



COMMISSION

ON SEXUAL & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

INSPIRING AND COORDINATING OUR COMMUNITY'S
EFFORTS TO ADDRESS SEXUAL AND DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE



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- ❖ The DV Commission was formed in 1998 by a joint resolution between the City of Bellingham and Whatcom County; interlocal agreement in 2019 to include sexual violence and update member positions and update functions.
- ❖ **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:

Sheriff Bill Elfo

Starck Follis

Erika Lautenbach

Dave Reynolds

Eric Richey

Bruce Van Glubt

Community appointments:

Dr. Katie Olvera, KPO Counseling LLC

Jessyca Murphy, Make.Shift Art Space

Krista Touros, PeaceHealth

Garret Shelsta, Stuff You Can Use

Moonwater, Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center

Raquel Vernola, Whatcom Community College

DV Commission Funding

- ❖ Whatcom County
- ❖ City of Bellingham
- ❖ City of Ferndale

2023-2024 DV Commission Work Plan:

- ❖ Continue to stabilize funding and administrative structures for DV Commission operations.

Restorative Justice/Transformative Justice Pilot

- ❖ Goal to develop a pilot of restorative and transformative justice responses for DV/SA in communities, systems, and/or subcultures who are ready (eg arts community, school/college/university, faith community)
- ❖ Partners: Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center, Make.Shift Project, Western Washington University, Lummi Behavioral Health, City of Bellingham, The Shakedown
- ❖ Survivor input gathered throughout summer and fall; full report at www.dvcommission.org/reports

Restorative Justice/Transformative Justice Pilot

“If there was some kind of larger process, a larger container around it, with support people in place, then yes. Absolutely.”

“I wish community could have come together more to talk about it and acknowledge what was happening with him and even brainstorm how to keep ourselves safe, how to keep people in the community safe, and how to hold him accountable.”

“I wrote him a letter and did have someone send it. I really felt like I needed him to know what the impact of what he did was. I haven't really cared ever if he gets punished, but I wanted him to know the impact that it had on me.”

Restorative Justice/Transformative Justice Pilot

Select recommendations from survivor feedback:

- ❖ Intensive planning, preparation, and support
- ❖ Autonomy and choice
- ❖ Physical and emotional safety planning
- ❖ Connection with community- and Tribal-based advocates
- ❖ Attend to harm by secondary survivors and systems responses

Restorative Justice/Transformative Justice Pilot

Next steps:

- ❖ Develop/continue partnerships with key stakeholders
- ❖ Identify, assess, and prepare pilot sites
- ❖ Identify facilitator qualifications, training requirements, and support/accountability processes
- ❖ Research and adapt curricula, safety plans, resource guides, intake process, policies and procedures, and promotional materials
- ❖ Create assessment and evaluation plan

Survivor defendants

quotes from stakeholders serving survivors of domestic violence/sexual assault

“It’s not just a couple of nights in jail and you’re fine. There are so many other court dates, repercussions, requirements, court-mandated things they have to do. They’re just running around continually treated like a criminal.”

“The victim-defendant issue is a big, huge problem. I’m not saying the numbers are huge, but any time it happens, it can be devastating.”

“I’ve seen over the years people who are left with a feeling of no other way out of a relationship – the system won’t help them, or advocates won’t help them, the cops won’t help them, the lawyers won’t help them.”

Survivor defendants

Themes from 2019 report:

- ❖ Arresting and charging survivors causes long-term and complex harm
- ❖ Misconceptions about how victims look and behave can impact who is arrested and charged with domestic violence
- ❖ Context matters

Survivor defendants

Recommendations and implementation, 2023:

- ❖ Develop tools and training for community-based DV/SA advocacy agencies to provide support for, advocate for, and safety plan with survivor defendants
- ❖ Lead one in-depth review of a case involving a survivor defendant to learn more about strengths and areas for improvement in intervention and prevention
- ❖ Provide trainings for community partners including law enforcement, DCYF, and public defenders
- ❖ Develop list of expert witnesses for defense in survivor defendant cases

Subject matter expertise

- ❖ Housing providers
- ❖ Workplaces
- ❖ Schools
- ❖ Courts
- ❖ Media
- ❖ Faith communities
- ❖ Healthcare providers

Annual meeting

Thursday, May 25, 2023

9:00 -11:00 am

Mt. Baker Theatre Encore Room

Procedural justice:

survivors experience dignity and respect, voice, trustworthiness, and transparency in encounters with systems



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Questions or comments?

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