

Iowa Network Against Human Trafficking and Slavery (NAHT)
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
Monday, November 13, 2017
2:30 pm - 4:00 pm Conference Call

Present on Call: George Belitsos (Chair), Jan Beran (Treasurer), Liz Cox (Secretary), Sr Shirley Fineran, Joy Fopma, Taylor Houston, Brynne Howard, Jennie Kerger, Stephen O'Meara, Liz Quinn (Fitzgerald Proxy), Shirlee Reding, Bernadette Rixner, Erin Schneider, Alissa Stoehr, Maggie Tinsman (Vice Chair), Suzanne Wright

Excused: Teresa Davidson, Paul Fitzgerald

Guests on Call: Jonathan Causey and Yangyidi Ye, Causey and Ye Law; Celine Villongco, Human Trafficking Coordinator, Office of the Iowa Attorney General Crime Victim Assistance Division

Taking Minutes: Margaret Epplin

Roll Call and Call to Order

The meeting was called to order and roll was taken. Belitsos welcomed guests, Jonathan Causey and Yangyidi Ye, husband-wife partners with Causey and Ye Law Firm based in Des Moines, Iowa, who introduced themselves. Attorney Ye provides various immigration services, criminal defense, legal business advice, family law, and divorce representation to clients from the U.S. and from the international and Chinese communities. Ye is a native of China and is fluent in Mandarin, facilitating the representation of Asian clients. As Causey and Ye Law's leading litigator, Causey represents Chinese, American, and other international clients in criminal defense, juvenile matters, family matters, civil matters, and immigration matters, including Asian clients who are victims of human trafficking. Belitsos asked them to focus their presentation on legal assistance for Asians who are trafficked.

Review today's Agenda The Agenda was reviewed with no changes.

Consent Agenda

- Motion to approve October 9 Board meeting minutes
- Motion to authorize the annual NAHT fundraising solicitation letter to be sent out December 2018
- Motion to renew Cox 2nd term, Belitsos 3rd term, Reding 3rd term, Tinsman 2nd term. One vacancy due to O'Keeffe resignation
- Motion to approve monthly Treasurer's report. As of November 1, there was \$4,925.21 in checking and \$1,781 in savings.
- Motion to endorse U.S. Senate anti-sex-trafficking bill known as Stop Enabling Sex Trafficking Act (SESTA)

There was a request for more information about the federal legislation. Belitsos responded that the SESTA (Senate 1693) bill amends the Communications Act of 1934 to specify that communications decency provisions protecting providers from liability for the private blocking or screening of offensive material shall not be construed to impair the enforcement of, or limit availability of victim restitution or civil remedies under, state or federal criminal or civil laws relating to sex trafficking of children or sex trafficking by force, fraud, or coercion.

The SESTA bill amends the federal criminal code to specify that the violation for benefiting from "participation in a venture" engaged in sex trafficking of children, or by force, fraud, or coercion, includes knowing conduct by any person or entity by any means that assists, supports, or facilitates the violation.

Belitsos explained that SESTA is new legislation that addresses the problem of the internet providing an avenue to connect with victims and to abuse them. Belitsos met with Senator Grassley on Friday and Grassley is supporting the bill. Belitsos reported that the “Big 3” internet providers are now supporting the bill, as well as Facebook. This bipartisan bill has a good chance to get passed by both houses of Congress.

Beran **made a motion** to approve the Consent Agenda. Stoehr **seconded**. Motion **carried** unanimously.

Review upcoming meeting dates and plans for the Governor’s signing of a proclamation designating January 2018 as Slavery and Human Trafficking Awareness Month. Encourage allies and coalitions to get local cities and counties to sign proclamations.

The date of the proclamation signing by the Governor has not been set. The preference of Belitsos and Tinsman is Monday, January 8, 2018, the first day of the legislative session. However, the Governor has a State of the State address on Wednesday, January 10, and the Governor’s scheduler has not been willing to add an additional commitment prior to the address.

Belitsos will request January 16 or 17. He also would like to hold a face-to-face Board meeting on the same date as the proclamation. Board members recalled that last year, the proclamation was also on the first day of the legislative session and was a bit chaotic. However, the media coverage was good.

Monday, January 15, was proposed. This is Martin Luther King Day and the legislature will not be in session, which several Board members noted might hurt publicity. Tinsman made the connection between African Americans being trafficked and MLK Day.

Board members discussed the name of the proclamation. Wright reported the results of googling the federal wording to be “Slavery and Human Trafficking.” By voice vote, Board members ultimately agreed to follow the federal naming and request Governor Reynolds sign a proclamation designating January 2018 as “Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention and Awareness Month.”

Stoehr reported that the Ames Public Library and the ISU Library will have informational displays about human trafficking throughout the month of January.

Belitsos reminded Board members to contact cities and counties to also sign local proclamations naming January as “Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention and Awareness Month” and to use the increased emphasis on human trafficking to further educate local citizens. Belitsos will send out proclamation wording to the Board for use in local cities and counties.

Review 2018 slate of officers and nominations for one vacant Board seat

Belitsos reported that O’Meara has declined to place his name in nomination for Vice Chair in 2018 and then Chair in 2019. O’Meara added that he will continue as a resource person and will provide currently booked hotel/motel trainings, but cannot assume further projects or the obligations of Vice-Chair. Belitsos expressed appreciation for O’Meara’s leadership on the hotel/motel project and for his participation on the NAHT Board.

Belitsos asked if any of the Board members were willing to serve as Vice Chair, and no one spoke up. Belitsos informed that the Executive Committee will meet November 10 and will discuss the two open Executive Committee positions: Vice Chair and Secretary. The Executive Committee will present a slate of officers for approval at the December 11 NAHT Board meeting.

Progress report of the Coordinator of the Attorney General’s Office Against Human Trafficking. Plans for Human Trafficking Summit, April 18 and 19, 2018 (Celine Villongco)

Villongco reported that the Iowa Human Trafficking Summit dates have been set as Wednesday April 18 and Thursday, April 19, 2018 at Prairie Meadows Conference Center. There will be a small fee, mostly to cover food, but the actual amount has not been set. National and local speakers are being invited. The speeches and individual breakouts will focus on establishing a rapid response by the Department of Public Safety to reports of human trafficking. Villongco will send Belitsos the “Save-the Date” flyer about the Summit, and he will forward it to the Board and post it on the Network blog.

Cox asked if a prevention track will be included in the summit. Villongco explained that the summit is mostly focused on how organizations and the Department of Public Safety work together to provide rapid response to reports of human trafficking. While anyone, including educators, may attend the Summit, tracks will focus on information for law enforcement, social workers, attorneys and medical staff. Prevention will be discussed, but will not be the main focus. Cox and Tinsman noted that educators who are Mandatory Reporters are often the first to report child human trafficking to law enforcement, and the role of educators in the rapid response process is being left out of the summit. Board members stated that the Department of Education should be included in the summit planning, and Villongco agreed to bring up the education piece to the Department of Public Safety.

Belitsos asked for an update on the statewide human trafficking needs assessment. Villongco reported that the final report is still on the Attorney General’s desk awaiting his review. Belitsos expressed concern that it is taking so long to release this study to the public. Belitsos said that the longer the report is delayed, the less relevant the report gets. Villongco will follow up with the Attorney General.

Report of the Research, Evaluation, and Best Practice Standards Committee (Shirlee Reding & Dr Taylor Houston)

Houston had previously emailed the minutes of the November 3 meeting to NAHT Board members. Stoehr has joined the Committee and informed the Committee of her research emphasis on survivor voices and media interpretations of human trafficking.

Houston reported on his Committee research. All the interviews have been completed and have been transcribed. Throughout November his team will establish a coding scheme and use the codes to analyze the transcripts to look for similarities among all the interviews. The qualitative research can’t be rushed and each transcript needs to be read several times. Molly Barrett has been helping to draft the literature review. The timetable calls for preliminary conclusions and a draft report in December. Houston and the interns working on this project are approaching finals and the end of the semester, making available time to work on this project limited. Houston thanked the Board for their support of this project.

Belitsos asked for preliminary conclusions, and Houston said he can’t report on any conclusions until the research has been analyzed.

Report on the Survivor Restoration and Service Provider Collaboration (Sr Shirley Fineran, Joy Fopma, and Teresa Davidson)

No meeting was held since the last NAHT Board meeting. Fopma reported that the next meeting will be held January 23 in Des Moines but no time or place has been set yet.

Presentation on immigration, T-visas, and recovery assistance for Asian massage business trafficked survivors (Jonathan Causey and Yangyidi Ye “Young”)

Causey and Ye have experience in immigration and being of assistance to trafficked women who are rescued from Asian massage businesses. Since Ye is Chinese and speaks Mandarin, they are in a unique position to represent Asian victims of human trafficking, who, in their experience, are all women. Often Asian women are too embarrassed to open up to law enforcement or ICE, but they will open up to Ye. While the victims might feel they are protected in the US, they still fear that their families in China won't be protected from the Chinese Mafia who recruited them into the massage business. Fineran shared that she worked with a woman in Sioux City woman who knew that her family in China would be punished if she turned in the perpetrator.

Causey noted that the coordination between Iowa counties and the state level to prosecute human trafficking has improved, but much improvement is still needed. Both T- and U-visas were created to encourage victims of certain serious crimes, including human trafficking, to cooperate with law enforcement officials who are prosecuting criminal offenders. Causey finds that, if the client is willing to give a disposition to the county attorneys, most county attorneys are willing to drop any victim charges. Causey has not done T-visas because a T-visa pertains only to human trafficking and to qualify for a T-visa, you must have traveled to the United States because you were recruited, forced, abducted, or deceived by the perpetrator of human trafficking and would not have been present in the U.S. if it were not for the actions of that person. T-visa applicants need to show that their removal from the U.S. would cause “extreme hardship involving unusual and extreme harm.” Sometimes this is difficult to prove.

Causey utilizes U-visas since U-visas are provided to victims of general criminal activity, not just human trafficking, and some of these crimes, such as rape or peonage, are easier to prove. U-visa applicants must prove that they suffered “substantial physical or mental abuse” as a result of the qualifying crime.

Howard shared that she has done a couple of T-visas, and T-visas do not require law enforcement verification. Howard also shared that the wait for a U-visa can be 10 years.

Causey stated that people do abuse the immigration system and fraudulently apply for T-visas. In immigrant communities, there is usually someone who is the “immigration expert” and will help anyone through the immigration system. Sometimes these “experts” infiltrate nonprofits which are helping, and Causey cautioned Board members to verify that what they are hearing is the firsthand account and is for the best.

Rixner is currently working with a Chinese woman arrested in a sting. Rixner needs practical ideas about what to offer the victim in terms of advocacy. Causey shared that the first step is that someone who speaks their language needs to talk to them. Sometimes the victims will not even talk to an interpreter and will say that the trafficker is their boyfriend and they are trying to help them out.

Ye is a liaison for the Chinese embassy in Chicago. When a victim is arrested, they have the right to talk to someone in their embassy.

Board members suggested Monsoon, an organization which has translators who speak Mandarin. Howard has done a couple T-visa cases, and contacts Monsoon to provide advocacy services to build a relationship of trust. Board members also suggested Justice for our Neighbors for help with advocacy.

Belitsos shared that the contact information for Monsoon is on the Network website. Belitsos will invite the new director of The Project to the January meeting.

Belitsos thanked Causey and Ye for joining the meeting.

Review of legislation

1. Report from the Legislative Advisory Council. Collaborate on legislative priorities with the Child and Family Policy Center, AMP, and Coalition for Children and Family Services?

Cox reported that the Legislative Advisory Council met on November 9. Jodie Butler is part of the group and is a tremendous asset. Butler has a long history of working behind the scenes to get legislation passed. Butler met with Villongco regarding human trafficking and the upcoming Summit. Iowa is investigating the design of a rapid response to human trafficking, and this will be the emphasis of the upcoming Summit. The NAHT Legislative Advisory Council is concerned that educators are not involved in planning the upcoming Iowa Human Trafficking Summit.

Cox reported that Blank Children's Hospital has received a grant to develop a screening tool to gather data on youth patients including information on whether the youth have been sexually abused or trafficked.

Funding is needed to update the State of Iowa DPS database including using the same codes as the FBI so data can be shared across agencies.

Cox emphasized that the NAHT Board needs to keep providing input to the Attorney General's Office as the Attorney General's Office drafts anti-human trafficking legislation.

2. Approved 2018 IA NAHT legislative agenda: (1) reform Mandatory Reporter Training and requirements, and (2) Erin's Law/sexual abuse prevention

Cox met with Jerry Foxhoven director of Iowa DHS to discuss reforming Mandatory Reporter Training to include identifying human trafficking. Cox explained that the work group plans to make recommendations to the Iowa legislature by December 2018, to be considered in 2019. Foxhoven supports reforming Mandatory Reporter Training.

Cox also discussed Home School Registration with Foxhoven. While Foxhoven would support Home School registration, he informed Cox that Home School registration would be the responsibility of the Department of Education.

Cox reported that the NAHT Legislative Council wishes to add Home School registration as the third item of the legislative agenda. The Legislative Council would like to have this item on the list, though there is no one in the legislature who is willing to bring the item forward. The home-school base will be against it.

The NAHT Legislative Advisory Council **made a committee motion** to add Home School Registration as a third item in the list of legislative agenda items. Motion **carried** unanimously.

The NAHT Legislative Council will prepare one-page talking points for each item on the legislative agenda.

Cox researched the legislative priorities for Department of Education and did not find substantial anti-human trafficking items. There is some funding through Every Student Succeeds.

Cox met with Karl Schilling of Iowa Victims of Crimes Advocates (I-VOCA). This group has been around 30 years. They are currently working with Marti Anderson on a bill which makes it illegal for perpetrators to track victims using GPS. They are also working to lengthen sentences for habitual offenders. I VOCA will support NAHT efforts to eliminate sex trafficking.

Cox stated that the next step is to meet with the Department of Education and the Department of Public Health to make them aware of the NAHT legislative agenda and to ask for their support.

Cox feels that it is important for the Council to meet with Linda Sandell who is the Governor's education advisor to see what is coming for Mandatory Reporter changes and sexual abuse education.

Villongco clarified that human trafficking must be reported whether the trafficking is done by a relative or someone else.

3. Research into child abuse prevention legislation in other states.

Cox reported that Missouri recently passed legislation requiring that all child welfare checks be attended by a police officer. Police officers initially were not in support of this change, but once the legislation took effect they became very supportive. The checks allowed law enforcement to be present in the home and thereby intervene earlier before more damage is done.

Cox discussed a coordinated response with Foxhoven (DHS workers are joined by law enforcement for a home visit), and Foxhoven is working to implement a coordinated response in Iowa. Cox stated that the upcoming Human Trafficking Summit, focused on rapid coordinated response to human trafficking, is very important.

4. Review comparison between anti-human trafficking laws in Nebraska and Iowa.

Cox reported that a new intern will complete a review of the following items. This will be completed by January and the first funnel.

- a. Adding "solicitation to Iowa's definition of trafficking
- b. Penalty for the john/customer similar to drug cases (e.g., impound car)
- c. "Immunity" for trafficking victims
- d. Iowa has no civil penalty option

Tinsman requested that the list of human trafficking legislation, compiled by Belitsos, be updated for 2006 to 2012. Belitsos will put this item on the November 20 Executive Committee Agenda.

Massage legislation and efforts to guide local city councils to adopt regulation ordinances for massage businesses. Cities that are working on an ordinance include Ames, Des Moines, Sioux City, Clive, Windsor Heights, Ankeny, Cedar Rapids, Fort Dodge, Marshalltown, Dubuque, Davenport, and Bettendorf

Moved to next agenda

Progress reports of the Cedar Rapids and Des Moines Hotel/Motel Project Steering Committees. Separate MOU and Coalition Hotel/Motel volunteer training for Eastern Iowa and Western Iowa? Training dates? Second training of trainers planned for Central Iowa volunteers on Thursday, March 8, 2018, 6 to 9 p.m.

Moved to next agenda

Other Items: Kerger asked for the date of the Day on the Hill. Belitsos will learn the date in early December and will notify the NAHT Board. Reding suggested that the Network partner with Teens against Human Trafficking when scheduling its Day on the Hill. Belitsos will add this to the Executive Committee Agenda.

Kerger asked for the name of a human trafficking expert in the Fort Dodge area. Board members recommended Amber Lawrence of Teens against Human Trafficking.

Adjournment

Belitsos reported that there is a request to change the meeting date to the third Monday of each month. Tinsman has another standing meeting on the third Monday of each month. The date change will be discussed further at Executive Committee.

Next Executive Committee meeting, Monday, November 20 (one week early due to Thanksgiving)

Next Board of Directors Annual meeting Monday, December 11, 2017.