



## **Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force**

**BIENNIAL REPORT TO THE TEXAS LEGISLATURE**  
December 2022

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The Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force *Biennial Report to the Texas Legislature* is required by Texas Government Code § 772.0064 and covers activities from November 2020 to October 2022 as well as the discussion of future undertakings.



Governor Greg Abbott

Aimee Snoddy, Executive Director, Public Safety Office

*As Texans, we embrace the right of all citizens to live safely and securely. With these goals in mind, committed professionals and volunteers across Texas remain dedicated to invaluable work in crime prevention, law enforcement, prosecution, advocacy, and victim support – helping to create a better, safer future for all Texans.*

*Since the last legislative session, the Governor’s Sexual Assault Survivors’ Task Force has continued its work on behalf of Texas’ adult and child sexual assault survivors. With our shared mission of transforming Texas’ response to sexual violence, we will continue to seek justice for survivors, hold offenders accountable, and ensure that all survivors have access to the resources they need for healing and recovery.*

- Governor Greg Abbott



*Texas leads the nation through a survivor-centered, trauma-informed response to sexual violence, where adult and child survivors are heard, believed and supported; where offenders are held accountable; and where all system partners work collaboratively to transform Texas’ response to sexual violence.*

- Sexual Assault Survivors’ Task Force Vision

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force (SASTF) held its inaugural meeting on February 6, 2020 at the Texas State Capitol, launching an ambitious agenda to achieve the Legislature's vision set forth in House Bill 1590. The work completed during the SASTF's first year was summarized in the *SASTF's Biennial Report to the Texas Legislature* filed on 10/30/2020.

Over the past two years, the SASTF has grown in size to achieve its mission and continues to meet regularly to ensure progress continues on all of its stated objectives:

- Adding **four new Task Force members**, including two additional survivor members, to ensure a comprehensive, holistic perspective and a stronger focus on survivors' voices;
- Implementing **two new subject-matter expert working groups**; and
- Holding **over 160 meetings**,<sup>1</sup> including quarterly meetings attended by SASTF members, and monthly meetings of specialized working groups focused on a variety of topics tied to mandated deliverables.



The Task Force has produced additional quantifiable results:

- The Task Force is proposing **12 policy recommendations** for consideration in the upcoming legislative session;
- SASTF members submitted **over 1,000 comments and recommendations** to the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement and the Texas Municipal Police Association for improvements in training for law enforcement officers;
- SASTF members submitted **50 comments and recommendations** for improving the *Information Sheets for Survivors of Sexual Assault* maintained by the Health and Human Services Commission;
- Task Force working groups completed **major projects** including the creation of a trauma-informed rubric, a safety planning framework, a law enforcement investigative protocol, a sexual assault evidence kit pilot project, and a survivors' rights guide;
- In consultation with the Steering Committee and the SASTF, The University of Texas at Austin's Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (IDVSA) **completed Part 2 of its research** into resources available to sexual assault survivors, which included interviews with 70 survivors and family members of survivors; and
- **A comprehensive, statewide sexual assault survivors' resource directory** is now available on the Governor's website.

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<sup>1</sup> OOG-PSO staff held an additional 240 meetings focused on SASTF objectives with various organizations and entities, subject matter experts, legislators, legislative staff, and community stakeholders.

Systematic improvement to Texas’ response to sexual violence requires a combination of technical problem-solving and thought-provoking, multidisciplinary conversations. The SASTF continues to demonstrate its ability to do both, guided by core values of *respect, service to mission, and perseverance*.

- We are dedicated to **prioritizing survivors’ voices** in our work.
- We have steadily worked to challenge our individual and collective thinking in search of **meaningful, collaborative solutions**.
- Our **shared willingness and commitment** to voice frustrations and concerns – along with an equal commitment to celebrate successes and milestones – has brought us closer together as a team.
- We **actively highlight the urgency** of our work, while we acknowledge that statewide, substantial systems change requires patience, time and a **willingness to focus on longer-term planning and solutions**.

The Task Force is pleased to present our *2022 Biennial Report to the Texas Legislature* and express our gratitude for the trust and confidence placed in our team to lead the state’s ambitious and vital mission: *transforming Texas’ response to sexual violence*.

As mandated by Texas Government Code § 772.0064, the SASTF Steering Committee includes the Office of the Governor, the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA), and the Children’s Advocacy Centers of Texas (CACTX). The statute further mandates Task Force representation from 14 separate state agencies and organizations. As detailed in our first biennial report, the Steering Committee approved adding several additional members to the Task Force in our first year to ensure a comprehensive, holistic approach.

Since November 2020, four new Task Force members have been added, including two additional survivor members, an additional law enforcement representative, and an emergency room physician, bringing the total to 26 members. Please see **Appendix A** for a full list of current SASTF members.

Task Force activities are governed by the *Sexual Assault Survivors’ Task Force Charter* (Please see **Appendix B**).

### SEXUAL ASSAULT SURVIVORS’ TASK FORCE MEMBERS

- Office of the Texas Governor\*
- Texas Association Against Sexual Assault \*
- Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas \*
- Survivor/Family Survivor Representatives
- Office of the Attorney General
- Texas Health and Human Services Commission
- Texas Commission on Law Enforcement
- Texas Forensic Science Commission
- Texas Department of Public Safety
- Texas Association of Crime Laboratory Directors
- Texas District and County Attorney's Association
- Texas Society of Pathologists
- International Association of Forensic Nurses – TX Chapter
- Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
- Law Enforcement Representatives
- Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Representatives
- Child Abuse Pediatrician Representative
- Emergency Room Physician Representative
- Judicial Representatives

*\*Member of SASTF Steering Committee*

**“I’ve really enjoyed my time on the Task Force – both as a survivor and as part of the larger conversation around survivor support. Working with folks from the various working groups has given me a view of the overall picture of how best to support survivors during all phases of their journey. I feel I’ve been able to open some eyes regarding the plight of male survivors trying to find limited resources. I’d like to see the Task Force continue to focus on inclusion of male survivor resources and the specific, nuanced nature of our trauma. It’s been heartwarming to witness and be a part of a group of agencies and individuals solely committed to helping survivors of sexual abuse.”**

*- Survivor, Task Force Member*

### VISION

The SASTF vision is that Texas leads the nation through a survivor-centered, trauma-informed response to sexual violence, where adult and child survivors are heard, believed and supported, where offenders are held accountable, and where all system partners work collaboratively to transform Texas' response to sexual violence.

### MISSION

The SASTF mission is to establish a survivor-centered, trauma-informed, collaborative and coordinated response to sexual violence experienced by adults and children in Texas.

### VALUES

The SASTF's values are a set of shared expectations that help members navigate the complex and challenging conversations necessary to promote the greatest progress for all survivors. The values are grouped into three categories: **respect**, **service to mission**, and **perseverance**. Please see **Appendix C** for a full list of SASTF group values.

### OBJECTIVES

The SASTF's objectives tie to the mission, and align with the statutory mandate:

- Creating and advancing actionable policy recommendations, protocols, and best practices that:
  - address the prevention, investigation, and prosecution of sexual assault and other sex offenses;
  - promote expanded access to services and resources for survivors; and
  - recommend funding for services;
- Improving the content, effectiveness, and accessibility of training and resources for professionals, including law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges who respond to sexual assault and other sex offenses;
- Providing accurate information regarding resources for survivors in a centralized and accessible format;
- Building transparency and accountability by making data related to sexual assault prevention, investigation, and prosecution publicly available in a centralized and accessible format; and
- Promoting culture change countering prevalent myths about sexual assault and reflecting the reality of sexual assault dynamics.



## SASTF STRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS – SURVIVOR INCLUSION

The SASTF embraces **survivor inclusion** as a guiding principle. Our understanding and awareness of how to thoughtfully engage and include survivors has evolved over the past two years, requiring deeper levels of communication and trust and adjustments to our partnership approach. We are fully committed to continuous improvement in how we work together in service to our critical mission.

TASK FORCE COMMITMENTS	ACTIONS TAKEN
<p>Survivors are partners and leaders. We intentionally make space for survivors' voices and strive to put their recommendations into action.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ We prioritize time in each quarterly meeting for survivor speakers to share their stories.</li> <li>▪ Survivors are members of all working groups.</li> <li>▪ The Survivor-Centered Working Group is chaired by a survivor.</li> <li>▪ We introduced facilitated pauses into our working group discussions to ensure that all participants have an opportunity to speak.</li> <li>▪ We developed a quarterly report for survivors that highlights survivors' contributions to discussions and provides updates on how survivors' feedback is being incorporated.</li> </ul>
<p>Ensure that survivors receive the support they need to participate fully in each meeting and discussion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ TAASA provides a full-time survivor advocate, funded by the Office of the Governor, to attend all meetings and ensure those impacted by sexual violence are supported before, during and after meetings.</li> <li>▪ Survivors are invited to participate in pre-meeting preparation sessions and post-meeting debriefs with the survivor advocate.</li> </ul>

**“I am a survivor, mother of survivor and a Licensed Professional Counselor, who worked in agencies for approximately 15 years before opening my own private practice. In doing so I have been passionate about bridging the gap between the two worlds so more people can be helped. I have always felt as though my thoughts and ideas are valued and encouraged. Over time, I have noticed others being more confident in disagreeing with me or wanting more information about my thoughts. I appreciate that; it feels like I am being treated as strength versus brokenness and with pity.”**

**- Survivor, Family Member Survivor, Working Group Member**



## **SASTF STRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS – STEERING COMMITTEE AND WORKING GROUPS**

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The SASTF operates through four primary constellations: Steering Committee, Quarterly Task Force Meetings, Multidisciplinary Working Groups, and Focused Working Groups.

### **Steering Committee**

The Steering Committee includes the Office of the Governor, the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault, and the Children’s Advocacy Centers of Texas. The Steering Committee serves as an advisory group with the primary function of strategizing and directing the SASTF’s activities, priorities, order of business, and general course of operations.

### **Quarterly Meeting**

The Task Force meets quarterly to receive updates on working group activities and to consider working group recommendations. The quarterly meetings also provide a forum for updates on other local or statewide sexual assault-related activities and projects, educational opportunities, technical assistance, and the opportunity to hear information and recommendations shared by survivor speakers.

### **Multidisciplinary Working Group**

The Multidisciplinary Working Group meets on an ad hoc basis. All SASTF members are part of this working group and are invited to these meetings. SASTF members or the Steering Committee may invite additional subject-matter experts to attend based on the topic(s) being discussed.

### **Focused Working Groups**

Focused working groups are smaller groups of SASTF members, subject-matter experts, and survivors that meet as needed to discuss complex topics requiring specific expertise.

Working groups are governed by the *Sexual Assault Survivors’ Task Force Working Group Guidelines* (please see **Appendix D**).

**“My hope is that the task force creates laws to enforce and show that the rights of survivors are just as important as the rights of defendants during the entirety of the investigation and legal process. I know we are starting to work on this and can’t wait to see all the results.”**

**- Survivor Family Member, Working Group Member**

## SASTF STRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS – STEERING COMMITTEE AND WORKING GROUPS

Current **focused working groups** include the following:

- **Campus Working Group\***—recommends improvements for campus-based sexual assault prevention education and awareness activities and emphasizes collaboration between law enforcement, university administrators, community service providers, students, and community members.
- **Data Working Group**—analyzes and interprets data; leads directives to make data and information available to survivors and the general public; creates recommendations for the standardization of data terms and language across systems and functions, including law enforcement and forensic science laboratories; and measures the overall impact of the SASTF.
- **Law Enforcement Working Group**—reviews best practices and makes policy recommendations for officer training, resource availability, and investigation of sexual assault and other sex offenses.
- **Policy Working Group**—reviews initial policy recommendations that emerge from SASTF and other focused working groups and develops strategies for accomplishing policy goals.
- **Prosecutor Working Group\***—develops recommendations on trauma-informed best practices for the investigation and prosecution of child and adult sexual assault with particular emphasis on improving the experiences of survivors who are interacting with prosecutors and others involved in the criminal and civil justice systems.
- **Safety Planning Working Group**—creates and adapts guidelines for effective trauma-informed, survivor-centered safety planning processes for child, adolescent, and adult survivors of sexual violence and makes recommendations to enhance information related to effective safety planning in training, procedures, and protocols utilized by law enforcement, advocates, Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs), medical professionals, and others who respond to survivors’ needs after a sexual assault.
- **Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner/Forensic Expert Working Group**—creates and develops recommendations to the Texas Evidence Collection Advisory Board and the Office of the Attorney General for changes to Texas’ evidence collection protocols and documentation, as well as recommendations on changes to SANE education, certification, and licensing.
- **Survivor-Centered Working Group**—comprises sexual assault survivors and survivor/victim family members who contribute their voices and lived experience to SASTF discussions and recommendations.
- **Trauma-Informed Working Group**—explores and defines trauma-informed principles in the SASTF’s approach and considers SASTF recommendations, state and local policies, procedures, and training through a trauma-informed lens to identify areas where trauma-informed principles and approaches may be incorporated.

*\* New working groups implemented in 2021-2022 biennium.*

“Being a part of the Sexual Assault Survivor’s Task Force Campus Working Group has truly been a rewarding and insightful experience. Working with other members who hold a variety of careers and leadership positions from all over the state has allowed us all to gain a wide range of perspectives on the far too common issue of sexual assault. Each time we meet, we discuss different ways to help keep students safe and protected. As one of only three college students in the group, I have had the pleasure of learning from those who have years of first-hand experience dealing with this problem, to understand the best ways to assist a survivor. In the future, I hope the Task Force will have the opportunity to spend more time on college campuses talking to students directly and gaining their insights on the resources available to them.”

*- Survivor, Working Group Member*

## TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

- The SASTF generates recommendations through a collaborative and coordinated process that is often informed by an initial review of existing best practices, policies, procedures and protocols, followed by discussions in both multidisciplinary and focused working groups. Staff members document and organize discussion points and draft recommendations for review and approval by the Steering Committee and the Task Force.
- A complete list of documents and Texas statutes reviewed by the SASTF over the course of the biennium are available in **Appendix E**.



“My hope is to see actionable change that makes improvements throughout the state. The Task Force is working incredibly hard to gather information, feedback, and research with both professional and survivor input. What I have seen developed already has been incredibly exciting. I look forward to seeing the products and results of each workgroup continue to solidify and be put into action.”

- Survivor Family Member, Working Group Member

# 131

## Multidisciplinary & Focused Working Group Meetings

# 30

## Steering Committee & Task Force Quarterly Meetings

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

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### PROMOTE SURVIVOR HEALING

- Clarify that sexual assault survivors who undergo a forensic medical exam have cooperated with a law enforcement investigation for purposes of eligibility for Crime Victims Compensation reimbursement (Texas Code of Criminal Procedure Article 56B.107, *Denial or Reduction of Award*).
- Ensure that health care facilities can be reimbursed directly for Emergency Medical Care from the Crime Victims Compensation Program by filing an application on behalf of the survivor; include a list of specific services that are eligible for Emergency Medical Care and a specific timeframe of eligibility (Texas Code of Criminal Procedure Article 56A.252, *Payment of Costs of Examination (Reported)*; Article 56A.254, *Payment of Costs for Certain Medical Care (Reported)*; Article 56A.304, *Payment of Fees Related to Examination (Non-Reported)*; and Article 56A.305, *Payment of Costs for Certain Medical Care (Non-Reported)*).
- Extend Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner certifications from two years to three years (Texas Government Code Section 420.011, *Certification by Attorney General: Rules*).
- Expand sexual assault forensic examination training requirements for emergency room medical and administrative professionals (Texas Occupations Code Section 301.306, *Forensic Evidence Collection Component in Continuing Education (Emergency Room Nurses)*; Texas Occupations Code, Chapter 204, *(Emergency Room Physician Assistants)*; Texas Occupations Code Section 156.057, *Continuing Education in Forensic Evidence Collection (Emergency Room Physicians)*; Texas Health and Safety Code Section 323.0045, *Basic Sexual Assault Forensic Evidence Collection Training (Facilities with Emergency Rooms)*; Texas Health and Safety Code Chapter 323, *Emergency Room Intake/Admin Support Staff*; and Texas Health and Safety Code Chapter 323.002, *Non-SAFE-Ready Facilities Plan*).

### STRENGTHEN STATEWIDE EFFORTS

- Update SASTF statutory membership to include a representative from the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, an adult survivor of child sexual abuse or a parent or guardian of a survivor of child sexual abuse, and a survivor of adult sexual assault (Texas Government Code Section 772.0064, *Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force*).
- Extend the SASTF expiration date (Texas Government Code Section 772.0064, *Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force*).
- Provide travel reimbursement for SASTF members and survivor speakers attending SASTF quarterly meetings (Texas Government Code 772.0064, *Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force*).

### ENHANCE SYSTEMS RESPONSE

- Promote essential access to forensic medical exams for adult and child survivors of sexual assault by making necessary statutory modifications, including synthesizing the reported and non-reported Subchapters within the Code of Criminal Procedure (Subchapters F and G, respectively) into one combined Subchapter. Make other necessary statutory modifications to ensure that survivors of sexual assault have access to forensic medical exams (Texas Code of Criminal Procedure Subchapter F, *Forensic Medical Examination of Sexual Assault Victim Reporting Assault* and Subchapter G, *Forensic Medical Examination of Sexual Assault Victim Not Reporting Assault*).
- Clarify that system-generated emails or text communications from Track-Kit, or information viewable to the user in Track-Kit, meets Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) notification requirements in cases in which the survivor has not reported the sexual assault to law enforcement (Texas Code of Criminal Procedure Article 56A.306, *Procedures for Transfer and Preservation of Evidence*).
- Add a minimum of eight hours of instruction related to trauma-informed child sexual abuse and adult sexual assault investigations to the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement's Basic Peace Officer Course (Texas Occupation Code Section 1701.253, *School Curriculum*).
- Mandate training for trauma-informed response to child sexual abuse and adult sexual assault for all law enforcement officers (Texas Occupation Code Subchapter F, *Training Programs, Schools, and Policies*).
- Amend the sexual assault statute with respect to consent to provide clear protection for victims of sexual assault in circumstances not explicitly covered by current Texas law (Texas Penal Code Section 22.011, *Sexual Assault*).

I. **Recommendations to the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE)** to create and improve training related to sexual assault, sexual assault investigations, victim/survivor-centered approach, trauma-informed approach, including the effects of trauma on both victims/survivors and law enforcement, and collaborative, coordinated response to adult and child sexual assaults.

### **A. Basic Peace Officer Course (BPOC) Instructor Guide—TCOLE Course #1000696**

SASTF and other subject-matter expert reviewers submitted 441 comments and 5 summary recommendations.

#### **Sample Summary Recommendations**

- A separate chapter dedicated to sexual assault, including a trauma-informed approach to sexual assault investigations, should be added to the BPOC.<sup>2</sup>
- Include scenarios specific to working with sexual assault survivors in each BPOC chapter.
- Ensure that community-based advocates, system-based advocates, community-based agencies, Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs), and victims/survivors are provided with opportunities to participate in training development and facilitation.
- If victims/survivors are available to participate and choose to do so, they should be given an opportunity to participate via videotaped, recorded, or in-person segments and should always be provided with support and advocacy during their participation.

“Include a discussion of how the symptoms tell the story. Rather than seeing trauma responses as a barrier to ‘getting the facts,’ frame the symptoms of trauma as evidence itself. Include information about what sorts of symptoms to ask about and record.”

Over **1000**  
**Recommendations to Improve Law Enforcement Training**

### **B. A Trauma-Informed Approach to Sexual Assault Investigations Instructor Guide—TCOLE Course #4070**

SASTF and other subject-matter expert reviewers submitted 263 comments and 5 summary recommendations.

#### **Sample Summary Recommendations**

- Utilize survivor testimony and amplify survivor voices throughout the training.
- Incorporate more references to sexual assault advocacy and the importance of utilizing advocates. Update with legislative changes from the 87th Legislature, including a survivor’s right to an advocate during law enforcement interviews.
- Recommendations for training facilitation and delivery include the following:
  - Consider bringing in other content experts from different areas, including sexual assault programs or dual domestic violence/sexual assault program agencies.
  - Ensure that role-playing opportunities are built into training to practice skills and receive feedback.
  - Require refresher courses every 2–3 years to include new research and best practices.

“Recommend that the paragraph talking about consensual relationships include a discussion of the components of consent to give a clear picture on when it turns into a crime. For example, it could include that, regardless of the relationship, consent must be given every time, and consent can be withdrawn at any time.”

<sup>2</sup> In November 2021, the SASTF submitted an update of BPOC Chapter 17 to TCOLE with improved content on sexual assault and trauma. The SASTF is following this with a policy recommendation this session to include a dedicated sexual assault chapter in the BPOC.

II. **Recommendations to the Sexual Assault Family Violence Investigator Course (SAFVIC)** to create and improve training content related to sexual assault, sexual assault investigations, victim/survivor-centered approach, trauma-informed approach, including the effects of trauma on both victims/survivors and law enforcement, and collaborative, coordinated response to adult and child sexual assaults.

SASTF and other subject-matter expert reviewers of the Sexual Assault Family Violence Investigator Course (SAFVIC) Student Manual submitted 184 comments and 9 summary recommendations.

Additionally, reviewers submitted 21 comments to the student manual specifically for 911 telecommunicators.

### Sample Summary Recommendations

- Recommend that references to survivor “cooperation” be replaced with “participation” or “engagement” throughout the training.
- Include expanded content and a special section on community-based and system-based advocacy and the role that advocates can play in partnership with law enforcement to better serve survivors.
- Reinforce throughout the training that the survivor is not at fault for their victimization. It is important to reinforce this as many victims blame themselves. All participants in the system must avoid the mindset that the victim is somehow responsible for their assault. The offender is at fault—not the victim.

“Recommend including information on barriers for males, to include self-bias and culture bias regarding perceived strength and ability to fight off assault or otherwise avoid it. Males may have shame and guilt around this topic and be less likely to report or discuss the assault or details of the assault.”

“Update timeline to include current laws and legislative milestones, and more examples of how survivors’ voices have helped create change, for example, the Lavinia Masters Act (House Bill 8, 86<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session).”

“Best practice with persons who have been traumatized, including sexual assault survivors, is not to ask specific questions requesting details or the timing of events because of the effects of trauma on cognition and memory. Questions like ‘*Did this happen before or after ...*’ should not be asked of a survivor, particularly in an initial interview or an initial phone report. Details may be more easily pieced together with at least two sleep cycles (48 hours).”

“Stress how important the first meeting with law enforcement is and that it sets the stage for victim engagement throughout the process. Victims that are believed and supported from the onset are much more likely to engage in the full criminal justice process and seek help in healing.”

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION

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The SASTF submitted **50 recommendations** for updates to the *Information for Survivors of Sexual Assault* documents, which are maintained by the Texas Health & Human Services Commission (HHSC) pursuant to Sec. 323.005 of the Health and Safety Code and are provided to survivors in health care settings.

HHSC posted revised versions of the [Information Sheets](#) incorporating the SASTF's recommendations to their website in January 2022.

The SASTF will continue to conduct periodic reviews of the *Information Sheets* to ensure that they reflect current law, survivors' rights, and best practice for working with sexual assault survivors in health care settings.

**Advocacy:** "Add the following sentence: 'You may choose to have a support person (friend, family member, or a trained sexual assault advocate) in the room with you. An advocate can answer any questions about the process and/or inform you of your options every step of the way.'"

**Informed Consent:** "Clarify that 'informed consent' for the evidence collection (paperwork in the kit) is different than the 'informed consent' for medical treatment. Survivors can receive medical treatment without consenting to evidence collection."

**Definitions:** "Add more information on differences between a SAFE-Ready facility and non-SAFE-Ready facility, along with the benefits of a SAFE-Ready facility."



**Law Enforcement Working Group**  
***First Responder's Sexual Assault Guide***  
**Statewide Roll-out and Implementation in 2023**

**“An officer’s duty to uphold the oath includes the commitment to provide a survivor-centered, trauma-informed response to sexual violence through a multidisciplinary, collaborative and coordinated approach.”**

**- Law Enforcement Officer, Task Force Member**

**Project Description:**

An empathetic and trauma-informed law enforcement response in the first moments of a victim’s attempt to get help can have a positive impact on the victim’s ability to participate in the investigative process and can contribute to the survivor’s healing and recovery.

The SASTF’s *First Responder’s Sexual Assault Guide* provides best practices for law enforcement’s initial interactions with an adult sexual assault survivor by incorporating a trauma-informed, victim/survivor-centered, and offender-focused response. The guide was developed through a multidisciplinary, collaborative approach that included law enforcement professionals, sexual assault survivors, sexual assault advocates, and prosecutors.

**Includes content on:**

- Trauma-Sensitive Response
- Arrival to Scene and Initial Victim/Survivor Contact
- Notifying Chain of Command/Investigative Elements
- Continuing the Investigation
- Evidence Collection
- Associated Interviews
- Completing the Report
- Clearing the Scene



## WORKING GROUP PROJECTS

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### **Trauma-Informed Working Group** ***Trauma-Informed Rubric*** **Statewide Roll-out and Implementation in 2023**

#### **Project Description:**

SASTF's *Trauma-Informed Rubric* includes detailed criteria for evaluation of a policy, procedure, or recommendation using a trauma-informed lens. It includes specific criteria and expectations for each aspect of a trauma-informed approach. The *Rubric* is currently being pilot tested by different state and local agencies in the Central Texas area and will be fully launched in 2023.

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### **Safety Planning Working Group** ***Safety and Well-being Planning Framework and Protocol*** **Statewide Roll-out and Implementation in 2023**

#### **Project Description:**

The SASTF's *Safety and Well-being Planning Framework* sets forth a personalized, survivor-driven process that empowers sexual assault survivors and their supporters with strategies, resources, and tools to address immediate and longer-term physical safety, emotional safety, economic safety, security, and healing. Strategies, resources, and tools address four primary areas of risk: the offender(s), formal system(s)/supports(s)/intervention(s), the survivor's immediate social system, and the community. A statewide protocol derived from the framework will be completed in 2023.

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### **Data Working Group** ***Sexual Assault Evidence Kit Processing Pilot*** ***In collaboration with the Houston Forensic Science Center, the Houston Police Department, and the Texas Department of Public Safety Crime Lab Track-Kit Program*** **Pilot In Progress**

#### **Project Description:**

This project is a benchmark effort to facilitate transparency, accountability, and collaboration within and between agencies that serve Texas' survivors. It encourages agencies to share and learn from each other's challenges and successes regarding collection, analysis, and utilization of data related to Sexual Assault Evidence Kit (SAEK) processing.

To gain a more complete picture of Texas' pending SAEKs along with a platform to explore root causes of the kit processing delays, each stage of the SAEK processing continuum has been clearly identified and documented (**see Appendix F**). Available data are currently being collected and analyzed with the goal of creating clear action plans to target necessary improvements for survivors—initially in Houston and ultimately statewide.

## WORKING GROUP PROJECTS

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### **Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) and Forensic Expert Working Group** *Forensic Nursing Program Coaching and Development Framework* **Program Pilot in Development**

#### **Project Description:**

Develop a coaching, development, and continuous quality improvement program for SAFE-Ready Facilities, including hospitals, freestanding emergency centers, and SAFE programs as defined in Health & Safety Code Chapter 323, Subchapter B. The goal of this program is to increase access to high-quality medical forensic examinations for adult and child sexual assault survivors in Texas by ensuring that programs providing examinations:

- are culturally competent, person-and survivor-centered, trauma-informed, and high-quality;
- prioritize patient safety, patient rights, and victim/survivor rights;
- meet current licensing, certification, and statutory requirements for individual practitioners;
- meet current licensing and statutory requirements for medical forensic programs; and
- have continuous learning and quality improvement practices in place.

In 2021, members from the SASTF's SANE & Forensic Working Group created the [Emergency Preparedness Plan for Reduced Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kit Stock](#) in response to COVID-related supply-chain issues and vendor staffing shortages affecting production of sexual assault evidence kits. This plan is helping to ensure that survivors can continue to have forensic evidence collected and submitted for analysis while supply chain issues and vendor staffing shortages persist.

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### **Survivor-Centered Working Group** *Survivors' Rights Guide and Glossary of Terms* **Posting to Governor's Website in 2022**

#### **Project Description:**

The *Survivors' Rights Guide and Glossary of Terms* will inform, empower, and assist survivors, providers, supporters, and the general public in understanding survivors' rights, including terms used by the medical field and the criminal justice system (CJS) pertaining to those rights. The glossary of terms includes medical, legal, and CJS terms and acronyms that are used or referenced in discussions of survivors' rights along with definitions of each term. Both documents will be posted on the Office of the Governor's website and used in other survivors' rights resources created by the SASTF Survivor-Centered Working Group.

**"As a survivor, it feels great to be a part of something like this on a state level. I feel like the state of Texas is beginning to utilize survivor experience to make changes, such as providing more survivor-centered services. While we have a long way to go in eliminating sexual violence, we are headed in the right direction. I have been honored to draft a survivors' rights guide that explains the rights a survivor has in simple terms, as well as a safety planning protocol for the State of Texas. I have had the opportunity to review several law enforcement trainings and make recommendations to help officers be more survivor-centered and trauma-informed. Over the next two years, I would like to see more trauma-informed and survivor-centered training for prosecutors as well as projects to go after offenders. I would like to see survivor rights matter more than offender rights."**

**- Survivor, Working Group Member**



In House Bill 1590 (86R), the Texas Legislature directed the SASTF to “[m]ake recommendations as necessary to improve the collecting and reporting of data on the investigation and prosecution of sexual assault and other sex offenses” and “[c]ollect, analyze, and make publicly available information organized by region regarding the prevention, investigation and prosecution of sexual assault and other sex offenses.”

The November 2020 State Auditor’s Office (SAO) Report [Investigation and Prosecution Processes for Reported Sexual Assaults in Texas](#) identified several issues with Texas’ sexual assault data.

In summary, SAO found:

- there are no comprehensive statewide data that provide complete information on the progress of reported sexual assaults through investigation and prosecution;
- law enforcement investigation outcome data are collected locally, hindering statewide analysis of sexual assault investigation outcomes;
- there are no statewide data available with respect to actions taken by prosecutors’ offices, including case declinations and no bills; and
- arrest, prosecution, and court disposition data in the DPS Computerized Criminal History System are inaccurate and incomplete, particularly with respect to prosecution records.

Ultimately, SAO noted that “auditors were unable to determine the statewide number of reported sexual assault incidents that resulted in either an arrest or prosecution for the five-year scope of this audit” (p. 27). The lack of reliable data hinders those seeking to understand Texas’ response to sexual assault, including researchers studying sexual assault case outcomes. This issue has been highlighted previously, resulting in legislative action. The 84th Legislature directed the creation of a task force (HB 2455) to “promote uniformity in the collection and reporting of data surrounding family violence, sexual assault, stalking and human trafficking.” The [task force’s report](#) detailed several issues with respect to sexual assault data, finding that “current data collection practices in Texas do not result in the capture of important categories of case-outcome information,” (p. 14) and recommending that law enforcement and prosecution agencies be mandated to collect and report certain categories of data. It is not clear that those recommendations were put into action.

The issues impacting Texas’ ability to analyze sexual assault data lead to a limited understanding of how reported sexual assaults are investigated and charged and to a limited understanding of how—or whether—sexual assault offenders are being held accountable for their crimes. This leads to understandable frustration and mistrust in the criminal justice system’s handling of sexual assault cases.

Texas must prioritize a resolution to this issue. Possible resolutions include a dedicated statewide project team tasked with identifying an effective solution, appropriated funding for any system and data collection improvements identified by the project team, and increased accountability for law enforcement agencies and district attorney’s offices to report both the outcomes of investigations and the decisions being made about cases considered for investigation and prosecution.

### Unsubmitted & Unanalyzed Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kits

Pursuant to a recommendation from the SASTF in the 87th Legislature, DPS is required to submit its *Statewide Electronic Tracking System Report* by December 1 of each year, detailing progress on Texas' efforts to address unsubmitted and unanalyzed sexual assault evidence collection kits (Texas Government Code §420.034 (h)).

Data from the [second DPS annual report](#) published on December 1, 2022, detail 3,849 kits pending submission or analysis.<sup>3</sup> Significantly, DPS labs, which process approximately 50% of the state's sexual assault evidence collection kits, are now processing all sexual assault evidence collection kits within statutorily mandated timeframes.

The SASTF strongly recommends that the Legislature continue to appropriate the necessary funds to ensure that all sexual assault evidence collection kits are processed in compliance with the timeframes set forth in House Bill 8 (86R). The SASTF further recommends that jurisdictions with high numbers of unsubmitted and unanalyzed kits submit specific plans of action to DPS that will demonstrate a path to compliance by 2025.

### Track-Kit Registration

In response to another SASTF recommendation from the 87<sup>th</sup> Legislature, the Office of the Governor's Public Safety Office (PSO) established a grant eligibility condition in 2021 requiring any facility or entity that collects evidence for sexual assault or other sex offenses—or that investigates or prosecutes a sexual assault or other sex offense for which evidence has been collected—to participate in the statewide electronic tracking system (Track-Kit) developed and implemented by DPS.

A recent analysis conducted by PSO identified approximately 50 law enforcement agencies seeking PSO funding that had yet to register with Track-Kit. PSO acted in accordance with the stated grant eligibility condition and encouraged those agencies to register or to formally explain why registration for their agency is not required.

The SASTF will continue to support measures designed to encourage participation in Track-Kit, and it looks forward to Texas law enforcement agencies achieving full compliance with this extremely important and statutorily mandated requirement.

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<sup>3</sup> For updated numbers, please refer to the *2022 Statewide Electronic Tracking System Report* from DPS, available December 1, 2022.

The University of Texas at Austin's IDVSA conducted a research project on behalf of the SASTF, interviewing 70 sexual assault survivors and family members of survivors to determine their experience seeking and utilizing sexual assault-specific services in Texas as well as identifying unmet needs. Key findings of the research,<sup>4</sup> which will inform the Task Force's recommendations to the Legislature on statewide standards for funding and services for survivors, included the following:

- **Survivor needs eclipse system capacity**: Most survivors need specialized sexual assault or abuse services, but many do not receive them. This discovery echoes IDVSA findings from the [2020 resource inventory study](#), in which service providers reported that their current capacity could not meet the demand for services.
- **Survivors encounter barriers to services**: Interview data showed several distinct themes on how and why survivors or parents and guardians of child survivors were unable to access needed services. Barriers included waiting lists; slow response times from advocates, investigators, or prosecutors; uncertainty or confusion about the criminal justice system; lack of service providers, especially those with specialized sexual violence training; and lack of trauma-informed practices, among others.
- **Trust, choice, and the restoration of control can counteract the sexual violence experience**: Sexual violence victimization by one person, typically someone the survivor knew, shatters survivors' assumptions about human interactions and relationships. It profoundly impacts every part of a survivor's world and results in feelings of helplessness. Service providers should create an experience of trust, protection, and respect so that survivors have the opportunity to regain control, recover, and heal.

IDVSA's full research report may be accessed [here](#).

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<sup>4</sup> Kellison, B., Sookram, S.B., Camp, V., Sulley, C., Susswein, M., McCarty-Harris, Y., Dragoon, S., Kammer-Kerwick, M., & Busch-Armendariz, N. (2022). Voices of Texas sexual assault survivors : Services, gaps, and recovery journeys. Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault, The University of Texas at Austin.

### Preliminary Articulation - Statewide Standards for “Whole Survivor” Care

In HB 1590 (86R), the Texas Legislature directed the Task Force to: “develop a statewide standard for best practices in the funding and provision of services to survivors by nonprofit organizations, health care facilities, institutions of higher education, sexual assault response teams, and other governmental entities.”

The previously cited research studies conducted by IDVSA on behalf of the Task Force provided themes and findings that inform SASTF’s preliminary articulation of a statewide standard for best practices. Over the next biennium, the SASTF will build these guiding principles into a statewide strategy with detailed recommendations for services and funding.

### *Texas’ Statewide Standards for Sexual Assault Survivors—“Whole Survivor” Care Guiding Principles*

1. **First, Provide What is Necessary:** A survivor’s basic needs, including food, clothing, shelter, and transportation, must be met for the survivor to begin healing.
2. **A Broader Vision for Advocacy:** No survivor should ever be alone when attempting to understand and navigate the systems responding to her or his sexual assault.
3. **Trauma Matters:** A survivor must have access to therapy to process the trauma of sexual assault.
4. **Healing Happens in Context:** A survivor must have access to resources to treat mental health issues, substance use and misuse issues, and any other health care-related needs.
5. **Every Survivor is Entitled to High-Quality, Expert Medical Forensic Care:** Medical forensic exams conducted by a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner in a SAFE-Ready Facility must be standard of care for every sexual assault survivor.
6. **Information Matters:** Survivors who report their assaults must have consistent access to current, reliable information from advocates, law enforcement, and prosecutors about the status of their case. All survivors must have consistent access to information about available services for support, recovery, and healing.
7. **Every Survivor Counts:** Texas must work toward full access to services for survivors across all Texas communities.

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<sup>5</sup> The Office of the Governor and the Sexual Assault Survivors’ Task Force offer our sincere thanks and appreciation for the considerable contributions of Hannah Tyler, our summer 2022 student intern from The University of Texas at Austin, to this section of our *Biennial Report*.

## CONCLUSION AND VISION FOR NEXT BIENNIUM

In the coming year, the SASTF will focus on continued implementation of several key projects previously identified in this report and will pursue the following additional objectives:

- **Fully articulate** statewide standards of care for survivors, including services and funding;
- **Identify** a comprehensive, statewide sexual violence prevention framework and strategy;
- **Focus** on male survivors, including implementation of the SASTF Services for Male Survivors Working Group;
- **Continue to review and improve** law enforcement policies, practices, and training with an emphasis on law enforcement leadership;
- **Prioritize** SASTF's criminal justice focus to include prosecutorial and judicial training, the judicial system and jury education;
- **Monitor** continued progress and improvement on Texas' sexual assault evidence kit backlog; and
- **Advocate** for resolution of problems with sexual assault data collection to ensure that the state can measure performance and maintain accountability for actions taken to investigate and prosecute sexual assault cases.

The Task Force is grateful to the Texas Legislature and to Governor Greg Abbott for their continued dedication to survivors and for their leadership on behalf of survivors across our great state. Together, we will collectively ensure the achievement of the Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force vision, where *"Texas leads the nation through our effective, survivor-centered, trauma-informed response to sexual violence; where adult and child survivors are heard, believed, and supported; where offenders are held accountable; and where all system partners work collaboratively to end sexual violence."*

**"I hope Texas continues as a leader in tackling the multiple issues surrounding sexual assault/rape. I hope we are BOLD enough to really push the societal boundaries/norms so that victims have a better path to justice. I want Texas at the forefront of trauma-informed, victim-centered, radical change when dealing with sexual assault/rape."**

**- Survivor, Working Group Member**





## APPENDIX A: SASTF MEMBERSHIP

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Austin's SAFE Alliance

**Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas\***

Dell Children's Medical Center - CARE Team

Department of Family and Protective Services

Health and Human Services Commission

HOPE S.A.V.E.S. Ministry

Houston Police Department

International Association of Forensic Nurses – Texas Chapter

Law Offices of Catherine Evans

Men's Resource Network

Office of the Attorney General

**Office of the Governor\***

Plano Police Department

Project Beloved: The Molly Jane Mission

Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney's Office

Texas A&M College of Nursing

Texas Association of Crime Laboratory Directors

Texas Commission on Law Enforcement

Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) - Crime Lab

Texas DPS Education, Training, and Research

Texas Forensic Science Commission

**Texas Association Against Sexual Assault\***

Texas District and County Attorney's Association

Texas Society of Pathologists

University of Texas Health San Antonio

***\*Member of Steering Committee***



GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT

## **Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force Member Charter**

### **I. Mission and Purpose**

Establish a survivor-centered, trauma-informed, collaborative and coordinated response to sexual violence experienced by adults and children in Texas through:

- Creating and advancing actionable policy recommendations, protocols, and best practices that address the prevention, investigation, and prosecution of sexual assault and other sex offenses, services and resources for survivors, and funding for services;
- Improving the content and effectiveness of training and resources for professionals responding to sexual assault and other sex offenses, including law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges;
- Providing accurate information regarding resources for survivors in a centralized, accessible, understandable format;
- Building transparency and accountability by making data related to sexual assault prevention, investigation, and prosecution publicly available in a centralized, accessible, understandable format;
- Promoting culture change that counters prevalent myths about sexual assault and reflects the reality of sexual assault dynamics and effects on adults and children.

### **II. Vision**

Texas leads the nation through our effective, survivor-centered, trauma-informed response to sexual violence, where adult and child survivors are heard, believed and supported, offenders are held accountable, and all system partners work collaboratively to end sexual violence

### **III. Values**

- a. Respect:
  - Being present and engaged.
  - Keeping our minds open.
  - Having courageous conversations.
  - Being mindful of all voices.
  - Practicing open and honest communication.
  - Considering the intent and impact of our language.
  - Listening to understand.
  - Assuming the best about each other and committing to stay there.
  - Demonstrating compassion for everyone, of all backgrounds.
- b. Service to Mission:
  - Being survivor-centered.
  - Being trauma-informed.
  - Being self-reflective.
  - Working collaboratively.

- c. Perseverance:
  - Being visionary.
  - Being solution-focused.
  - Committing to continuous improvement.
  - Prioritizing progress.
  - Practicing self-care.

### IV. Governance

- a. The Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force (SASTF) is established by the Governor within the Office of the Governor's Public Safety Office (PSO).
- b. The Governor or his designee is the presiding officer of the SASTF.
- c. The SASTF includes a Steering Committee that will:
  - create relevant working groups;
  - ensure the SASTF identifies systemic issues and solutions pertaining to survivors of all ages;
  - ensure the task force does not unnecessarily duplicate existing standards, information, or protocols, and;
  - review and approve all task force reports, recommendations, resources, protocols, advice, and other information before release.
- d. The SASTF is staffed by an Administrator, Associate Administrator, and Administrative Assistant who will coordinate and facilitate meetings and activities of the SASTF in accordance with this charter and the guidelines established by the 86th Legislative Session in House Bill 1590.
- e. The Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) Survivor Advocate will ensure that proper and adequate crisis intervention and support is provided to those who have been impacted by sexual violence and are engaging with the SASTF.
- f. Communication and cooperation between stakeholders relating to the prevention, investigation, or prosecution of sexual assault or other sex offenses or services provided to survivors is a guiding principle of the SASTF.
- g. The SASTF will build upon other groups, committees, and governance structures that already exist. (See Section V. Composition.) By facilitating communication, collaboration, and planning, SASTF members will help to reduce potential duplication of effort and maximize the efficiency among agencies, jurisdictions, and community partners.

### V. Composition

- a. **Membership:** The SASTF comprises stakeholders representing various sexual assault service providers, agencies, and levels of government including representation from entities with sexual assault prevention, investigation, and prosecution expertise across the

State. At a minimum, membership on the SASTF will include individuals from the following\*:

- Office of the Governor
- Office of the Attorney General
- Health and Human Services Commission
- Texas Commission on Law Enforcement
- Texas Forensic Science Commission
- Texas Department of Public Safety - Crime Laboratory Service
- Texas Association of Crime Laboratory Directors
- Texas District and County Attorney's Association
- Texas Society of Pathologists
- International Association of Forensic Nurses Texas Chapter
- **statewide organization** described by Section 264.409, Family Code, or the president's designee;
- **state sexual assault coalition**, as defined by Section 420.003, or the president's designee;
- a representative from a **law enforcement** agency appointed by the steering committee described by Subsection (c);
- a **sexual assault nurse examiner** appointed by the steering committee described by Subsection (c) to represent the interests of health care facilities that perform sexual assault forensic exams; and
- **other members** considered appropriate by the steering committee described by Subsection (c).

**\*Note:** See the attached **SASTF Membership List** for the complete list of organizations and individuals.

- b. **Steering Committee:** Consisting of the statewide organization described by Section 264.409, Family Code, or the president's designee; the state sexual assault coalition, as defined by Section 420.003, or the president's designee; and the governor, or the governor's designee.
- c. **Workgroups:** All SASTF working groups will focus on both child and adult survivors. Ad hoc working groups will be established for the purpose of providing subject matter expertise in the development of SASTF recommendations. Such working groups may be requested by the SASTF and will be reasonably facilitated by OOG staff upon approval of the Steering Committee. All working groups are formed solely for the purpose of informing SASTF members on issues related to the SASTF's mission and purpose.
- d. **External Brain Trust:** This term is used to acknowledge existing experts in the field of sexual assault prevention, investigation, and prosecution, and others who may be called upon to support and inform SASTF members on various issues and processes.

**VI. Meetings and Administration**

- a. **Frequency, Format, and Financial Considerations:** The SASTF will meet quarterly to review and discuss progress and recommendations, and to share working group status updates. Working groups will meet as needed to review and discuss current policies, procedures and trainings and to create recommendations. The Steering Committee will meet monthly to monitor overall deliverables and review/approve outputs. Conference calls and virtual meetings are permissible.. Any travel expenses incurred for participation will be the responsibility of the individual member.
- b. **Attendance:** Attendance at quarterly task force meetings is required for members to be considered in “active” status. While task force members are encouraged to participate in each SASTF meeting, an alternate individual shall be designated to represent a member or agency at a meeting.
- c. **Task Force Support:** OOG staff will provide support to the SASTF preceding, during, and following each meeting. The OOG staff will:
  - 1. Maintain the SASTF membership list;
  - 2. Maintain the calendar for SASTF meetings and workgroups, including obtaining input from members regarding available dates and agenda topics;
  - 3. Provide a clear agenda to all members for each meeting;
  - 4. Facilitate SASTF meetings;
  - 5. Disseminate information;
  - 6. Distribute post meeting summaries;
  - 7. Document activities;
  - 8. Track progress;
  - 9. Prepare SASTF summaries and reports; and
  - 10. Provide other support as needed.

**VII. SASTF Member Responsibilities**

- a. Maintain a trauma-informed, survivor-centered perspective at all times;
- b. Work to fulfill the mission and purpose of the SASTF as outlined in this Charter;
- c. Actively incorporate and uphold the SASTF core values in meeting discussions;
- d. Attend and participate in meetings;
- e. Designate an alternate or replacement representative when necessary;
- f. Keep strictly confidential any Task Force working group discussions; and
- g. Refrain from disseminating Task Force work product without express approval from the OOG.

With my signature below, I affirm that I have read and understand the Governor’s Sexual Assault Survivors’ Task Force (SASTF) Charter. I agree to serve as an SASTF member, comply with the above Charter, and cooperate in its implementation. In the event that a replacement or proxy representative is required, I will contact OOG as soon as possible to arrange an appropriate substitution or replacement.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Typed Name

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**SEXUAL ASSAULT SURVIVORS' TASK FORCE GROUP VALUES**

As members of the SASTF, we are guided by the following core values:

**RESPECT**

We demonstrate this by:

- Being present and engaged.
- Keeping our minds open.
- Having courageous conversations.
- Being mindful of all voices.
- Practicing open and honest communication.
- Considering the intent and impact of our language.
- Listening to understand.
- Assuming the best about each other and committing to stay there.
- Demonstrating compassion for everyone, of all backgrounds.

**SERVICE TO MISSION**

We demonstrate this by:

- Being survivor-centered.
- Being trauma-informed.
- Being self-reflective.
- Working collaboratively.

**PERSEVERANCE**

We demonstrate this by:

- Being visionary.
- Being solution-focused.
- Committing to continuous improvement.
- Prioritizing progress, acknowledging that our work will unfold over the next four years.
- Practicing self-care.



GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT

## **Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force Working Group Guidelines**

### **I. Mission and Purpose of the Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force**

Establish a survivor-centered, trauma-informed, collaborative and coordinated response to sexual violence experienced by adults and children in Texas through:

- Creating and advancing actionable policy recommendations, protocols, and best practices that address the prevention, investigation, and prosecution of sexual assault and other sex offenses, services and resources for survivors, and funding for services;
- Improving the content, effectiveness, and accessibility of training and resources for professionals responding to sexual assault and other sex offenses, including law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges;
- Providing accurate information regarding resources for survivors in a centralized, accessible, understandable format;
- Building transparency and accountability by making data related to sexual assault prevention, investigation, and prosecution publicly available in a centralized, accessible, understandable format; and
- Promoting culture change that counters prevalent myths about sexual assault and reflects the reality of sexual assault dynamics and effects on adults and children.

### **II. Vision**

Texas leads the nation through our effective, survivor-centered, trauma-informed response to sexual violence, where adult and child survivors are heard, believed and supported, offenders are held accountable, and all system partners work collaboratively to end sexual violence.

### **III. Values**

- a. Respect:
  - Being present and engaged.
  - Keeping our minds open.
  - Having courageous conversations.
  - Being mindful of all voices.
  - Practicing open and honest communication.
  - Considering the intent and impact of our language.
  - Listening to understand.
  - Assuming the best about each other and committing to stay there.
  - Demonstrating compassion for everyone, of all backgrounds.

- b. Service to Mission:
  - Being survivor-centered.
  - Being trauma-informed.
  - Being self-reflective.
  - Working collaboratively.
- c. Perseverance:
  - Being visionary.
  - Being solution-focused.
  - Committing to continuous improvement.
  - Prioritizing progress.
  - Practicing self-care.

#### **IV. Governance**

- a. The Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force (SASTF) is established by the Governor within the Office of the Governor's Public Safety Office (PSO).
- b. The Governor or his designee is the presiding officer of the SASTF.
- c. The SASTF includes a Steering Committee that will:
  - 1. create relevant working groups;
  - 2. ensure the SASTF identifies systemic issues and solutions pertaining to survivors of all ages;
  - 3. ensure the task force does not unnecessarily duplicate existing standards, information, or protocols, and;
  - 4. review and approve all task force reports, recommendations, resources, protocols, advice, and other information before release.
- d. The SASTF is staffed by an Administrator, Associate Administrator, and Administrative Assistant who will coordinate and facilitate meetings and activities of the SASTF in accordance with this charter and the guidelines established by the 86<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session in House Bill 1590.
- e. The Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) Survivor Advocate will ensure that proper and adequate crisis intervention and support is provided to those who have been impacted by sexual violence and are engaging with the SASTF.
- f. Communication and cooperation between stakeholders relating to the prevention, investigation, or prosecution of sexual assault or other sex offenses or services provided to survivors is a guiding principle of the SASTF.

#### **IV. Composition**

- a. **Membership:** The SASTF is composed of stakeholders representing various sexual assault service providers, agencies, and levels of government including representation among entities with sexual assault prevention, investigation, and prosecution expertise across the State. At a minimum, membership on the SASTF will include individuals from the following:
  - Office of the Governor
  - Office of the Attorney General
  - Health and Human Services Commission
  - Texas Commission on Law Enforcement



- Texas Forensic Science Commission
  - Texas Department of Public Safety - Crime Laboratory Service
  - Texas Association of Crime Laboratory Directors
  - Texas District and County Attorney's Association
  - Texas Society of Pathologists
  - International Association of Forensic Nurses Texas Chapter
  - **statewide organization** described by Section 264.409, Family Code, or the president's designee;
  - **state sexual assault coalition**, as defined by Section 420.003, or the president's designee;
  - a representative from a **law enforcement** agency appointed by the steering committee described by Subsection (c);
  - a **sexual assault nurse examiner** appointed by the steering committee described by Subsection (c) to represent the interests of health care facilities that perform sexual assault forensic exams; and
  - **other members** considered appropriate by the steering committee described by Subsection (c).
- b. **Steering Committee:** Consisting of the statewide organization described by Section 264.409, Family Code, or the president's designee; the state sexual assault coalition, as defined by Section 420.003, or the president's designee; and the governor, or the governor's designee.
- c. **Working Groups:** An Adult-Focused Working Group and a Child-Focused Working Group will be established within the SASTF. Other ad hoc working groups may be established for the purpose of providing subject matter expertise in the development of SASTF recommendations. Such working groups may be requested by the SASTF and will be reasonably facilitated by OOG staff upon approval of the Steering Committee. All working groups are formed solely for the purpose of informing SASTF members on issues related to the SASTF's mission and purpose.
- d. **External Brain Trust:** This term is used to acknowledge existing experts in the field of sexual assault prevention, investigation, and prosecution, and others who may be called upon to support and inform SASTF members on various issues and processes.

### V. Meetings and Administration

- a. **Frequency, Format, and Financial Considerations:** The SASTF will meet quarterly to review and discuss progress and recommendations, and to share working group status updates. Working groups will meet as needed to review and discuss current policies, procedures and trainings and to create recommendations. The Steering Committee will meet monthly to monitor overall deliverables and review/approve outputs. Conference calls and virtual meetings are permissible and a conference bridge may be used to facilitate participation. Any travel expenses incurred for participation will be the responsibility of the individual task force and working group member.

**VI. SASTF Working Group Member Responsibilities**

- a. Maintain a trauma-informed, survivor-centered perspective at all times;
- b. Work to fulfill the mission and purpose of the SASTF as outlined in this document;
- c. Actively incorporate and uphold the SASTF core values in meeting discussions;
- d. Attend and participate in meetings;
- e. Keep strictly confidential any Task Force working group discussions; and
- f. Refrain from disseminating Task Force work product without express approval from the OOG.

**APPENDIX D: SASTF Working Group Guidelines**

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With my signature below, I affirm that I have read and understand the Governor’s Sexual Assault Survivors’ Task Force (SASTF) Working Group Guidelines document. In the event I am unable to remain a working group member, I will notify OOG staff. I understand that if I am not able to consistently participate in working group meetings, the Steering Committee may consider replacing me as a working group member to ensure ongoing progress and the mission of the SASTF is fulfilled.

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Signature

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Printed Name

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Austin Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI)**

*Educational Campaign Survey*

*Survivor Notification Protocol*

### **Texas Commission in Law Enforcement**

*Basic Peace Officer Course (BPOC) – TCOLE Course #1000696*

*A Trauma-Informed Approach to Sexual Assault Investigations Instructor Guide – TCOLE Course #4070*

*Trauma-Informed Training – Course #470*

### **Children’s Advocacy Centers of Texas**

*Medical Evaluation Guidelines*

### **Health and Human Services Commission**

- *Information for Survivors of Sexual Assault (SAFE-ready facility)*
- *Information for Survivors of Sexual Assault (Facility not SAFE-ready)*

### **Texas Municipal Police Association/Sexual Assault Family Violence Investigator Course**

*Sexual Assault Family Violence Investigator Course (SAFVIC) – TCOLE Course #3264*

*SAFVIC for Telecommunication Professionals – TCOLE Course #3267*

### **Texas Association Against Sexual Assault**

*A Guide for Survivors of Sexual Assault*

### **Texas Department of Criminal Justice**

*Victim Impact Statement Form and Recommended Processing Procedures*

### **Texas Code of Criminal Procedures:** Chapter 56A. Rights of Crime Victims.

- *Subchapter B. Crime Victims' Rights Article 56A.052. Additional Rights of Victims of Sexual Assault, Indecent Assault, Stalking, or Trafficking.*
- *Subchapter F. Forensic Medical Examination of Sexual Assault Victim Reporting Assault Article 56A.251. Request for Forensic Medical Examination.*
- *Subchapter F. Forensic Medical Examination of Sexual Assault Victim Reporting Assault Article 56A.252. Payment of Costs of Examination.*
- *Subchapter F. Forensic Medical Examination of Sexual Assault Victim Reporting Assault Article 56A.254. Payment of Costs for Certain Medical Care.*
- *Subchapter G. Forensic Medical Examination of Sexual Assault Victim Not Reporting Assault Article 56A.303. Forensic Medical Examination.*
- *Subchapter G. Forensic Medical Examination of Sexual Assault Victim Not Reporting Assault Article 56A.305. Payment of Costs for Certain Medical Care.*
- *Subchapter G. Forensic Medical Examination of Sexual Assault Victim Not Reporting Assault Article 56A.306. Procedures for Transfer and Preservation of Evidence.*

### Texas Penal Code:

- *Chapter 22. Assaultive Offenses Section 22.011. Sexual Assault.*

### Texas Health and Safety Code:

- *Subchapter A. Emergency Services for Survivors of Sexual Assault.*
  - *Section 323.004. Minimum Standards for Emergency Services.*
  - *Section 323.053. Minimum Standards for Safe Programs.*
  - *Section 323.054. Forensic Medical Examination by Safe Program; Informed Consent.*
- *Subchapter A. Emergency Services for Survivors of Sexual Assault Section 323.0045. Basic Sexual Assault Forensic Evidence Collection Training.*
- *Subchapter A. Emergency Services for Survivors of Sexual Assault.*
  - *Section 323.005. Information Form.*
  - *Section 323.0051. Information Form for Sexual Assault Survivors at Certain Facilities.*
  - *Section 323.0052. Information Form for Sexual Assault Survivors Who Have Not Reported Assault.*
- *Subchapter A. Emergency Services for Survivors of Sexual Assault Section 323.008. Data Publication.*
- *Subchapter B. Sexual Assault Forensic Examination Programs Section 323.054. Forensic Medical Examination by Safe Program; Informed Consent.*

### Texas Occupational Code:

- *Subchapter F. Training Programs, Schools, and Policies Section 1701.2551. Basic Peace Officer Training Course.*

### Texas Government Code:

- *Subchapter A. General Provisions Section 420.011. Certification by Attorney General; Rules.*
- *Subchapter A. Planning Entities Section 772.0064. Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force.*
- *Subchapter A. Planning Entities Section 772.0064. Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force.*

# Rape Kit Testing and Tracking Process Diagram

