variety of crime victims that are served.” - Advocate

Several advocates expressed appreciation for the support that Mr. Fullwood had for their work and would like this positive climate to continue. A few advocates mentioned they felt as though they were in a partnership with the Commission.

“They are valuing our partnership not just as a funder, but they are valuing us as someone that can support the whole effort.” - Advocate

“VOCA is absolutely the best across the board to work with. You feel like VOCA wants you to do good work ... they make the process easy for you.” - Advocate

“The climate is we want you to do the good work. There’s not all these hurdles created in doing the work. We are always getting the information to help support our program, help link us to other people. The climate is the absolute best. Continue that and make the people who do the field work feel supported.” - Advocate

“Mike respected what we did as victim advocates and he let us know that.” - Advocate

“(There is an) open door policy. I don’t know how many times you’ve said to me, ‘There is no stupid question.’” - Advocate

“You have someone who is an advocate for the issue of crime victims.” - Advocate

Two advocates voiced the opinion that the Executive Director should be politically aware.

“Political awareness, like what’s going on across the state.” - Advocate

“Not only did he know the state and what was going on, but he also seemed to know when I had issues with the (county) council. He was able to give me feedback about the county, the state.” - Advocate

Another important skill is knowledge of the field, as mentioned by two advocates.

“He really was (knowledgeable of his field). He helped me out of a big bind a few years ago ... he knew what was happening in the state. It was issues regarding compensation. He knew about Wayne and what my advocates did. His help was invaluable.” - Advocate

“He knew as much about domestic violence and sexual assault as he does about child sexual abuse, about hate crimes. He really was very well versed in so many dynamics of different crimes”. - Advocate

The importance of a strong support staff for the commissioner was discussed.

“One thing Mike did very well too was to empower his staff. I had limited interaction with Mike because I didn’t need to. It’s been very obvious to me over the years that he has ensured that (Leslie) has the knowledge she needs to do her job and the authority.” - Advocate

“The staff is knowledgeable. It is very professional.” - Advocate

“It’s that professionalism in your office and that openness that makes it such a pleasure.” - Advocate

“I would like to acknowledge your wonderful staff. Thank you very much Leslie for all your wonderful help.” - Advocate

“I met Dr. Parker; he did one of the site visits. There is a lot of stress going into that, preparing for that, but Dr. Parker was just absolutely wonderful. It was a comfortable meeting and we thoroughly enjoyed it, and we learned a lot from him.” - Advocate

Uniform Statewide Trauma System

Ms. O’Reilly updated the Advocates on the status of the Uniform Statewide Trauma System. The trauma legislative package was recommended initially by the commission in 2005. The objective of the proposal is to create a unified statewide trauma system. The services would be funded through a surcharge paid by people using hospital trauma response services. The resulting funding would be used to pay for healthcare professionals who perform forensic medical exams for sexual assault survivors. The exams are currently paid from a variety of different funding sources, including survivor insurance, crime victim compensation (administered by the Commission), federal and local grants, law enforcement, and other sources.

Ms. O’Reilly explained that the crime victim compensation program includes the requirement to report the crime to law enforcement within 48 hours so under the current system victims of sexual assault must report to law enforcement in order to be eligible to receive compensation. This may be a barrier for some victims in seeking service. The proposed trauma package would address this issue. There are also policy implications regarding forensic exams impacting training, licensing, and program development at hospitals, community-based programs, and children’s programs. Fall 2008 CVSC Update: The Commission is supporting legislative changes which would create the Sexual Assault Forensic Exam Response or SAFE Response program.

Mr. Hubinger also provided an update on the movement of the system, indicating progress has slowed. With the state budget situation, the trauma bill has not been on the forefront. The trauma system has not yet been introduced in a bill. He encouraged advocates who are concerned about the trauma system to express their concerns, so he could report them back to the department.

“Michigan is one of the few states that did not design a trauma system. It’s expensive. Michigan is still lagging behind (on) trauma issues. This initiative is extremely important.” – Mr. Hubinger

Increasing Awareness of Victim Services in Michigan

Ms. O'Reilly discussed the idea of developing reports that tell the story of victim services in Michigan and provide suggestions for future work. The reports will include a background briefing, including types of crime and victims, services in Michigan, and state resources to fund these services. The reports would also describe perpetrators, victims, who is at highest risk of becoming a victim and effective intervention practices for crime victims. Also included would be promising practices and evidence based models for effective service to crime victims. A single report, or a series of reports by type of victim (domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, drunk driving, homicide) could be developed.

"You're fighting that fight everyday working with law enforcement, the medical systems, and the judiciary. What do you need to be effective in that role?" – Ms. O'Reilly

"We need to do an effective job of educating on a regular, if not annual, basis the members of the legislature. (We need) a task force ... whether that means an annual lobbying day, just to talk about the services we provide, what the gaps are, and potential solutions. So when bills do come up, (there is) a foundation of (knowledge)." - Advocate

Ms. O'Reilly indicated the briefing report could be used to educate legislators, administrators, agency boards, and communities on crime victim services in Michigan.

VOCA Grant Information

Ms. O'Reilly updated the advocates on the current status of the VOCA Victim's Services Federal Grant Program. The Commission administers the crime victim assistance and compensation grants for the state of Michigan. Over \$150 million has been awarded by the Commission since 1986. Currently, over ninety agencies (public or non-profit organizations) receive these grants. Thirteen million dollars was awarded in this fiscal year. On average, over 125,000 victims of crime are serviced by the grant programs annually.

"These programs offer vital services to crime victims throughout the state." – Ms. O'Reilly

The Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) receives a formula grant award from the federal government. The CVSC, within MDCH, administers the funds. The following services must each receive at least 10% of the award: domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault, and underserved victims of crime (in Michigan, these are drunk driving victims, homicide survivors, and victims of hate crime).

The purpose of this meeting of VOCA grantees is to disseminate VOCA related information and solicit grantee feedback on administrative and technical assistance needs. The meeting also serves as an opportunity to network with other program representatives.

Ms. O'Reilly updated the advocates on the status of VOCA Crime Victims Funding. The Federal House and Senate passed versions of the 2008 appropriations bill. The Senate voted to keep the fund's cap at the President's recommended level of \$625 million. The House voted to increase the cap to \$635 million. Because other program areas received larger earmarks of funds under the formula, less is available to support victims' assistance programs.

The President has recommended rescinding the money from the Crime Victims Fund with the latest recommendation to instead support this formula grant program with federal tax dollars. This fund is supported by criminal assessments, forfeited bail bonds, and fines at the federal level. Money that is not awarded to states in formula grants or awarded to the federal agency for program administration remains in the fund. Congress indicated the cap was created to stabilize funding for victims services as funding fluctuates from year to year. The funding cap ensures stability for states.

The commission is recommending and asking programs to support an increase in the cap to \$661 million. This would restore the federal program to the 2006 level of funding. Otherwise, there will be a reduction in federal grant awards next year.

Advocates can receive updated information about the fund at the National Association of VOCA Victim Assistance Administrators website (www.navaa.org). The website includes updates, briefing materials, and samples. Advocates may be asked to contact their Congressional Representatives.

House Bill 5355

Ms. O'Reilly next updated the COA on the status of House Bill 5355. This bill would allow the use of the Crime Victims' Services Fund to pay for five state services that were previously in the general fund budget. These services, costing approximately \$5 million annually, would reduce the funds available to serve victims. In addition, other services may also be paid for under the bill.

“(The bill) provides services described under Section 8: A court, or local agency that receives a distribution under this act, shall use this distribution to maintain or enhance crime victims' rights services including, but not limited to, any of the following: operation or enhancement of sex offender registry, Amber Alert program, prevention and treatment services for victims or potential victims of sexual assault, polygraph examination, expert witness testimony or forensic science.” – Ms. O'Reilly

Commission Website

The website was demonstrated and described to the advocates. Features of the website include:

- Communications for service providers,
- Publications for service providers, media and victims,

- Brochures and printable documents, including compensation and notification brochures,
- Grant status information,
- A listing of all grantee agencies along with contact information, and
- Grant reporting tools, including the Michigan employee funding time report

Several advocates made suggestions on how to improve the website. One advocate would like the listing of agencies to include the services provided by each agency. Another advocate suggested that the listing of the agencies and a description of their services be posted on the Michigan Advocate website. Ms. O'Reilly stated that a county by county listing of resources provided by funded agencies could be included on the website.

"It would be extremely helpful if in that list...there were bullet points about what services they (provide)." – Advocate

"Could that be something that could be added to the Michigan Advocate website as a subsection a listing of all agencies in the state and a synopsis of the services they provide?" - Advocate

One advocate mentioned that they use the site for information and to obtain brochures.

"We use it for brochures and things like that."- Advocate

Another advocate asked if the general public was using the site. Ms. O'Reilly said she would see if user data is available for the site.

"Do you have information on who is using the site...is the general public using it, and what kind of information are they hitting on?"- Advocate

A suggestion was made to include a link to the agencies' websites.

"Is there any place that links to all of our websites and programs?"-Advocate

There was some discussion about posting information on prisoner release for victims and their families to access.

"If there is indeed general public interest in this site... (for) folks who are wondering about release dates (for perpetrators)..make sure there is a contact ... to their victim witness unit in their community. (If) someone is being releasedthere is an opportunity for that family to get information and their rights are in that process."- Advocate

"I second that. And also phone number to the chief department of corrections (to receive information) if they hadn't registered to be notified ... or if they have not updated their phone number and address."-Advocate

"I think it is especially important that they know who in their county can be their personal advocate."- Advocate

An advocate suggested that there be a feature that allows entering of employee training on an ongoing basis, rather than just once a year in the year-end report.

“It would be helpful to enter that information through out the year as it occurs so we don’t have to scurry at the very end.” - Advocate

Another advocate mentioned using the website as a means of communication to more members of an agency. Ms. O’Reilly said that adding a financial contact and another agency contact might be beneficial, so all of these individuals would receive communications.

Ms. O’Reilly reported that the children’s services outcomes for evaluation will be posted to the website. The on-line application has a several links to examples of expected outcome evaluations for their grant activities.

The website has a function for users to change their password. The advocates were urged to use complex passwords to ensure security. In addition, grantees should change their password when an employee who has had access to the website leaves the agency.

Grant Awards

Ms. O’Reilly described the grant award process. Grant awards were mailed to agencies and contracts approved online. Amendments can now be done online. The system sends out automated notices about reporting requirements.

“You will see a new function for the application review. It’s in a checklist format. It was updated to provide the ability to quickly look and see what you (have) to respond to. You must create an amendment to the application to respond to the items that are outstanding in your grant application. The system sends electronic notices regarding VOCA reporting. It’s a five day reminder prior to the report due date and then delinquency notices after the due date. Those are sent electronically so it is important for email addresses be current.” - Ms. O’Reilly

Ms. O’Reilly noted that VOCA grantees are contractually required to notify the CVSC of staffing changes; this can be done on the website. She also reminded the advocates that victims’ rights notices must be submitted. Advocates should also put their current CVA number and the acknowledgement that they received VOCA funding on these notices.

“The purpose of the notices under the Victims’ Rights Act Local Law Enforcement are to provide information on emergency response programs in the community. If you are serving victims, law enforcement needs to receive an updated report on what you are funded to provide ... so they know services (are) available in the community. Contact (information) ... hours of operation.” – Ms. O’Reilly

Training Needs

The next topic was training needs. Ms. O'Reilly updated the advocates on the training that the Commission supports, including cultural competency and hate crime training provided by the Michigan Department of Civil Rights. Last year, 70 trainings were offered, with 3,000 people attending. Training sessions will continue in 2008.

Ms. O'Reilly asked the group for feedback on their needs for training in the areas of planning and analyzing resource materials for non-English speaking individuals. Three advocates indicated that they would like help with program planning and materials development. Ms. O'Reilly indicated that the trainings could be done at each of the agencies, so that training could be individualized. Discussion followed on how this training should be offered.

"I anticipate if we plan to have a visit to each agency, you could have individualized training at your community over the next two years." – Ms. O'Reilly

"(There) may be an opportunity instead of doing it by community but by region." – Advocate

"(Then) staff can sit down as part of the training separate from that larger region and say 'how does this work?', 'how can we make this better?', 'what do I have that can make it better?' Because I think every community and every agency (is different)." – Advocate

An advocate asked if there was an easy way to find the guidelines. Ms. O'Reilly pointed out that these are available on the Department of Justice website; this information is provided in the grant award memo.

The discussion turned toward the grant application and award trainings. Ms. O'Reilly indicated that the trainings would be in February and March of 2008; this information is in the grant award letter. The CVSC is looking for a site in Detroit to host a grant award workshop and grant application workshop.

"Looking at what it cost us to come to Lansing. We're up at four o'clock in the morning to drive down here ... we turn around and drive back in that day. Even that is expensive. It's a whole day of driving ... a whole 8 hours." – Advocate

A number of advocates would like distance-based training to limit travel time and costs – a number of the advocates would like web-based training. Several advocates voiced the concerns with travel costs with limited program budgets.

Ms. O'Reilly stated that a survey of the advocates would need to be done to determine what types of technology agencies have available.

"This is something that we hope to accomplish. To implement it, (to meet) the same standards we currently have for training is (going to) require ... some planning. I would like to see it done in a way that (is) useful to programs. The communication process is important to us and we've been instructed by the administration to look at training opportunities that

(are) possible. That's creating a whole communications package that doesn't necessarily exist online right now. Show of hands how many people would like to see web-based training for grant workshops?" – Ms. O'Reilly

Various modes of distance training were discussed:

"I was just wondering if there was some way of doing a presentation and then sending it to folks ... to view. If you have questions, document those questions and then forward them to us for a response." – Mr. Hubinger

"It could be on your (computer) screen. You could also have your speakerphone on. People can type (their questions) in and you can see them. It would be like an open discussion." – Advocate

"It's a pretty economical way of running a meeting." – Advocate

"Maybe you offer a people a choice (of in-person or web-based training). We are all adults here. Either I have the choice of adopting or accessing a web-based (training) or an opportunity to come to Lansing and sitting in a live session." – Advocate

Ms. O'Reilly discussed future training opportunities such as orientation training prior to service and continuing training for those in the field. She also discussed the idea of standardized volunteer training throughout Michigan that will include appropriate techniques and tools and protocols to assist victims of crime.

"We have hundreds and hundreds of volunteers that work in victims services across the state. Any service provision training (needs to be) evidence based. It has to be quality training ... and professionally developed resources." - Ms. O'Reilly

"(It) could include board training as well, because many boards are volunteers" - Ms. O'Reilly

One advocate discussed the need for training on how to assign volunteers to work.

"Have some kind of concrete training on how to assign a volunteer to a particular project. One volunteer might be terrific at fundraising, but you don't want that person doing face-to-face things. Sometimes there are kids trying to get college credit or high school credit ... and they are trying to get something for themselves as well as give of themselves." - Advocate

Several advocates expressed the concern that trainings should not be overly restrictive – agencies should be able to tailor the training to the types of services they provide and clients they serve. In response, Ms. O'Reilly stated that would be specific units for children's services, domestic violence, sexual assault, and general victim volunteer programs.

"What your volunteers at DV shelters do is very different from what my volunteers do. The training would look very different." - Advocate

“Victims services volunteers who are working with child victims and child advocacy programs are different from volunteers working with victims in a domestic violence shelter or sexual assault program or prosecutors office victims unit.” - Advocate

Resource Needs

There are a number of resources available through www.healthymichigan.com. There are four booklets for children that will be translated into Arabic and Spanish and printed. The booklets are:

- *Sometimes it's Sad to be at Home*
- *What is a Kid to do about Domestic Violence?*
- *Kids and Secrets: It's good to Tell the Truth*
- *Kids go to Court*

The advocates discussed their needs for additional resource materials, including information on sexual assault and for serving victims from other countries.

“I didn't see anything in here about sexual assault.” – Advocate

“We've seen an increase with people from Albania who don't speak English and Russia and Ukraine.” – Advocate

“One of the concerns that we had was producing things in other languages and getting the appearance that we would have somebody there that would speak the language.” – Advocate

Ms. O'Reilly mentioned the need to find out who the demographics of victims.

“I think (we should go) back to the planning process if we got the demographic picture of who the victims are.” – Ms. O'Reilly

Ms. O'Reilly indicated that there are services that will provide translation, but that victim's safety and confidentiality were always a consideration.

Application Schedule

Ms. O'Reilly reviewed the application schedule. The application will be posted on the web on January 28, 2008, with an application due date of March 14, 2008.

OVC Training

Information on the online OVC trainings was provided in the Fall 2007 Michigan Advocate newsletter posted on the Michigan Advocate website www.michiganadvocate.org. There is a basic program that combines core information and basic skills that are needed by victim service providers to assist victims of crime both effectively and sensitively. The training takes approximately 35 to 40 hours to

complete. Sexual assault training is also online. Both of these offerings would meet the grant requirements of 24 hours of training. There is no charge for this training. The training is available at www.ovcttac.gov/vatonline. Ms. O'Reilly asked if these trainings should be required.

"I think those kinds of (training) are great especially for rural people who want to do things but don't have the resources." – Advocate

"Maybe we should have a committee that really assesses some of those training opportunities to see if it is something we should be requiring." – Ms. O'Reilly

"If you already have an orientation program in your agency, you're duplicating those types of things." – Advocate

"I know that (another grantee) offers basic training as well as sexual assault." - Advocate

Grant Compliance and Needs Assessment

Dr. Randy Parker discussed the process for the site visits and needs assessments. Agencies are selected for a site visit randomly on a three to four year cycle. Dr. Parker contacts the agency to set up the site visit appointment approximately two weeks prior to the actual visit. Dr. Parker distributed to the group the steps for notification, site visit protocol, which has been modified from previous years, and a self checklist.

"I am very, very impressed with your programs. It is clear that a lot of work goes into preparing for the site visits and we really appreciate it." – Dr. Randy Parker

After the site visit, Dr. Parker writes a site summary report for the VOCA Program Specialist. The agency will receive a site summary report and a letter stating the grantee is in compliance or a corrective action plan is required. If there is a corrective action plan, it usually includes activities such as employee or salary documentation, timely submission of reports, or skills development training. The agency is then required to respond with its plan to resolve any issues.

"If you are contracted for a certain (activity), we need to make sure you are doing that certain (activity). If you decide to change that, or go in a different direction, contact Leslie O'Reilly, Program Specialist." – Dr. Randy Parker

"Based on the site summary reports, you'll either get a letter saying no problems, everything is fine, or you'll get a letter that indicates a plan of corrective action is required. We give you 30 days to submit that plan to the Commission." – Ms. O'Reilly

"Grantees with findings are required to submit a corrective action plan (CAP) that includes a description of each finding, specific steps to be taken for each recommendation, a timetable, and a description of how the implementation will be monitored. At any point in time (the Commission) can go back and verify that (the problem) has been resolved." – Ms. O'Reilly.

The Michigan Advocate Website and Newsletter

The Michigan Advocate is the online newsletter (www.michiganadvocate.org), published by the CVSC and MPHI. The website and newsletter share ideas and resources important to crime victim service providers, professionals, and victims of crime. *The Michigan Advocate's* readership includes VOCA grantees, additional state programs serving crime victims, prosecuting attorney offices, VOCA administrators in other states, national association colleagues, and federal offices.

MPHI staff demonstrated the website, which continues to evolve to incorporate new functions. In addition to the CVSC calendar, there is a community calendar that is available for posting agency events and training opportunities. Grantees can post anything from training events to fundraisers using a form on the website. MPHI staff also reviewed other functions of the website, including subscribing to the newsletter and submitting an article idea. Advocates were also encouraged to submit ideas through the website.

"We are always looking for contributions for articles, so if you have an article idea or you want to write an article, we greatly appreciate that." – Ms. Thompson

"It's a resource for local agencies. We want information to be available to victims' service organizations, the staff of those organizations, as well as other allied professionals who work with crime victims. If you choose to write an article for the newsletter, it should be a general information piece geared toward that target audience." – Ms. O'Reilly

The council members provided suggestions for upcoming issues, including topics and authors:

- Immigration issues and how to serve illegal immigrants,

"In Wayne County we are dealing with a lot of immigration issues. We just had a case where people needed services but they were illegal immigrants so what to do?" – Advocate

- Human trafficking,
- Methamphetamines and child abuse,
- Legislation on victims rights/services,
- Identifying the batterer in same sex/intimate partner violence, aimed at police and domestic violence agencies,

"We have seen where the actual batterer will call different agencies for assistance, and they are in fact the batterer and not the battered." – Advocate

- Michigan prisoner re-entry,

- Outreach to lesbian victims,

“It’s very difficult in my community, which is a very close-knit community, to make inroads into the lesbian community. How do we reach out in a very safe and respectful way?” – Advocate

- Victims of multiple crimes,

“I’d like to see some article on people who are victims of multiple crimes. A lot of times we’ll get someone in for one thing, they’ve been victimized a whole host of ways. Something that can educate a community on how much a victim can face.” – Advocate

- Cris Sullivan to author a series of articles on the effects of trauma on children, and

- Providing assistance to victims of identity theft

Program Evaluation Trainings

Program evaluation is necessary for service providers to adequately address quality assurance and to determine the overall effectiveness of crime victim services. The CVSC has again partnered with Cris Sullivan Ph.D. and MPHI to conduct program evaluation trainings for VOCA-funded agencies for this year. Three trainings will be offered in fiscal year 2008, including a training that will focus on the evaluation needs of grantees working in small or rural agencies and one that will focus on agencies serving children. The dates and locations for the training are as follows:

- May 1, 2008: Henry Center – Lansing (General Training)
- August 7, 2008: Prince Conference Center – Calvin College, Grand Rapids (Training aimed at agencies that provide Children’s Services)
- September 25, 2008: Treetops Resort – near Gaylord (Training aimed at Small or Rural agencies)

In reply to an advocate’s question about whether or not the trainings are evaluated, Ms. O’Reilly responded:

“MPHI receives funding from the Commission to implement the evaluation trainings for us. They do an evaluation.” – Ms. O’Reilly

CVSC, MPHI, and Dr. Sullivan use the results of the training evaluations to make improvements to the workshops, such as content changes and location selection.

IX. Conclusion

Ms. O'Reilly thanked the attendees for their participation. She requested on-going feedback to improve the process of VOCA grant management and victim services throughout Michigan.

"As these initiatives (discussed today) get developed you'll be hearing more. This is (a) feedback session right now and implementing something, some of the recommendations from agencies, will require additional contact, information, and feedback from agencies.

(With) the site visit process, you will have the ability to comment on that. Contractually, anytime we make significant changes in our process you're required to give us your feedback. We'll send it to you; if you don't respond that's (your) response. If you do, we try and incorporate any suggestions.

It has been our experience that the feedback provided by the victims' service agencies really move the process along and really allows it to be an effective process." – Ms. O'Reilly

The participants expressed gratitude to the CVSC for hosting an event dedicated to an open dialogue that values the work crime victim service agencies perform and allows agencies a voice in vital crime victim issues and VOCA grant administration.

The next Council of Advocates meeting will be scheduled for November 14, 2008 at the Henry Center in Lansing.