



Office of Professional Accountability Review Board (OPARB)  
**Minutes of Wednesday, May 6, 2009 Meeting**  
11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Patrick Sainsbury, Chair:	P	Steve Freng, Member:	A (E)
Tina Bueche, Member:	A (E)	Martha Norberg, Member:	P
George Davenport, Member:	P	David Wilma, Member:	P
Sharon Dear, Member:	P	Michael Pendleton, Consultant:	P

*(Absent = A, Present = P, Excused = E)*

Guest(s): Kate Pflaumer, Outgoing OPA Auditor; Judge Michael Spearman, New OPA Auditor; Deadria Boyland and Veronica Brown, New Beginnings; Ciara Murphy, Salvation Army DV Program Director

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The meeting was convened at 11:33 a.m.

The minutes of the March 19, April 1, and April 16 meetings were approved.

### Guest speakers

**Deadria Boyland of New Beginnings** (NB) discussed their program, established in 1976, which serves women and children and families who are victims of domestic violence. Boyland is in charge of community outreach and education and has served New Beginnings in other capacities. Veronica Brown is a former client of New Beginnings who now works for the agency. New Beginnings has approximately 42 staff, 100+ volunteers, and 30 relief workers. This is a 24/7 operation with a shelter program where families can stay up to 56 days, housing 12 women and their children at one time. They provide public health services, legal advocacy, chemical dependency therapy, mental health and social change therapy. They also provide transitional shelter for about 14 families for up to 18 months, and further facilitate them into permanent housing. Their focus is to help these individuals become more independent.

This program serves 450 women each year. They refer to other organizations when they are full to capacity. They participate in the Day One program, a website that lists in real time the services and facilities that are available to domestic violence victims, including available beds.

A trained volunteer Victim Response Team (VRT) often accompanies SPD on DV calls. Their experience with SPD is positive. The VRT ensures that SPD is aware of their services, and police often refer victims to New Beginnings, and may bring victims to New Beginnings. NB's information about SPD comes from victims/clients, VRTs and New Beginnings' staff encounters with SPD.

Originally New Beginnings was very cautious about having anyone know where they are located. Eventually they opened up to SPD, Child Protective Services, and other agencies they wanted to establish closer relationships with. New Beginnings maintains good connections with the police in order to make sure the police know of their services. Their relationship with SPD has improved over the years, and they maintain good relationships with all precincts. They attend roll calls and teach SPD about domestic violence. Staff at NB would love to provide increased DV training to SPD, as their current training is minimal in this area.

The VRT routinely asks victims about their encounter with SPD after an incident. The interactions are generally good both on the scene and in follow-up investigations, but if they are not, NB works with the woman to get her to follow through on a complaint. NB may work directly with the precinct in a confidential manner, keeping specific information confidential, since often the women are afraid to complain about the very person who is supposed to help them when they call for help. They do not file complaints with OPA, and were not aware of OPA's services. The one thing NB would improve is that sometimes officers do not separate the two people, so the victim is required to give a statement in the presence of the abuser.



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Women have more, and different, fears than men do if they are being arrested. They are concerned about the welfare and disposition of their children, about the loss of the man's income, about deportation, etc. Abusers are manipulative, and use intimidation and power and women's fears to control their victims. For example, a victim wanted to know whether she really could be prosecuted for kidnapping for fleeing with her children and taking them to Yakima. While most victims reported that they would call SPD again, the same is not true for noncitizens, who fear being deported. Increased education in this area, in several languages, would be very valuable.

NB serves primarily Caucasian women, then African-American, then Hispanic, then other ethnicities. Most women's concerns are around their children. About 70% of their contacts are cold calls, not from SPD. 60% of the clients who come to them are involved with SPD.

Question – What is the role of the legal advocate? They do not go to court, but are very involved in the legal process, working with pro bono attorneys. The legal advocate helps clients navigate the legal system; custody, restraining orders, etc. They give advice. Pat suggested that NB consider having an SPD official on their board.

**Ciara Murphy, director of the Salvation Army DV Program (SA)**, explained that they provide many of the same services as New Beginnings, although their emergency DV shelter has a 90 day limit. Most domestic violence survivors are not in shelters but are still living in their homes in our communities trying to survive the violence every day. They want help to stay in the relationship. Those clients participate in SA's community advocacy program, where they are provided support, advice and legal advocacy. Their experience with SPD has been positive. The dv detectives "get it." Precincts are well run, they are adequately trained, given the demands for various types of training, but not trained as well as they should be. The biggest problem is with immigrant and refugee clients. The services they offer may not have been offered in their country, so they are unaware of the availability of help. Often their abuser/partner has threatened they will be deported. Many times neighbors call SPD because they hear altercations. She wishes they had billboards in all languages, everywhere, to teach citizens that SPD does NOT deal with a complainant's immigration status. The Victim Support Team is a body of volunteers that ride along with police as they respond to DV calls and it's their job to provide support and referrals to the victim. However the VST is only available on the weekends, when dv agencies are closed or less staffed.

There have been anecdotal complaints from clients, e.g., they get no response when calling to report a violation of a protection or restraining order, especially when the violation involves intimidation by telephone or email and no direct contact. There is better response when the violation is an assault. There are concerns about SPD's failure to follow up with orders to surrender weapons – they are not thorough enough in getting all the weapons available to the offender. This often is rationalized by the ease of acquiring another weapon.

Police seem impatient when called for civil standby when a victim is retrieving her possessions. Sometimes abusers destroy or conceal property, and police don't help. Police don't call for interpreters as often as they should. Abusers often flee when SPD is called. If they are not apprehended soon, the victim is fearful and the abuser later says, "Go ahead, call the police, nothing will happen."

Ms. Murphy mentioned that the stipulated orders of continuance in violation of no contact order cases do not seem to be working well.

Ms. Murphy would like to see more training about how to determine who is the primary aggressor in a DV dispute. This is her primary response to our question #4.

She concluded by expressing her admiration for the professionalism and restraint of SPD officers who have a very tough job.



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**Other Business** – There were few questions from Council members regarding the OPARB report presented at the April 21 Public Safety meeting. The committee will be compiling a list of topics they'd like OPARB to pursue.

Pat, David, Martha and Michael will attend the SE Seattle Crime Prevention Council meeting on May 26 at 6:00 p.m. That meeting is held at Columbia-Lakewood Community Church, 5005 S. Ferdinand.

George discussed his response to OPARB's questions directed to the First African Methodist Episcopalian letter.

David reported on the LGBTQ Advisory Council meeting. They responded to our questionnaire in writing, and David forwarded that to Michael.

The group adjourned at approximately 1:38 p.m.

Notes taken by Nancy Roberts.

The next meeting will be held on May 21, 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. in the Boards & Commissions Room, City Hall.