

Little Hoover Commission Hearing Testimony

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WEAVE

### **About WEAVE**

WEAVE's mission is to promote safe and healthy relationships and support survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence and sex trafficking. WEAVE provides 24/7 comprehensive intervention services to victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, and sex trafficking in the Sacramento region supporting more than 13,000 victims annually and engaging more than 47,000 youth and adults in prevention and education activities.

Core services include 24/7 support line, confidential emergency shelter, transitional housing, 24/7 response, legal services, therapeutic counseling, case management, advocacy, and school and community based prevention education. WEAVE advocates and counselors are embedded in 38 different locations throughout the community in an effort to ensure all victims have access to accessible, respectful and culturally responsive services.

In fiscal year 2019 WEAVE provided 18,785 bednights of emergency shelter and 7,255 bednights of transitional housing to 274 clients via its 12,000 square foot shelter, six 900 square foot transitional housing cottages and two four-plexes. 624 victims received individual counseling, 410 victims participated in WEAVE's 15 week psychoeducational group counseling and 140 children received therapeutic counseling. WEAVE's legal team represented 144 clients at court proceedings, served 93 immigration clients and assisted 177 victims in obtaining protection orders. 47,691 youth and adults participated in 908 prevention and education activities. Staff and volunteers fielded 12,713 calls to WEAVE's crisis line and 162,000 users visited [www.weaveinc.org](http://www.weaveinc.org) during 203,000 sessions seeking help and information.

WEAVE strives to ensure that all services are accessible to any victim in need which includes designing shelter programs to accommodate all genders and gender identities, offering services in multiple locations throughout the community, and partnering with culturally specific organizations to ensure that WEAVE is viewed as a welcoming place for all. WEAVE implements specialized programs to address improved access for victims with disabilities, American Indian/Alaskan Native victims, Elder Abuse victims, and is working to better understand and serve the Black community in South Sacramento. In fiscal year 2019 18% of clients self-reported that they had a disability, of which 45% were mental/psychiatric, 25% were mobility/physical, 11% were chronic condition/injury, 10% were cognitive/developmental and the rest were learning disabled, sensory and blind or low vision at 3% each. Even with very intentional program design and earmarked funding, demand for general and specialized services exceeds capacity, and victims who are experiencing domestic violence along with other intersecting issues such as racism, poverty, living with a disability, LGBTQ+ identity, etc. are more vulnerable and face greater barriers.

WEAVE's budget for fiscal year 2020 is \$9,300,535. The bulk of the funding, 66%, is from an array of more than 20 government grants and contracts. WEAVE raises 16% of its budget through philanthropic

giving, 13% through thrift store revenue and 5% through service and training fees. Of the government grants and contracts, 11% is from State of California dollars which are portions of two CalOES grants for core domestic violence and rape crisis funding, and 100% of a CalOES human trafficking grant. 31.2% is from direct federal funding from five grants from the Office of Violence Against Women, and 23% is from federal funding distributed by the CalOES and the Department of Public Health. WEAVE has a robust fund development program and raises between \$1.5 and \$2.5 million annually via major and planned gifts, corporate and foundation sponsorships and grants, special events and direct mail. In addition, we operate three retail resale shops that generate \$1.2 million in revenue and contribute more than \$30,000 worth of clothing to clients.

### **Challenges and Inefficiencies**

We find that there are many challenges and inefficiencies in state processes and requirements that could benefit from adjustments that would result in money and time savings for WEAVE and similar organizations. While we recognize that some of the requirements are being driven by the federal government, perhaps there are some changes that could be made at the state level and/or there could be some advocacy around changing them on a national level.

A key challenge is that the CalOES Domestic Violence Assistance Program does not come close to funding the mandated services in the state statute. Our residential services program alone costs more than \$1.2 million, our state funds don't cover even half of that and there are multiple other programs that are mandated yet aren't adequately funded. If we didn't raise philanthropic dollars and piece together an assortment of other funding we could not possibly provide the broad range of services that we do. We have to provide all of the required services, many of them on a 24/7 basis, yet there isn't enough money to do so. WEAVE receives the same amount of money as every other CalOES funded domestic violence agency regardless of services delivered. I know that other programs struggle with this as well, and unfortunately, for many agencies the answer is to offer the bare minimum of services. We could do that as well. We have 124 emergency and transitional housing beds. We could choose to have only 6 beds and we would still get the same amount of money. There is no correlation between how robust services are, the number of victims served, or how many services victims access and how much funding agencies get.

The length of time it takes to be reimbursed by CalOES is a huge challenge and an inefficiency. All of the grants are cost reimbursement and even though we have built as many efficiencies as we can into our internal processes we wait months for reimbursement. There is a disconnect in the methodologies of processing our reimbursement requests between the States and the Feds even though the majority of the OES grants are Federal funding. CalOES requires us to mail a hard copy of our invoices to a central accounting office. At a minimum, there is a 30-day turnaround time on the review of our invoices we submit, plus 15 days turnaround for the State Controller's office to print the check. This creates significant cash flow issues for agencies who are floating costs for the Feds and State for between 50 and 110 days. Other agencies have told me that they have turned down CalOES grants because they just can't float that much money. The finance charges that may be incurred from a line of credit are a disallowed cost to the grants so, even if we could get a line of credit, we will lose money while we wait for our grant funds. We have had to liquidate our investments in the past to make payroll as we wait for checks from CalOES. It is even worse when there is a disaster and our program specialist is deployed to the disaster site. It does not make sense to us that the same staff are working on our grants and being

deployed to emergency situations. On the flip side, our five OVW grants allow us to submit our reimbursement request electronically, and the payment is deposited into our bank account via ACH within 3 days.

Functional timesheets and the level of detail required are time consuming. Since individual grants don't cover 100% of most employees we are all sliced and diced and allocated between multiple funding sources. We spend significant time aligning allocations to individual employees and reallocating them when new funds are acquired, there are vacancies in positions or we have submitted and been granted a budget modification. Every time we get a new grant our HR department has to build new allocations into the payroll system so employees can access their funding drop down menus. When you have as many contracts with the state as we do—13--and very few of those grants have full time (1.0 FTEs) working on them, this means that pieces of staff are funded in various grants, sometimes up to 15-20 different allocations. It can take staff several hours each week just to record time worked on their various grants and the specific task they were performing during that time. It doesn't seem to be efficient to have to break down activities/functions in addition to fund source on the functional timesheet because grant funded staff are paid to achieve the goals of the grant. If they are doing that it does not seem necessary to break down the functions they do to achieve the grant goals within a day. I understand one of the reasons for this is to make sure they are not performing prohibited functions such as lobbying and/or fundraising, but I am not sure this achieves that goal because as long as grant funded staff know they cannot do those things they either will not do them and/or will certainly not report that they are doing them. We have invested a great deal of time and money into customizing an on-line system to track and report staff time spent on grants. Perhaps it would be easier for auditors and monitors if every funded agency used the same system.

It seems that CalOES program specialists are under the impression that staff funded by their programs have only that funding source, in other words that these staff don't have other funding allocations, but that's simply not the case. It's also very difficult to match CalOES requirements for functional timesheets with that of the county, feds, and private funders as each entity has its own set of requirements and "allowable activities" under their grant programs. At the end of each reporting period, our Grants Manager has to break down staff time by function for OVW, CalOES (VOCA) and FVPSA all separately. This alone can take several hours for each grant. There is an immense amount of administrative work that goes into "proving" funds are being spent appropriately (and monitoring these details) that would be far better spent on serving victims. Additionally, the infrastructure costs of meeting these demands such as our Finance department and HR department, are only partially funded through the 10% administrative costs allowed in grants. As a result, the most efficient organizations in the state are made less efficient by the same entities asking us to constantly do more with less.

Monitoring visits and requests from program specialists are very inconsistent, and the samples and items that individual auditors ask for vary dramatically, which makes it very difficult to prepare for what are already time-consuming situations. For example, recently two auditors from CalOES came out at same time for a total of four different grants to be audited. One auditor requested only two to three employee timesheets and pay stubs from a list of 20 employees. The second auditor requested every single person in both of his grants (over 50) and to pull timesheets and payroll reports from four different pay periods. This took our Human Resources Director more than three days to pull and prepare—including printing everything because we use an on-line timesheet and payroll system.

It is a challenge to find enough match for each grant. As I understand it, the State of California chooses to not ask for match waivers for 100% of the federal match requirement. I'm not sure why this decision has been made as it results in us having to identify and track allowable match dollars for dozens of grants. I know that other programs have decided to not apply for CalOES funds because they don't have enough volunteer hours, expenses paid for by non-federal funds, etc. to meet the match requirement. This results in fewer victims' services because the money and grants are just too challenging to manage.

A major inefficiency is that we have multiple grants to serve specific target populations, for example victims of elder abuse, underserved/underserved communities, people with disabilities, incarcerated victims, etc. and reporting and management of those grants is extremely time consuming. Each separate grant requires additional levels of management from submitting initial and renewal Requests For Applications, modifications, progress reports, VOCA reporting, etc. and in reality most clients cross over in multiple programs since few of the grants provide adequate funding to be a stand-alone funding source and program. It would be easier from a management standpoint to have more generalized programs that served a broader range of clients rather than slicing and dicing staff and programs.

### **Data and Reporting Requirements**

WEAVE looks at all available data to inform decision making but the reality is that when it comes to reporting to our government funders we are counting bodies which does not give us any information to determine if our programs are successful or whether or not those with the greatest needs are being served. There are many data gaps and not good outcomes data for the field. If data was being used to inform decision making, then the funding structure for domestic violence programs would likely change. In Sacramento County, for example, there are three CalOES DVAP programs. Each DV agency receives the same funding award despite incredible differences in the numbers served, depth of services provided, etc. There is no financial incentive to serve more clients or any specific number of clients, in fact. We are left to our own devices to gather separate data to answer the question *Are we making a difference?* and to tell a more complete story to donors and potential funders.

The amount of data we are expected to provide to the government is excessive and redundant. CalOES requires semi-annual progress reports that are a combination of both quantitative and qualitative data. That's 13 grants x 2 progress reports a year = 26 reports. Some of them vary in length, but none is less than 4 pages and the DV progress report is 11 pages long. In addition, any of our CalOES grants with VOCA funding (10 total) also require quarterly data reports to be submitted directly to the feds via the OVC PMT website (a very problematic, onerous system that never functions as it's supposed to); so that's 10 grants x 4 reports/year = 40. So CalOES alone is requiring us to submit 66 reports/year. The time needed to prepare the progress reports vary by grant, but an average of 1.5 days is required to complete (12 hours if that's all you were working on that day). The VOCA reports take about 2 hours each and that's using our very robust, very expensive client data system, Efforts to Outcomes, that already has the report built in it. I can't imagine how much time it takes smaller agencies who are relying on Excel spreadsheets or lesser database solutions. So now we're talking roughly 450 hours each year just to complete the reporting requirements for CalOES and that's not including the annual STOP Formula and FVPSA funder reports that are also required depending on the mix of funds we received that year. Those are also very labor intensive and can take days to complete. The biggest aggravation is that the information being reported is duplicated in the various reports, but each entity (CalOES, VOCA, FVPSA, etc.) all ask for the information to be reported in a different way--different quarters, different

funding periods, etc.--so it's not like we can just copy and paste the information. Additionally, we rarely receive feedback on the reports we submit, unless there's an error or a correction needed. It would be beneficial to know how the information is being used to inform future funding needs, etc.

We also have 5 semi-annual OVW progress reports to complete each year; those are very lengthy, upwards of 30 pages, though not all the information is required, but they are not like any of our other required progress reports and thus have to be completed completely separate from the CalOES reports despite the fact that many of the services are the same—law enforcement responses, transitional housing, legal assistance. It takes a minimum of a week to complete an OVW progress report and a handful of staff to get it done. In addition to all that data, we also report to the County of Sacramento monthly for our marriage license tax funding and our Safehouse children's program, quarterly to Child Protective Services and the Office of Victims of Crime for sex-trafficking contracts, yearly to EFSP and the Department of Public Health and semiannually to many more private foundations.

The various grants programs are unique, but the services being provided are not. So much of what we do as an agency crosses over between the programs, but each funder has their own requirements for reporting back the information, so we have to work continuously to maintain our database in an effort to reduce the amount of time it takes to export the data in order to meet these specific requirements. And most of the data reported is widgets (# of people served, # of services, # of things, etc). There is almost no outcome or qualitative data built into the grant requirements which means there is very little built into data collection and reporting, or outcome evaluation. It is ironic that we spend all of our time counting these widgets yet the number of widgets has no correlation to the amount of money provided to do the work. We need to move away from counting services, number of bed nights, number of clients in counseling, etc. and more towards measuring self-sufficiency and whether clients leave with hope and a sense of success. It's also glaringly obvious that we do all of this activity but we don't track whether it is doing any good unless we choose to do that on our own—which we do. While the State continues to "count bodies" WEAVE and other innovative DV agencies have been looking at outcomes for years and if the State plans to go down this path they need to engage those who are already succeeding in these efforts and not create new expectations that actually undermine what's working. We have a program built into our database that tracks the self-sufficiency of clients and their progress toward goals. We use the data to assess the efficacy of our programs and share outcomes with foundation, corporate and individual funders and donors. It isn't lost on us that our largest funders don't actually require or request this information. It would be great if the State cared whether the programs they invest in are having an impact of the recipients of the services. It would be excellent if some of the more comprehensive grants had an evaluation built into the program requirements and enough funding added to the grant allocation to support outcome evaluation, data collection, and the infrastructure to do it.

### **Thoughts Going Forward**

The state might want to consider looking more deeply at the use of funding by programs in the same county or region to determine if the funding allocation is resulting in services to the greatest number of vulnerable victims. Perhaps someone should look at whether having multiple agencies with duplicate infrastructures and services is best serving the community. Are we better off having fewer larger and more efficient organizations rather than many small shops that still have to staff and answer a 24/7 crisis line that might only ring once an hour, and provide shelter that, even with only a few beds, is supposed to be staffed 24/7, etc. There are undoubtedly opportunities for mergers, better

collaborations, sharing of infrastructure, etc. The state of Iowa completely rebuilt its domestic violence infrastructure by creating four regions. Is the answer a regional approach for certain critical services such as the crisis line we are all required to operate (with funding for a call center infrastructure)? Can we make better use of current technology such as texting with victims, live chat, etc.? Could there be funding/incentives for providers to partner together and with grassroots organizations serving specific populations to provide services to multiple priority/underserved populations to reduce administrative and operational costs. Some task force or entity should at least consider what options there are to increase efficiencies and standardize services.

And then there are the service standards themselves, which, in fact, aren't particularly standardized. Most are left up to the service provider's interpretation and some aren't really worthy of being listed as they aren't that impactful in the scheme of things. Some agencies have a legal department with lawyers and paralegals while others have an advocate who can accompany someone to court for emotional support but cannot provide any legal assistance. In some communities, the legal requirement is met through referrals meaning an organization need only provide names of attorneys to victims with no assurance they will actually receive services. At WEAVE, we hire master's level counselors to provide individual and psycho-educational group counseling while other agencies use volunteer or paid survivors of domestic or sexual violence. As previously mentioned, some agencies, like WEAVE, have a robust Safehouse program on a three-acre campus with supportive services, an on-site school for children, strengths-based case management, financial empowerment programs, etc. while others shelter clients in a house and offer no on-site programming. While every staff member and volunteer must complete the 40-hour training to become a peer counselor and serve domestic violence victims, it certainly isn't enough training to treat the complex trauma experienced by many of the clients we serve. Even the quality of the 40-hour trainings varies greatly from agency to agency. The education requirements for staff and the services available differ greatly despite there being a set of services we are all allegedly offering. There has been talk of changing the service standards or allowing agencies to pick and choose which services they will offer. Unless this comes with appropriate compensation I fear that there will be many communities left with inadequate services. Shelter is expensive. Lawyers are expensive. Therapeutic counselors are expensive. Staffing a 24/7 crisis line is challenging. If agencies aren't required to offer these supports many won't. I do believe that we should revisit the standards and confirm that they are up to date—which they aren't. We currently only count crisis line calls. Texts with victims, on-line chat, email exchanges and other more current communication methods don't count. The generations to come aren't going to be picking up a phone to get help. We need to get with the times and update our support systems.

The service standards themselves, the menu of services available and the models for delivering them are largely outdated and insufficient. Most of the interventions were created in the 1970's by white women and they just don't resonate with many of the communities we are working to serve. Many cultures do not value or access counseling services. Many communities of color don't want to interact with the criminal legal system. Leaving isn't always an option for victims of certain religious faiths. We continue to invest the majority of our money in the crisis interventions that take place after the violence has begun rather than in strategies to prevent violence. We are treating symptoms and failing to address the adverse childhood experiences that complicate the lives of our clients. Strategies such as providing confidential shelter, assisting with obtaining protective orders and counseling are all helpful but they can't be offered in a vacuum that fails to recognize the multiple traumas that victims have experienced

by the time they get to us for help. I'm not sure that agencies are equally prepared for and qualified to work with these victims who come with multiple barriers to safety and success.

We need to pivot to a two-generation approach to serving victims. There isn't enough prevention or intervention funding to reach children who are growing up in homes with violence and are experiencing multiple traumas but aren't yet victims or perpetrators. When we do have access to parents and children while they are staying in our shelters we need to ensure that we have innovative supports and interventions designed to increase parental resilience, knowledge of parenting, child development and healthy relationships, and the social and emotional competence of the children. While the government funding for prevention work is woefully inadequate, we can't simply swap intervention funding for an investment in prevention. We need to change our focus to better serve children and their parents. Until we get better at preventing violence we must preserve and improve upon the life-changing and life-saving interventions that we do have. We need innovative prevention and intervention solutions if we are going to serve the diverse population of California.