

CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE, CDA
MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 6, 2024, 3RD FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM

Meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Mark Bisaccia

Present: Members Michelle Miller, Roberta Garlock, Carol Eagles, Colleen O'Connor, Sammy Rivera, Paige Weinstein Via phone Staff: Rosa Richardson, Ron Dumas, Mark Bisaccia Absent: Members Victor Borrás, Jeffrey Moreno

RAPE CRISIS- Antonio Vitti, Executive Director and Stephanie Hanrahan, Director of Victim Services introduced themselves after CDA and Committee member introductions.

Mr. Vitti explained that in 2023, Rape Crisis provided victim services to 702 clients throughout Milford, Orange, West Haven and the entire Valley districts. 76 of those victims were West Haven Residents. They explained that there is always someone to answer phones. During the day, staff answers all calls. Volunteers man the phones in the evenings.

There was discussion on the process associated with victims. They are provided as advocate immediately, whether it is through the hospital or Police Department. Stephanie explained this process which is different for adults and youth and infants. They proceeded to explain that advocates carry a bag in their vehicle so if clothing is taken as evidence, victims can leave with clean, brand-new clothes, undergarments and even toiletries. This allows them to walk away from the location with some sense of dignity. Member Weinstein asked if those same bags are provided for youth and infants. They are available. However they proceeded to explain that most often, the disclosure is not immediate hence, they do not confiscate the articles of clothing for evidence purposes.

The Committee was informed that advocates are available to all those who may be impacted by this assault, not just the victim (mothers, fathers, siblings, etc...).

Rape Crisis also provides support groups, specialized training for Police Officers, Specialized training to Educators, Social Workers within the West Haven School System. They participate in Community Outreach events/ activities and provide age-appropriate community education for Pre-K through College students is also provided within our school system and UNH. These programs provide students, Educators and Social workers about the red flags, social media issues, what constitutes sexual assault and the laws regarding such. They provide these programs within the classrooms and reach between 11,000 and 12,000 annually.

Committee Member O'Connor asked if they provide this for the LGBTQ+ individuals. Stephanie stated that all employees are trained for everything, but she does have to who specialize in that area.

BRIDGES- After introductions, Dawn stated that Bridges has offered the Elderly Case Management Program to Seniors for approximately 13 years. They would go to the WH Senior Center for many years and recently began going to the local library in an effort to assist residents. This program remained available throughout Covid but they were not able to utilize the Senior Center as it was closed. She did inform the Committee that Rosa did reach out to the organization to ask why they had not returned to the Senior Center once it re-opened. Dawn was not aware that Staff had stopped going and this has been re-implemented.

They have a mobile crisis unit that responds when they receive a call for welfare check. Often times, the individual is sent to the hospital or is offered clinical support depending on their needs at that time. If they go to the hospital, they are often referred to Bridges for further treatment as needed. Requests for these situations are often made by a physician, clinician, family member or neighbor. They also have a medical van that is available to West Haven residents a couple of times a month.

In addition to the Elderly Case Management program, Bridges has a clinical site on Elm Street, provides the mobile crisis team, mobile medical program and clinicians within each of our public schools. This is an asset to the West Haven students as well as the residents within our community. Rosa stated that she had been on the Board of Directors for Bridges and was grateful for the necessary programs they provide within our community.

COLUMBUS HOUSE- After introductions, Caroline Press informed that Committee that there are currently 17 clients enrolled in the subsidized housing program in West Haven. These clients receive case management, as well as any other necessary programs including but not limited to Clinical, medical, substance abuse as needed. They meet with there case manager regularly with the goal to ensure that each client can get the necessary assistance in order to prepare them to become self-sufficient. There was mush discussion regarding the need for available assistance when the city has an individual who may be homeless, and the difficulties associated with making the necessary contacts to assist these individuals. Carolina has indicated that she will forward the contact information to assist in contacting the appropriate individuals/ agencies we may need.

MARRAKECH- After Introductions, Lauri Maclean addressed the Committee with their request to renovate an existing kitchen in their Island Lane property in order to off more program space for the 191 clients who use this facility. She explained that the kitchen has not been used for years and the space can be used for additional programs. There was discussion regarding the fact that the removal of existing kitchen equipment could lead to the total abatement of asbestos tiles. This can have great financial impact on the project. There were other concerns with leaving the asbestos flooring since it is possible there is nothing beneath the equipment.

Lauri agreed that these are very reasonable concerns and she asked to go back to the facilities Director to check into this matter and get back to CDA.

Respectfully submitted by,

Rosa Richardson