

## **March 14th NAHT Board Meeting Minutes**

Present: John Chesser, George Belitsos, Maggie Tinsman, Tom Barr, Kim Smith, Mike Tupper, Grace Lohse, Bernadette Rixner, Alyse Hardin, Deanna Jensen, Stephanie Olson, Jessica Hagin, Alka Khanolkar

Excused Absence: Shirley Fineran, Linda Harrell, Lyna Debner

Absent:

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

### **I. Call to order and attendance. Introduce new board member Grace Lohse.**

Meeting was called to order at 2:31 pm. Chesser had new board member Grace Lohse introduce herself. Lohse introduced herself and noted that she is a senior at Bondurant-Farrar and pager at the Iowa state legislator.

### **II. Legislative Committee update (Maggie, Chelsea, Threase). Progress of our bill and other HT-related bills in the Iowa Legislature.**

Hoye reported that a bill the Network was supportive of that would put internet filter technology on browsers in the state of Iowa got introduced in the Senate but did not clear the funnel. Senate File 522 that would give judges more discretion over the ability to impose restitution has good momentum up to this point. Belitsos asked if there has been any opposition to this bill. Hoye responded that some county attorneys have been opposed. House File 620, which would significantly increase the penalties for human trafficking, passed unanimously in the house. Senate File 84 and House 646, which

relates to the sexual exploitation of minors passed the senate floor and has come out of the house committee.

Senate File 545, which is the Youth Safe Harbor Task Force Bill, was able to get through the senate committee but has not gotten a house companion yet. It next needs to move to the senate floor. It will also receive an amendment to move the task force from where it currently would be in the build from the Department of Public Safety to the Department of Human Services. Tinsman asked if DPS is okay with the task force being built under DHS. Hoyer responded that they made it clear that they would prefer it to not be under DPS. Rixner asked if the merger with DHS and Department of Health would have an effect on how efficiently the task force is put together. Hoyer responded that many state agencies are currently in the same sort of situation and does not think it will make much of a difference. Brown-Waech noted that they have been able to merge the two up to this point mostly without issue so it should not be as much of a problem as one might initially think.

Barr asked if this bill will just develop a task force or if other things will be taking place in tandem with it. Hoyer responded that the bill is specifically to get the task force together with multiple agencies working together because they will not unless there is a mandate to do so. Safe Harbor legislation is something that could be a recommendation as a result of the task force. Chessier noted that some agencies have policy that discourages employees from having meetings with other agencies unless it is mandated, which is

why this bill is needed. Belitsos said that he supports the change from DPS to DHS because the point of Safe Harbor is to divert minors who are arrested from the criminal justice system into services. Belitsos also suggested that Youth Safe Harbor should be kept on the bill name. Hoye agreed that this was a good idea to keep the idea on people's minds. Barr asked Hoye what her estimate was for the duration of the task force before a Safe Harbor bill might be brought forward. Hoye responded that they would work in the interim between legislative sessions and then will report to the legislature the following year.

Rixner and Brown-Waech both suggested that the name task force be changed to multi-disciplinary team. Tinsman noted that this would have to be amended on the bill. Chesser asked if this was important enough to get it changed. Brown-Waech responded that it would be if the bill would still pass. Rixner noted that it should also change since it is going from DPS to DHS. Belitsos noted that Chesser could change his letter to legislators to emphasize the point of diverting from the criminal justice system to support services.

Hoye noted that it is very important for the bill to get moved over to the House ASAP. Advocacy Strategies has prepared a letter for board members to send to their legislators. Hoye noted that Jack Whitver, who is the senate majority leader, is the one who needs to move the bill to the floor. They have put in a meeting request to meet with him. Tinsman noted that if you are part of an organization you should ask them to write

a letter to legislators as well. Belitsos noted that he urged the Rotary District 6000 Prevent Human Trafficking Action Team members to write to their legislators.

### **III. Consent agenda items; February meeting minutes; treasurer's report**

Chesser asked if there any amendments to the February meeting minutes. There were none and Tinsman moved to approve it and Olson seconded it. **The minutes were approved unanimously.** There were no changes to the treasurer's report. Tinsman moved to approve the treasurer's report and Jensen seconded it. **The treasurer's report was approved unanimously.**

### **IV. Update on the activities of the Siouxland Coalition (Bernadette)**

Rixner reported that in January they asked businesses to light up in blue to acknowledge January as Human Trafficking Prevention Month. They had two repeat businesses from last year do it again and they were able to get others to follow suit. Rixner noted that they received a \$1000 gift from Great Southern bank and they used it to buy a table at the Lila Mae fundraiser. They were also able to pass proclamations declaring January as Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month in Woodberry County, Plymouth County, Sioux County, Paulina, Rock Valley, LeMars, and various other places. Rixner noted that when LeMars signed the proclamation that they expressed real concern for the issue and the assistant police chief held a presentation. It had an attendance of 65 people. At the presentation, they brought up a specific case that happened in the area that could have potentially turned into human trafficking if it

had not been intercepted by law enforcement. Many of the audience members were from local service agencies who noted that they have started to see an uptick in minors being exploited. Rixner also noted that a person from a truck repair shop in LeMars reached out to get help on putting up material around their business.

Rixner said that this past weekend they had a table at the multicultural fair where they had discussions with people at the fair. Rixner also noted that she was reached out to by the human resource department at a company to do a presentation on what to look for and what to do if an issue is spotted. Rixner noted that Ragbrai this year is starting in Sioux City and they would like to put up stickers in all the bathrooms.

Rixner mentioned that she would like to start getting into schools to educate students on human trafficking and online safety but is having difficulty with doing so. Smith noted that online safety is the best way to get into schools and bridge it to human trafficking. She also said that she presents the exact presentation material to the parents and asks if it is alright to present it to the age-appropriate students. Olson noted that she would like to be involved with this because her program has material that includes curriculum on human trafficking, social media safety, and healthy relationships. Olson also noted that one of the keys of getting into the schools is how the curriculum is presented. Many other program's curriculum is fear-based currently. Smith agreed that it is important to not have fear-based curriculum and instead give students tools and resources to be safe while online. Hardin noted that it is important to also show that the curriculum is

age-appropriate. Tinsman said that it might be helpful to first approach the school superintendent and parents first. Brown-Waech agreed that it is important to engage the parents and get them involved first as well as stay away from fear-based curriculum. Chesser noted that there seems to be a lot of interest in getting prevention into schools and asked if this should be an item to be included as an agenda item at future meetings. Belitsos noted that this could be a topic that the Evaluation and Research Committee could look into because data to support what board members think would be important. Olson agreed that this would be a good thing to discuss and consider. Olson also noted that the program they are doing with the Des Moines Public School system will help get a lot of data concerning education in the schools. Belitsos noted that Lohse could be a great member for the committee on this topic. Lohse and Olson both agreed that this would be a good idea.

Khanolkar noted that Rotary has 240 youth students that meet every year and this could be an opportunity to give a presentation to them.

**V. Discussion of the status of the various regional anti-HT coalitions with focus on Central Iowa Service Network (CISN). (John, George - What is the situation of the CISN? Are other regional coalitions experiencing a shortage of leadership and/or volunteers?)**

Chesser noted that they considered a few ideas about the CISN including merging it with another coalition or handing the leadership off to another member. Chesser also

noted that the group has seen a decline in attendance at meetings and asked why that may be. Belitsos noted that he thinks part of the problem was a lack of people willing to take leadership roles. Belitsos also noted that they reduced the number of meetings they had and COVID also had an impact on their ability to meet. Belitsos said that this happened to many other smaller coalitions as well. Belitsos noted that they sent out a email to all the members asking if anyone wanted to take the leadership and if not that it would merge with the North Iowa Coalition Against Human Trafficking (NICAHT). One person reached out to take the leadership but was too inexperienced so at this point, they are planning to merge it with NICAHT. Smith asked if they could initially merge the two groups, get enough traction, and then split them again so that they could do in-person meetings. Rixner noted that if they could get the leadership to do so that it could work but that is the biggest problem for these coalitions to find on top of getting people to be involved and attend meetings. Rixner also said that it would be a good idea to have an in-person meeting and a Zoom option for members. Smith noted that it is important to give people a job to do in these coalitions. Olson added that its important that coalitions don't duplicate efforts and that they should find a way to work as a group with agencies to clearly define roles for the coalitions.

**VI. Fundraising Committee (John, Deanna): ideas and potential committee members**

**No meeting time to discuss**

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

**No meeting time to discuss**

**VIII. Adjournment**

Meeting was adjourned at 3.59 pm.