

**VICTIM ADVOCACY AND SERVICES UNIT ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**Regular Meeting Minutes**

1:30 P.M. TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2026

**Office of the Attorney General**

313 NE 21<sup>ST</sup> ST.

Oklahoma City, OK 73105

*To the extent not otherwise provided below, the Council may, at its discretion, discuss or change the sequence of any agenda item. Possible action includes, but is not limited to, approval, authorization, adoption, rejection, denial, amendment, taking no action, or tabling the item for disposition at a later date or time.*

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

a. ROLL CALL AND ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM

i. The meeting was called to order by Ann Lowrance, in accordance with the Open Meetings Act, at 1:38 P.M. Members present included Ann Lowrance, Meagan McCurley, Kristie Chandler, Kelsey Samuels, Lauren Garder, Shelley Miller, and Jayra Cameros. Non-members present included Miguel Mojica, Sharla Colbert-Dunbar, Myel Solorzano Sutton,

b. ASSURANCE OF COMPLIANCE WITH OPEN MEETING ACT

i. Myel Solorzano Sutton announced that the meeting was in compliance with the Open Meetings Act. An agenda was posted at the principal office of the Oklahoma Attorney General's Office on February 13, 2026, at 9:03 A.M. and on the Oklahoma Attorney General's Office website on February 13, 2026, at 1:24 P.M.

**2. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON APPROVAL OF REGULAR MEETING MINUTES FROM JANUARY 20, 2026**

a. Lauren motioned to approve the meeting minutes from January 20, 2026. Matt Levey seconded the motion. Motion passed with two abstentions.

**3. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON RE-SCHEDULING MAY'S VASU ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING**

a. Myel Solorzano Sutton reported to the Council that the Council's VASU staffers will be out of state attending the Conference on Crimes Against Women in May 2026 during the week that May's Advisory Council meeting was scheduled. The Council members discussed rescheduling May's meeting.

b. Kristie Chandler motioned to re-schedule VASU Advisory's Council meeting originally scheduled for May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2026, to May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2026. Kelsey Samuels seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

#### **4. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON VASU ADVISORY COUNCIL BY-LAWS**

- i. Council members reviewed the Council's previously used by laws. Ann Lowrance expressed that the bylaws should operate as minimally as necessary to accomplish the Council's work. She noted that adding excessive provisions can create unnecessary complexity. Council members agreed with this approach.
- ii. Agenda item tabled to March's meeting.

#### **5. SUBCOMMITTEES WORK UPDATES**

##### **a. CHAPTER 1 SUBCOMMITTEE**

- i. Subcommittee chair Ann Lowrance noted that there was nothing to report. The group will continue to meet monthly via Zoom.
- ii. Myel Solorzano Sutton asked the Council if they preferred for the OAG staffers to coordinate scheduling and distribute Zoom links for all subcommittee meetings. Ann elected for VASU staffers to schedule and send out links for future chapter 1 subcommittee meetings.

##### **b. CHAPTER 15 SUBCOMMITTEE**

###### **i. CHAIR STATUS**

1. Chapter 15 interim subcommittee Chair, Kristie Chandler, reported that the group had met once since the previous VASU Advisory Council meeting. She noted nothing to report.
2. Myel Solorzano Sutton requested a continuation of last month's conversation surrounding who will replace Kristie Chandler as the Chapter 15 subcommittee chair. Council members elected Kelsey Samuels as the 2026 Chapter 15 subcommittee chair.
3. Kelsey Samuels reported that she will schedule and distribute the Chapter 15 subcommittee meeting links in advance of next month's meeting.

##### **c. CHAPTER 25 SUBCOMMITTEE**

- i. Chapter 25 subcommittee chair, Lauren Garder, reported that she will schedule and distribute their group's Zoom links in advance of next month's meeting. She reported that there was nothing to report.

##### **d. CHAPTER 30 SUBCOMMITTEE**

- i. Whitney Anderson was not present at the time the Council arrived at this agenda item. Kelsey Samuels reported as a member of Chapter 30 subcommittee that the group has plans to meet monthly via Zoom or Teams.
- ii. A question was raised regarding whether any current legislation includes prioritization of labor trafficking. Kelsey shared that she and Whitney Anderson were planning to contact the Office about expanding language to include labor trafficking. Myel reported that SB 1810 addresses this issue.
- iii. VASU staffers projected a copy of SB1810 at the Council's request. Lauren noted that the expert witness language mirrors language requested

by HTRU and asked about the reasoning behind aligning the language in that way.

- iv. Lauren further inquired why the mirrored language does not specifically include children, expressing concern that it could be construed as applying only to adults. She emphasized that the effects of domestic violence and sexual assault on children need to be heard in court. VASU staffers reported that they would raise this issue during legislative discussions with VASU Chief, Susan Laib, particularly regarding DV/SA-specific language and previous implications within Title 42 (Family Law).

## **6. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON OAG CERTIFIED PROGRAM**

### **FAQs**

#### **a. PROGRAM APPLICATIONS RECEIVED FOR ALREADY SERVICED AREAS AND UPDATES TO CURRENT APPLICATIONS**

- i. Myel Solorzano Sutton presented the agenda item for Council discussion.
- ii. Ann Lowrance asked for clarification regarding who establishes service areas and how those areas are determined. Program representatives on the Council discussed how they typically refer to their “catchment areas.”
- iii. Ann shared that the current catchment areas appear to be based on outdated Oklahoma Department of Mental Health service areas that may no longer be functional. She noted the need for clarification and possible formal adoption or approval of defined service areas. Historically, service areas were population-based, resulting in large multi-county regions in sparsely populated areas, while Oklahoma City and Tulsa function largely as individual areas. Ann questioned whether the Department of Mental Health still uses the same structure.
- iv. Lauren raised concerns about the potential for growing monopolies, noting that smaller rural agencies have gone out of business. Ann stated this was important information and expressed concern about losing existing shelters, given the limited statewide coverage.
- v. Ann emphasized that there are no state-run DV/SA programs; all are private nonprofit corporations with legal rights. She noted that changes impacting service areas would be complex and asked whether EVO or OCAT had taken any related action.
- vi. It was noted that service areas are determined by formula and by county.
- vii. Ann explained that many programs originated as grassroots organizations and are well-positioned to serve their communities. While core services are required under standards, programs may differ in non-core services based on community needs. Ann stated there may be value in developing new non-core services where appropriate. Lauren shared that during her time at the Department of Mental Health, agency responses (e.g., during April 2020 COVID adjustments) were highly specific to their individual communities.
- viii. Whitney discussed collaboration efforts among Tulsa-area agencies and OCAT when applying for grants, noting differences in service provision between Oklahoma City and Tulsa. She emphasized the importance of

community-based solutions and highlighted Dragonfly's 10-year presence as an example of locally driven success.

- ix. Shelley provided clarification regarding tribal programs. She noted that some areas include multiple tribes, not all of which provide services, and that some tribes are working to diversify services and fill gaps within their own designated areas. Ann reiterated that clients retain individual choice, and service areas have never been rigidly enforced. She added that defined service areas can be helpful when negotiating policy and legislative changes.
- x. Lauren emphasized that clients should maintain autonomy in choosing services. She noted that funding preservation and simplicity are important considerations, particularly for existing providers. Opening new programs in rural counties may present sustainability challenges.
- xi. Kelsey discussed demonstrating need, comparing it to a "waiver of need" concept used in other industries. Considerations include utilization, community capacity, and availability of state or community funding.
- xii. Matt shared examples of programs opening in multiple locations, such as in Cleveland County. He cautioned that oversaturation could lead to program failure. Ann added that community partnerships are also a factor.
- xiii. Shelley suggested that expansion in an area already served should ideally come from the existing program rather than a new outside entity. If additional funding becomes available, it may be more effective to invest in strengthening existing programs that provide quality services.
- xiv. Lauren raised operational concerns, noting that some community partners cap services at certain limits (e.g., 14 participants) and may differ in policy implementation. She questioned how standards and consistency are maintained.
- xv. Kristie emphasized the importance of coordination and communication. She shared an example involving a tribal program serving victims in Oklahoma County and initial courtroom concerns about advocate presence, which were resolved through collaboration. She stressed ensuring victims are informed of all available services.
- xvi. Whitney noted that lack of recurring funding creates complexity, as many programs rely heavily on private funding. She cautioned against duplication of services.
- xvii. Matt stated that some communities express interest in starting programs but lack community buy-in or demonstrated need, which can result in business failure. Kelsey added that from a victim services perspective, it is generally more cost-effective to invest in existing programs rather than create new ones; however, she cautioned against allowing the victim services model to become purely business driven. Lauren noted similarities to challenges currently observed within the Department of Mental Health and emphasized balancing victim-centered priorities with fiscal responsibility.
- xviii. The Council elected to table the agenda item and continue conversations during next month's meeting.

xix. Agenda item tabled for next month.

## **7. DISCUSSION AND UPDATES ON BIP PILOT PROGRAM WORK**

- a. Sharla Colbert-Dunbar reported that the pilot application has been distributed to eligible programs in Tulsa and Oklahoma counties. Applications are due by March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2026. She created a live shared resource folder where materials are being uploaded. Once pilot programs are selected, participating programs will be able to submit questions and access additional guidance through that shared platform.
- b. Miguel shared that there has been strong interest in the pilot, and multiple programs have expressed intent to apply. He asked council members if they had any questions about the review process.
- c. Sharla reported to having developed a scoring sheet based directly on the application criteria. Applications will be evaluated on a standardized scale, measuring how clearly and thoroughly required information is presented. Miguel noted that the review process is similar to evaluating policies and procedures for compliance with established standards. Each application component will be reviewed alongside the applicable standards, and weighted scoring will be used. Weighting will help distinguish between proposals if two applications are otherwise very similar in quality and content.
- d. Sharla noted that during various meetings and assessments she has attended, discussion of the pilot and the differentiated response model has generated increasing enthusiasm among stakeholders.
- e. Lauren asked about plans for information sessions and how that process is progressing. Miguel stated that he would like to host roundtable discussions once pilot programs are identified. While informal conversations have already occurred, more structured information sessions will be planned after selections are finalized.

## **8. NEW BUSINESS Not Known or Which Could Not Have Been Reasonably Foreseen Before the Posting of the Agenda *in Accordance with 25 O.S. § 311(9)***

- a. None reported.

## **9. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- a. Miguel Mojica announced that the 2026 Spring BIP facilitator training is set for April 29<sup>th</sup> -May 1<sup>st</sup>.
- b. Miguel Mojica announced that dates for the Oklahoma Victim Assistance Academy (“OVAA”) and Partners for Change (“PFC”) trainings have been set. OVAA 2026 is scheduled for June 21<sup>st</sup> through June 26<sup>th</sup>. PFC is scheduled for September 2<sup>nd</sup> through 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## **10. ADJOURNMENT**

- a. Kristie Chandler motioned to adjourn. Ashley Henson seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 2:38 P.M.

**Next Advisory Council Meeting:** March 17, 2026 at 1:30 p.m.  
Oklahoma Attorney General’s Office

313 NE 21<sup>st</sup> St.  
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

*Should you have a disability and need an accommodation, please notify the Victim Advocacy and Services Unit in advance at (405) 521-3921.*