

MARICOPA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS
REGIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES – AUGUST 24, 2009

MEMBERS ATTENDING

President Diane Enos, Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, Chair
Lt. Robert Bates, Phoenix Police Dept.
*Kathy Berzins, City of Tempe
Tony Vidale for John A. Blackburn, Jr., AZ Criminal Justice Commission
Kendra Leiby for Allie Bones, Arizona Coalition Against Domestic Violence
+Grace Carrillo, Neighborhood and Family Services Commission
*Chris Christy, Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community
Angela Wold for Suzanne Cohen, Maricopa County Attorney's Office
Councilmember William Conner, City of El Mirage
Libby Bissa for JoAnn Del-Colle, Phoenix Family Advocacy Center
*Will Gonzalez, City of Phoenix Prosecutor's Office
Laura Guild, Arizona Dept. of Economic Security
Shannon Cotton for Cindy Hallman, Marley House
+Linda Melendez for Dan Hughes, City of Surprise
*Cmdr. Kim Humphrey, City of Phoenix Police Dept., Vice Chair
*Lynette Jelinek, Glendale Fire Dept.
*Mary Lynn Kasunic, Area Agency on Aging
*Patricia Klahr, Chrysalis Shelter Inc.

Councilmember Phil Lieberman, City of Glendale
*Jodi Beckley Liggett, Arizona Foundation for Women
Jeremy Arp for Maria-Elena Ochoa, Governor's Office for Children Youth and Families
Dottie O'Connell, Chicanos Por la Causa
*Stephanie Olohan, City of Goodyear
*Janice Parker, Save the Family Foundation
Connie Phillips, Sojourner Center
*John Pombier, City of Mesa
*Kerry Ramella, City of Phoenix Fire Dept.
Sarah Youngblood, Community Legal Services

OTHERS PRESENT

Erin Bruce
Debbie Driscoll, Town of Buckeye
Paty Iniquez, Governor's Office for Children, Youth and Families
Jessye Johnson, Elim House
Katie Komar, Governor's Office for Children, Youth and Families
Elizabeth Morton, Sojourner

+ Those attending by video/audio conference
* Those not present or represented by proxy

1. Call to Order

President Diane Enos, Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting. She called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m. Introductions ensued.

2. Call to the Audience

No comments were made.

3. Approval of the June 4, 2009 Meeting Minutes

Chair Enos called for approval of the June 4, 2009, Regional Domestic Violence Council meeting minutes. Tony Vidale, Arizona Criminal Justice Commission, motioned to approve the minutes as presented. Laura Guild, Arizona Department of Economic Security, seconded the motion. Councilmember William Conner, City of El Mirage, and Chair Enos abstained from voting as both were absent during the June meeting. The motion passed.

4. Joint Domestic Violence/Homeless Activities

Chair Enos introduced Brande Mead, MAG, to report on the joint activities of the MAG Regional Domestic Violence Council and MAG Continuum of Care Regional Committee on Homelessness. Ms. Mead thanked the Committee for the opportunity to report on the Shelter Capacity Study and the Client Principles Statement. Ms. Mead said both projects were recommended at a joint committee meeting last December. She offered the following updates:

Shelter Capacity Study: The study is an update to the 2005 MAG report on *The Need for Increased Domestic Violence Shelter in the MAG Region*. The Shelter Capacity Study includes not only domestic violence shelters but also emergency homeless shelters. The purpose is to identify common reasons why requests for shelter may be denied and to identify ways in which shelters can maximize current resources to serve people in need. Ms. Mead thanked Arizona State University (ASU) intern Christine Glass and shelter staff for their collaborative work on the study.

Ms. Mead said a community stakeholder group gathered in June to provide input into the study design. The study was then piloted with a handful of shelters for daily data collection and feedback. Changes were made to the survey based on the feedback received. The survey was distributed to shelters from June 21, 2009, to July 4, 2009, at which time 10 shelters responded to the survey. MAG staff determined additional input was necessary and the study was again distributed from July 20, 2009, to August 2, 2009. Ms. Mead said the data collected is being analyzed and compiled into a report for presentation at the joint committee meeting for approval on September 14, 2009. Ms. Mead opened the topic for questions and discussion by the Committee.

Councilmember Phil Lieberman, City of Glendale, addressed the Committee regarding the Project Homeless Connect held at Vineyard Church in Glendale on August 20, 2009. He said it was an open house with more than 20 agencies participating and more than 200 participants attending. Ms. Mead agreed there was a great turnout from service providers and a large number of people in need of service.

Chair Enos asked if the data gathered from shelters are adequate for the study. Ms. Mead said daily data were collected on the number of people turned away and the reasons why they were denied shelter. She confirmed data collected is sufficient for the purpose of the

study. Amy St. Peter, MAG, commented that collecting data for the study meant going above and beyond for many of the shelters. She noted some shelters regularly collect this data while others do not. She said the data gathered provide a good baseline for making recommendations on how to consistently gather information. Ms. Mead thanked everyone who participated in the Shelter Capacity Study and extended appreciation for their time and effort.

Client Principles Statement: Ms. Mead said this project was recommended at the joint Committee meeting in December for the purpose of creating a standard of treatment for all persons served in shelters. While some shelters have their own standards of treatment, this process would develop regional standards of treatment to bring shelters together as a community. Ms. Mead thanked everyone who participated on the project. She said a workgroup met on August 12, 2009, to brainstorm different areas of focus and different principles for the statement. She referred the Committee to the draft provided in the handouts. She invited them to provide feedback or additional information they would like included in the statement.

Chair Enos noted the draft refers to culturally sensitive staff, but does not have anything pertaining to language or bilingual services. She suggested adding the words “understandable” or “clearly” to the fourth bullet point. Ms. Mead confirmed the change can be made. Ms. St. Peter questioned the appropriateness of adding the word “bicultural” as well as bilingual. Chair Enos said the words “culturally sensitive” are sufficient. Connie Phillips, Sojourner Center, addressed the fifth bullet point “*To provide information to those seeking or in shelter about the shelter’s grievance processes*”. She said it does not seem practical to inform people who are seeking shelter about the grievance process as the initial conversation between the intake worker and the potential client takes place very quickly. Ms. Mead clarified the statement would be appropriate for those “in” shelter; not those “seeking” shelter. Ms. Phillips also asked for clarification regarding confidentiality and collaboration among shelters. She said shelters sometimes cannot share information with other shelters, which could create conflict if the statement is adopted and misinterpreted. Ms. Mead noted the language regarding confidentiality can be clarified.

Ms. St. Peter agreed with not necessarily needing to provide the shelter grievance process to individuals calling in for emergency shelter. However, she said the Client Principles Statement also applies to transitional housing, which often includes an application and interview process. She said in those cases, where there is a lengthy process, it may be appropriate to provide the information as the potential client may have grounds for using it. Ms. St. Peter asked if the Committee wished to address the issue as it applied to transitional housing. Chair Enos asked for comments or suggestions from the Committee. No further comments were made by the Committee.

Ms. Mead said once completed, the document will be presented at the joint Committee meeting in September for approval. She said staff is seeking input from the Council on whether the document should be presented to the shelters for signature by either the Board of Directors or the Executive Director. Chair Enos asked if sending it to the

shelter directors would delay the project. Ms. Mead advised it could probably be done in a relatively short time once approved by the joint Committee. Chair Enos asked for feedback from the Committee.

Ms. Guild asked for clarification on whether the statement addresses individuals “seeking” shelter, noting the document can be interpreted as addressing those persons already “in” shelter. Additionally, she noted the document is intended as a best practices document with no authority assigned for overseeing it. She commented it would be appropriate to have others review and understand its purpose. However, she deferred to the opinions of shelter Executive Directors present at the meeting. Ms. Phillips said it would be respectful to take the document to the shelters. She noted doing so would create goodwill and do more to build the relationship between shelters. She said taking it to the Board of Directors would be a very effective community building activity. Dottie O’Connell, Chicanos Por la Causa, expressed agreement with Ms. Phillips.

Ms. St. Peter reviewed the comments made and agreed taking the Client Principles Statement to shelter board members is a good idea. She said staff is happy to do so. Additionally, she said MAG does not want to appear as though staff is trying to enforce or monitor compliance the statement. She asked for input on presenting the document to the shelter board members for the purpose of seeking feedback without requiring signatures to be obtained. Renae Tenney, MAG, suggested presenting the statement at the Arizona Coalition against Domestic Violence’s quarterly meeting of Maricopa Domestic Violence Shelter Executive Directors. Chair Enos restated the purpose would be to seek input with the goal of creating a best practices document. She said Ms. Tenney’s suggestion is well taken.

Ms. St. Peter asked if there is consensus among shelters with using the term “client”. Chair Enos commented that many shelters may have people seeking shelter, but who are not actual clients. Ms. St. Peter suggested removing the word “client” from the title and renaming the document Screening Principles. The Committee showed mutual agreement with no additional feedback or input. Ms. Mead thanked everyone for their input as well as those who participated in the work group.

5. Youth Empowerment Project (YEP) Update

Chair Enos invited Renae Tenney, MAG, to provide an update on the Youth Empowerment Project activities including completion of the print ad and development of the project toolkit. Ms. Tenney thanked the Committee for the opportunity to provide an update. She also extended her gratitude to the Governor’s Office Innovative Domestic Violence Program Grant for funding the project and Committee members who have helped make the YEP a success.

Ms. Tenney said the final print ad was completed in June with help from the MAG Communications Division. She gave an overview of the original entry which was submitted by a student at Suns-Diamondback Education Academy. Ms. Tenney described the original entry and how it evolved into the cast with key terms written on it. She acknowledged the former MAG intern who modeled for the photo. Ms. Tenney said

the ad will be distributed in shelter newsletters as well as the Human Services newsletter. She asked the Committee to provide information on any additional opportunities to distribute the print ad.

Ms. Tenney discussed development of the YEP DVD toolkit. The toolkit contains four public service announcements (PSAs) including the print ad, video, radio ad, and Web banner. In addition, the toolkit has planning and evaluation tools, resources and peer testimonials for youth-serving organizations to reach out to teens about dating violence. Ms. Tenney said the toolkit was distributed in June and July to more than 20 youth organizations, the MAG Management Committee, and the MAG Regional Council. She said the toolkit is available on DVD or can be downloaded from the Web of Friends Web site (www.WebofFriend.org).

With regard to the future of the YEP, Ms. Tenney stated plans had been developed based on discussion with teen focus groups and the Council. She said continuation of the project was contingent on funding. However, the Innovative Domestic Violence Program Grant funds are no longer available. Ms. Tenney is researching other opportunities to obtain funding to support moving the project forward. She again thanked the Governor's Office whose support has been tremendous over the years. She asked Committee members to submit any suggestions or ideas on where to seek funding for the project. Chair Enos asked how much funding is being sought for the project. Ms. Tenney commented \$50,000. She said the Web of Friends Web site will remain online to provide resources for the community.

Ms. Tenney offered the YEP print advertisement for approval by the Committee. The print ad received positive comments from Committee members. Chair Enos asked if it has been offered to school districts. Ms. Tenney confirmed it had been. Ms. Phillips motioned to approve the Youth Empowerment Project print advertisement. Councilmember Conner seconded the motion. Jeremy Arp, Governor's Office for Children, Youth and Families, abstained from voting as the Governor's Office funded the project. The motion passed unanimously. Chair Enos thanked Ms. Tenney for her efforts on this project.

6. Legal Assistance Study

Chair Enos invited Ms. Tenney to present an update on refinements made to the Legal Assistance Study. Ms. Tenney thanked the Committee for the opportunity to present an update. She said the Council was last updated on the study at the June meeting. Since then, the report was distributed with the intent of getting feedback from Council members. Positive feedback was received along with noted some areas of concern. Ms. Tenney acknowledged the MAG Communications Division for their assistance in formatting the final document. She then highlighted the following changes made to the study:

- The description of domestic violence and other background information was moved to the back of the report to allow readers quick access to the data.

- The section describing the civil legal process was clarified and made easier to understand thanks to input from Sarah Youngblood, Community Legal Services, and the Arizona Coalition Against Domestic Violence.
- Additional input from the Morrison Institute helped clarify the document is only representative of those who participated in the study and does not represent all court professionals or victims of domestic violence.
- A section was added to discuss future areas of study based on data collected.
- A section of the report regarding false allegations of domestic violence and how allegations of domestic violence impact decision making was removed from the study. Conversations with the Morrison Institute led to this decision due to the study's low response rate.

Ms. Tenney gave a brief overview of the key findings and recommendations of the study:

- Nearly one quarter of domestic violence survivors wanting legal assistance reported they did not receive them. The majority of professionals estimated that domestic violence survivors would benefit from this assistance.
- The majority of survivors wanting legal representation (attorneys) were not able to secure it.
- The number one reason survivors cited for not accessing legal representation is their inability to afford these services. The majority of professionals cited awareness as the biggest barrier to survivors securing legal representation.
- The majority of domestic violence survivors reported needing legal representation for future civil cases. They do not expect to be able to secure representation however.

She noted the findings and recommendations are based on information gathered from 182 people. She thanked the Council and community partners for helping to develop the study. She also acknowledged the role of former ASU interns Amy Schlappi and Blake Holub whose work made completion of the study a reality. Ms. Tenney thanked the Morrison Institute for providing guidance and support throughout the project. Ms. Tenney opened the topic for discussion and action by the Committee.

Ms. Phillips asked for clarification on how many study participants were needed to reach a representative response rate. Ms. Tenney said data were collected from women residing in domestic violence shelter as well as those experiencing domestic violence who were not staying in shelter. She noted the difficulty in determining the overall number of women experiencing domestic violence in the region. Without knowing the overall population, Ms. Tenney said identifying the number of participants needed for a representative sample was an impossible task. Chair Enos noted the length of time it took

to complete the project. She stated legal services for domestic violence survivors are a challenging area. She commented the information in the report is greatly needed as resources become more limited. Chair Enos called for a motion to approve the study.

Ms. Youngblood asked how staff anticipates using the results of the study. Ms. St. Peter said the idea for the study was originally brought to the Council a few years ago. At that time, the Arizona Coalition Against Domestic Violence wanted to put forth legislation to establish a legal assistance fund. They determined data were needed to support their efforts. As such, this Council felt the study was a high priority. Since then, the legislature and funding from the community has changed significantly. The Coalition's plans to proceed with that effort are unknown at this time. Ms. St. Peter noted the study will hopefully be a useful tool. Chair Enos asked for suggestions on other ways to use the results of the study.

Ms. Youngblood said an ongoing priority for Community Legal Services is to find avenues for funding more lawyers and helping more victims of domestic violence. She noted the legal assistance fund was their primary goal in trying to fund more lawyers. She said the report does address the need for volunteer lawyers and noted there are a number of people accessing those services. However, she expressed concern there may not be many more family law lawyers willing to offer pro bono services. Chair Enos asked if Community Legal Services has reached out to larger law offices for the purpose of recruiting more attorneys to provide services to survivors. Ms. Youngblood said while that option has not been considered, they have offered to co-counsel and work with individual attorneys. Ms. Youngblood expressed concern with recruiting lawyers who are not practicing family law. She noted Community Legal Services has concerns about the legal services received by survivors when attorneys are not experienced in the nuances of domestic violence.

Chair Enos commented on the need to be innovative in using the information provided in the Legal Assistance Study. She noted the need for new approaches to pro bono services and challenged the Committee to come up with ideas for using the data collected by the study. Councilmember Conner motioned to approve the Legal Assistance Study report. Ms. Phillips seconded the motion. Chair Enos recommended discussing how to best carry forward the recommendations noted in the study. She recommended adding this discussion as a future agenda item for the Council. Chair Enos asked the Committee if they would agree to amend the motion to include keeping the Legal Assistance Study as an ongoing agenda item. Councilmember Lieberman asked if Councilmember Conner and Ms. Phillips would be willing to amend their original motion to include bringing the Legal Assistance Study before the Committee again within 60 days for further review. Councilmember Conner stated no opposition to the revised motion. Ms. Phillips seconded the revised motion. The motion was modified and approved unanimously.

7. 2009 Domestic Violence Press Conference

Chair Enos invited Ms. Tenney to provide an update on plans for the annual domestic violence press conference. Ms. Tenney said a stakeholder meeting was held on August 19, 2009, to discuss planning ideas for the press conference. She thanked the Committee

for the opportunity to share the recommendations of the stakeholder group. With this year marking the tenth anniversary of the MAG Regional Domestic Violence Council, the stakeholder group felt it would be a good opportunity to highlight the Council's successes. The group recommended the theme "Beyond the Bed" for the conference. This theme refers to the Council's role in helping to increase the number of shelter beds from the number reported in the 2004 MAG study *The Need for Increased Domestic Violence Shelter in the MAG Region*. The theme also makes reference to the need for not only shelter beds, but the many services shelters provide to help people move forward after experiencing domestic violence.

Ms. Tenney said the stakeholder group discussed domestic violence victim Laura Munoz and her family. Ms. Munoz' story made a huge impact in the community and was the catalyst for the development of the MAG Regional Domestic Violence Council. Ms. Tenney said the stakeholder group discussed including Ms. Munoz's story as part of the press conference, however, the family has not been in contact with the domestic violence community indicating they want to be advocates for this cause. Ms. Tenney said one of the main issues in Ms. Munoz's story was that she was turned away from shelter due to shelters not having enough beds for a large family. She was seeking shelter with six children. The stakeholder group suggested finding a survivor who would be willing to talk about her experience of getting into shelter with a large family. Ms. Tenney noted due to changes implemented over the last ten years, more shelters are now able to accommodate large families.

Ms. Tenney said the press conference is tentatively scheduled for September 29, 2009 at 10:00 a.m. She asked Committee members to advise her if there are any conflicts or other events scheduled on that date. Locations being considered include the police department or a shelter. Ms. Tenney noted a centralized location is needed to draw as much media as possible. Ms. Tenney said the group discussed suggestions for speakers, including Chair Enos, a domestic violence survivor, and the first Chair of the Domestic Violence Council Ms. Peggy Bilsten. The event could acknowledge and recognize key people and organizations such as the first Chair, the Governor's Office and the Arizona Republic. Ms. Tenney invited Council members to provide any additional suggestions.

Chair Enos asked for more information on the proposed theme. Ms. Tenney said the theme relates to the 2004 report on the need for additional shelter beds. The report was routed to the Governor's Office and assisted in increasing the number of beds available. She noted having the press conference at a shelter would allow the media to film inside one of the units. The coverage could be used as an awareness raising experience for the general public. Ms. Phillips expressed her concern that the message be very clear that there still remains a shortage of beds in Maricopa County. She suggested working with Community Information and Referral to find out what the turnaway rates are for those individuals not able to get into shelter or DV Stop. She agreed with the message that it takes an array of services to move beyond abuse. Ms. Phillips offered to host the press conference at Sojourner Center, if the Committee decides to move forward with having it at a shelter. Chair Enos thanked her for offering a location for the press conference. Libby Bissa, Phoenix Family Advocacy Center, agreed on the need to inform people that

it takes more than just a bed by noting the bed alone does not provide the safety and security survivors need.

Chair Enos asked what messages are planned for the conference. Ms. Tenney said the press conference will highlight various successes of the Council, provide an overview of what has been done and highlight the need to continue the work in this area. Chair Enos asked about the ability to present data and statistics such as those seen in the Legal Assistance Study. Ms. St. Peter said the Shelter Capacity Study currently underway will provide data that can be used at the press conference. Additionally, she said the main purpose for the press conference is to celebrate what has been done but also to serve as a call to action. Ms. St. Peter noted the message will include the need to maintain what has been added as well as look at increased need.

Ms. Guild said celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Council and all that MAG has done to enhance response to domestic violence is applicable for the press conference. However, she questioned whether the theme “Beyond the Bed” would diminish the other qualities by placing more focus on the beds. Ms. Tenney asked for input from the Committee. Ms. Phillips stated agreement with Ms. Guild. Ms. Youngblood said the main challenge faced by victims is self-sufficiency. She noted the bed is only the first step to providing victims a safe place to escape from their abuser. She said the biggest obstacle is the move towards self-sufficiency and it requires the biggest resources. Ms. Tenney said the press conference will also serve as a call to action. The goal is to have a collaborative process within the community to develop the next domestic violence plan. The beginning of this process will be reviewing what has been accomplished. Ms. Guild suggested the focus be system accountability. Ms. Tenney stated she will take into consideration the Council’s comments to rework the theme into something more inclusive of the Council’s many successes.

Chair Enos asked for additional suggestions for the location of the press conference. Lt. Robbie Bates, Phoenix Police Department, acknowledged a great job done on the Legal Assistance Study. He said there are many different options for locations through the Phoenix Police Department’s Public Affairs Bureau. Ms. O’Connell said having information available in Spanish would be helpful if the press conference is held at a police-related facility. She said many of the clients served are fearful of the police. She noted this is a very sensitive area as many monolingual women fear going to the police for assistance.

Ms. Guild suggested the county courthouse plaza or the domestic violence bench on the Senate Lawn as possible locations. Ms. St. Peter said part of the rationale for including a shelter as an option is to focus on the tenth anniversary of the Council and Ms. Munoz being turned away from shelter. She said while all recommended locations are good options, the message and location needs to tie back to the MAG Regional Domestic Violence Council. Chair Enos asked if staff requires a recommendation from the Committee or if staff can determine the location based on the provided suggestions. Ms. St. Peter advised staff can move forward as long as the Committee is comfortable with all of the location recommendations.

Ms. St. Peter asked for input on visuals to be used at the press conference. She suggested having a display board with 3D objects such as a gavel to represent the Legal Assistance Study or a bed for the Shelter Capacity Study. Ms. St. Peter asked for suggestions of objects to represent successes. No suggestions were made by the Committee. Chair Enos asked the Committee if they were in agreement with the theme, appropriateness of the information and leaving site selection to MAG staff. Councilmember Lieberman asked for a review of the suggested locations. Ms. Tenney said the suggested locations include Sojourner Center, the county courthouse plaza, the domestic violence bench on the Senate Lawn, and a recommendation to work with the Phoenix Police Department's Public Affairs Bureau.

Ms. Phillips made a motion that staff move forward in selecting a site for the press conference with a general theme of what has been accomplished and remains to be done with an emphasis on systems accountability. Councilmember Lieberman seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

8. Legislative Update

Kendra Leiby reported on Senate Bills 1088 and 1106. She said the Coalition is happy to report both bills were approved by the Legislature.

Senate Bill 1088, Dating Relationships: Under Arizona Revised Statute, Arizona will now recognize dating violence relationships. Ms. Leiby said it is among the most comprehensive statutes in the nation and recognizes both same sex couples and heterosexual couples. She noted the bill does not specifically cite teens in the actual language. However, a teenager is now eligible for an Order of Protection. The main purpose of the bill is to address those between the ages of 16–20 years which is the age group most likely to experience domestic violence. The bill ensures they are receiving the same protection as married couples. The bill will be enacted September 30, 2009.

Senate Bill 1106, Child Custody: Ms. Leiby said the Coalition has been working on variations of this bill for years. The bill received incredible support from both the Senate and House of Representatives. Essentially when a parent is keeping a child from engaging in visitation with the abusing parent, that act cannot be used against the parent when custody issues go before a judge. The bill ensures custody will no longer be taken away from the parent acting to protect the child. Ms. Leiby said the Coalition will be working with Community Legal Services, courts, and judges to further revise the statute.

Ms. Leiby gave an overview of Senate Bill 1120, which would add offenses to be recognized as domestic violence, and Senate Bill 1068, Strangulation and Suffocation. Both bills failed to pass but will be brought forth during the next session. Chair Enos asked what concerns prevented SB1068 from moving forward. Ms. Leiby said SB1068 would make strangulation and suffocation a felony charge. She indicated there are concerns with the proposed bill needing specific language to make it only applicable in domestic violence or dating violence relationships.

With regard to the budget, Ms. Leiby said the Governor is reviewing a budget submitted by the Legislature that is essentially identical to the budget proposed on July 1, 2009. Chair Enos thanked Ms. Leiby for her report.

9. Comments from the Council

Mr. Arp announced the next meeting of the Governor's Commission to Prevent Violence Against Women is scheduled for October 8, 2009, from 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. in the Governor's Executive Tower, in the second floor conference room.

Ms. O'Connell announced DeColores will sponsor the second annual free legal clinic on December 10, 2009 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The clinic will offer a variety of seminars on domestic violence issues, such as the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), and parenting children who have experienced or witnessed domestic violence. Ms. O'Connell said the event is free and tables are still available. She noted speakers and local attorneys within the community are donating their time to this event, which was attended by 120 participants last year. Ms. O'Connell said most of the seminars will be in English and Spanish. Additional information on the seminar will be forthcoming. She noted child care will not be available.

Ms. St. Peter encouraged everyone to submit any additional ideas or suggestions for the press conference.

Ms. Youngblood shared some details pertaining to a recent domestic violence case in which the victim suffered a horrific attack from her former husband. She said the Maricopa County Attorney's Office offered the offender a plea deal in which he might not have to serve jail time. The plea deal was offered and accepted prior to the victim being notified. Ms. Youngblood said this is a violation of the Victim's Bill of Rights. She commented situations such as this may be occurring more often than people realize.

With respect to housing, Ms. Youngblood said the Public Housing Authority, which administers housing vouchers, is required to operate under certain HUD regulations including sections of VAWA. She said some of the housing agencies are not trained to deal with victims of domestic violence. She noted there are specific rights and procedures that apply to those individuals. She stated public housing agencies are not recognizing victim's rights with respect to housing. Ms. Youngblood said Arizona State Law includes provisions where victims of domestic violence can terminate their leases immediately if there is an issue with safety. Community Legal Services has been working with the Mesa Housing Authority to ensure staff is trained in these two areas. Ms. Youngblood commented other housing agencies are reluctant to have their staff trained.

Chair Enos asked for input on how to address the housing issue and for clarification on whether training is an option or a requirement. Ms. Youngblood said Community Legal Services is attempting to work with the housing authorities and does not believe training is required. She said it is a huge problem for victims of domestic violence. Ms. Phillips suggested MAG staff research options for working through HUD to find a solution. Ms.

St. Peter said the joint committee meeting is scheduled to meet in September. She noted this issue could be a timely project for the group.

Chair Enos asked about the status of people and resources available after recent budget cuts. Libby Bissa, Phoenix Family Advocacy Center, noted some positions were cut but they continue to serve clients that come to them. She noted the Family Advocacy Center does not deal with clients in the court process. Angela Wold, Maricopa County Attorney's Office, stated the office has experienced a 10 percent decrease in victim advocates and tremendous growth in case loads. Councilmember Lieberman mentioned the Victims' Assistance program in Glendale. He also suggested bringing in a presenter from Glendale's program.

Chair Enos asked if supporting the need for more victim advocates is another task the Committee would like to have MAG staff research. Ms. Phillips asked about the possibility of having the Maricopa County Attorney's Office prepare a report for the Committee on how they are coping with vacancies while meeting the needs of victims. Chair Enos noted the MAG Regional Domestic Violence Council is not allowed to propose, discuss, deliberate or take action at the meeting on any matter in the summary, unless the specific matter is properly noted for legal action. As such, she recommended the topic be added to the next meeting agenda.

10. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m. The next MAG Regional Domestic Violence Council meeting is scheduled for October 1, 2009 at 1:00 p.m. in the Saguaro Room at the MAG offices.