



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 26, 2019

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 June 27th meeting were approved without any changes.

On-Going Business:

Laboratory Testing Updates: *Nicole Bishop, PBCVS Director on behalf of Julie Sikorsky, Forensic Laboratory Manager, PBSO*

Nicole Bishop updated SART members on rape kit backlog and the timeframe for processing sexual assault kits, the number of kits tested and the number remaining. She also wanted to let us know that crime lab will continue with testing the sexual assault kits, backlog and others.

Reviewed SA cases (pre & post SB 636): 8,880

Pre SB636 Cases:

- **Outsourced for analysis:** 1679
- **Profiles entered into CODIS:** 823 profiles from 774 cases (+ 26 profiles added since June's meeting)
- **From evidence:** 714
- **Suspect samples:** 109
- **CODIS hits (across all agencies):** 293 (+ 15 from June's meeting)
- 9 arrests made (no changed from June)
- 9 on-going active investigations.
- ****PBSO recently had a conviction from a 1998 case (based on a CODIS hit). The defendant received a 17.5-year prison sentence.**
- Project still on-going to review cases without SAKs

Media Appreciation Day: *Molly McConnell, Grant Coordinator, PBCVS*

Molly McConnell and Carol Messam-Gordon updated SART members on Media Appreciation Day held August 28, 2019. Survivor Action Team and Palm Beach County Victim Services hosted our

second Media Appreciation Day. This was a closed event that allowed our Survivor Action Team to share their stories and have an intimate conversation with media representatives about the responsibilities of and language used by the media when reporting sexual assault cases. The conversation was engaging and media members had excellent questions on how to be more victim centered when approaching victims when reporting.

New Business: Nicole Bishop, Director, PBCVS

HB 53 – Statute of Limitations for Sexual Offenses & SB 84 – Sexual Battery and Emergency Contraception

Nicole provided information regarding several legislative bills that will be considered in 2020. The first was Senate Bill 84 where it would require medical facilities that provide emergency room services to provide sexual assault victims with medically and factually accurate information regarding emergency contraception to prevent pregnancy as well as provide the medication if requested by the victim.

The second was House Bill 53 where the statute of limitation for civil actions for sexual battery committed against minor victims would be until they are 55 years old. This bill also would replace language from “Sexual Battery Offenses on Minors” to “Sexual Offenses” as well as replacing the language to reflect a minor victim being under 18 years old instead of a minor victim needing to be under 16.

Member Highlight: Ann Juhasz, Medical Jail Inspector/PREA Manager – PBSO, Detectives James Bitz and Deborah Botella, Jail Investigations Unit – Violent Crimes Division - PBSO

PBSO PREA manager Ann Juhasz and Detectives Bitz and Botella provided SART members with information on PBSO’s correction’s response to sexual assault and explain the social dynamic of the jail and what incarcerated sexual assault victim’s face. They elaborated on the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) and PBSO’s zero tolerance policy for sexual violence perpetrated by inmates or PBSO staff. The PBSO detention centers Start By Believing when investigating all reports of sexual assault in their jurisdiction. Detective Botella provided photos of the inside of the PBSO Main Detention Center to give SART members a visual of the housing of inmates.

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

Lisa provided a cumulative report on Sexual Assault Responses from June through August 2019. There were seventy call outs and sixty forensic exams. SANEs responded to all cases. In the total call outs there were eleven non-reporting victims. Thirty-six exams were completed at the Butterfly House. Lisa also shared information regarding an upcoming SANE Testimony Training with the State Attorney’s Office.

Community Action Network: Molly McConnell, PBCVS Grant Coordinator and Valerie Messineo, PBCVS SART Supervisor

Molly and Valerie explained the goal of the last C.A.N. meeting was focused on cross promotion and working on continuing a relationship with community partners. The current objective of C.A.N. is to get outside members to invest in the committee and creating a structure where all

members get something out of attending the meetings and being active members of the committee.

Training Committee: Molly McConnell, Victim Services Grant Coordinator

Molly reported that Training Committee is currently working on the upcoming SART Mock Training. Molly emphasized the importance of continued participation in the committee and explained the committee mission is to support a coordinated community response to sexual assault by providing specialized training for all Sexual Assault Response Team members focusing on the immediate & long term needs of sexual assault survivors through the medical, civil and criminal justice systems. Any members interested in attending should notify Molly to be put on the committee list.

Molly also disseminated information regarding an upcoming training designed for first responders navigating traumatic grief in children and adolescents. The training will take place on November 12 at the PBSO Training Facility from 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Training information and registration instructions were emailed before the SART meeting as well as provided in person during the meeting.

Legislative Committee: Nicole Bishop, Director, PBCVS

Nicole highlighted Senate Bill 84 and House Bill 53 previously discussed under “New Business.” These legislative updates were provided to Nicole by the Palm Beach County Legislative Delegation.

SART Case Staffing’s: Carol Messam-Gordon, PBCVS Sexual Assault Program Coordinator

Carol updated SART members on the September sexual assault case staffing held on September 20th. Victim Services’ staff reviewed 5 cases.

One case involved a young lady who was assaulted at the center where she was living. The evening advocate spoke with road patrol who picked up the completed SAK. Once assigned to the daytime advocate, she was having trouble identifying who the assigned detective was. After the meeting, the Sergeant was contacted; she assigned a detective who has already spoken with the advocate about how the case will move forward from here.

Another involved a SANE Nurse responding to CPT for an exam on a minor girl. The SANE is unable to prescribe medications so she referred the victim to our Sexual Assault Care Coordinator for follow-up testing. We staffed this case to start a discussion on formulating a protocol for when our SANE might respond to CPT and how to best provide medical follow-up, especially if it is a DCF case and Victim Services may not be involved.

The final case involved a Victim dancing at local bar when Suspect stuck his hands up victim’s skirt and fondled her. She immediately reported this to her boyfriend who then physically battered Suspect. Suspect suffered a traumatic brain injury; Victim was detained and Victim’s boyfriend was arrested. Victim was interrogated by officers who did not believe her when she disclosed assault. Video surveillance later supported Victim’s statements. Advocate and newly

assigned detective worked together to regain victim's trust and coordinate re-interview where crime could be determined. Sexual assault investigation is now on track. Staffing suggestions included Start by Believing training and SART protocol including dispatching of advocates. Had victim not located Palm Beach County Victim Services on her own, she would have missed opportunity to collect evidence (SAK).

Green DOT Program: Clarice Redding, VS Green Dot Program Coordinator

Clarice shared that In October, a new program called "Fading Out Violence" will start where their goal is to create a safe space for men to share their stories, gain knowledge, learn about resources, as well as how to recognize and put an end to violence when it crosses their path.

Member field discussion: Nicole opened the floor to members to discuss successful collaborations or provide updates. Susan Carlini, Program Coordinator for PBCVS, discussed an upcoming training opportunity designed for law enforcement on advanced intimate partner violence investigations. The training will be at the PBSO Training Facility on October 25 from 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Registration information was provided in person at the meeting.

Next meeting date: October 31, 2019 @ 2pm – 3pm

Thank you!