



Department of Public Safety

COUNCIL ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
& SEXUAL ASSAULT
Executive Director, Lauree Morton

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October 20, 2015

Dear Mr. Hofmeister:

We are in receipt of the Women In Safe Homes response to the probation notification and corrective action memo made available to WISH on September 9, 2015.

WISH did receive a letter in June from the Council closing the FY2013 on-site evaluation on a positive note. The referenced on-site evaluation was conducted from October 28 to November 1, 2013. Council staff worked with WISH's interim administrative staff and Ms. Bogarde, as a new executive, to ensure recommendations were followed and were finally able to sign off on WISH's compliance in June 2015. Per CDVSA Grant Award Condition #23, on-site recommendations are to be completed by December 31st of the on-site year; however, WISH was granted an extension without penalty due to the administrative changes that transpired during this period.

The personnel, program participant and community partner complaints which generated the July conversations and on-site review did not come to the Council's attention until July. As soon as the initial complaints were brought to us, Council staff informed the WISH administration and started review of the individual concerns as they were brought forward. As your letter indicates, there was dialogue between Council staff and WISH administration around former personnel complaints and WISH's grievance process in early July. We were hopeful that a resolution had been found and the complaints were isolated incidents. Unfortunately, that proved not to be the case.

In total eleven people filed complaints with our office which prompted the on-site visit.

Since the visit, an additional three complaints have been received. The complaints were from former employees, community partners and program participants.

You are correct there was continuous communication between the Council Office and WISH's administrative staff. This is the normal course of interactions between the Council and funded programs. It is the responsibility of the funded program's executive to communicate directly to the program's board any and all information from the Council which the executive deems appropriate.

It is also a routine matter for Council staff to meet with funded program Boards when conducting on-sites. Prior to the visit, Ms. Gagnon corresponded with Ms. Bogarde (see email 7/21/15) regarding attendance at the Board Meeting. Ms. Bogarde indicated that Ms. Gagnon could attend as a public member and speak during the public comment period. Ms. Gagnon stated that she was not attending the meeting as a public member but as her role as a Program Coordinator for the CDVSA, and requested to be introduced as such. Ms. Bogarde agreed to introduce her to the Board of Directors in this capacity. While meeting with Ms. Bogarde the morning of the July 29th visit, Ms. Gagnon requested to address the Board as to why she was there: in other words, she wanted to tell the board that she was there to investigate complaints recently brought forth to the CDVSA. Ms. Bogarde told Ms. Gagnon that she was not to address the Board about any complaints unless and until those complaints were confirmed. Thus no mention was made to the Board about the complaints, including when she was introduced to you.

While the letter from me on September 9th was after the on-site visit and after the numerous interactions between Council staff and WISH administration, it was written to the Chair of the WISH Board and at no time since it was written have I received written or oral communication from the Chair or another member of the board prior to the formal response dated October 9th. The Board has left all communication to the WISH executive. On September 10th, Ms. Bogarde sent me the following email:

Hello Lauree,

I did receive the documents regarding the WISH probationary status. I left a message on your voice mail on your line at CDVSA. I am scheduled for surgery on 09/22/2015 and the physician stated I could work one-half day on 09/21/2015, but would not be able to work on Wednesday, 09/23/2015. Also, Nora is in Anchorage with her daughter for surgery and plans to return to work on Monday 09/28/2015. Would you please advise me what you wish to do regarding our scheduling conflict. When you have an opportunity would you please call me? My cell number is [907-821-1847](tel:907-821-1847) and my direct line is [907-228-4085](tel:907-228-4085). Thank you,

Beth

As you can see, it was WISH administration that had conflicts with meeting dates, not me. The Council further accommodated WISH by extending the probation response due date from Oct. 1st to the 9th. I offered to meet with the Board during the week of October 5th and was told the Chair was reuniting with her son returning from military service that week. I then offered to make myself available by teleconference prior to the 9th if the board wanted to ask questions or discuss the memo. That offer was not accepted.

I further offered to make a physical visit to Ketchikan at the end of October/first week of November and was told by Ms. Bogarde that she would not be available due to a required training out of state. I suggested she speak to her board members for a judgment on whether or not she should attend the training or meet with me. I have not heard back from Ms. Bogarde on this issue.

I agree, in labor disputes it is advisable to get information from all parties involved. And if indeed, Ms. Gagnon had been allowed access to the Board, additional facts may have come to light or some information may have been clarified. In fact, it was not only complainants that relayed the comments attributed to the Board regarding the grievance policies and whether or not the Board would hear grievances, it was Ms. Bogarde herself. During the site visit, in response to a conversation regarding a recent employee grievance, she stated that the Board did not want to hear about personnel issues, stating that their one employee was the Executive Director and she was to take care of all personnel decisions without their involvement.

At CDVSA, our commitment is to oversee the provision of safe and accessible services by our funded programs to all of those experiencing domestic or sexual violence. I know we share this common goal. The majority of our report outlines our concerns for the current service delivery and practices at WISH. It is those concerns that drove us to visit your program in July, and is the focus of the majority of findings.

It is interesting to me, that almost the entirety of the WISH response focuses on the process by which the Council interacted with the agency when bringing complaints to attention and on the personnel grievance procedure. The bulk of the special on-site report concerns program participant interactions and procedures for assisting people seeking services if services are not to be provided. Only two of the nine action items of the report relate to personnel matters.

I ask you to re-examine the on-site report with particular attention to statements such as:

*Staff cited that often times they refer participants to the homeless shelter, however **each** staff member also stated that the homeless shelter **was not a safe place** therefore they try not to send women with children there; or*

*It has also been reported that there is a **lack of safety planning** before discharge, particularly for women who did not participate enough while in shelter, used drugs and alcohol, or not working enough on their goals and objectives during their stay; or*

If management does not like you, you are in danger of being asked to leave, if they do like you, it is reported you will receive more help and services;

As you can see above, there is a strong concern regarding WISH's actual practices versus what is procedurally stated in written policies. It is strongly encouraged WISH review the report not looking for issues of technicality, but with concern for the service delivery occurring within the organization.

While WISH has responded to the probationary status document by stating they appeal due to "lack of CDVSA process", WISH has not complied with the request to submit a timeline as to when they will accomplish each action item. It is required that WISH submit a timeline that is all-inclusive of each recommendation outlining when they will accomplish each action item. As action items were created in response to current concerns and findings from the special on-site visit that occurred July 29th, action items are not considered met if they occurred prior to the September 9th notice of probation letter submitted to the Board.

Finally, I now have commitments during the last week of October and first week of November so those dates are no longer available for me to travel to Ketchikan. I will be traveling to Ketchikan the week of November 9th-most likely on the 12-13th. Please let me know when a quorum of the WISH Board will be available to meet with me.

The probation memo is a precursor to being placed on suspension. Being placed on suspension is an appealable action, but one the Council would prefer not to take, if possible. Please find the regulation regarding suspension attached to this letter.

I expect a reply no later than Monday, October 26th.

Sincerely,

Lauree Morton

Lauree Morton
Executive Director

cc. Beth Bogarde, WISH Executive Director
Richard Irwin, CDVSA Chair
Rachel Gernat, CDVSA Vice-Chair
Program File