

Commission on the
Status of Women

Commission on the Status of Women
Wednesday, November 20, 2024 – 7:00pm
North Berkeley Senior Center
1901 Hearst Ave, Berkeley, CA 94709

AGENDA

Mayor Arreguin:
Vacant

Rashi Kersarwani:
Alyssa Plese

Terry Taplin:
Vacant

Ben Bartlett:
Kameka Goodwin

Kate Harrison
Shirley Posey

Sophie Hahn
Kera Binns


Susan Wengraf:
Chair-Carole Marasovic

Rigel Robinson:
Keyanna Ortiz-Cedeno

Mark Humbert
Vacant

All items are for discussion and possible action.

1. Roll Call.
2. Reading of Land Acknowledgment.
3. Public Comments for Items not on the Agenda.
4. Approval of the Agenda. Discussion and Possible Action.
5. Empowering East Bay Girls: Trends, Needs, and Opportunities for Partnership
6. Approval of the September 18, 2024 minutes. Discussion and Possible Action.
7. Chair Report. Discussion Only.
8. Discussion of Possible Tour of Bridget House. Discussion and Possible Action.
9. Discussion and Possible Letter to Council on Staff Recommendation on Domestic Violence/Gender-Based Violence. Discussion and Possible Action.
10. Vice-Chair Election. Discussion and Possible Action.
11. Continued Discussion of Work Plan. Discussion and Possible Action.

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SB 343 Disclaimer

Any writings or documents provided to a majority of the Commission regarding any item on this agenda will be made available for public inspection at the City Manager’s Office located at 2180 Milvia Street, 5th Floor.

Commission Contact Information

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Land Acknowledgement Statement

The City of Berkeley recognizes that the community we live in was built on the territory of xučyun (Huchiun (Hooch-yoon)), the ancestral and unceded land of the Chochenyo (Cho-chen-yo)-speaking Ohlone (Oh-low-nee) people, the ancestors and descendants of the sovereign Verona Band of Alameda County. This land was and continues to be of great importance to all of the Ohlone Tribes and descendants of the Verona Band. As we begin our meeting tonight, we acknowledge and honor the original inhabitants of Berkeley, the documented 5,000-year history of a vibrant community at the West Berkeley Shellmound, and the Ohlone people who continue to reside in the East Bay. We recognize that Berkeley's residents have and continue to benefit from the use and occupation of this unceded stolen land since the City of Berkeley's incorporation in 1878. As stewards of the laws regulating the City of Berkeley, it is not only vital that we recognize the history of this land, but also recognize that the Ohlone people are present members of Berkeley and other East Bay communities today. The City of Berkeley will continue to build relationships with the Lisjan Tribe and to create meaningful actions that uphold the intention of this land acknowledgement.



Commission on the Status of Women

**Commission on the Status of Women
Regular Meeting – September 18, 2024
DRAFT- MINUTES**

The meeting convened at 7:15pm with Chairperson Marasovic presiding.

ROLL CALL

Present: Oliver, Posey, Binns, Marasovic

Absent: Plese

Leave of Absence: Goodwin, Ortiz-Cedeno

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Comments from the Public

- Public attendance: 1
- Public comments: 0

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Action Items:

Item # 1:

Approval of Agenda. Discussion and Possible Action.

M/S/C: Oliver, Posey

Ayes: Oliver, Posey, Binns, Marasovic

Absent: Plese

Leave of Absence: Ortiz-Cedeno, Goodwin

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Item # 2:

Approval of the Minutes from July 17, 2024 COSOW Meeting. Discussion and Possible Action.

M/S/C: Oliver, Marasovic

Ayes: Oliver, Posey, Binns, Marasovic

Absent: Plese

Abstain:

Leave of Absence: Ortiz-Cedeno, Goodwin

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Item # 3:
Election of Vice-Chair. Discussion and Possible Action.

Election will be moved to the next scheduled meeting.

M/S/C:
Ayes:
Absent:
Leave of Absence:

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Item # 4:
Small Business Support Act/ Small Business Ombudsman Proposal from Council Member Bartlett.

No action taken.

M/S/C:
Ayes:
Absent:
Leave of Absence:

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Item # 5:
Work Plan. Discussion and Possible Action.

No Action Taken.

M/S/C:
Ayes:
Absent:
Leave of Absence:

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The meeting was adjourned at 9:05pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Okeya Vance-Dozier, Secretary
Commission on the Status of Women

Girls Inc. of Alameda County

Presentation: Empowering East Bay Girls: Trends, Needs, and Opportunities for Partnership

Description: Julayne Virgil, CEO of [Girls Inc. of Alameda County](#), will share insights on the organization's mission, programs, and measurable impact. She will present key trends affecting local girls, including post-pandemic challenges and urgent needs, and explore ways Girls Inc. can partner with the City of Berkeley to support girls' development and success.

Website: [Girls Inc. of Alameda County - Inspiring Girls to be Strong, Smart, & Bold](#)

City of Berkeley | Department of Health, Housing and Community Services

October 2024 Status Update: Domestic, Intimate Partner and Gender-Based Violence

This document provides an informational progress report for the Commission on the Status of Women, with regard to the City of Berkeley's Domestic, Intimate Partner and Gender-Based Violence work. This status update serves as a follow-up item to the Department of Health, Housing and Community Services' presentation in April. The recommendations below reflect the feedback shared in the context of that April COSOW meeting, and other follow-up conversations. Sasha Gayle-Schneider, a representative from the HHCS Office of the Director team, would welcome hearing from you to set up a one-on-one conversation for more in-depth feedback and recommendation review.

The Department of Health, Housing and Community Services is conducting a rigorous process to engage community members, clients, and service providers on priority policy areas in line with a "care-first" model of social service provision. Stakeholder input and feedback is collected through continued community-based surveying, one-on-one meetings with community leaders, community field outreach at encampments, shelters and service centers as well as via commission and community forum information reports. Additionally, HHCS conducted a review of best practices in the field of non-carceral social policy, building upon the work and legacy of working groups nation-wide who have sought to implement similar Care First Jails Last initiatives. HHCS then used evaluative criteria to measure the efficacy and feasibility of various interventions. Criteria include:

- 1) Harm Reduction: Does this recommendation reduce the number of people who cycle through crisis & carceral systems? Does this recommendation reduce the harm and trauma caused by those systems, to the individual?
- 2) Transformation: Does this recommendation reinforce the status quo, or would its implementation meaningfully create new pathways/investments in public safety (crisis diversion & stabilization)? Does this recommendation support the healing and long-term positive change for everyone involved in an incidence of violence?
- 3) Political Feasibility: Is this recommendation responsive to the needs and priorities of the Berkeley community?
- 4) Financial Feasibility: Is the implementation of this recommendation financially possible, given budgetary constraints?

HHCS has completed a rigorous best practice research review, will continue to gather crucial community feedback, and has identified the following interventions:

- Recommendation 1: Restorative Justice & Circle Work
- Recommendation 2: Financial Stabilization & Independence
- Recommendation 3: Language Access for Survivors of Violence
- Recommendation 4: Support for Emergency Shelter Beds for Survivors of Violence
- Recommendation 5: Young People's Involvement in Community Violence Survey
- Recommendation 6: Trauma-Informed, Non-Carceral Crisis Response
- Recommendation 7: Law Enforcement Protocol Responding to Occupational Survival Crimes

Recommendation 1: Restorative Justice & Circle Work

Needs Assessment

In the City of Berkeley, survivors of violence have few pathways to seek justice, most of which currently involve the court system or other carceral means. The Alameda County Court System offers survivors of inter-personal violence can access a public defender and a court-appointed representative from the Victim & Witness Services Division. This representative can provide the survivor with restitution support, crisis intervention, court escort, employer intervention and witness relocation. They cannot, however, facilitate a healing or justice-seeking process outside of a court or carceral system.

The Department of Health, Housing and Community Services (HHCS) are surveying members of the public who self-identify as having survived incidence of violence, on their social service support system experiences, needs, preferences and priorities.

HHCS has also conducted a review of Restorative Justice best practices, utilized by other municipalities. Studies show that incarceration does not produce behavioral transformation amongst those who have perpetrated acts of harm, nor does it support long-term safety, security and justice for the survivor. Restorative Justice (RJ) circles offer a different pathway forward – one in which the person(s) who have survived the harm and the person(s) who have committed an act of violence are both cared for, healing and seeking justice in the context of their community setting.

Project Proposal

Establish an effective restorative justice program, crisis mediation and violence prevention program to mediate within a community, multiple individuals, or family system. The City of Berkeley hopes to secure funding for a two-year pilot, sub-contracting with a local Community Based Organization (CBO) to deliver Restorative Justice services to COB residents. The drafted scope of work for this project includes:

- 2 FTE for a 2-year pilot contract. Peer educators with a Transformative Justice background and/or social workers who will be trained on the job. RJ Practitioners are not case managers, clinicians, therapists or court advocates.
- RJ Practitioners facilitate a conflict mediation process outside of the court system and can refer to others who can support the survivor in getting other safety/financial need met.
- RJ practitioners will work closely with Berkeley Mental Health, the Specialized Care Unit, Berkeley Police Department and Community-Based Organizations across the city to triage referrals.
- All survivors of inter-personal, domestic, intimate partner, or gender-based violence can connect with an RJ practitioner through referral process and request a circle/mediation process.
- Mediation circles can be facilitated instead of or in addition to a simultaneous court process – should the survivor also wish to pursue legal action in response to the harm.

Current Progress and Next Steps

The City Manager's Office and HHCS are exploring State and Federal grant opportunities with contracted partner, California Consultants, which is providing support with all projects related to the Reimagining Public Safety initiative.

Recommendation 2: Financial Stabilization & Independence

Needs Assessment

Through conversations with front-line service providers, Case Managers at local Community-Based Organizations, the Commission on the Status of Women, and HHCS leadership, stakeholders concur that there is a need for greater coordinated care across the City of Berkeley. Job training programs are among the areas most in-need of further coordination, as many residents are under-employed or unable to get connected to adequate opportunities that would support long-term financial security. When community members receive job training and connection to meaningful, community-based employment opportunities, one's access to greater financial security, housing opportunity and other social securities grow in abundance.

Project Proposal

HHCS proposes coordinating services amongst pre-existing and funded employment programs, case management services, and build relationship with employment programs for people who identify as survivors of domestic, intimate partner or gender-based violence – specifically LGBTQ+, TGI and/or cisgender women. Social service agencies will utilize tax credits, stipends, vouchers (housing, transit or otherwise), motel conversions and/or cash benefit programs to address the costs incurred when cisgender women, LGBTQ+ people and TGI people seeking safety away from abusive or violent relationships.

Current Progress and Next Steps

HHCS currently supports a number of under-utilized job training programs. Additionally, HHCS is developing a social service directory to better connect Berkeley residents to service providers, case managers, and relevant City of Berkeley resources. This directory, anticipated completion in early 2025, will list organizations phone numbers, website, where to access services in-person, and a brief description of the services offered. The social service directory categories include but are not limited to the following:

- Case Management & Support Navigating Benefits/Social Services
- Crisis Response
- Disability Rights & Advocacy
- Domestic, Gender-Based and Intimate Partner Violence Resources
- Job Training & Financial Stabilization Programs
- Harm Reduction & Substance Use
- Housing & Shelter
- Legal & Advocacy Assistance
- Immigration, Identification Documents & Translation Services
- LGBTQ+ Services
- Medical & Dental
- Mental Health
- Police Misconduct
- Shelter & Housing
- Youth & Family Services

Recommendation 3: Language Access for Survivors of Violence

Needs Assessment

In *Phase 2* of the Reimagining Public Safety initiative, the City Council allocated \$15,000 to support the publication of resources for survivors of violence in plain language and multiple languages, both in print and digital formats. This funding is aimed at enhancing accessibility, ensuring that critical information and support services are available to all community members, including those with limited English proficiency and low literacy levels. This effort is in line with the recommendations from the Reimagining Public Safety Task Force Report and informed by Census Data analyzed by an Epidemiologist from the Public Health Officer's Unit.

Project Proposal

HHCS and the City Manager's Office are working in tandem to produce a comprehensive public resource document for survivors of domestic, intimate partner and gender-based violence. The resource document will be published in the top five most popular languages used by monolingual residents of the City of Berkeley and will be available in a variety of public spaces (libraries, social service centers, etc.).

Current Progress and Next Steps

The team aims to complete the translation and publication of victim resources by the end of the calendar year. As the initiative enters Phase 3, the DEI Officer will explore further projects to enhance language equity. This will support the expansion of resource translation, focusing on critical areas identified for sustainable and inclusive growth.

Recommendation 4: Support for Emergency Shelters

Needs Assessment

This intervention was made by Berkeley's Commission on the Status of Women (COSOW), requesting a rigorous needs assessment and review of the current emergency shelter services available for women, families, transgender, nonbinary and intersex people. COSOW members noted the need for increased bed capacity and accessible non-congregate shelters for Berkeley residence. HHCS partners with local shelters, whose staff and client base are comprised of survivors of violence and/or regularly support survivors in navigated domestic violence-specific resources.

Project Proposal

Phase 1: Conduct qualitative review of current service offerings and needs assessment of shelter quality of care, non-congregate bed capacity for survivors of domestic, intimate partner and gender-based violence.

Phase 2: Report on community survey learnings and integrate feedback into Berkeley's pre-existing 24/7 shelter programs, emphasizing short/medium term housing stabilization options, for survivors of domestic violence.

Current Progress and Next Steps

HHCS will continue to work with key community stakeholders including but not limited to Community Based Organizations leading the provision of Berkeley's shelter services, members of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Housing and Community Services division, as well as other community leaders in service provider settings, to establish a project scope and survey format.

Recommendation 5: Young People's Involvement in Community Violence Survey

Needs Assessment

Various organizational representatives and members of the Commission on the Status of Women identified a clear need to include young people (Transition Aged Youth 18-25 & high school aged Berkeley residents).

Project Proposal

The Office of the Director is working with a variety of Community-Based Organizations to scope a rigorous and thoughtful survey focused on domestic, intimate partner and gender-based violence related experiences people aged 14-18, and 18-25 may have in their lives and homes.

Current Progress and Next Steps

The City of Berkeley is building relationship with leadership from the UC Berkeley Tang Center Behavioral Health division and Berkeley High School's Mental Health Services program. These relationships, in addition to those with community leaders, will inform the project scope, feasibility and survey format and questions.

Recommendation 6: Trauma-Informed Non-Carceral Crisis Response

Needs Assessment

In their original recommendation reports for the Specialized Care Unit pilot project, Resource Development Associates identified the need for a non-police mobile response team to respond to selective, non-violent domestic disturbance calls for service. In tandem, Leadership from Berkeley Police Department, the Specialized Care Unit and the Department of Health, Housing and Community Services have identified a need to solidify such a policy, which already functions as standard operating protocol within BPD.

Project Proposal

This exploratory recommendation follows the best practice recommendations authored by the Los Angeles County Alternatives to Incarceration working group. Solidify pre-existing standard operating protocol within BPD: when BPD responds to a domestic disturbance call for service, and officers on site have determined their law enforcement presence is no longer needed, BPD can contact the Specialized Care Unit to support all parties on site in accessing post-crisis care. In doing so, the Berkeley's crisis response service network expands, diversifies and strengthens the City's ability to respond to low-level calls for service with appropriate, trauma-informed resources.

Current Progress and Next Steps

Leaders from the Specialized Care Unit (SCU) and Berkeley Police Department are standardizing a decision tree and protocol to responding to low-level, non-violence domestic disturbance calls. The Department of Health, Housing and Community Services will provide additional crisis scene management training to frontline SCU staff, as a part of the City's commitment to community safety and continuous improvements to quality of care.

Recommendation 7: Law Enforcement Protocol Responding to Occupational Survival Crimes

Needs Assessment

Sex work is currently criminalized and highly stigmatized in the United States. Individuals who engage in sex work as a means of survival are exposed to high levels of harassment, isolation, violence, housing and financial instability. "Sex worker" is a term to refer to people who work in all aspects of the sex trades, indoor and street-based, legal and criminalized, and can include people who trade sex for money as well as safety, drugs, hormones, and other survival needs such as food, shelter, clothing, or immigration status/documentation. Existing laws that criminalize sex work often prevent workers from reporting violence, rather than understand this work to be among many areas of survival-based professions – with participating workers deserving of protection and trauma-informed social services. (Excerpts from INCITE! website)

Project Proposal

Reassess law enforcement practices and policies on arrests/bookings for sex work, especially given the racial disparities with respect to Black women. Prioritize pre-arrest diversion of cisgender women, LGBTQ+ people and TGI people engaged in sex work with connection to job training and placement programs and peer outreach workers who can offer voluntary harm reduction services. This exploratory recommendation follows the best practice recommendations authored by the Los Angeles County Alternatives to Incarceration working group.

Current Progress and Next Steps

BPD and HHCS will collaborate, drafting updated protocols for consideration, to support a Care-First approach to sex work-related interactions with law enforcement officers.