



*Sedgwick County...*  
*working for you*

Monday, November 9, 2020  
6 p.m.

WebEx Online Meeting  
Virtually

**Board members in attendance:** Maggie Ballard, Sara Dixon, Maria Gonzalez, Nalini Fraser, Philip Fraser, Denise Romero, Sabrina Shoemaker, Madison Shriner

---

### **1. Call to Order**

Chairperson Fraser called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

### **2. Meeting Minutes from September 14**

After reviewing the September minutes, Philip Fraser made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Nalini Fraser. The motion passed unanimously.

### **3. Wichita Family Crisis Center**

Amanda Meyers, Executive Director, described the work that the Wichita Family Crisis Center performs. Meyers mentioned that COVID has had an impact on the population they serve and on their ability to serve that population.

There are only two domestic violence shelters in Wichita. Between the two shelters there is a capacity of 60 beds. Meyers estimates that there are thousands of victims a year. The Wichita Family Crisis Center's shelter is in a former doctor's office. They only have two bathrooms for about 25 people. Since March they have had to house people in hotels around Wichita. This costs at least \$10,000 a month. They work to provide the resources that people need to develop full and productive lives. That is the most dramatic impact that COVID has had. They are having to work from home and they have set up the technology to allow them to work from home. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of children in their care. They are hearing from law enforcement that this is one of the highest domestic violence homicide years in the area. This is reflected in what they are seeing.

Commissioner Cruse asked Meyers about what impact that the stay-at-home order had on domestic violence.

Meyers answered that the stay-at-home order coupled with the news earlier in the year about the 737 MAX planes at Spirit AeroSystems had a dramatic effect and increased

rates of domestic violence. They have seen a lot more grievous injuries. Particularly facial injuries and chokings and strangulation. Meyers wanted to emphasize that if anyone has been strangled that they should seek medical attention. It can sometimes take hours for the more dire symptoms to appear.

Commissioner Cruse asked if there was data on the increase.

Meyers answered that the Wichita Police Department had seen between a 30% and 60% in the severity of cases compared with prior years. There was an increase calls from law enforcement to the Wichita Family Crisis Center. Typically, the person experiencing domestic abuse calls the Wichita Family Crisis Center. However, if the police feel a situation is highly dangerous they will call on behalf of the victim.

Kelly Gurik asked if the Wichita Family Crisis Center was fully staffed.

Meyers confirmed that they were fully staffed. However, the limiting factor was having physical space for their clients.

Commissioner Cruse encouraged people in attendance to ask their questions and make suggestions if they had them

Meyers mentioned there was a question in the chat regarding what happens if there is no space available.

Meyers answered that a victim is never turned away. She mentioned that she has in the past has used her own credit card to ensure that a person has shelter. They will find shelter in neighboring communities. Additionally, they have flown people to relatives.

Sabrina Shoemaker asked what the biggest challenge they face.

Meyers answered that the most immediate big challenge is securing funding. The long term big challenge is not having enough space.

Maria Gonzalez mentioned that the waiting list for Section 8 housing is open.

Meyers answered that they have people on the list. But, that domestic violence victims are not prioritized. She also mentioned that she would be looking for more options. Some of the privacy protocols necessary for domestic abuse victims make it difficult to secure housing.

Lonny Wright mentioned there is a special group in the Wichita Police Department involved with domestic violence support. Meyers mentioned that they are a team that is dedicated to finding abusers who have fled.

Philip Fraser asked if the pandemic has effected funded.

Meyers answered that is has been both amazing and frightening. With the availability of CARES Act funding things are okay now. However, that funding runs out at the end of the year and there is a lot of uncertainty.

Sabrina Shoemaker asked what this forum can do to help.

Meyers answered that there are two things:

- Keep talking about the issues that have been discussed tonight.
- The second is to talk to young people about dating violence. Talking to young people will hopefully lead to the prevention of future offenders and make more people aware of what to be aware of.

Commissioner Cruse how one can donate to the Wichita Family Crisis Center.

Meyers answered their social media pages and their websites had that information. Donations of coats and games make a huge impact during this time of year.

### **Stop Suicide ICT**

Nicole Fenoglio is the President of Stop Suicide ICT. They provide suicide prevention services and educational awareness to the community. The best practice is to have in person training because so many people have been impacted by suicide. Virtual platforms make it difficult to monitor their responses to the information. A lot of their work takes place in schools and remote learning has made this much more difficult. Additionally, more youth are isolated from their friends and they are out of connection with school counselors and teachers who are trained to identify suicide warning signs. Their fundraising events have also been cancelled as a result of COVID-19. They have been forced to get creative regarding community outreach and fundraising.

Commissioner Cruse asked how they have adapted to COVID-19.

Fenoglio answered that they have developed a social media marketing campaign that launched in September called "I Choose to Talk." There is information on the site about warning signs of suicide, safe storage of firearms, and other information. The idea behind the campaign is to encourage people to just take a moment and to reach out. Their number one call is to get people to pause and talk to someone. That is why the stop sign symbol is prominent in the campaign.

Commissioner Cruse began a screen share of the I Choose to Talk website and Fenoglio walked through the content on the site.

Commissioner Cruse asked about the demographics of suicide in Sedgwick County.

Fenoglio answered that the demographics in Sedgwick County are similar to the national patterns. However, our suicide rate is about 25% higher than the national average. About 75% of the victims of suicide are male and 25% are women. The rate of suicide attempts is higher for women than for men. This is due to women attempting suicide with less fatal options. The most significant cause of death in suicides is firearms. Fenoglio mentioned that the numbers of firearms purchases between March of 2019 and March of 2020 went up 80%. Fenoglio mentioned a Harvard study that found that people who have a firearm in the home a five times greater likelihood of dying by suicide.

Commissioner Cruse asked about the training that was available on the site.

Fenoglio answered that they provide training in Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) The idea behind QPR is that the more people who are trained in recognizing the signs of a mental health crisis the better. If more people can recognize warning signs than more suicides can be prevented. A second form of training they provide is called Counseling on Access to Lethal Means (CALM). This is good for any individual to help them understand the impact of having firearms stored unsafely. They are not anti-firearm; they just want the firearms to be stored safely. The training that is provided by Stop Suicide ICT is free. Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASSIST) is a two day program available to the community through COMCARE. It takes the principle of the QPR training but in much greater detail.

Commissioner Cruse asked if there were any questions from the group.

There were no questions at this time.

Commissioner Cruse asked how one would donate to Stop Suicide ICT

Fenoglio answered they could donate either through their social media pages or through their website. She also mentioned that the International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day is Saturday, November 21. It will be a live virtual event. Stop Suicide ICT is one of the sponsors and supporters of this event.

Nalini Fraser stated that the presentations completed the agenda for the meeting. She asked if there were any other items to include.

Philip Fraser wanted to welcome the new board members.

Commissioner Cruse mentioned that there was a Special Meeting of the Board of County Commissioners focusing on COVID-19.

Commissioner Cruse also mentioned that they had an opening for a high school student.

#### **4. Other**

Nalini Fraser stated that the next meeting is December 14.

A question was asked about the County Commissioners were going to do about the pay issues and staffing shortage issues effecting paramedics.

Commissioner Cruse stated that there were no pay raises this year. They are looking at the 2021 budget and are looking for ways to increase pay because paramedics are able to go to other places and earn more money. Commissioner Cruse asked if there was a follow up question. There was not one.

Commissioner Cruse mentioned that Dr. Minns was considering new a new order and she wanted to know what the group would recommend.

Sara Dixon responded that she was very concerned and would watch the meeting. She supported increased enforcement.

Sabrina Shoemaker asked if there are examples of what communities across the country are doing to prevent the spread.

Commissioner Cruse responded that places like Taiwan have done very well with mask wearing and social distancing and have experienced very few outbreaks. Commissioner Cruse emphasized that she did not want a shutdown.

Ben Ropp asked about contract tracing.

Commissioner Cruse answered that Sedgwick County is contacting tracing. She mentioned that House Bill 2016 has drastically reduced the effectiveness of contact tracing.

Philip Fraser asked if they had adequate staffing for contact tracing.

Commissioner Cruse was not aware if they were at full capacity. However, she believed they were still hiring.

Nalini Fraser if it was a better route to go through 211 for testing or to go with a private testing site.

Commissioner Cruse stated that we are inundated our system with close contacts needing testing. She recommended going through 211 and to contact your physician if you have a physician. Also, exhaust all of the testing sites that are available if needed.

Sara Dixon observed that it might make people safer if testing were readily available.

Commissioner Cruse stated that in the upcoming holiday season it is important to take precautions because we might have to hunker down. She recommended that if it was possible it would be good to not travel or be around large groups of people. COVID-19 is currently spreading through small gatherings at homes.

Rob Simon wanted to know the legislation that restricted contact tracing.

Commissioner Cruse answered that it was House Bill 2016. She would look up the legislation and share it with him.

Sara Dixon stated that she shared the link in the chat.

Rob Simon stated that he asked because given that enforcement is such an important issue it is surprising to see how difficult the process has been made. Rob Simon stated that it was important to promote testing and better treatments.

Commissioner Cruse stated that they had just finished the contract with Wichita State for the testing lab. This will lead to much quicker turnaround times for the tests.

Commissioner Cruse asked if Jamie Buster had any questions.

She had no questions. Buster stated that she appreciated the speakers this evening and she stated the testing was up and running at Wichita State University. She

mentioned that many of the comments on the social media pages of County Commission was full of people spreading misinformation regarding COVID-19 and masks.

Commissioner Cruse stated if you believe COVID-19 is real or a hoax the reality is that our hospitals are full because of something.

Sabrina Shoemaker told a story about a family dealing with the deaths of a father and son from COVID-19.

Philip Fraser asked if Sedgwick County was planning on doing a marketing campaign focusing on people's personal stories of COVID-19.

Commission Cruse mentioned that they were considering a number of options and would be more than happy to listen to people's stories.

Sara Dixon felt that it would be good for Sedgwick County to emphasize the benefits of mask wearing beyond slowing the spread of COVID-19.

Nalini asked if there was a motion to adjourn the meeting. Sara Dixon moved to adjourn the meeting. Rob Simon seconded the motion to adjourn. The motion passed.

### **Next Meeting**

December 14 - details to be determined.