

Alaska Criminal Justice Commission

# Victims' Rights and Services Workgroup

## Meeting Summary

**Thursday, October 8, 9:00 a.m.**

Via Zoom

Commissioners Present: Sam Cherot, Steve Williams, Sean Case, Paul Miovas (proxy for Commissioner Sniffen), Mike Ramsay (proxy for Commissioner Dahlstrom, Randi Breager (proxy for Commissioner Price)

Participants: MaryBeth Gagnon, Rachel Gernat, Victoria Shanklin, Laurie Orell, Nancy Meade, Suki Miller, Taylor Winston

Staff: Staci Corey, Barbara Dunham

### **Introductions**

The group approved the agenda without any changes or opposition. Commissioner and workgroup chair Steve Williams suggested changing the summary of the last meeting to reflect that Paul Miovas, Randi Breager, Mike Ramsay and Laura Russell were all serving as proxies for commissioners. There was no opposition to approving the meeting summary with those changes.

### **Revised Recommendation re Victim Coordinators**

Steve explained that the recommendation had been revised to clearly delineate between the two positions, that of the paralegal and that of the victim coordinator (the "witness" had been dropped from the coordinator job title) to try to prevent confusion between two, and to more accurately convey the work that needed to be done. This version explained more about the role of the paralegal in the second paragraph, making it clear that the recommendation was to preserve that role, and how it was different from the new recommended position. Steve also explained that he had sent this to Paul Miovas at the Department of Law and discussed it with him, and they made some additional changes.

Paul explained that his suggestions were to further flesh out the role of the paralegal to address everything a paralegal does, so as not to take away duties from the paralegals or diminish their role in the eyes of the legislature. The paralegals will still have to do lot of substantive work with victims. Steve noted that work would be different from just providing information about the case and connecting the victim to resources. Paul said that was correct; for example, any time an offer is being made to the defendant, the paralegal will still consult with the victim. The attorney on the case is usually involved in that process.

Steve explained that next paragraphs were more familiar, with added examples of what the coordinator will do, and the value of the coordinator. The last key piece emphasizes that this position is a coordinator, not an advocate. He checked in with the group and asked if there was any opposition or if there were any comments on this revised draft. There was no opposition and there were no comments.

Steve wondered whether the draft should add in a reference to “all crime victims,” since the other recommendations made it clear that they were addressing all victims of crime. He suggested adding “all” to the second line of the third paragraph so that it would read “The Commission recommends...to establish Victim Coordinator positions (Coordinators) to assist all crime victims.”

The group approved the recommendation with that change.

Suki Miller from STAR asked how the position would be funded, and how they would be working with advocacy agencies. Steve said that the group had looked at where to house this position and had come to the conclusion that for purposes of continuity and access to information it would be best housed within a state agency, specifically the Department of Law. The group did not get into details of how to fund the or how to coordinate with advocacy agencies, but he imagined that any existing collaborations with Law and the advocacy agencies would continue. The Commission did not typically get into specifics about funding and it would be up to the legislature as to how to appropriate funding.

### **Public Comment**

There was an opportunity for public comment but none was offered.

### **Next Steps**

Commission project attorney Barbara Dunham said she would circulate the revised draft to the Commission that day. The recommendation would be on the agenda for the October 15 plenary meeting.