



It is the mission of Vera House, Inc. to prevent, respond to and partner to end domestic and sexual violence and other forms of abuse.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
MEETING MINUTES  
February 20, 2024**

**Attendees BOD:**

Dawn Penson  
Ebony Pengel  
Kyle Metzler  
Mitayah Donerlson  
Sapna Kollali  
Susan Petrosillo  
Monica Coles  
Nalisha Barron  
Amelia

**Attendees VH:**

Daquetta Jones  
Dana Zanders

**Virtual**

Sandra Russell

**Absent**

Stefani Savory                      Dana Zanders

**The opening of the meeting and introductions was presented by Ebony Pengel.**

**Motion to call Meeting to order: 1<sup>st</sup> – Ebony P. 2<sup>nd</sup> – Susan P.**

**MINUTES: Minutes of previous meeting 01-16-24 was viewed and approved by all.**

## REPORTS:

### Report - Daquetta Jones, CEO

#### AGENCY UPDATES – JANUARY 2024 – PART 1

##### Chief Executive Office Update:

- Scheduled meetings with funders / community partners
  - Met with Olive and Beth at Interfaith Works 1/5/24
  - Met with Janice Green, USDOJ 1/8/24
  - Met with OCC Counseling Center Leadership 1/26/24
  - Met with YWCA Niagara Frontier 1/12/24
  - Rescheduled to meet 1/27/24 with OCO re: best practices and improve collaboration re: Hud Funded position
  - CVTC in process of scheduling meeting with NYSDOCCS re: PREA
  - Met with Meg O'Connell, Allyn Foundation 1/11/2024
  - Met with Nan from United Way on 1/23/24
  - Participated in 12 Men Model final session/ceremony - 1/10/24
  - Attended HSLC full membership meeting 1/12/24
  - Attended Break Stalking Community Discussion at One Group 1/11/24
  - Met with Stacy Phillips (OVW) DOJ on 1/22/24
  - Attended HSLC New ED Affinity Group 1/17/24
  - Effective Jan – meetings with County are bi-monthly (next meeting 3/15/24) and meeting with State Agencies monthly until Feb.
  - All Advocates Training at McMahon Ryan Child Advocacy Center 1/17/24
  - Continue to meet with board members 1:1. Felicity coordinating meetings with Board of Trustees
  - Scheduled to meet with Chief ADA, Jarrett Woodstock, Feb 6, 2024
  - Attended Elder Justice Coalition meeting 1/18/24
  - Met with Tania from ARISE

#### AGENCY UPDATES – JANUARY 2024 – PART 2

##### Chief Executive Office Update:

- Switch from T-Mobile to Verizon saving over \$1,300k per month (about \$18k annually)
- Provided Letter of Support for Laliga CNY re: housing
- ACC Technical Services now providing an elevated Network and IT services. Contract with Bob H ended 1/29/24
- Safe Dwelling – North Shelter scheduled to open on Feb 2
- OCFS Renewal Application for DV Shelter submitted along with Performance Improvement Plan 1/26/2024
- Facility maintenance issue: Boiler at Admin Building addressed
- Submitted QUOTES re: fence repair and improved security system (OCFS grant could support improved security system. Fence repair cannot be paid for through this fund.
- Accepted OPDV Flexible Spending Funds \$35k
  - o McMahon Ryan Child Advocacy Center partner
  - o Submitted successfully on Jan 16, 2024
- 2024 Onondaga County Contracts (4) in-progress - two contracts executed.
- Executed Upstate Medical SANE Contract (3 year)
- Submitted VH Directors and Officers Insurance due by 2/16/24

**COO Report – Tricia Matthews, COO**

- Department Presentations**

## WHAT IS NEW WITH CLINICAL TEAM 2024

Metric	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
# of separate individuals served	163											
# sessions completed	499											
% safety planning	100%											
# of no shows	63											

During the month of February, clinical leadership will be submitting a proposal asking for supportive funds to cover an appointment reminder system. This system will send automatic reminders (by text or email) to clients with scheduled appointments as a measure to decrease the frequency of unattended sessions.

Two of our clinicians have recently passed their licensure exams! This is a major step on their way to becoming fully licensed marriage and family therapists in New York!

## WHAT'S NEW WITH ADVOCACY 2024

Metric	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
# Clients served	671											
# days between crisis call and assigned advocate	0											
# of referrals into Advocacy	99											

# WHAT'S NEW AT THE SHELTER 2024

Metric	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
# of Clients Housed	24											
# clients denied	10											
AVG LOS	22											

# WHAT'S NEW WITH PREVENTION EDUCATION 2024

Metric	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOVEM	DECEMBER
# of People Reached through Prevention Education Programs	432											
# of Direct Service hours	16											
# of Vacant Positions	4											

## January Highlights:

- Completed 12 Men Model training with our partners, 100 Black Men of Syracuse, PEACE Inc., and other community members.
- Met with additional community partners to facilitate our youth programming with SUN ESF Tabling, Le Moyne College Tabling, Pomeroy College School of Nursing Presentation, Engaging Men on College Campuses Webinar.
- Meeting with Onondaga Community College partners to reaffirm memorandum of understanding between the college and the agency.
- Youth Education Program with Westhill, Jamesville-Dewit Middle School, Chestnut Hill Middle School, Nottingham HS, ELMS
- Direct service: Call outs, and working with shelter clients, facilitating Heal and Reclaim
- Interviewing for vacant positions

# SEXUAL ASSAULT NURSE EXAMINER – SANE 2024

Metric	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
# of Call Outs	27											
# of Call Outs w/o Exam	8											

## WHAT'S NEW WITH ELDER ABUSE AND JUSTICE (EAJ) PROGRAM – JANUARY 2024 – PART ONE

### General EAJ Activity – January Highlights:

- A. Staffing – setting up interviewing for the Elder Advocate, Outreach Coordinator, and ALL Coordinator positions
- B. Onboarding and Staff Training – preparing to present training to Advocacy about Elder Abuse in January and Community Partners
- C. Representation – represented VH at Senior Companion Council (IFW), Aging Services Network, and DOJ meetings
- D. Grant Management – investigating new solicitations; discussing priorities, intentions with community MOU/partners in February time frame

### ALTC-AGING Grant – January Highlights:

- A. Elder Abuse Conference – venue, date secured, exploring themes/speakers, preparing sponsorship marketing with Development, and finalizing EAC planning committee
- B. Elder Justice Coalition – monthly meetings convened and EAC Planning and Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression SubCommittees attended
- C. Evergreen Network – expanded distribution to over 400 partners, January/February newsletter prepared and sent
- D. Community Outreach – preparing partnerships with Interfaith Works and the Syracuse Peacemaking Center

### OVC Expanded Community Outreach Response to Elder Abuse (ECORE) GRANT – January Highlights:

- A. Christopher Communities – contracted 2024, updated MOU, planning February launch
- B. Center for Justice Innovations – contracting complete; planning expansion of services with February launch
- C. Case Management – needing updating

## WHAT'S NEW WITH ELDER ABUSE AND JUSTICE (EAJ) PROGRAM – JANUARY 2024 – PART TWO

### OVW Abuse in Later Life (ALL) GRANT – Highlights:

- A. Syracuse Housing Authority – contract complete, ready to launch in February
- B. Victim Services – the advocacy department has been addressing older client needs at this time
- C. Survivor Support Services – support group carried on with 9 continuing clients
- D. Training and Cross-Training – continued reconnecting with NCALL, OVW TTA to launch activities

### LIFESPAN Enhanced Multidisciplinary Team (EMDT) Coordination for Central New York - Highlights:

- A. Currently serving seven counties of EMDT committees
- B. Caseload of over 30 cases currently during most months
- C. Typically, 2-3 new cases in the areas of domestic violence and financial

### Elder Abuse Education and Outreach Program (EAEOP)

- A. Making inquiries to apply for 2024
- B. Preparing Grant Application

## ALTERNATIVE STEPS 2024

### OUTCOMES FOR JANUARY 2024

**Continued participants – 53**

**New participants – 34**

**Total participants (January) - 87**

**Total participants that completed 15 weeks - 11**

- **PREA BOD for the month of January 2024**
- **Total number of participants – 10.**

## HUMAN RESOURCES PROJECT GOALS IN FLIGHT

- Agency Orientation / Regulatory Compliance Training Program for 2024
  - Orientation general session
  - New hire Workplace Sexual Harassment Prevention training for all Vera House
  - Self-paced, independent learning modules
  - Certification requirements for specialized areas
- General Ledger Interface (GLI)
  - Implementation in progress to supply electronic payroll data feeds to BlackBaud to strengthen efficiency and accuracy
- Time off policy proposal for July 2024
  - Evaluate PTO structure, rollover, thresholds, & propose PTO bank
  - Utilize HR systems to automate accruals
- Staff performance review process for 2024

## FINANCE UPDATES 2024

### Staffing

#### Vacant Positions

- Grants and Contracts Financial Administrator
- Senior Grants Accountant

#### State and County Fiscal Reporting Priorities

- FVPSA Core, FVPSA ARP DVPI
- OVS - BAR, Q3 and Q4
- DCJS SA, DCJS SANE
- OVW - Q3 and Q4
- County Contracts
  - Adult and Long-Term Care
  - Adult Mental Health
  - Child and Youth Counseling
  - Child Preventative Services

## Additionally:

- The 2024 budget was not completed for February's committee meeting
- 2024 Budget will be sent to Audit and Finance Committee by March 6th, 2024
- March 8th Audit and Finance Committee meeting.
- Correspondence surrounding Grants and Awards have not been verified.
- Team is working on getting caught up on billing.
- Meeting scheduled for 2/28/2024 @ 2pm to discuss Capital CFO
- The information for Capital CFO will be distributed to all board members.
- Position to engage Capital CFO given our current financial situation was discussed.
- Since The Foundation have not had to cover payroll for 2 cycles, will they be able to cover CFO.
- Discussion on if Community Foundation does Bridge Loans. This may be an option for the organization to assist with the gap between being awarded grants and actually receiving them.
- Emails were sent to be billed but we have not received any responses.
- It was indicated we are not the only local organization in this situation.

## Development Report – Carrie Veley, Director Development

# WHAT'S NEW IN DEVELOPMENT 2024

### Development Successes

NCC – Feb 3rd event garnered approximately 100 attendees and raised nearly \$10,000 between ticket sales, auctions, wine pull and in-kind donations.

Social Media audience reflects total growth of 15%, respectively, with market growth of between 13% and 150%. Intentionally posting specific to VH peak engagement hours and optimizing market saturation by boosting posts that are rich with Org relevant content.

Constant Contact reflects lower bounce rate, as expired/bounce-back emails are regularly monitored and removed, which reduces cost and provides clear line-of-sight to engagement and click through rates, optimizing messaging.

Vera House is currently out-performing industry standards in these metrics! Woot woot :)

Assisted with HR's completion and rollout of recruitment platform by interfacing open positions on VH website: [Career Center button](#) and [Hyperlink](#). LinkedIn Business Access in-progress.

Created Ad supporting for HSLC Member Newsletter (To lend visibility to open positions/Now Hiring).

### On the Horizon

#### VH Annual Campaigns

WRC – April 2024, planning underway

EAC – June 2024

Gala/DV Campaign – Oct 2024

#### Community Calendar:

Harveys Garden – Charity Monday, Feb 26th

#### Currently Confirmed:

2024 Pride Parade, June 22

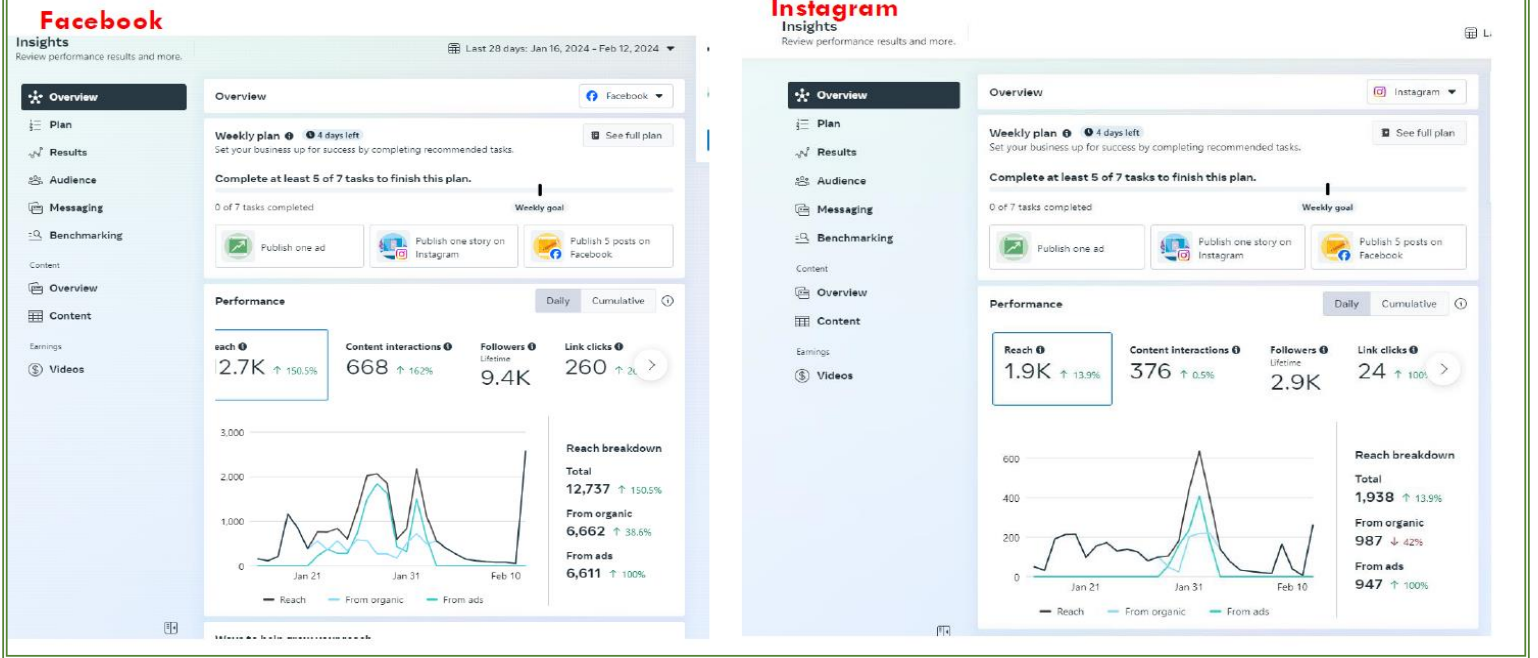
Spring/Summer Events Calendar – coming soon!

### Development Needs

Development/Marketing/Events Coordinator

**Training** in Raisers Edge/Blackbaud/Greater Giving as these are the primary fundraising platforms used to support all events and all trained staff are no longer with the Org.

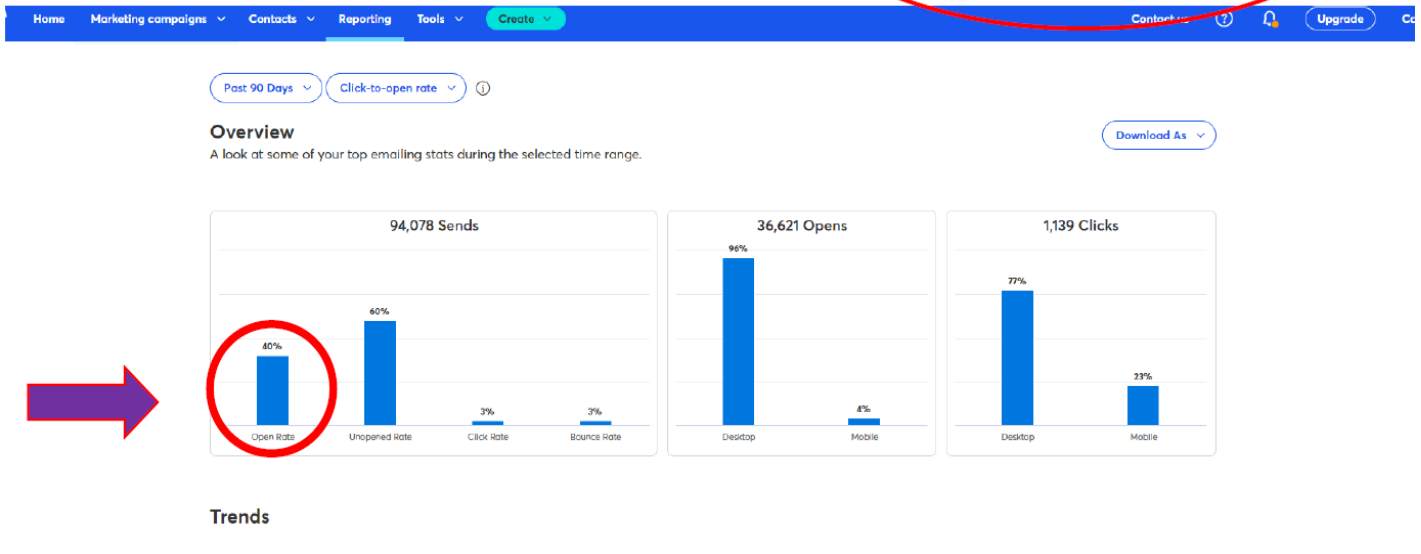
# SOCIAL MEDIA/MARKETING GROWTH AND ENGAGEMENT



# SOCIAL MEDIA/MARKETING GROWTH AND ENGAGEMENT

Neon One  
<https://neonone.com/resources/blog/nonprofit-email-benchmarks>  
**Nonprofit Email Benchmarks You Need to Know - Neon One**  
 The average nonprofit email open rate is **28.59%**. That's much higher than the average open rate for for-profit organizations—according to Campaign Monitor and MailChip, the average open rate across all industries hovers between 21% and 21.5%. [See more](#)

Vera House email open rates have increased from roughly 12% (2022) to **40%** (2024) which surpasses industry standards by more than 10%. Our subscribed audience is engaged and interested in what we are saying! :)



## **Additionally:**

### **White Ribbon Campaign**

- Meeting schedule March 20<sup>th</sup>.
- Discuss how the WRC looks for the organization this year.
- Research shows the WRC campaign normally happens nationally in November, so we are OK to move it to April.
- The campaign will not contain the walk as it has traditionally due to capacity.

### **February 3rd Fundraiser**

- The event was successful in raising funds for the Organization.
- Photos of the event was sent to Ebony. Please let her know if you would like photos sent to you.

### **Upcoming event at Harvey's Garden on 2/26/2024**

- The Board to share and invite anyone they know.
- Games are planned.
- Event is family friendly.
- There will be items we can raffle and that we can do a 50/50.
- 30% of the beer profits from that night will go to the organization.

### **Board Development Committee – Dawn P.**

- Two interviews are scheduled for April 2nd for additional board members.
- Board Application will be revamped, and a Board Matrix will be created and will be on SharePoint Site.
- Board Policies will also be updated by Katie.
- The Board will sign them in the March 2024 meeting.

## **COMMITTEE UPDATES:**

### **Property Committee**

Next meeting is March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

### **Program committee -**

Next meeting in April 2024

### **Personnel Committee**

Next meeting in March 2024

### **Audit and Finance Committee**

Next meeting is March 8th, 2024.

- Template completed and sent to the committee members.
- This committee will meet the 2nd Friday of every month.
- The committee has 2 objectives:
  - Review the audit results and talk about financials.
  - Review mutual long-term goals, plan to stabilize the budget and stop the need for funding from the foundation.
- Additional items that were discussed are:
  - Improving the perception of the agency in the community.
  - Potentially getting funding from United Way.
  - The Agency was able to cover its own payroll for the 2nd one in January and 1st in February
  - Agency's focus on grants for 2024.

- The audit work has been stalled due to a shift in focus on grants.
- Financial reports have a 15-day close so when the audit and finance committee is reviewing them, they will be 1 month behind.
- The Board is considering a contingency plan in the event cash flow is not stabilized in April/May.
- Audits for non-profits are started in April.

**Other:**

- A satisfaction survey was not conducted in 2023.
- A discussion to do the survey in March 2024 through survey monkey with 30 days to complete.

**Meeting Adjourn 8:15pm 1<sup>st</sup> Ebony P., 2<sup>nd</sup> Susan P.**

**Next Meeting Scheduled: March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024**