

VOCA Stakeholder Monthly Call

1:00 pm 08/07/2023

Hosted by DSS via WebEx

Patricia Custer (Patti Custer): This is going to be the first of many monthly VOCA calls, where we are going to do check-ins for everyone. It's good to see everybody jumping on and to see you all here today.

I am Patricia Custer, or Patti as most of you know. If you are not familiar with me, I am the DSS VOCA Program Coordinator. We also have staff online, I'll give them a chance to introduce themselves.

Tara Shahangian: Hi, my name is Tara Shahangian and I'm a VOCA specialist for the VOCA program here at the state of Missouri.

Benjamin Johnson Jr.: Benjamin Johnson Jr. I'm a program specialist here on the VOCA unit. It's nice to see you all.

Patti Custer: I believe we also have Ken Chapman and Jeriane Jaegers Brenneke on the phone with us today, but we will go ahead and get started. Also, if everyone in here can put their name and the agency you're with in the chat, that way we have some kind of a roll call for everyone that's joined us today.

Jeriane Jaegers Brenneke: Yes Patti, Ken and I are here.

Patti Custer: Thank you Jeriane. We will be monitoring the chat and taking notes as well as recoding.

- The first thing we want to go over is the quarterly reports. These quarterly reports were for April, May, and June. They were due on July 31st, so if we have not received those, or if you haven't sent those to us yet, we need to get those in. We have to have them to DOJ and entered into their system by the 15th of this month, so in just a few days we have to have those entered. It's very important for you guys to get those sent to us in timely fashion.
- The next thing is the grand release date so as of today, and I checked this morning, they have not released the FY23 grant to the state yet. We are still waiting on that to come out, it might be September but were hoping it'll be in August. But, as soon as they release that to us, with the grant conditions that we have to put on our contracts, we will get those out to you. Also, we are prepared to get those to you as soon as possible when that comes out.
- Once you get those signed and back to procurement we'll do the budget and budget narrative and you'll have 10 days to get that budget and budget narrative back to us.
- The next agenda item is the gap analysis overview. So we have been out visiting, and we've probably visited about 80-100 places so far. As of right now, were seeing a trend in transportation, staffing issues, and things like that. So we will continue to visit and get those Gap Analysis into us and get those things done. We're trying to accumulate all those comments and reinforce that there's a gap so we can start working on those. We're also seeing if there's something we can search out or use to help and get more information to help everyone. So we are working on

that, and will share that spreadsheet once we are finished. Unfortunately, most of the gaps are pretty common throughout all the agencies.

Jeriane Jaegers-Brenneke: I have couple of things I want to add. I want to reiterate that the reason the contracts are not out yet, is because we have to put the terms and conditions in the contracts by federal guidelines. So, until the DOJ releases those terms and conditions, we can't get the contracts out. We have done our portion of responding to any questions they have about the grant and stuff. We are just waiting on that piece of it.

- Allocations are not changing so that's not an issue. So like Patti said, she was hoping August, it may be September. But as of right now we are at the mercy of when we get those. If we already had them, they would've been out the door already, but we don't. Patti is going to a conference next week and hopefully she will find something out then, maybe not, we don't really know. But if she does, she will follow up with an email to everyone. So just know that we, as in DSS, are not trying to sit on those. We just don't have everything we need to send those out.
- Regarding the gap analysis, we do have multiple other programs, and we are going to go through that gap analysis again as a group. We have some other transportation in other projects that we are funding now, so we will let you know if we are doing any other projects, and what we have out there. So that's all I had. Ken did you have anything?

Ken Chapman: I think just to add that part of the gap analysis is to figure out how we can better help, problem solve, and strategize some of those needs you have, specifically within your organization, and trying to meet the needs of your victims. So however we can do that, we just want you to know we are working on those kinds of pieces and putting them together so we can all work together for a better end.

Jeraine Jaegers-Brenneke: And we do intend to send that out to everyone once it is finished. So if you see things or you see a provider that has an issue, and you're like "Hey we use to have this issue, we know how to resolve it." We would love for you to send up ideas, so we can put together like a best practices guide or however we can support you.

- How many locations have you guys visited now?

Patti Custer: Almost 100

Jeriane Jaegers-Brenneke: That's just 39 left so you know, so kudos to them and kudos to everyone providing us feedback. We are learning a lot and we appreciate you. I'll turn it back to Patti now.

Patti Custer: The next thing we have is the provider update, so every update we are going to try to do 10 agencies. We'll see how that goes and if we can fit in more, or if not. We're going to give you a couple minutes, and were going to be going in alphabetical order.

We don't mean to put anyone on the spot, we just want you to tell us a little bit about your programs, what you are doing, and if you have anything new or exciting going on at your agency.

So that's what we will be doing and were going to start that today. So we did have 10 people that were going to go. So starting at the top of the list, if you will just speak about your agency that would be great. So the first agency is the 15th Judicial circuit CASA.

Hannah: Hi, I am Hannah. I am the director at the 15th Judicial Circuit CASA. We cover Celine and Lafayette counties. We are kind of in the West central area of Missouri.

- Just looking back at the 3rd quarter data, we served 35 individual kids in our program. We are a pretty small CASA program. There were 78 kids in custody in the circuits with children's division, so that was about 44% roughly. And that's with 13 volunteers, which 4 of them are brand new this year. One of them doesn't have a case yet, so there was few less volunteers so we are excited that were having some join.
- We also have another training class starting later this month which we have a couple signed up, and are hoping to get a couple more so we can add those towards the end of the year.
- We've started planning our fundraising events. That'll take place in the spring. It's our Blue-Jean-Bash and that's our main event. It was pretty successful, bringing it back last year. It was the first year after COVID. So were hoping to grow that a little more.
- We've also completed our program and fiscal monitoring and we are excited that it went well for us and getting to meet some of the VOCA staff.
- Then everywhere else, we are continuing to look for funding sources to help supplement. Like I said, we are a pretty small program, it's just our volunteer coordinator and myself, so we wear several hats. That's about it Thank you!

Patti Custer: Alright, now we have the 17th Judicial Circuit, that's Cass County Prosecutor's Office. Oh, it looks like Julie said she's on a computer with no microphone or camera, so we will maybe catch her next month. Do we have someone on from 37th CASA?

Connie Pendergrass: Yes, my name is Connie Pendergrass, and I'm the director here.

- So were just like some of the other CASAs, we are kind of small so we just have 2 and a half people on our staff. Right now were serving about 50 children. We have 4 new advocates who have just started for this year.
- We just finished our monitoring and we did well with it, so I do want to thank the staff there at VOCA because if we had any questions as we were going along I could call up there and you guys would help me with whatever I needed, so I do appreciate that very much.
- So we are heading into the festival season here. We serve Howell, Shannon and Oregon County. So we will be doing festivals. We have our large fundraising event on September 9th. So we are doing a murder mystery dinner here in West Plains. We are doing a 50's theme; so everyone can get out their poodle skirts and letter jackets, though they may not fit anymore, but you can get them out and come. So we did a murder mystery last year and had about 160 people come and it was sold out. So were hoping we will sell out again this year. We are just kind of perking along! But I think the most difficult thing we have is trying to get volunteers, our advocates. So that just seems to be a continuing difficulty for us as a small agency.

Patti Custer: Thank you Connie, do we have anyone from Avenues? No, how about Adhoc?

Damon Daniel: My name is Damon Daniel, I am the president of the Adhoc against Crime. For some, we are the emergency room for social services and for other we have the trusted bridge between the communities.

- In the criminal justice system, the last quarter we served (pertaining to this particular program and grant) 31 individual who received a range of services from grief and trauma-informed counseling relating to those who survive violent acts or assault. We also provided case management. Brandon, our chief operating officer is also on the line here. Brandon correct me if I'm wrong but I believe we had 3 emergency relocations. These individuals who survived a shooting and were referred to us through law enforcement, for crisis management, as well as got them temporary housing and case management to help them get a stable-footing. Brandon is there anything you want to add to the report?

Brandon Mims: Yeah I think it should have been 6 but I think it was 6 emergency relocations, but absolutely.

- So for the bulk of the services that we have for VOCA, trauma, crisis case management, trauma informed care, grief counseling, also just tradition counseling to help with traumatic and violent experiences. As Damon states victim relocation and so essentially that is a witness or victim of a violent crime who relocate in order to keep them safe and they might be able to pursue avenues, like law enforcement participation. So that's the crux of it.

Damon Daniels: Yeah and I would say just to add some excitement in terms of something new and different to report that's unrelated to this specific grant, but also something I am really proud of is back in May we relaunched our employment readiness program. Which is a program where we do a partnership with Cass County Court and Full Employment Council here. Where we work with individuals who are in the system. But we've just expanded that to serve those who are coming out of municipal court, custody, and probation and parole as well. This is an effort to help folks who are currently in the system get pulled back into civic life. As a part of our employment readiness we do cognitive behavior intervention, which is basically a cognitive restructuring in addition to having folks come up with a plan for reintegrating back into society once their observation and grow. Then connecting them with the job. So that's really exciting that were doing that and there are other exciting components associated with this fairly new program, that we just were doing prior to COVID, but we just reestablished it in May and so were proud that we have that going on.

Patti Custer: Thank you, is anyone on the phone from Agape? No, How about Alive?

Maggie Manefee: Yes, I am Maggie Manefee with Alive. Wow, okay so update for us. The most important thing is September 5th there will be a new executive director coming on board and I'll be working with her for two months until I retire so that is big news. We do serve both St. Louis community, County and City, St. Charles, Jefferson County and Franklin County.

- In VOCA we have two different grants with the central and the St. Louis grants. Over 800 served in this last month. That's either through shelter services, counseling for adults and children, and helping people understand court order protection; although we are going to just be getting a

new court advocate starting September 5th. Also, Alive has been around for 40 years and this year's our big 40 year anniversary. So that's our update.

Patti Custer: Thank you, is there anyone on the phone from Audrain County Crisis Intervention?

Kathy Yohe: Hi I am Kathy Yohe, I am the interim director and access as of the 19th of July. Peggy resigned, so I am filling in right now. I was formally the child advocate for over 20 years, but this is the first time I'm really doing this kind of stuff.

- So we are a domestic and sexual violence. We have this shelter we currently had down to do some major repairs to it. Were still waiting on a roof repairs to be done, but our shelter is back open and we've been majorly swamped since then.
- We also have a big fashion show coming in October as a fundraiser. And we're trying to give our support groups back to going good; but it's been hard since COVID of course, and were trying to get more volunteers in here because we only have 5 staff members. So that's what we have going on.

Patti Custer: Thank you, anyone from Boone County Prosecuting Attorney's office? No, How about Butler County 36th district.

Rebecca Pacheco: Hi, my name is Rebecca Pacheco, I'm the executive director at Butler County community resource council. We're the umbrella organization for the CASA of the 36th Judicial Circuit.

- We serve Butler, Ripley, and Carter counties in Southeast Missouri. Right now, we are serving 55 children with 25 volunteers, 4 of which are new.
- We just finished training and probably the only other update I would add is that Carter County is new to our judicial circuit, so we are establishing new relationships and networking within Carter County since it is new. That's all I have, thank you.

Patti Custer: Thank you. So that really wasn't 10 because we had a few that weren't on here, but we'll reach out to you and let you know when you're going to be up and tell us about your agency. So we'll try make contact after next week so you're prepared.

- The other thing the FY25 contract, so nothing is set with any of that. We do have options out there we are still taking comments so if you have comments, data or feedback that you want to get to us, we are still collecting those. But at this point nothing have been decided or discussed further, we are just collecting comments at this time. Jeriane and Ken do you have anything you want to add?

Jeriane Jaegers-Brenneke: I just want to reiterate that we have gotten, and I don't know exactly how many comments, probably 10 or so and a couple letters. But we are just putting all that together right now, and then we will need to sit down and kind of figure that out. I know we want to have some separate conversations with different groups. We've talked about like just certain types of organization having conversations with just those organizations. But no, we don't have anything finalized. Did you guys put those meeting minutes out on the internet?

Patti Custer: No not yet, the recording is out there but not the minutes yet.

Jeriane Jaegers-Brenneke: When are you doing that for the previous stakeholders meetings?

Patti Custer: They are not out there yet, IT is still working on those but we will get those out.

Jeriane Jaegers-Brenneke: So do we think a week or so? Probably a week. It sounds like they're in the right hands it just a matter of them getting it done.

Patti Custer: Those will be on the VOCA website, and they're building something there where you can just click on it where it shows the dates with the minutes.

Jeriane Jaegers-Brenneke: Yeah so it'll be something similar to what we have in the employment and training side.

Patti Custer: As soon as those get posted I will send out an email.

Jeriane Jaegers-Brenneke: Okay thank you.

Patti Custer: The next meeting will be September 20th at 1:00, and we'll get that invite sent out today.

- Also, like I said we will let the next 10 people who are sharing know. Then if you have any feedback or feedback from this meeting, about the content or if there's anything you want to see in these meetings, feel free to email us.

- Next month we will go over the new forms and releasing the new forms for the next go around. We will have new quarterly reports things like that because we are releasing our ARPA funds, GR funds and FY23 Grant money. So we will have different ways to invoice and report for all those. So we will be going over a bunch of that stuff next meeting as well. If you have any comments or anything you want to send to us we would greatly appreciate it.

- I want to say we have learned a lot by going out and visiting you and we will continue to do those visits and finish up the ones we haven't got to yet. We will still be doing that and they have been helpful for us to understand better what you do, what your gaps are and what's actually going on in the state. So we appreciate you always welcoming us in and showing us around and telling us about the agency and it helps us do better.

Jeriane Jaegers-Brenneke: I put the link to the VOCA page in the chat, if you haven't visited it already there's a lot of different resources out there. There's meeting minutes there some training information, technical assistance.

Patti Custer: Benjamin was going to put the link for the VOCA email if you don't have it where you can send us comments too. You are more than welcome to send your comments to the email address. Or you can email your VOCA specialist.

- That's really it. That's kind of what our meetings are going to be about. We look forward to seeing everyone each month this way and getting out for our visits.

Jeriane Jaegers-Brenneke: So as we said before, we're just trying to work on our communication on a regular basis, being the administrator technically of the VOCA fund. We do this on most of our other programs, unless they're a small one program where we just have direct communication with them. I mean we probably should've started doing this before now, but here we are. And if

you need anything let us know and if you have things you want to know about let us know. We are here for you and we appreciate everything you do.

Patti Custer: Yes, thank you everyone. Have a great afternoon.