

HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE  
February 21, 2014  
1:34 p.m.

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CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Austerman called the House Finance Committee meeting to order at 1:34 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Alan Austerman, Co-Chair  
Representative Mark Neuman, Vice-Chair  
Representative Mia Costello  
Representative Bryce Edgmon  
Representative David Guttenberg  
Representative Cathy Munoz

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Bill Stoltze, Co-Chair  
Representative Les Gara  
Representative Lindsey Holmes  
Representative Steve Thompson  
Representative Tammie Wilson

ALSO PRESENT

Michael Geraghty, Attorney General, Department of Law; Lauree Morton, Executive Director, Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, Department of Public Safety; Michael Hanley, Commissioner, Department of Education and Early Development; Terry Vrabec, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Public Safety; John Skidmore, Director, Criminal Division, Department of Law; Ron Taylor, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Corrections; Ree Sailors, Deputy Commissioner, Family, Community and Integrated Services, Department of Health and Social Services; Catherine Stone, Director, Public Housing, Alaska Housing Finance Corporation.

SUMMARY

^UPDATE: CHOOSE RESPECT INITIATIVE AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

Co-Chair Austerman discussed the agenda for the day.

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MICHAEL GERAGHTY, ATTORNEY GENERAL, DEPARTMENT OF LAW, stressed that there was an epidemic occurring in the state related to sexual assault and domestic violence that far exceeded national averages. The crime was widespread throughout the state and had a disproportionate impact on Alaska Natives. He discussed that with the help of the legislature, the governor had shown a light on the crime; subsequently, the work was beginning to "stem the tide." He provided a PowerPoint presentation titled "Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Initiative Update" dated February 21, 2014 (copy on file). He relayed that the governor's Choose Respect initiative was a historic undertaking that involved all Alaskans. He communicated that the trauma of sexual assault and domestic violence impacted children and families; the problem created a long-term cycle of violence for children growing up in domestic violence situations. Progress had been made, but there was much more work to do. He discussed the goals of prevention, protection, and healing; in order to succeed all three items needed to be focused on. He highlighted the importance of changing norms, working with young children, and teaching respect. He was optimistic about change that could be made.

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Attorney General Geraghty pointed to slide 2. The initiative had begun with an emphasis on survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence by ensuring there were programs and shelters available. The focus had adjusted to include offender accountability, including bringing offenders to justice, ensuring the right crimes and punishments were in place, and that legal and judicial responses were appropriate. He spoke to the importance of changing the environment so that the crimes did not occur (e.g. educating children at school about the issue). He turned to slide 3 titled "Building Comprehensive Strategies." He reiterated that the key to long-term success was to protect, prevent, and heal. He communicated that during the presentation the committee would receive

highlights on key areas and would hear from all departments involved in the initiative including the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED), the Department of Law (DOL), the Department of Public Safety (DPS), the Department of Corrections (DOC), the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation (AHFC), and the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (CDVSA).

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Attorney General Geraghty moved to slide 4 titled "Key Priority Areas by Funding." The slide provided a historic overview of funding beginning in FY 11 through FY 15; it was broken down into key priority areas. Slide 5 addressed progress that had been made. The initiative was tracking progress over time including population measures. He had been struck by the Dashboard, which included a series of population and performance measures for the departments involved in the initiative. Effective programs had been implemented, which were evidence-based, best practices, and promising. He discussed the importance of accountability. He looked at slide 6 that focused on progress in all three priority areas. He addressed increasing prevention programming and community engagement, increasing reporting to law enforcement, and other. He relayed that sexual assault and domestic violence was stigmatized and had been in the dark. He stressed the importance of reporting the crimes. The state measured how many cases DOL accepted for prosecution in addition to how many individuals took advantage of advocacy centers and shelters.

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Attorney General Geraghty addressed slide 7 titled "Population Measures of Success." He looked at an increase in primary prevention and protective factors, which included screening of high school students to determine whether there were adults other than their parents that they would report problems to. Also included in the category was whether doctors discussed the importance of reporting domestic violence with pregnant patients. He stated that an increase in self-reporting or in reports of harm was needed; the crime had been hidden too long. Additional measures on the chart included increase in utilization and access to services, increase in offender

accountability, decrease in perpetration, and decrease in victimization.

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LAUREE MORTON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, COUNCIL ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY, noted that a copy of the "2014 Alaska Dashboard" had been included in members' packets (copy on file). She addressed slide 8 titled "Tracking Progress: Alaska Dashboard." She stated that the Dashboard provided an at-a-glance review of statistics from surveys of individuals and information gathered from state divisions and services. The Dashboard was a broad overview of population indicators on the key issues impacting domestic violence and sexual assault in Alaska. She pointed to several columns on the Dashboard; the "information and start date" column included available information concerning the item as close to the start date of the initiative as possible; the "current date" column contained information closest to the current fiscal year; the "percent change" was the increase or decrease in the current Alaska data relative to the start date; and the "progress" column noted whether progress was satisfactory, uncertain, or needed improvement. She detailed that subsequent pages provided explanations of what was measured and where, when, and how information was gathered. The Dashboard was used to monitor trends, strengthen policy and practices, determine ways to help with prevention efforts, and to identify corrections to strategies that should be made along the way.

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Ms. Morton turned to slide 9 and continued to discuss the Dashboard. She shared that the "progress" column was not meant to be a comment on the rate of domestic violence or sexual assault, but whether or not progress at turning the curve was occurring at a satisfactory pace. As an example, number 16 on the Dashboard was the rate of forcible rape reported to law enforcement. She pointed to page 8 of the Dashboard and relayed that reports were increasing. The state measured the increase as satisfactory because more people were coming forward to report. She highlighted other items making progress under "offender accountability" including numbers 27, 30, and 31; more rape was reported, more arrests were being made, more arrests were taken up for prosecution, and more of the prosecutions were

resulting in convictions. She looked at slide 10 pertaining to progress needing improvement. She explained that the percent change showed the increase or decrease in the current Alaska data relative to the start date. She pointed to slide 10 that showed an increase from 4 percent to 4.8 percent in the "percent of mothers whose 3-year old child saw violence or physical abuse." She explained that the figures actually represented a 20 percent increase. She explained that numbers 2 and 5 on the slide were trending progress that needed improvement; the data showed that more 3-year olds were exposed to violence; however, less reports of harm were being made.

Ms. Morton relayed that the CDVSA looked at its strategies to assist children exposed to violence to determine what could be done to strengthen them. She moved to slide 11 titled "Implementing Effective Programs." She stated that the council recognized the critical area and it supported evidence-based practices to work on the issues such as strengthening families, parents-as-teachers, and social/emotional learning. Additionally, the council had a small increment in its budget that would go to piloting programs for children who accompany their parents into shelters. She discussed that programs the council had selected were evidence-based and practice-informed. She explained that evidence-based generally referred to programs that were validated by scientific evidence and had the ability to replicate results; practice-informed were programs shown to work effectively, produce successful outcomes, and were supported to some degree by data; promising programs were those that had the potential to effectively address the issues. Some of the evidence-based programs were the "Fourth R," legal representation and adequate housing for victims. She relayed that one of the practice informed programs was "Green Dot"; a couple of other promising programs included Alaska Men Choose Respect and Stand Up, Speak Up.

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Ms. Morton communicated that the departments would address the three elements including prevent, protect, and heal. Departments would highlight their initiative programs beginning with prevention. She stated that working with communities to build capacity and adaptations for what makes sense in their cultures and communities was really what prevention and supporting the efforts was all about.

She shared that Commissioner Hanley would describe several of the efforts.

MICHAEL HANLEY, COMMISSIONER, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT, turned to slide 14 titled "The First Step: Breaking the Silence." He acknowledged that prevention did not happen via a program or a silver bullet; it occurred by way of supporting a community, building capacity, and working to change expectations. He referenced a quote by Governor Sean Parnell on slide 14: "This battle is going to be won in the hearts and minds of our young people." He stated that it would take everyone to make the change and that the first step in breaking the cycle was breaking the silence. One of the efforts that had been made to engage communities, connect victims to support, and bring issues of domestic violence and sexual assault out into the open were Choose Respect marches throughout the state. He detailed that the marches represented the public component of the efforts taking place in communities. He looked at slide 15 that showed children who represented lessons that took place prior to the march and efforts to stand up for positive change in their communities. There were several events that took place after the marches.

Commissioner Hanley moved to slide 16 titled "150 Communities Strong." He communicated that since the inception of the initiative more and more Alaskans had found the courage to speak, the strength to act, and connection to needed support. The initiative had begun with 18 involved communities in 2010; the number had grown to 150 by 2013. He stressed that the significance of the marches and the state's public awareness campaign should not be minimized. He stated that breaking the silence was part of the solution and represented a vital part of changing social norms that put children and women at risk. He referred to a recent comment by a Village Public Safety Officer (VPSO) who had said "you can't have a brighter tomorrow unless you decrease the darkness of today. When we strengthen our families, our tribes, and communities we become the sparks for a brighter dime."

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Commissioner Hanley showed an image of middle school students (with the governor and first lady) involved in a Choose Respect march on slide 18. He spoke to the importance of engaging young students in the message; it

was critical to involve middle and high school students. He stressed that the students would drive the school climate and connectedness in their own schools. He added that the climate in schools was one of the primary protective factors. He looked at a DEED model on slide 19 taken from the coordinated school health program model. He noted that the bubbles shown on the page did not all fall within DEED, but neither did the needs of children. The department partnered with CDVSA and DHSS to provide the services. He detailed that the categories of healthy and safe school environment and comprehensive health education fell under the purview of DEED, primarily in its effort related to the "Fourth R": recognizing healthy relationships (others included reading, writing, and arithmetic). He briefly referred to the department's Coaching Boys into Men program (slide 20). The department had a health and safety coordinator and used a small component of domestic violence and sexual assault funds to support the programs. Dashboard indicator 15 recognized that the percentage of students who felt connected to the school was up by almost 8 percent (slide 23 and 24). He stated that the Coaching Boys into Men program was tremendous; de facto student leaders were frequently student athletes. The program engaged athletic coaches and helped students recognize their leadership roles on the court, in schools, and in their families.

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Commissioner Hanley turned to slide 21 titled "Fourth R: Healthy Relationships." The curriculum shown on the slide was used in grades 7 through 9 in physical and health education to promote healthy relationships and reduce interpersonal and dating violence. To date 275 professionals had been trained in the Fourth R curriculum. He shared that in 21 school districts, 63 secondary schools had been trained and approximately 50 of the schools had implemented the program; over 1,200 students in the prior year had been involved in the curriculum. He continued to discuss the Fourth R curriculum on slide 22. He shared that the final results would be available in the summer of 2014. He detailed that results would indicate whether youth report a decrease in the rate of self-reported perpetration in dating and peer violence; and an increase in participant awareness and understanding of dating behavior, including dating violence.

Ms. Morton discussed a bystander intervention called Green-Dot (slide 23). She shared that the program was currently piloted in Anchorage, Bethel, Fairbanks, Homer, Kenai, and Prince of Wales. She explained that the state was developing an Alaska-specific curriculum; a trainer's bureau would be developed in the program's third year in order for Alaskans to reach out to other Alaskan communities. She elaborated that a green-dot may involve pulling a friend out of a dangerous situation, displaying an awareness poster, putting a note on a person's Facebook page, or other. She looked at Green-Dot measures on slide 24. She highlighted that the state had been methodical in its implementation of the program; it had begun with one program in Dillingham. The program had expanded over the last couple of years to approximately 13 communities. She relayed that implementation of the program would be implemented in the present year. For example, in Anchorage the program would work with taxi drivers and bartenders to determine how they could increase the safety of their patrons. In the program's third year it would look at measures included on slide 24; the hope was that a difference would be seen in the communities.

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TERRY VRABEC, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY, introduced himself and representatives from other departments. He communicated that one of the Choose Respect initiative keystones was to provide a law enforcement presence in every community that wanted one (slide 26). He believed that through an increased presence and changes in cultural norms, victims would be more willing to report crimes to law enforcement. He referenced victimization surveys showing that domestic violence and sexual assault was highly underreported in Alaska. The department did not view an increase in reporting as an increase to victimization, but as an indicator that the state's efforts were encouraging victims to seek help. Additionally, the department believed efforts would help better prosecution through investigations and victim participation.

Mr. Vrabec relayed that the department had increased the training provided to law enforcement across the state to bolster its response to investigations and crimes of sexual assault and domestic violence. He turned to slide 27 showing a map of VPSO and Alaska State Trooper locations throughout the state including the regional boundaries of

the 10 VPSO program grantees (9 were nonprofit corporations plus the North West Arctic Borough). The primary method of increasing law enforcement presence across the state was through VPSO placement in rural communities. The effort was promising and challenging. Prior to the start of the initiative there had been 46 VPSO positions filled; there were currently 88 VPSO positions filled, which covered more than 69 communities. He acknowledged that the department wanted to fill all of the VPSO positions; as it continued to recruit and fill positions it looked for innovative ways to expand the program. He spoke to VPSO rover positions that were based in hub communities such as Bethel and Fairbanks and traveled to outlying communities for coverage. The Tanana Chiefs Conference used rovers to provide coverage for up to 30 communities. Rovers also provided assistance to the other 12 communities with VPSOs. He detailed that each of the four rovers made two to three visits per month and stayed five to seven days per visit.

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Mr. Vrabec showed a video showing the effect VPSOs have on Alaskan communities [video duration was 3:40 minutes].

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Mr. Vrabec looked at slide 29 related to the rate of forcible rape incidents reported to law enforcement (Dashboard number 16) and the percent of forcible rapes resulting in an arrest (Dashboard number 27). The source of the data shown on the slide was the Uniform Crime Report (UCR), which compiled submissions from law enforcement agencies statewide. He stated that the increase in the percent of forcible rapes resulting in an arrest suggested that the state was making progress in holding offenders accountable. Slide 30 related to Dashboard number 16; the chart showed an increase in reports of forcible rape to law enforcement. He opined that it should be interpreted as a positive sign that victims of sexual assault were more willing to report. He looked at a graph showing the sexual assault reports to law enforcement in 2012 (Dashboard number 19). The UCR bar represented the number of sexual assault reports to law enforcement in 2012, totaling 576. The State Statute bar represented the number of sexual assault offences reported to law enforcement based on state statute, totaling 804. He communicated that a significant limitation of UCR data was related to its reliance on a

decades-old, narrow definition of forcible rape; the definition did not represent sexual assault offences under Alaska law. As a result, DPS began collecting data from local law enforcement agencies related to reports of sexual assault and abuse from crimes defined by state law. The Federal Bureau of Investigation had since revised its definition based on a more inclusive description. He relayed that agencies had begun submitting data based on the new definition beginning in January 2013.

Mr. Vrabec highlighted slide 31 that showed the number of increased sexual assault and domestic violence training hours at DPS.

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JOHN SKIDMORE, DIRECTOR, CRIMINAL DIVISION, DEPARTMENT OF LAW, spoke to offender accountability on slide 32. Dashboard measures related to DOL fell into three categories including sexual assaults, sexual abuse of minors, and domestic violence; within the categories the department looked at the number of cases accepted for prosecution and the conviction rate. The slide pertained to the number of sexual assault cases accepted for prosecution. He reported that the department had been accepting more cases in all three categories primarily due to the increase in reporting. The expectation early on in the initiative was that the number of crimes reported would increase based on greater awareness and a shift towards breaking the silence. He relayed that the number of sexual assault cases accepted for prosecution (Dashboard number 30) had increased from 111 to 141 between 2008 and 2011 (a 27 percent increase). There had been 144 cases accepted pertaining to the sexual abuse of minors (Dashboard number 32) representing a 32 percent increase. The acceptance of domestic violence cases had increased 17.2 percent or from 2,617 to 3,068 (Dashboard number 34).

Mr. Skidmore continued to discuss offender accountability on slide 33, specifically related to accepted sexual assault cases resulting in a conviction. The conviction rate had increased by 8.4 percent between 2008 and 2011; 26 additional convictions had been made. The percent of accepted sexual abuse of minor cases with a conviction had gone down by 10 percent. He addressed the decrease and underscored that it would be a problem if there was a 100 percent conviction rate. He explained that if the state

only accepted cases it was certain of winning it meant the prosecution was not aggressive enough. He stressed that the envelope needed to be pushed and cases needed to be accepted even when it was not clear the state would win. He explained that even though the conviction rate went down, the prosecution had taken on more challenging cases; the net result was convicting 17 more individuals. He communicated that if the rate dropped by 20 or 30 percentage points he would be concerned; however, he did not find a 10 percent decrease troublesome. He noted that the area was listed on the Dashboard as needing improvement; the state was working to bring the number up.

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Mr. Skidmore discussed the percent of accepted domestic violence cases with a conviction (Dashboard number 35) on slide 33. The percent of accepted domestic violence cases with a conviction increased 4.6 percent, which involved more than 400 more convictions (the category had increased, but it had room to increase more). He believed progress had been made in holding people accountable.

Mr. Skidmore discussed how money allocated by the legislature had helped to achieve progress on the Choose Respect initiative. He looked at slide 34 titled "New Kotzebue Attorney." He relayed that Kotzebue had started with one prosecutor; the legislature had provided the department with funds for a second attorney in 2011. He highlighted the domestic violence assault 4 conviction rate. He shared that misdemeanor offences were more likely to work their way through the entire court system. The number of accepted domestic violence cases increased from 157 to 201 or by 28 percent due to the new prosecutor. Between 2011 and 2013 the acceptance rate remained 91 percent to 93 percent. He stressed that the acceptance rate was steady and high. He underscored that the conviction rate between 2011 and 2013 increased 17 percent. He stressed that accountability had increased in Kotzebue as a direct result of the new attorney. He thanked the legislature for its efforts.

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RON TAYLOR, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER, DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS, looked at slide 35 related to the recidivism rate for adult sex offenders (Dashboard number 36) from FY 06 to FY 10. He

highlighted the department's focus on reducing recidivism rates and on holding offenders accountable by providing access to programs and ensuring offenders followed through with probation or parole conditions. He discussed that since FY 06 recidivism rates for sex offenders had continued to decrease and remain below the general offender recidivism rate. He relayed that of the approximately 160 sex offenders released from custody in FY 10, less than 10 had returned to custody charged with a new sex offense over a three-year period; the majority of recidivism had occurred in the first year (five return offenders). He communicated that DOC took holding offenders accountable when released very seriously. In FY 13 the department's institutional sex offender management program was expanded to serve an additional 30 offenders at Palmer Correctional Center.

Mr. Taylor spoke to probation outcomes related to the initiative on slide 36. The first outcome related to a reduction in the number of felony domestic violence and sexual assault technical violations of supervised probationers. He elaborated that the increment was specific to three probation officers in Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Bethel. The increment was to provide targeted supervision to people on felony supervision for sexual assault or domestic violence. Additionally, the item targeted individuals trapped in hub communities who were from rural areas where the individuals could not return to their communities without the completion of some type of program (i.e. substance abuse or sex offender management) or if they had a restriction preventing them from moving back to the area. The probation officers had been hired by the department in the prior fiscal year with the goal of providing a more targeted probation officer with training to ensure the offenders' needs were met when returning to their communities. Additionally, the officers would also work with DPS to determine how a person could be safely returned to their community with limited supervision. He relayed that because of the early stage of the program, no participants had been released back into their communities as of yet; 50 individuals had been targeted for tracking of items such as failure to report, alcohol violations, or missed appointments.

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Mr. Taylor discussed that the second outcome was to increase the number of domestic violence misdemeanor probationers participating in the Probation, Accountability, and Certain Enforcement (PACE) program (slide 36). He relayed that even though the primary DOC mission for community supervision pertained to felons, the commissioner felt it was appropriate to take advantage of strengths seen in the adult and felony PACE programs for use in a pilot program for misdemeanants. He elaborated that the program was aimed at high risk misdemeanor probationers who continually violated protective orders or returned with domestic violence charges. The project began in 2012 and the number of participants had doubled, totaling 17 in 2013. The department was ensuring that participants with technical violations (i.e. failure to report, alcohol or drug violations, or missed appointments) were brought before the court immediately. The department was proud to report that none of the individuals in the PACE program had returned for domestic violence crimes.

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REE SAILORS, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER, FAMILY, COMMUNITY AND INTEGRATED SERVICES, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES, introduced colleagues. She spoke to understanding trauma on slide 38. She stated that trauma accompanied domestic violence and sexual assault. She detailed that trauma impacted children in addition to victims. She addressed trauma-informed care and stressed that trauma represented a vicious cycle that needed to be broken. She discussed how children and victims experiencing trauma learned to cope throughout their lives. Dashboard number 5 related to the number of reported child abuse cases. She referred to testimony from a previous meeting citing that the department received over 15,000 calls per year related to child abuse. Subsequently, DHSS believed that becoming a trauma-informed care system was critical for individuals in the state. She pointed to various forms of abuse including physical abuse and neglect, emotional, sexual, alcohol and drug abusing family members in a household, incarcerated household members, a mother treated violently, and homelessness. She reminded the committee that 37 percent of homeless people were families.

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Ms. Sailors discussed slide 38 further. The specific kind of trauma impacted brain neurobiology and its ability to function at a reasonable level. She stressed that that the trauma impacted children in a permanent way including their ability to have successful social, emotional, and cognitive functioning. The trauma tended to encourage adaptive behaviors such as risk taking and coping mechanisms like abuse and addiction. Additionally, the trauma contributed heavily to persistent and severe behavioral health problems. She discussed that if a child had experienced more than four adverse childhood experiences including being a victim or witness of sexual assault or domestic violence, their chances of having substance abuse problems were 350 percent greater than the norm. Likewise, their chances of having severe emotional problems were over 3 percent higher. She discussed what the issue meant financially for the department's Medicaid budget and the services provided. She underscored that prevention was urgent.

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Ms. Sailors discussed trauma-informed care on slide 39. She relayed that DHSS trained over 1,300 mental health professionals in the state. She detailed that without the training, the chances of misunderstanding, mistreating, and misdiagnosing people, was significantly increased. Additionally, DHSS had trained 500 of its personnel in its Division of Juvenile Justice. She stressed that the training was creating a culture change in the department's institutional care and probation services. She pointed to examples including a reduction in need for restraints, isolations, and other.

Ms. Sailors highlighted the trauma-informed care provider agreement. The idea was to create partnerships between partners trained in the DHSS "trauma 101" (a "trauma 201" training was in development; training was also available online) and domestic violence and sexual assault programs. She elaborated that the goal was to provide short-term, well-informed treatment consistent with trauma-informed care principles for individuals in shelters. The department had worked with the Rural Domestic Violence Sexual Assault Prevention Pilot Projects in four communities; funding had been provided to the communities for another form of "capacity building" to help communities identify problems, resources, and to create strategic plans for solutions. The

first 1 to 2 years of the 4-year program had been used to organize groups, collect data at the local level, and to provide funding to local initiatives to make a difference in the communities. She stressed the importance of grassroots efforts and stated that "it takes a village." The grants represented efforts to build the capacity and to educate community members in order to work collaboratively on the problem.

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Ms. Sailors believed some of the results had been stunning. She communicated that benefit had been witnessed from moving treatment and communities forward in terms of understanding how to successfully treat trauma victims.

Ms. Morton discussed slide 40: "Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault." She spoke to two evidence-based intervention programs including legal advocacy and legal representation. She detailed that at the beginning of the initiative \$65,000 had been set aside to assist with working to increase the number of pro bono attorneys in the state and to increase the comfort level of dealing with family law and the complex issues through continuing legal education. She referenced the chart, which showed the return had grown exponentially; in 2011 the amount of service had totaled \$826,000, which had increased to over \$1 million in 2013. She shared that part of the program was to mentor attorneys who were new to domestic violence or sexual assault cases for the first time. She mentioned the return on the investment and lives that were changed for the better. The department had asked involved attorneys and recipients of services about how the program had impacted them. She quoted a response from a recipient:

I'm 100 percent sure I would never have been able to take this huge step without legal representation. It's changed my life. It feels like I can now exhale. I felt like I've been holding my breath for so many years. Keep on doing the work you're doing; it is life changing.

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Ms. Morton detailed slide 41: "Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault." She spoke to ensuring victims had safe havens when needing to get out of a dangerous situation. A

chart on slide 41 tracked shelter nights in order to include beds, toiletries, clothing, food, and advocacy services. When the number of shelter nights were monitored, better decisions could be made about the levels of staffing and funding. The chart showed a 20 percent increase in shelter nights from FY 09 to FY 13. She communicated that Alaska participated in a national annual survey that looked at a day in the life of a shelter program. The prior year the day had been September 17; 18 of the state's domestic violence programs had participated. During the 24-hour period the participating programs had served 618 victims; 336 had found refuge in emergency shelters or transitional housing; and 282 had accessed nonresidential services including legal advocacy and medical accompaniment. During the last year, over 9,000 people had accessed services; of services utilized approximately 75 percent were for domestic violence, 20 percent were for sexual assault, 3 percent were for stalking, and 13 percent for other violent crime. The figure exceeded 100 percent because victims suffered from more than one type of crime. She pointed to support programs in communities; the prior year there had been over 3,000 volunteers that had provided over 78,000 hours of service.

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Ms. Morton looked at slide 42 titled "Victim Service Programs Make a Difference." She relayed that in the prior year DHSS had begun measuring outcomes and had moved away from only measuring outputs (e.g. the number of people staying the night in a shelter, the number of crisis interventions, the number of emergency transportations, and the number of counseling sessions). Outcomes measured whether department's efforts were making a difference in victims' lives and how the information could inform the type of practices and services provided. The department had looked at three areas including safety, healing, and justice. She moved to a chart on slide 43 and relayed that funded programs were on the right track; victims knew more ways to keep safe, to access resources, to help their children, they felt less isolated, understood crisis and trauma, and better understood their legal rights. She communicated the importance of staff, boards, and the department to understand how to make adjustments that would benefit all victims seeking help.

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CATHERINE STONE, DIRECTOR, PUBLIC HOUSING, ALASKA HOUSING FINANCE CORPORATION (AHFC), addressed slide 44 titled "VPSO Housing." She noted that the availability of decent, affordable housing was a significant factor in a community's ability to support and retain a VPSO position. Annually, the governor had requested \$1 million in funding for VPSO housing through AHFC's Teacher, Health Professional, and Public Safety Housing (THHP) grant program in order to improve the quality of rural housing and to address turnover. She shared that funding for the program was \$6 million in FY 15 with \$1 million designated for VPSO housing. She reported that since 2011, 12 units had been funded specifically for VPSO housing in rural locations statewide and since 2004, 13 other projects had been funded that allowed VPSO housing tenants under their public safety eligibility as part of a multiple unit project. She looked at slide 45 titled "AHFC Empowering Choice Housing Program." The program was a three-year time limited referral program run in collaboration with the Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault and the CDVSA. The program had been launched in 2012 with \$1.34 million in state funds and a \$1 million match from AHFC's Moving to Work federal allocation. The average assistance paid in the first year was \$920 per month; currently the average was \$707 per month. She shared that as assistance to private landlords decreased more referrals could be sent out into the community and an increased number of individuals could be assisted.

Ms. Stone looked at slide 46 titled "Empowering Choice Housing Program." As of December 31, 2013, 256 families were referred to AHFC and 135 families were receiving rental assistance. Currently the agency had met its target of 254 referrals statewide. She shared a story about a pregnant mother who had come to a shelter the prior year. She relayed that women typically arrived with very little clothing and belongings. She elaborated that the woman's partner had cleaned out their bank account and left the state. Subsequently, the woman received a housing voucher; the mother was currently working and had a car; she was now able to take care of her children in a safe and loving environment. She relayed that the story was a typical example of how the program impacted lives.

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Ms. Morton communicated that she was frequently asked if the department was making a difference in people's lives; she believed the answer was yes. She shared that the proof was in looking into a woman's eyes who did not show fear for the first time and when a child was learning to laugh instead of remaining quiet in the corner. She had worked in the field since 1984, but she had only begun to see people from "all walks of life" talk about the issues in recent years and changing the way of being. She referred to a presentation she had given to the other legislative body. Subsequently, she had received an email from someone wanting to help in their local community. She discussed that 10 years earlier she would not have received the same kind of email; she believed she would have been called a "home wrecker" and a "man hater" in the past. She stated that she would have been viewed as destructing the fabric of society instead of trying to weave it back together.

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Attorney General Geraghty viewed the initiative as a moral imperative. He stressed that the legislature had helped to start stemming the tide. He compared the work to a marathon and not a sprint. He discussed that progress was being made slowly and steadily. He stated that healing the vast numbers of Alaskans from the physical and emotional trauma that had been inflicted upon them would take people courageously standing up and speaking out. He pointed to a quote from a child sexual abuse survivor on slide 47. He stated that it would take time to change the social norms that promote and condone domestic and sexual violence. He asked committee members to keep the long-term commitment to end the epidemic.

Co-Chair Austerman thanked the presenters for their presentation.

Vice-Chair Neuman spoke to his judgment of the initiative based on a multitude of documents provided to the committee that included results and numbers. He ranked the program at a D letter grade at best. He referred to the 804 sexual assaults reported to law enforcement, which he believed was one of the only documents based on reports by victims. He opined that it did no good to go from 101 [111] to 141; he did not care that the number increased by 31 percent. He stated that on average a perpetrator committed 20 assaults prior to being arrested. He referred to the increase in

sexual assault cases accepted for prosecution. He remarked that there had been slightly over 100 cases with convictions of over 2,400 assaults. He reiterated that many assaults were not reported. He did not believe the state was doing a great job. He did not see numbers showing that the millions of dollars spent were making a significant difference. He discussed lives that were being ruined. He noted that over 3,000 children went through the Division of Juvenile Justice annually, of which, 48.3 percent had traumatic life experiences; he stated that the primary contributor was sexual abuse. He communicated that it was DHSS's job to pick up the kids and adults to help them straighten out their lives. He stressed that \$2.7 billion had been spent. He thought the charts provided in the presentation were meaningless. He commented on the report that the recidivism rate had decreased over a three-year period. He stressed that the recidivism rate for sexual assault was closer to 90 percent. He referred to legislation he had worked on in the past related to the issue. He did not believe the report told him anything he needed to know. He stressed that the report did not contain numbers. He observed that the report did not quantify how many sexual assaults occurred that were not reported. He reiterated that there had been slightly over 100 convictions pertaining to more than 2,400 assaults.

[2:58:02 PM](#)

Attorney General Geraghty disputed the statement that all departments had characterized themselves as doing a great job; however, he did believe the initiative was stemming the tide. He reiterated his earlier statement that there was a long way to go and that the addressing the work was like a marathon. He did not question the data cited by Vice-Chair Neuman, but was unfamiliar with any data showing that there were 20 prior assaults before an arrest. He relayed that Alaska had a mandatory arrest statute for domestic violence and sexual assault; it was DOL's job to prosecute and convict. He relayed that many victims changed their mind after making a report and withdrew charges. He stated that a report could be a vindictive act by a victim to get back at a perpetrator such as her husband or significant other. He detailed that there was a whole gamut of facts that applied in the situations. He stressed that if the victim chose not to testify he had to make a choice about where to devote department resources. He underscored that numbers were improving and the rate of acceptance was

increasing. He agreed that he wanted to see more arrests resulting in prosecution. He could not specify why a discrepancy existed; however, based on police reports, many victims many times did not want to testify. He questioned how the department could prosecute when a victim would not testify. He noted possible exceptions when physical evidence was present. He emphasized that many reasons went into the screening process. He agreed that improvement was needed. He encouraged Vice-Chair Neuman to read the entire Dashboard report. He respectively disagreed with the statement that the Dashboard did not tell anything. He agreed that much more work needed to be done, but progress had been made. He reiterated his earlier statement that the issue was a moral imperative. He concluded that the state could not responsibly turn its back on the problem.

3:01:10 PM

Representative Edgmon commended the governor and the departments for work done on the issue. He understood that it took time to make progress. He believed that over time raising awareness and removing the stigma of reporting would produce tangible results. He had heard adults talk with children about abuse. He addressed cultural norms and changing society. He referred to the 78,000 hours of volunteer time and surmised that a portion of the hours could probably be attributed to department employees as public servants. He believed the reduction in recidivism would take many years. He appreciated the passion shown by Mr. Skidmore in his earlier testimony. He had seen lives destructed in rural Alaska. He asked the departments to address the underlying forces including adverse childhood experiences.

3:04:06 PM

Ms. Morton replied that some of the DHSS programs in development would address the issue raised by Representative Edgmon. She listed several programs including Parents as Teachers, pre-Head Start, and Social Emotional Learning (a K-12 program teaching children how to interact). She discussed nurse-mother partnerships that would allow new mothers to work with a nurse on how to interact with their child. She shared that some of the department's programs went into elementary schools to teach ways to take care of oneself and to identify adults to confide in. She believed there had been recognition in the

past several years that it was important to begin teaching children as early on in life as possible about understanding who they are, where boundaries are, and how to interact respectfully. She believed it was important to do a better job creating safe places to talk about the issue. She believed that until a person was able to talk about what happened to them there was still much work to be done. She discussed the Coaching Boys into Men program where high school athletes talked with younger boys about ways to act and treat each other. She addressed the Girls on the Run program where girls aged 8 through 13 learned they have a right to be safe and how to help other people. She believed the answer relied on a combination of items. She noted the importance of focusing on the issues earlier than what the state currently was able to provide.

[3:07:15 PM](#)

Representative Edgmon underscored the ongoing nature of the issue. He observed that the current effort had been underway for only a handful of years. In his role as a legislator, he wanted to contribute to making efforts successful.

Representative Costello thanked the departments for their presentation and collaborative efforts. She discussed that the US Gulf States had revenue sharing with the federal government, which had resulted in their receipt of \$29 billion. She discussed that Alaska did not have revenue sharing with the federal government for outer continental shelf development. She referred to legislation offered by Alaska's US Senators Lisa Murkowski and Mark Begich. She believed it would help if Congress would pass revenue sharing to enable Alaska to receive funds. She stressed that \$29 billion was an immense amount of money. She believed funds generated from resource development could help the state address chronic issues. She asked about trauma-informed care. She wondered if there had been discussion about training educators in schools on trauma care.

Ms. Sailors answered in the affirmative. She communicated that DHSS was preparing trauma informed curriculum (Trauma 101 and 201) for a conference of school administrators in Alaska. She believed looking at other places the training could be provided was important; the work had begun in the behavioral health professional community, but the state was

working to move the work through as many relevant sectors as possible. She believed the training effort was important to helping how to overcome the problems and to avoid exacerbating trauma. She discussed the importance of determining how to build resiliency, which was the key to overcoming traumatic experiences. She stated that curriculum had been developed and could be made available to anyone interested. She added that Trauma 201 focused on helping organizations to transform into trauma-informed care organizations.

[3:12:00 PM](#)

Representative Costello believed the state's sex offender registry was helpful to parents. She wondered if the state should pursue meeting federal standards in order to be eligible for the receipt of federal funds. She believed the state was currently out of compliance for receipt of the funds.

Mr. Skidmore replied in the affirmative. He discussed that a consideration was related to strings attached to taking federal funds. He detailed that frequently federal funds would end up costing the state money due to the lengthy requirements the state had to comply with. He did not know the situation specific to sex offender registration. He relayed that the cost/benefit analysis related to accepting federal funds was ongoing.

Representative Guttenberg thanked the departments for their presentation. He spoke to testimony from his community on the importance of VPSO officers. He observed that there were many communities in Alaska that did not have VPSOs. He referred to a committee meeting earlier in the session where failures of the state had been discussed. He noted there were various items that would increase the state's ability to put VPSOs or troopers in communities. He pointed to difficulties in the program. He asked the administration to work harder on the VPSO program. He wondered why an increased number of qualified people could not be brought to the areas.

[3:16:29 PM](#)

Attorney General Geraghty answered that the state had spent \$44 million in the past four years to increase the number of troopers, VPSOs, and housing. He noted that the number

of VPSOs had increased. He remarked on the high VPSO turnover rate. The legislature was working on legislation that would arm the positions to increase safety for the officers. The department was working with tribes in order to engage communities to increase safety. He remarked that he had written the chairman of the Indian Law and Order Commission asking for increased funding for tribal courts. He commented that the commission had issued a "scathing" report about Alaska.

Representative Guttenberg discussed the state's ability to build housing for VPSOs through AHFC. He believed agencies could work together to accomplish the goal.

[3:18:59 PM](#)

Co-Chair Austerman referred to a prior presentation related to victims of domestic violence. He recalled testimony that 87 percent of the victims felt good about how the program was working and providing help. He remarked that the presentation had not addressed that there were 5 percent less perpetrators. He wanted to know how the money allocated by the legislature was being spent and the benefit ratio related to hiring the directors and other. He was interested in changes taking place and the benefit of using the money in its current capacity. He discussed that prior to "white-man civilization" in Alaska it had not taken communities long to determine solutions to their problems. He emphasized that the state was currently in worse shape than ever before. He recognized that the work to improve the problems could not occur overnight. He was willing to allocate the money, but wanted more concrete information about the cost/benefit in the future.

Co-Chair Austerman discussed the agenda for the following week.

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ADJOURNMENT

[3:22:43 PM](#)

The meeting was adjourned at 3:22 p.m.