

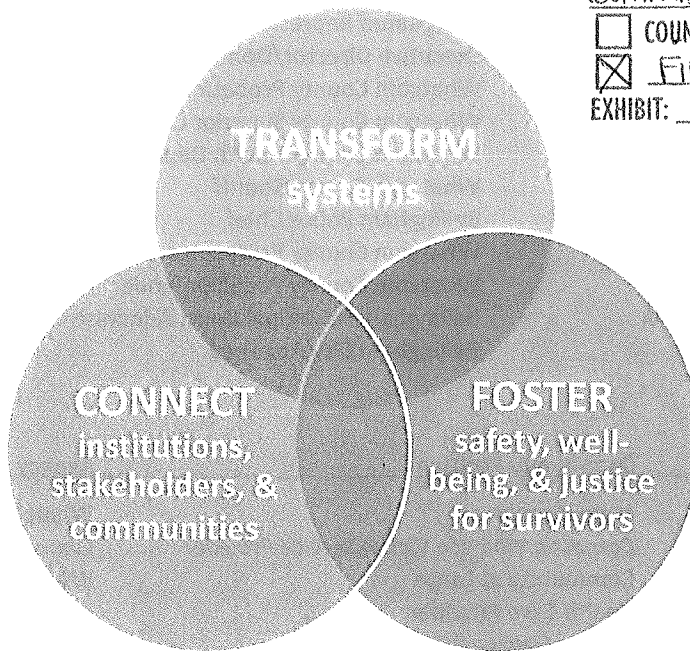


# COMMISSION ON SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Inspiring and coordinating community efforts to address sexual and domestic violence

The Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission on Sexual & Domestic Violence, formerly the Commission Against Domestic Violence (DV Commission), was created in 1998 by a joint resolution between the City of Bellingham and Whatcom County to provide leadership in the community's efforts to reduce and prevent domestic violence. In 2019, the City and County expanded our mission to include addressing sexual violence. The Commission has up to 31 members, all of whom are leaders in our community and systems that respond to domestic violence and sexual assault.

FILE UNDER AB 2019 : 228  
DATE RECEIVED: \_\_\_\_\_  
SUBMITTED BY: Susan Marks  
(Commission on Sexual & Domestic Violence)  
 COUNCIL MEETING  
 Finance COMMITTEE  
EXHIBIT: \_\_\_\_\_



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# COMMISSION ON SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

## Membership Roster, April 2019

The Commission consists of 17 government and 14 community members. Government officials are designated by government position. Community members are selected by the Mayor and the County Executive from among members of the community who have an interest in, or are impacted by, domestic and sexual violence.

### (17) Designated Government Representatives

Term Exp.	Name	Community Position
January 31, 2020	Kevin Turner	Selected Police Chief-Whatcom County Cities
January 31, 2020	Linda Quinn	Selected Superintendent-Whatcom Co. School Districts
January 31, 2021	Vacant	Area Administrator, DSHS/Children's Administration
January 31, 2022	Mike Riber	Administrator, DSHS/Community Service Office
January 31, 2023	Jon Mutchler	Designated Representative-Whatcom County Cities
January 31, 2023	Vacant	Designated Representative/Lummi Nation
January 31, 2023	Katrice Rodriguez	Designated Representative/Nooksack Tribe
January 31, 2023	Karen Burke	Executive Director/Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Services
N/A	Bruce Van Glubt	Whatcom County Probation Administrator
N/A	Dave Reynolds	Whatcom County Superior Court Administrator
N/A	Regina Delahunt	Whatcom County Health Department Director
N/A	William Elfo	Whatcom County Sheriff
N/A	David Doll	Bellingham Police Chief
N/A	Eric Richey	Whatcom County Prosecutor
N/A	Starck Follis	Whatcom County Public Defender
N/A	Darlene Peterson	Bellingham Municipal Court Administrator
N/A	Peter Ruffatto	Bellingham City Attorney

### (7) County Community Appointments

Term Exp.	Name	Community Position	Agency
January 31, 2020	Michele Zlotek	Major Employer	Whatcom County Transit Authority
January 31, 2020	Vacant	Domestic Violence Victim Service Provider	Lummi Victims of Crime
January 31, 2021	Riannon Bardsley	Community at Large	WA State Department of Commerce
January 31, 2022	Christina Kobdich	Health Care Provider	Unity Care NW
January 31, 2022	Michael Parker	Human Service Provider	Whatcom Homeless Service Center
January 31, 2023	Garret Shelsta	Community at Large	CTK Bellingham
January 31, 2023	Moonwater	Human Service Provider	Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center
January 31, 2023	Vacant	Institution of Higher Education	Whatcom Community College

### (7) City Community Appointments

Term Exp.	Name	Community Position	Agency
January 31, 2021	Ken Levinson	Community at Large	Tulalip Tribes
January 31, 2021	Mary Welch	Domestic Violence Victim Service Provider	Northwest Justice Project
January 31, 2021	Beth Boyd	Human Service Provider	Peace Health Medical Center
January 31, 2022	Byron Manering	Human Service Provider	Brigid Collins Family Support Center
January 31, 2022	Katie Plewa Olvera	Community at Large	KPO Counseling, PLLC
January 31, 2023	Sharon Rutherford	Health Care Provider	St. Joseph Hospital
January 31, 2023	Alan Artman	Major Employer	Faithlife Corp
January 31, 2023	Chris Roselli	Institution of Higher Education	Western Washington University



## **WHATCOM COUNTY SEXUAL ASSAULT AUDIT, PUBLISHED 2019**

### **FINDINGS: THEMES, STRENGTHS, & GAPS**

#### **OVERARCHING THEMES**

1. The ways our community institutions understand and respond to reports of sexual assault are influenced by widespread societal myths and misconceptions about sexual assault.
2. Implicit bias and historical oppression lead to inequitable outcomes in the ways our community institutions serve and partner with marginalized communities, particularly Native communities.

#### **IDENTIFIED STRENGTHS**

1. Bellingham and Whatcom County agencies pro-actively committed to the intensive Audit process to examine our limitations and improve our systems responses, in order to seek justice for sexual assault survivors, accountability for offenders, and increased community safety.
2. Bellingham and Whatcom County agencies have functioning commitments to and frameworks for multidisciplinary collaboration and response to sexual assault cases.
3. The expertise and effort of individual practitioners in sexual assault dynamics and trauma-informed care contributes to survivors' experiences of being believed, and increase survivors' sense of justice, dignity, and safety following a sexual assault.

#### **IDENTIFIED GAPS**

1. There are systemic delays in processing sexual assault cases.
2. Sexual assault survivors experience a lack of follow-up, communication, and engagement from responding systems.
3. Institutional responses to reports of sexual assault are overly reliant on assessing survivor credibility—more so than suspect behavior and credibility.
4. There is a lack of criminal accountability for reported sexual assault offenders in our community, which includes and may enable serial offenders.
5. Across systems, there is lack of expertise in sexual assault dynamics, trauma-informed care, and effective survivor engagement.



# RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

AS A WAY TO ADDRESS **SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE** IN WHATCOM COUNTY:

## A LEARNING SERIES

first session:

**May 23**

THURSDAY 8-10AM

BELLINGHAM-WHATCOM COUNTY

**COMMISSION**  
ON SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

annual meeting

MOUNT BAKER THEATRE ENCORE ROOM • 104 N. COMMERCIAL ST.

## goals & objectives:

- Develop a **COMMON UNDERSTANDING** and definition of restorative justice framework
- Explore how a restorative justice framework can be applied to **OUR COMMUNITY RESPONSE** to sexual & domestic violence
- Develop **SHARED COMMUNITY VALUES** for considering restorative justice to address domestic violence & sexual assault

**To RSVP or learn more, contact:**

Susan Marks, Director of the Commission  
smarks@dvcommission.org | 360-312-5700 ext. 1242

**or visit:** [dvcommission.org/events](http://dvcommission.org/events)

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**COMMISSION**  
ON SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

# about

- A series of **SIX 2-HOUR LEARNING SESSIONS** conducted every 2 months over the course of a year.
- Participants should plan to **ATTEND ALL SESSIONS** of the learning series.
- The initial session will be at the **ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COMMISSION** on Sexual & Domestic Violence. The schedule of other sessions is to be determined.  
(The learning series will resume in September after a brief hiatus for the summer)

# who should attend?

**ADVOCATES • SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS  
COUNSELORS, ADMINISTRATORS, & TITLE IX COORDINATORS IN  
SECONDARY SCHOOLS & INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION  
POLICY-MAKERS • ELECTED OFFICIALS  
FAITH COMMUNITY LEADERS • PROBATION & PAROLE OFFICERS  
LAW ENFORCEMENT • PUBLIC DEFENDERS • PROSECUTORS  
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PRACTITIONERS • COMMUNITY MEMBERS  
CIVIL LEGAL ATTORNEYS • JUDICIAL OFFICERS**

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# COMMISSION

ON SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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**Inspiring and coordinating our community's efforts to address sexual and domestic violence**

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## COMMISSION

ON SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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**• History**

- ❖ The DV Commission was formed in 1998 by a joint resolution between Whatcom County and the City of Bellingham.
- ❖ In 2006, Ordinances of Support were passed by each of the additional municipalities of Whatcom County.
- ❖ In 2019, Whatcom County and the City of Bellingham voted to expand the mission to include sexual assault.

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### Mission

- ❖ To inspire and coordinate our community's efforts to address sexual and domestic violence.

### Goals

- ❖ **Connect institutions, stakeholders, and communities** to collectively increase understanding and effectiveness of community responses for sexual and domestic violence
- ❖ **Transform systems** to ensure best practice prevention and responses for sexual and domestic violence
- ❖ **Foster safety, justice, and well-being for survivors** and communities

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#### Government representatives:


- Bruce Van Glubt
- Dave Reynolds
- Regina Delahunt
- Sheriff Bill Elfo
- Eric Richey
- Starck Follis

#### Community appointments:

- Michele Zlotek
- Riannon Bardsley
- Christina Kobdish
- Michael Parker
- Garret Shelsta
- Moonwater

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**COMMISSION**  
ON SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- **Local government funding**
  - ❖ Whatcom County
  - ❖ City of Bellingham
  - ❖ City of Ferndale
- **Grants, US Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women (OVW)**
  - ❖ Safe Futures for Children & Youth
  - ❖ Improving Criminal Justice Responses to Sexual Assault

*Why No Lynden?*

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## Whatcom County Sexual Assault Audit

quotes from survivors of sexual assault

*"If nothing else were to change, it is that you need to tell the victim what is going on."*

*"There are so many missed opportunities by many people in power to even acknowledge harm done, to offer condolences."*

*"Sometimes the way agencies respond, or don't respond to you ends up actually being worse of an experience than the incident."*

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## Whatcom County Sexual Assault Audit

- Data collected in 2017 and 2018 by multi-disciplinary team
- Data collection activities included:
  - Focus groups & interviews with survivors
  - Focus groups & interviews with professional stakeholders
  - Mapping of systems responses
  - Text analysis (agency policies and procedures, police reports, prosecution files)
  - Observations (trial, emergency department processes, MDT meetings)

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## Whatcom County Sexual Assault Audit

### Findings – Themes:

- Societal myths and misconceptions about sexual assault
- Implicit bias and oppression, particularly impacting Native survivors

### Findings – Gaps:

- Delays
- Lack of follow-up and communication
- Over-focus on survivor credibility
- Lack of criminal accountability & serial offenders
- Lack of expertise trauma-informed responses

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## Whatcom County Sexual Assault Audit

- Recommendations

- Policy, procedure, protocol, and practice – develop and/or update with best practices
- Professional training
- Multi-disciplinary response specific to sexual assault
- Resources

- Implementation

- Agency action plans and timelines
- Sexual assault response team
- Trainings for advocates, nurses, law enforcement, and prosecutors

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IF IT'S NOT CLEAR, IT'S NOT CONSENT.

*"With the girl who was raped there was a lot of victim blaming and gossip from the peer community. It wasn't anything with the perpetrator, it was her friends taking sides."*

– Local high school staff

*"I think we need to develop tools and skills for bystanders."*

- DV survivor

*"I think for today's youth a lot of [information] is found online and a lot of it is inaccurate and for young queer people it's really hard to navigate that."*

– Whatcom County youth

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IF IT'S NOT CLEAR, IT'S NOT CONSENT.

Youth Summit for high school youth groups with an adult mentor  
Friday, March 1, 2019

Who participated?

- 145 students
- 24 adult mentors/team leaders
- 8 high schools, Juvenile Detention, home school, Nooksack youth program
- Groups included: sports teams, prevention clubs, QSAs
- 74% identified as female, 18% as male, 8% as non-binary
- 44% of students identified as LGBTQ+

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IF IT'S NOT CLEAR, IT'S NOT CONSENT.

82 students completed evaluations (57% response rate)

What did they learn?

- 99% learned how to define consent
- 96% learned how to recognize consent
- 89% learned about new resources
- 95% felt energized to take action

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## Restorative Justice Learning Series

### quotes from survivors of domestic violence/sexual assault

*"I just want him to acknowledge what he did, to say he's sorry and he understands that it was wrong."*

*"I just didn't want him to do it to someone else."*

*"I know that it was messed up, and I wish he'd own up to that, but I also don't want him to go to jail."*

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## Restorative Justice Learning Series

### Goals:

- Develop a common understanding and definition of restorative justice framework
- Explore how a restorative justice framework could be applied to our community response to sexual and domestic violence
- Develop shared community values for considering restorative justice to address domestic violence and sexual assault

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## Restorative Justice Learning Series

### About:

- Co-hosted with the Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center
- A series of six 2-hour learning sessions conducted every 2 months over the course of a year
- Participants should plan to attend all sessions of the learning series
- Initial session will be at the annual meeting of the Commission on Sexual & Domestic Violence on Thurs, May 23<sup>rd</sup> from 8 – 10am at the Mt. Baker Theatre

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## Questions or comments?

Susan Marks

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