



**Mission:** *To promote a community-wide response to sexual violence by coordinating a multi-disciplinary team that will ensure victims receive comprehensive, compassionate care*

## **Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) General Meeting Minutes Thursday, September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020**

### **Call to Order:**

Nicole Bishop, Director, Palm Beach County Victim Services & Certified Rape Crisis Center (PBCVS)

### **Welcome/Introductions of Members and Guests:**

Nicole Bishop welcomed all who were in attendance at the meeting and facilitated introductions.

**Review/Approval of minutes:** Minutes for August 27<sup>th</sup> meeting were approved without any changes.

### **On-Going Business:**

*SANE Report: Lisa Alward, Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program Coordinator PBCVS*

Lisa provided a report on Sexual Assault Responses for August 2020. There were a total of 14 call outs and 14 forensic exams. SANEs responded to all cases. In the total call outs there were 0 non-reporting victims. Thirteen exams were completed at the Butterfly House and 1 was completed at a local Palm Beach County Hospital ER. Lisa also informed SART members that she was conducting monthly meetings with the SANEs. She also said that last month, the SANEs were provided with Toxicology Kit updates.

*Child Protection Team Report: Susan Sims, Senior Case Coordinator, Child Protection Team*

Susan provided child abuse and child sexual abuse CPT case statistics for the month of August 2020. Susan reported that they are anticipating an increase in abuse reports now that schools are reopening.

### **August 2020**

- 746 Abuse Reports Screened
- 87 Cases Opened
- 118 Services Provided
- 15 Sexual Abuse Forensic Medical Exams were completed
- 6 Sexual Assault Kits were completed

*Laboratory Testing Updates: Julie Sikorsky, Forensic Laboratory Manager, PBSO*

Julie updated SART members on rape kit backlog and the timeframe for processing sexual assault kits, the number of kits tested and the number remaining. Julie's team is still reviewing Pre SB 636 cases.

- ▶ Crime Lab sent to SID for review:
  - ▶ 958 cases without SAKs to SID for additional review (older cases)
    - ▶ SID has completed review of 335 cases, 623 remaining (down 211 cases)  
Classified as:
      - ▶ Does not need analysis (no physical evidence, etc.)
      - ▶ To be outsourced for DNA analysis
      - ▶ Additional research needed for possible evidence (forwarded to review list)
  - ▶ **Current cases** without a DNA request after *monthly* evidence vault query:
    - ▶ 25 Post SB 636 cases without an SAK
    - ▶ 15 Post SB 636 cases with and SAK
- ▶ Total SA cases reviewed (pre & post SB 636): 10,120
  - ▶ 9,162 analyzed or do not need analysis
  - ▶ 102 identified to be outsourced
  - ▶ 15 identified to be processed in-house with *Rapid DNA analysis* **New!**
  - ▶ 49 requested to be processed in-house (screening/DNA)
  - ▶ 19 Other pending
  - ▶ 774 cases pending additional review for possible SA evidence for DNA analysis
    - ▶ 469 are from PBSO or merged agencies
    - ▶ 305 are from non-PBSO agencies (PBSO will need to reach out for these agencies to do research)
- ▶ Pre SB636 Cases
  - ▶ Outsourced: 1679
  - ▶ Profiles entered into CODIS: 845 profiles from 795 cases (no changes)
    - ▶ From evidence: 732
    - ▶ Suspect samples: 113
  - ▶ CODIS hits (across all agencies): 311 (no change)
  - ▶ 13 arrests made: 9=PBSO, 4=WPBPD (no changes)

SART Case Staffing's: Carol Messam-Gordon, PBCVS Program Coordinator

Carol updated SART members on the most recent sexual assault case staffing held on September 11<sup>th</sup>. Victim Services staff reviewed 5 cases but only 3 were discussed at the SART meeting. In attendance were Advocates, Coordinators, Team supervisors, and SANES.

Case 1: PBSO Belle Glades; Deputy Howze did a phenomenal job with assisting a non-reporting victim. Deputy Howze discussed underreporting for SA cases and the need for more community outreach in the Pahokee area so that people are aware of VS and the services provided. Program Coordinator will be working with our outreach coordinator to follow up and provide additional outreach.

Case 2: Victim was sexually assaulted by an attorney and reported to LE shortly after. Victim contacted the Helpline for services a month later. Victim did not complete a SAK, however swabs were taken at her home by LE. Victim is currently trying to cope with the assault while reaching out for services and follow ups. Supervisor and advocate will be following up to ensure that victim receives the necessary services and that the LE agency knows to contact VS for an exam.

Case 3: Victim was sexually assaulted and reported to LE. The case was not turned over to a detective until a week later. VS was contacted after an interview was completed with the detective.

Program Coordinator, SART Supervisor and Grant Coordinator are working to ensure that Law Enforcement are aware of all the protocols and updates we have in place for responding to Victims of Sexual Assault.

### **Committee Reports:**

#### Community Action Network: Holly Carotenuto, PBCVS Sexual Assault Outreach Coordinator

Holly reported that C.A.N. met on Wednesday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>. Julie Weil from Survivor Action spoke to the members about her experience during COVID and the importance of having an advocate. Holly provided a brief recap of the Palm Beach County Library “Know my Name” book club discussion that was held on Tuesday, September 22<sup>nd</sup> via zoom. She also provided a recap of the Green Dot “On the Record” panel discussion that was held on Facebook live on Thursday, September 24<sup>th</sup>. Holly introduced different events and ideas for SAAM 2021 such as doing a “What were you wearing” event throughout the county.

#### Legislative Committee: PBC Legislative Delegation & Abby Ross, Legislative Aide for Sen Berman

Abby informed the SART members that they are working on a bill that is now in the early stages of drafting. She spoke about issues with the anonymity for victims and the legal issues that surround that. They would like to reevaluate and improve the statues that protect the victims. Nicole also spoke about issues relating to abuse and college students. She briefly spoke about Title IX and how colleges handle cases. She highlighted the college subcommittee if the legislative committee needed assistance.

Rebecca thanked Abby for all the work that she had been doing with the reports and collaboration. She also mentioned that her lobby team is able to assist with the current bill that is being created. Rebecca also stated that the Legislative Affairs Office is in the process of developing the 2021 legislative agenda. She has met with multiple entities in order to gather information. She will stay in contact with Nicole for updates from the SART Meetings in case there is something else that needs to be added. Rebecca also stated that on November 17<sup>th</sup> she will be going in front of the board. She mentioned changes in the Senate such as virtual meetings and limited access to the Capitol. They are anticipating changes at the end of October which will be addressed in November with her Lobby team.

#### Training Committee: Kristen Ferguson, PBCVS Grant Coordinator

Kristen informed the SART Members that she is in the process of scheduling a meeting with the training committee to collectively look at ways to improve our training process. She will send a calendar invite out over the next few weeks to all SART members for the upcoming October Meeting.

### **New Business:**

#### Williams Rule: Takisha Richardson, Esq. Cohen Milstien Sellers & Toll

Ms. Richardson explained the importance of the Williams Rule specifically in Sexual Assault cases. She explained that this rule is one of the greatest tools a prosecutor can use when prosecuting crimes of sexual nature. It allows a prosecutor to move forward when they have a case where the only testimony or evidence of the present case is the disclosure made by the victim in the present case. She highlighted a case that happened in the 15<sup>th</sup> District; the State of Florida vs. Jose Rana.

She explained that Mr. Rana was married to a woman who was friends with multiple females throughout the course of her life. Prior to the current case, the wife befriended a victim who came over during the holidays, they went out one night to have fun. Over the course of drinking that evening, Mr. Rana digitally penetrated and assaulted the wife's friend. At that time the prosecution did not feel as though they had enough evidence to prosecute because they only had the statement of the victim. Mr. Rana also stated that everything was consensual. The prosecution at that time elected not to file the case.

Seven to ten years later, Mr. Rana's wife befriended another person from work. During the same holiday, Halloween, the friend planned to go out with them and then slept over that night because she did not want to drink and drive. During the course of the night, she became impaired, got back to Mr. Rana's home and he poured her a drink. The victim falls asleep on the couch and Mr. Rana sexually assaulted her. She was lucid at points, but throughout most of the assault she was not lucid. She woke up to Mr. Rana raping her. The following day she reported to Law Enforcement. Ms. Richardson filed the case and learned of the prior case that took place almost a decade ago. The Williams Rule allowed the prosecution to establish motive which showed that Mr. Rana typically preys on impaired women. They were also able to revert the claim of consent.

Ms. Richardson stated that the court and the Williams Rule motion allowed the 1<sup>st</sup> victim to testify in the 2<sup>nd</sup> victim's trial. The case was tried, and Mr. Rana was convicted and sentenced to 10 years in the department of corrections. A few months ago, the court district court of appeals reversed that decisions and stated that the Williams Rule evidence should not have been admissible. They reversed and remanded the case for a new trial and stated that in the new trial, the Williams Rule evidence will not be admissible. Ms. Richardson stated that they followed the guidelines for Williams Rule when they were filing. The struggle that they are having is that the Judge who ordered to reverse the ruling has reversed multiple rulings in the last few years. They are trying to go through Williams Rule and review the updates and guidelines, because this may affect future cases. Ms. Richardson stated that it would be beneficial to have our SART members join in the amicus so that the court can see that this issue is bigger than a single district and how these cases are prosecuted can affect our survivors.

### **Community Corner:**

#### *Detective Brittany Tatum, Special Victims Unit, West Palm Beach Police Department*

Detective Tatum highlighted a Human Trafficking case that she was called out on. She stated that neighbors saw this victim hiding behind their home and was in need of shelter and they contacted law enforcement to assist her. Once Law enforcement arrived, the victim was shaken up and is horrified. She disclosed that she was kidnapped, held against her will and forced into human trafficking. Victim was put on websites and being forced to sell her body for sex at the direction of the Madam and the victim's pimp. The suspect also lived at a nearby home on the same street.

Detective Tatum contacted Victim Services and spoke with Advocate Linda Evans who referred her to PBCVS HT Project Coordinator Maura Smith. The Victim was taken to the Butterfly House for a forensic exam. Detective Tatum stated that the victim was very shaken and it was hard for her to stay calm. With the help of Maura Smith and Advocate Isabel Steube they were able to calm the victim down and proceed with the statement. The victim provided a detailed statement of what happened once she was calm. Everyone worked together to provide the necessary support and resources for the victim.

**Member field discussion:** Nicole opened the floor to members to discuss successful collaborations or provide updates.

JR Thicklin from Destiny by Choice stated that throughout the month of October he will be doing multiple events to raise awareness for Domestic Violence. He will be doing events virtually and on Facebook Live.

Alexa Lee from PBC Behavioral Health Coalition stated that Monday, September 28<sup>th</sup> is National Strengthening Family Day. They will be hosting a virtual event from 7-8pm which is open to the public. This event is geared towards families finding creative ways to connect with their kids. "Present at the Plate" for registration, go to [bit.ly/PBCDinner](http://bit.ly/PBCDinner). On October 10<sup>th</sup>: Unmasked Your Potential Youth Summit for the teens will be held.

Lucas O’Ryan from Compass stated that in November they will be hosting “The Smart Reimagined Ride- Bike Ride, Walk, Run, Swim, Etc #howdoyou165. Compass is also doing HIV Testing at their center. They are also doing a register to vote event on September 26th. For more information email: [Dylan@compassglcc.com](mailto:Dylan@compassglcc.com) or [Lucas@compassglcc.com](mailto:Lucas@compassglcc.com)

Holly Carotenuto from Palm Beach Victim Services provided the link for Domestic Violence Awareness Month Opening Ceremony: <https://www.facebook.com/events/364414144586485/>

Laura Cusack from CILO provided the link for CILO’s Disability Sensitivity Training: [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf\\_37o37yKTMobZbe0uAqiXwwJls9ApOPUSFGhdBfP\\_AFGyNA/viewform?usp=sf\\_link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSf_37o37yKTMobZbe0uAqiXwwJls9ApOPUSFGhdBfP_AFGyNA/viewform?usp=sf_link). She also informed the group that The Human Trafficking Coalition of Palm Beach County is hosting a series of trainings as well in October. Dates and info can be found here: <https://www.htcpb.org/event-calendar>

**Next meeting date:** October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020 @ 2pm – 3pm

**Thank you!**