

**Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board**  
313 N.E. 21<sup>st</sup> Street, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73005  
(405) 522-1984 | FAX (405) 557-1770

**MEETING MINUTES**

**October 25, 2023**

**Meeting Venue:** Office of the Oklahoma Attorney General  
313 NE 21<sup>st</sup> St, Oklahoma City, OK 73105

**MEMBERS**

Celia Cobb (OCME) [P]	Melanie Ferguson (ODMHSAS) [P]	Laura Kuester (OCADVSA) [P]
Karen Cunningham (OAG) [P]		Angela Beatty (OCADVSA alt.) [P]
Melissa Van Duyne (OAG Alt.) [P]	Constanzia Nizza (OJA) [P]	Brandon Pasley (OCADVSA) [P]
Jill Nobles Botkin (OSDH alt.) [P]	Scott Hawkins (OSA) [A]	Sheila Stinson (Supreme Court) [P]
Emily Nicholls (OSDH IPS alt.) [P]	Don Sweger (OACP) [A]	Shelly Harrison (NAAV) [A]
Marissa Belase (OKDHS alt.) [P]	Julie Goree (OBA) [A]	Tania Bardin (NAAV) [A]
Beth Green (OSBI) [P]	Laura Thomas (DAC) [P]	
	Martina Jelley (OSMA) [P]	
	Sara Coffey (OOA) [A]	
	Janice Carr (ONA) [P]	

**I. Call to Order and Confirmation of Compliance with Open Meeting Act**

Chair Brandon Pasley presided over the regularly scheduled meeting of the Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board, which was held at the Office of the Attorney General in Oklahoma City, OK on October 25, 2023. Notice of the meeting was posted annually with the Secretary of State before the December 15, 2022, deadline and at the front door of the Office of the Attorney General more than 24 hours in advance. Chair Brandon Pasley (OCADVSA) called the meeting to order at 9:07 am.

**II. Roll Call and Establishment of Quorum**

Roll call was conducted at 9:07 am. Quorum was achieved at roll call with 14 members present. Two alternate designees were present but were not counted towards quorum at the time of roll call due to the primary designee being present at the time. Others present included Anthony Hernández Rivera, OAG DVFRB Program Manager and Nicholas Massey, OAG Research Analyst.

Note: Member Jill Nobles Botkin (OSDH) left the meeting at 11:15 am. Member Karen Cunningham (OAG) also left the meeting shortly before adjourning to executive session so her alternate Melissa Van Duyne (OAG) became the designee present on behalf of the OAG at that time. Quorum was maintained throughout the meeting, but the overall count of members present decreased to 13 by the end of the meeting due to the departure of Jill Nobles Botkin (OSDH).

**III. Discussion and Possible Action on Approval of Minutes from the September 27, 2023, Regular Meeting\***

DVFRB Program Manager (PM) Anthony Hernández Rivera explained that Emily Nicholls (OSDH IPS) contacted him in the leadup to the meeting with minor edits to the minutes. He pointed out the edits included adding Lt. Scott Hawkins' (OSA) rank before his name on several occasions he was referred as Mr. Hawkins and clarifying language that mentioned a statement Emily Nicholls (OSDH IPS) made about experts encouraging gun safety laws in recent years to curb suicides and

not have firearm readily accessible inside a home with volatile domestic violence situations. Martina Jelley (OSMA) also mentioned she was absent for that meeting but was counted as present in the minutes. Mr. Hernández acknowledged this and noted he would have to make changes to the narrative on item two to reflect the correct number of members present. He stated that would mean 15 members were present instead of 16 like he had originally written in.

Beth Green (OSBI) moved to approve the minutes from the October 25, 2023, DVFRB Regular meeting with the edits that were discussed. Emily Nicholls (OSDH IPS) seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed by roll call vote (12 Aye, 2 Abstain, 0 Nay).

#### **IV. Discussion on Possible Selection of DVFRB Acting Vice-Chair due to Current Vacancy\*.**

DVFRB Program Manager (PM) Anthony Hernández Rivera reminded members that during the last meeting Brandon Pasley (OCADVSA) was promoted from DVFRB Vice-Chair to Chair due to the recent retirement of Donna Glandon (OJA). He added that Marissa Belase (DHS) was mentioned as a potential candidate for the role of Acting Vice-Chair due to the vacancy left by Brandon Pasley when he was promoted to Chair. Mr. Hernández said Ms. Belase asked for some time to talk to the DHS primary designee Jennifer Postlewait (DHS) and alternate Leslie Hargis (DHS) about the matter. She also wanted to learn more about the role and what it entailed before making a commitment. He added he sent Ms. Belase the DVFRB bylaws and statute so she could deliberate with her supervisor on whether she wanted to accept the role. Mr. Hernandez asked Ms. Belase if she had an update.

Ms. Belase confirmed she had spoken to Jennifer Postlewait (DHS) and Leslie Hargis (DHS) and they all agreed she could take on the responsibility if she wished too. She added that she was ready to accept the nomination if someone made a motion nominating her to serve as Acting Vice-Chair for the remainder of the current two-year term.

Beth Green (OSBI) proceeded to make a motion nominating Marissa Belase (DHS) as a candidate for DVFRB Acting Vice-Chair for the remainder of the current two-year term that ends in June 2024. Martina Jelley (OSMA) seconded the motion. The motion passed by roll call vote (14 Aye, 0 Abstain, 0 Nay).

#### **V. Discussion and Possible Action on Proposed 2024 DVFRB Meeting Schedule\***

DVFRB Program Manager (PM) Anthony Hernández Rivera reminded members he needs to file the 2024 DVFRB meeting dates with the Oklahoma Secretary of State by December 15, 2023, to be in compliance with the Open Meeting Act. He added he created a list of proposed meeting dates and wished to discuss several things with the membership. Mr. Hernández told members the DVFRB normally meets 11 times per year and that the majority of meetings are the fourth Wednesday of every month except in November and December. He stated that in November the DVFRB meets the week after the Thanksgiving holiday and that there is no meeting in December due to many members being on leave for the holiday season. He also added the DVFRB meets jointly with the Oklahoma Child Death Review Board (CDRB) in January and July. During the January joint meeting the Boards meet during the DVFRB meeting schedule on the fourth Wednesday of the month; however, in July the Board meets on the third Thursday, which is when the CDRB normally meets. Melanie Ferguson (ODMHSAS) asked whether joint meetings start at 8:30 am instead of at the regular 9:00 am schedule. Mr. Hernández checked the most recent meeting agenda and confirmed the meeting started at 9:00 am. Marissa Belase (DHS) agreed

meetings could start at 9:00 am.

The PM mentioned he needed to run several things by the Board. First, he asked the Board whether they might be open to having the May meeting be on the 5<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month. He explained that the Conference on Crimes Against Women in Dallas is normally scheduled on the week of the DVFRB meeting. Mr. Hernandez mentioned he has always wanted to go to that conference to take advantage of the training they offer since it's very relevant to the work he does on behalf of the Board. Members agreed with meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month so that the PM could take advantage of the training in Dallas. Beth Green (OSBI) went ahead and made a motion to officially set the May meeting date to the 29<sup>th</sup> instead of the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Celia Cobb (OCME) seconded the motion. The motion passed by roll call vote (14 Aye, 0 Abs, 0 Nay).

The PM then proceeded to discuss the schedule of the 2024 community review. He added that three community reviews were written into the new two-year grant cycle. Mr. Hernández mentioned the goal would be to do at a minimum 1 per year outside of the Oklahoma City metro area. A third one would take place in Oklahoma City or Tulsa if possible. He reminded members we would continue with the hybrid community review model where a pre-review would be done in Oklahoma City and then have a full review day in the community where the fatality happened. Mr. Hernández told member the location and case for the 2024 community is still to be determined. However, he asked members whether they wanted to continue having the review in June or move it to later in the fall. He mentioned the DVFRB was very close to not meeting quorum during the 2023 review in Weatherford, OK so he wants to settle on a date where the greatest number of members can make it. He asked for input on the matter.

The majority of members agreed that they preferred to keep the June meeting date since it's been successful the past two years. Sheila Stinson (Judiciary) added it made sense because court personnel have more flexibility with their schedule during the summer. Members also pointed out that the November 27 meeting date was just before the Thanksgiving holiday on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Laura Kuester (OCADVSA) mentioned the meeting date should be moved to November 20<sup>th</sup> instead. Mr. Hernández acknowledged that and stated he would make the change. He added we would revisit this agenda item during the November meeting as a final check to confirm the 2024 meeting schedule that would be submitted to the Oklahoma Secretary of State.

## **VI. Continued Discussion and Possible Action on the 2023 Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board Annual Report, including Board Recommendations and Activities\***

DVFRB Program Manager (PM) Anthony Hernández Rivera reminded members that the DVFRB would need to decide on what recommendations they wished to be developed for potential publication in the 2023 DVFRB Annual Report. He added that in recent years three recommendations are published in the form of a two-to-three-page policy paper. Mr. Hernández said these recommendations are normally drawn from recurring ideas or themes the Board discussed while reviewing cases during the entire calendar year. He added that normally these ideas are very broad in scope and that it was the PM's responsibility to flesh them out into concrete recommendations. The PM told members he organized several ideas discussed in meetings and at a recent interim study on domestic violence in a table so the membership could choose which ones they preferred. He asked members for their preference on how to proceed in the discussion. DVFRB Chair Brandon Pasley (OCADVSA) stated that it would be best to go over the table together and have an open discussion on thoughts and preferences.

The first recommendation candidate that was discussed was one targeting the 9-1-1 emergency telecommunications system. Mr. Hernández explained this would entail crafting a recommendation emphasizing the need to train emergency telecommunicators on best-practices

when working with domestic violence-related emergency calls involving victims and children. He reminded members DVFRB staff could count on technical assistance to write this recommendation from personnel at the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments' (ACOG) 9-1-1 Training Institute and the Oklahoma 9-1-1 Management Authority due to their recent visit and presentations during the August DVFRB meeting. Mr. Hernández added a recommendation targeting this area would have an immediate impact due to recent legislation requiring training for 9-1-1 operators. He added a recommendation could potentially facilitate an official working relationship with the 9-1-1 Management Authority, which is responsible for creating and implementing the required training. Janice Carr (ONA) stated she agreed with having a recommendation targeting the 9-1-1 system due to the significant amount of time the DVFRB has spent discussing the issue and how immediate action is needed to ensure the 9-1-1 system is better equipped to work domestic violence-related calls. General discussion ensued on some of the challenges 9-1-1 centers face across the state and the role they play in getting victims of domestic violence (DV) the help they need. The DVFRB agreed that this should be one of the recommendations developed for publication.

The second recommendation candidate discussed was one related to making domestic violence crime's range of punishments higher. Mr. Hernández explained that a reoccurring theme during reviews are discussions on the current state of Oklahoma domestic violence statutes and how punishments are often too low in comparison to other non-DV crimes. He added a recent presentation at an interim study in the Oklahoma House of Representatives echoed some of the DVFRB's concerns in this area. The PM mentioned the speaker was Assistant District Attorney (ADA) Ashley Nix and that she leads the domestic violence prosecution team at the Tulsa County District Attorney's Office. He also mentioned he had spoken to ADA Nix, and she had agreed to partner with DVFRB staff to write a recommendation on what statutory changes would help prosecutors hold abusers accountable and keep them in custody longer. He added that state representatives expressed a lot of interest in doing something to strengthen punishments by reclassifying DV crimes to violent and 85% crimes. Janice Carr (ONA) stated she agreed with crafting a recommendation targeting this area because it would have significant impact. Brandon Pasley (OCADVSA) raised the concern about potential unintended consequences that could affect victims. He mentioned this would also negatively affect victims that are criminalized because they were misidentified by law enforcement as perpetrators when they fought back after being subjected to abuse. The DVFRB agreed they would like to see a draft for further discussion before making any commitments on including this as a recommendation in the upcoming report.

The third recommendation candidate discussed was one on early child intervention via the education system. Mr. Hernández mentioned there was precedent for the Board doing this and listed several years when something along those lines was recommended. He also mentioned it seemed some legislators were interested in learning about healthy relationships education during the recent interim study at the Oklahoma House of Representatives. Beth Green (OSBI) stated she had concerns about the feasibility of recommending something along these lines considering the current climate at the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDH). Constanza Nizza (OJA) then gave an overview of several Office of Juvenile Affairs (OJA) programs that promote healthy relationship education to youth. Emily Nicholls (OSDH IPS) then gave an overview of the programs that Brandi Woods Littlejohn (OSDH IPH) talked about during the interim study. Members agreed that it might be a good idea to highlight these initiatives in the form of a spotlight article on the report. Beth Green (OSBI) suggested the PM look at the epilogue section from the 2015 DVFRB Report as an example.

The fourth recommendation candidate discussed was one related to the future state abduction response team that is being assembled by the Oklahoma Highway Patrol (OHP). Mr. Hernández mentioned OHP Communications Director Jason Matheson mentioned this initiative during a

presentation at the most recent DVFRB joint meeting with the Child Death Review Board (CDRB). The PM mentioned a recommendation could be crafted expressing support for this initiative and emphasizing its importance. Board members agreed the DVFRB PM could work directly with OHP if they ever requested technical assistance on trauma-informed best practices for the new team. As a result, they did not think a recommendation targeting this initiative was necessary.

The fifth recommendation candidate discussed was one where the DVFRB expressed support for increased funding to domestic violence service providers considering higher needs and cuts in federal funding to grants supporting crime victim services. The recommendation would also make an argument for the need of more victim advocates across the state. Mr. Hernández mentioned that during a recent interim study at the Oklahoma House of Representatives, one of the reoccurring issues raised by speakers was the lack of funding to support victim services and other intervention/preventive initiatives in Oklahoma. He added this recommendation could be justified with funding data and would be a call for the state to play a more prominent role in the funding of services in Oklahoma. Members agreed this would be a timely recommendation. Brandon Pasley (OCADVSA) and Laura Kuester (OCADVSA) made comments on the current state of funding to certified programs and the disparity between what they bill the Attorney General's Office for services and what they are paid. The DVFRB agreed a recommendation should be developed targeting this area.

The sixth recommendation candidate discussed was one targeting firearm possession in the context of domestic violence situations. Mr. Hernández mentioned as an example the successful Operation 922 initiative by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Oklahoma. He briefly provided an overview of the initiative that was started in 2019 and presented some statistics on its effectiveness since then. The PM asked whether the Board wished to recommend that the state should explore ways to mirror federal law so local prosecutors can charge domestic violence offenders if they possess a firearm and they have previously been convicted of a felony offense, a misdemeanor domestic violence crime or are subject to active protective orders. Mr. Hernández reminded members the DVFRB published a spotlight article on the initiative in the 2019 DVFRB Annual Report. Members agreed it would be a good idea to do a follow-up spotlight article on the success of the initiative since its creation four years ago. They supported the PM's idea of including statistics on its effectiveness and information on how it has become a national model on how to hold domestic abusers accountable who illegally possess firearms.

The seventh recommendation candidate discussed was one where the DVFRB calls for more funding for DV and Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) programs in Oklahoma. Mr. Hernández told members this was a topic that was talked about in the recent interim study on domestic violence at the state capitol. He added this might be an area where we might find support in the legislature. DVFRB members agreed this would be a great addition to the fifth recommendation candidate (discussed above) where the board calls for more funding for service providers.

The eighth recommendation candidate discussed was one where the DVFRB calls for the creation of a program that could organize a volunteer pipeline to help with the shortage of victim advocates in Oklahoma. DVFRB members agreed this could potentially be tied somehow to the fifth recommendation candidate (discussed above), but that it should not be a standalone recommendation.

The ninth recommendation candidate discussed was one where the DVFRB calls for the creation of a DV offender registry. Mr. Hernández mentioned this was something legislators expressed interest in the most recent interim study on DV at the state capitol. Chair Brandon Pasley (OCADVSA) stated he had concerns about how this would affect DV victims who are criminalized

by the criminal justice. He also added it seemed redundant considering all the information that is already available by looking up someone on the Oklahoma State Courts Network (OSCN). The rest of the membership agreed, and it was decided it would not be developed into a recommendation.

The tenth recommendation candidate discussed was one where the DVFRB calls for making domestic violence a crime against society. The PM mentioned Scott Hawkins (OSA) had given an explanation on why this would be a good idea in a recent meeting. Several members expressed concern on how this would impact victim's autonomy. It was decided the idea would not be developed into a recommendation.

The eleventh recommendation candidate discussed was one where the DVFRB calls for the creation of a statewide awareness campaign on domestic violence issues and resources. Mr. Hernández explained the DVFRB had recommended this throughout the 2000s and that it might be a good idea to craft something along similar lines as previous recommendations with an added emphasis on why its important. The membership agreed this would be good to include in the same spotlight article as the third recommendation candidate (discussed above) instead of as a standalone recommendation.

The twelfth recommendation candidate discussed was one where the DVFRB highlights issues with the bond system in the context of DV-related arrests. Mr. Hernández mentioned the recommendation would entail doing research on what other states do and recommending best-practices. He mentioned this idea came from Angela Beatty (OCADVSA) and discussions during the most recent DVFRB community review. Members agreed this would be a good recommendation for a future report after more research is done on the matter by DVFRB program staff.

## **VII. Consideration of Motion to Adjourn to Executive Session\***

*Pursuant to 25 O.S. § 307B for the purpose of case review*

- a. Adjourn to Executive Session\***
- b. Continued Review and Discussion of case #200086**
- c. Follow-up Update of case #20007**
- d. Follow-up Update of case #20008**
- e. Review and Discussion of case #200096**
- f. Consideration of return from executive session and return to regular meeting agenda.**

Beth Green (OSBI) made a motion to adjourn to executive session at 11:20 am. Emily Nicholls (OSDH IPS) seconded the motion. The motion passed by roll call vote (13 Aye, 0 Abstain, 0 Nay). Member Jill Nobles Botkin (OSDH) did not vote due to leaving the meeting at 11:15 am. Karen Cunningham (OAG) left the meeting shortly before adjourning to executive session so her alternate Melissa Van Duyne (OAG) became the present OAG designee and was counted towards quorum and the vote to adjourn to executive session. The Board concluded and came out of executive session at 11:55 am. No action was taken as a result of executive session.

## **VIII. Announcement by Chair as to the necessity of any Board action as a result of Executive Session. Vote as a result of Executive Session\***

No announcement.

## **IX. 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).**

No new business.

**X. Announcements**

No announcement.

**XI. Adjournment\***

Beth Green (OSBI) made a motion to adjourn at 11:55 am. Emily Nicholls (OSBI) seconded the motion. DVFRB Chair Brandon Pasley declared the meeting adjourned at 11:55 am.