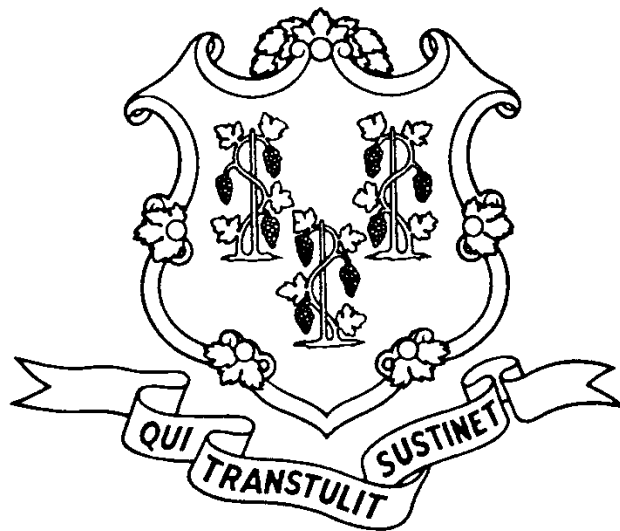


Domestic Violence Offender Program Standards Advisory Council



An Update to the Connecticut General Assembly

**Submitted to the Judiciary Committee and
Committee on Children pursuant to
Public Act 15-211**

February 2016

INTRODUCTION:

Section 19 of Public Act 15-211 established a Domestic Violence Offender Program Standards Advisory Council. This Advisory Council was charged with promulgating, reviewing and updating/amending (as necessary), the standards that were presented to the Criminal Justice Policy Advisory Committee in 2014.

The membership of the Advisory Council consists of Co-Chair Joseph DiTunno, Co-Chair Karen Jarmoc, Linda Cimino, Karen Diebolt, Merit Lajoie, Stephen Lanza, Chief Marc Montminy, Mary Painter, Brian Pear, David Rentler, PsyD, Monica Rinaldi, Nydia Rios-Benitez, and Nancy Turner. There are four current vacancies on the Council.

The Council met on three separate occasions (September 30, 2015, November 18, 2015, and January 13, 2016) and the agendas/minutes are attached to this report for review. In addition, a public comment period was held during the month of October to solicit input from the community regarding the standards and implementation within systems. Despite the month long opportunity to respond with feedback, no individual or agency offered any comments to the Council.

BACKGROUND:

Prior to the establishment of the Domestic Violence Offender Program Standards Advisory Council, significant work was conducted by a multi-disciplinary team formulated through the Criminal Justice Policy Advisory Committee (CJPAC). This team, comprised of many individuals appointed to the current Advisory Council, spent nearly one year researching and drafting the Domestic Violence Offender Program Standards.

These standards were submitted to and reviewed by the CJPAC. The current legislative Advisory Council was established to formalize the process of determining the standards necessary to ensure quality interventions that hold offenders accountable for their violence and to implement the standards in current practice.

The Domestic Violence Offender Program Standards are to be applied in criminal court domestic violence cases when a defendant is not referred to a Judicial Branch contracted service. The Judicial Branch oversees two Batterer Intervention Programs (EXPLORE and EVOLVE) that currently meet or exceed the standards. There are also community-based interventions (individual and group formats) utilized by defendants to address domestic violence criminal charges. It is for these type of programs, accessed by numerous defendants not referred to the Family Violence Intervention Unit (see CGS 46b-38), that standards are required to ensure effective service and consistent delivery statewide.

CURRENT CHARGE AND TASKS COMPLETED BY THE ADVISORY COUNCIL:

The Advisory Council completed the work necessary to fulfil the legislative charge. During multiple meetings, the membership reviewed the standards as well as discussed whether modifications were necessary. No changes to the current version of the standards were recommended by members.

The major issue addressed by the Advisory Committee was the steps required to ensure proper implementation of the standards within the criminal justice system. The formulation of a concrete implementation plan will be an on-going priority for the Advisory Council during the months leading up to the July 1, 2016 effective date enacted by the legislation. The tasks associated with implementation include, but are not limited to, informational sessions for vital system stakeholders, announcements/outreach to community-based service providers, development of required forms/memos for defendants, and review of current computer systems for outcome collection.

One major hurdle discussed by the Council is whether there should be a list of approved individuals and/or agencies available to the court system and public. This list would be generated after a formal response by an agency or individual that they have met or exceeded the approved standards. There was also consideration given to a formal certification for programs, but this measure would appear to necessitate a significant and in-depth process. The Council debated the viability of several different State agencies that could be responsible for this aspect. One possibility is that the Domestic Violence Offender Program Standards Advisory Council would have direct oversight of this process.

NEXT STEPS:

The Advisory Council is planning to meet in the upcoming months to formulate an implementation plan prior to July 1, 2016. The Public Act requires that the Advisory Council meet yearly to assess the standards for potential changes. The co-chairs anticipate holding a meeting in the Fall of 2016 to begin that specific work.

The co-chairs would like to recognize the members of the Advisory Council for the work and dedication to this important enhancement regarding the handling of domestic violence cases in Connecticut.