

February 14th NAHT Board Meeting Minutes

Present: John Chesser, Maggie Tinsman, Tom Barr, Linda Harrell, Lyna Debner, Shirley Fineran, Alyse Hardin, Bernadette Rixner, Deanna Jensen-Valliere, Stephanie Olson, Jessica Hagin, Mike Tupper

Excused Absence: George Belitsos, Kim Smith

Absent: None

Guests: Aaron Seydell, Chelsea Hoye, Gretchen Brown-Waech, Ray Fiedler

I. Call to order and attendance.

Meeting was called to order at 2:31 pm.

II. Guest presenters: Pat Waymire, Ray Fiedler of the Department of Public Safety Office to Combat Human Trafficking on their annual report to the legislature on human trafficking in Iowa

Fiedler noted that the report gives an update on what they are doing, the cases that are in progress, and the number of lodging places that have signed up for the hotel/motel program. They have noticed in their report that they have gotten an increase in the number of tips and law enforcement activity including investigations. The quality of the tips they are receiving is increasing too. Fiedler noted that he could reach out to get updates on currently ongoing cases in Iowa. Fiedler also noted that they are working with law enforcement to prioritize human trafficking cases to be evidence-based trials and to avoid putting the victims on the stand if they can.

Fiedler reported that some would-be human trafficking cases end up also with drug/weapon charges and that is what they usually focus on because the punishment is more severe for those crimes. They will also hand off a lot of cases to the federal level for the same reason.

Fiedler noted that 632 lodging places have done the hotel/motel training along with over 21,000 individuals. They have also continued to train law enforcement, prosecutors, and advocates on human trafficking. Fiedler said that when he is doing training in different parts of the state he has stopped at hotels/motels that aren't trained and told them about the program. They will also plan to have a program this year and next with all the state patrol posts around the state where Fiedler will present about human trafficking awareness and also have a survivor speak.

Tinsman asked how they could change the penalty for human trafficking so that it gets prosecuted more frequently. Fiedler noted that one of the problems is that there is no minimum for sentences that are given in Iowa. Fiedler noted that they could look at the current federal penalties and try to conform to them. Chesser asked if there are any cases that fall through the cracks because of the gap between state and federal law. Fiedler responded that they haven't noticed that being an issue. Fineran asked if Fiedler has been doing their training in Western Iowa. Fiedler responded that they have done some and have more plans for the future.

Rixner asked if the training they do is repetitive for the trainees and what the response has been. Fiedler responded that they have had an overall positive response to the training they do and have been told that it was informative. Rixner asked about the tip process and how they contact law enforcement about it. Fiedler responded that when the tip comes through the system, they reach out to the local jurisdiction and share the information that was included in the tip. After this, they will follow-up at a later date for an update. Fineran suggested that when they report crimes in media that they should include that the person was engaged in human trafficking even if they were convicted for drugs or weapons.

III. Consent agenda items: January meeting minutes, treasurer's report

Chesser noted that the two items for the consent agenda is the January meeting minutes and the treasurer's report. Barr motioned to approve the consent agenda and Fineran seconded the motion. **The motion was approved unanimously.**

IV. Appointment and nominations: Deanna Jensen appointed chair of the fundraising committee; nomination of Grace Lohse to the board; nomination of Alyse Hardin as vice chair of the board

Chesser noted that he had a conversation with Jensen a few weeks prior about the fundraising chair position. Chesser also noted that she had great ideas about what to do in the position and that this fills in three of the five committee chairs.

Chesser noted that Grace Lohse is a high school student who applied for a spot on the board last summer. She is currently a page at the capitol and has been involved with the Network for a few years. Chesser spoke with Lohse last week and felt that it would be nice to have a younger member of the board and that Lohse will likely be a point of contact in Johnson County starting in the fall. Chesser called for a vote to nominate Grace Lohse to the Iowa Network Against Human Trafficking and Slavery Board of Directors. **The vote was approved unanimously.**

Chesser noted that he has been working with Hardin over the last few months and has decided to nominate her for the Vice-Chair position. Chesser said that Hardin would not be expected to fill the Chair position if she does not want to and that it would be important to have someone who works with survivors in the position. Chesser called for a vote to nominate Alyse Hardin to the Vice-Chair position. **The vote was approved unanimously.** Hardin thanked everyone and that she was very excited about this new role.

V. Continued discussion of the strategic plan, including discussion of board training in trauma-informed advocacy and future plans for our standing committees

Chesser noted that it is important to take a look at the strategic plan because some of the items on it need to be striked and others need to push up to the front of priority. One thing that needs priority is working on getting Iowa an integrated approach to victim's services. Chesser noted that an item that they could look at as well is improving their grade on the Shared Hope International report that comes out.

Chesser noted that Belitsos gave him two ideas of what to focus on including Trafficking Free Zones and John Schools. Rixner noted that Trafficking Free Zones is essentially an awareness effort for local communities to end the demand. Hardin mentioned that it included press releases and reaching out to local government. Rixner noted that they were not sure if it did decrease demand or not. Olson noted that when it comes to Trafficking Free Zones, they would need to have a very intentional approach where they get the entire community involved in all areas and not just do awareness campaigns. Olson also noted that a lot of John School programs don't do a very good program but she knows of one that does and will do a little bit of research into it. Chesser noted that programs like this need to be part of state law and asked if Olson's committee could look into that. Olson noted that she would be willing to do that.

Olson presented an idea that they could work on getting a common language that is trauma-informed for the people in the field to use. Fineran and Tinsman both agreed that this would be a good idea. Hardin, Rixner, and Brown-Waech all volunteered to help with Olson's research committee.

Fineran noted that Belitsos had suggested to find a way to get statistics from service providers. Currently, it is very difficult to find these statistics currently and it would be very helpful for presenters and other service providers to know these statistics. Chesser asked how they would go about getting these statistics. Fineran noted that they would want to make it very easy to respond to and for service providers to read. Hardin suggested that they could ask service providers to compile their statistics at the same time every year. Chesser noted that currently all the agencies have a different method of reporting their numbers so if they could make it a uniform process for service providers it would simplify it greatly. Brown-Waech noted that in the current process, they have organizations submit their statistics into a database but it only includes organizations funded through their office. Tinsman noted that this is why they want to put together a task force so that they can get a clearer image of the true statistics in the state. Chesser noted that they could use Brown-Waech's office as the template for receiving statistics. Chesser asked if they would like to table this discussion or have the research committee look into it. Olson suggested that they table the discussion for a future meeting.

VI. Legislative committee: Maggie, Threase, Chelsea report and discussion of results of lobby day January 12 and meeting with AG Brenna Bird on February 8.

Hoye reported that they have good conversations with legislators about Safe Harbor. Hoye noted that the legislators were receptive to the information and were sent all the things they needed. Hoye also noted that they have only a few weeks left to get everything to committee. Tinsman asked when they will get a bill number for their legislation. Hoye responded that they will get it when LSA drops the bill. They are currently continuing to poke around and get updates.

Hoye noted that they sent language for the expungement legislation as well. Hoye said that they had a meeting with the Attorney General last Wednesday and went over the all the priorities. The Attorney General said that the ask for \$5M in funding will likely not happen this year. Tinsman asked what they can do now. Hoye responded that they can reach out to Brad Zaun and Stephen Holt to urge them to support the bill.

Barr asked for clarification that the task force would be put together when the bill passed. Hoye responded that it would be put together if the bill were to pass. Barr also asked if it would be a good idea to give law enforcement involved with the bill a current count of the items that are concerned in the legislation so that legislators know how important the issue is. Hoye responded that this could be helpful in getting the idea into legislator's minds. Rixner added that they should also focus on how much housing is available for minors currently. Brown-Waech added that if they were to add additional programs that they would need to meet the requirements of the Department of Public Services, which can be difficult to do. Chesser noted that it is also important to focus on

getting the proper framework put in place for law enforcement so that they have a clear expectation of how to divert a minor to a program. Fineran noted that there is a huge difference in the expectations and laws for housing minors and adults currently. Fineran also noted that it very difficult to work with a large number of people in these programs because of very specific and unique needs.

Hoye noted that some other bills of interest to the NAHT. One of the bills that is advancing would allow judges to have more discretion and are allowed to take into considerations someone's status as a victim when deciding whether or not to make the determination to pay a restitution payment. Another bill that Hoye presented to the NAHT Board would go after websites and individuals that are facilitating human trafficking. Olson noted that one thing to be concerned about would be people reacting to this bill by going underground and not being able to be identified. Hardin noted that another thing to consider would be how much more difficult it would be to find evidence for human trafficking cases.

VII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 4:01 pm.