

**Monroe County Domestic Violence Coalition  
Meeting Minutes  
May 18, 2018, 12:00 pm – 1 pm**

**Mission:** The Monroe County Domestic Violence Coalition is committed to improving our community's response to domestic violence issues through communication and coordination of services.

Members: Ron Smith (Indianapolis Counseling Center), Harry Heyer (Character Restoration Center), Julie Robertson (Probation), Sally Thomas (IU), Melissa Stone (IU), Tia Arthur (CASA), Cynthia Perez (Connect 211), April Wilson (Prosecutor), Heather Davis (MWH), Sam Harrell, (MWH), Debra Morrow (MWH), Jennifer Whitaker (Centerstone/REC)

City Staff: Michael Shermis, Thomas Nguyen

**I. Guest Speaker Presentation**

Guest Speaker: Kerry Hyatt Bennett, JD, Indiana Coalition against Domestic Violence  
Topic: Stalking, Sexual Assault, Lobbying for Survivors, and Other Legal Issues

- Kerry shared her work at the Indiana Coalition against Domestic Violence. She trains prosecutors, judges, and law enforcement officials about domestic violence issues to help survivors get out of abusive relationship.
- Some of her current focus is on helping domestically abused immigrants. Lots of immigrant victims/survivors, who are undocumented citizens, are abused but don't want to report to the police because they're afraid of losing their status. To help immigrant victims, their information is needed.
- Kerry asked for Coalition members to connect her with small business lawyers and she will train them to help file for divorce lawsuit to help abused survivors and take care of their children with alimony payment from their abusing spouse.
- ICADV is also trying to help domestic violence victims get access to payday lending. Some payday lending institutions are taking advantage of abused victims, who are in a financial crisis.
- There is an issue with Indiana judges because they are not "educated" enough about Domestic Violence, for example, the differences between Batterers Intervention Program and Anger Management.
- When the bill for a divorce lawsuit comes, victims usually are asked to pay for it, which is unfair.
- Kerry suggested that we all lobby legislators to help the survivors and change the laws to favor the survivors.
- April noted that the existing Indiana state law has a hole in its definition of domestic violence. The Domestic Violence determination requires the victims and perpetrators to be intimate partners, have a child, or be married to consider the abuse as a domestic violence. Kerry said she will search for the Domestic Violence determination from the federal domestic violence law and then try to lobby Indiana state to change its law.

- Indiana State Law has a hole in its system and favors men because the majority of the people in legal power are men. There are some women who have been abused by their husbands for 20 years. But if they lash out to defend themselves because they can't stand it anymore, these women, who are victims, can end up in jail. Cynthia pointed out that victims often don't call 211 or 911 when they're abused. One of the reasons why they don't call the police is because they have an addiction, and they're afraid that the police will find out.

## **II. Staff Update**

- Currently only Connect 211 and probation have sent their stats. Please send statistics soon!

## **III. Information Sharing**

- Harry Heyer passed around flyers and cards. He's working at protecting the victims and will clearly explain the process related to domestic violence control issues.
- MWH says they are seeing an increase in complaints about domestic and dating violence. The police are receiving more reports and are doing a more work regarding on-campus sexual assault.