



## Office of the Texas Governor Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force

Greetings All!

As we wind down our work for 2023, we want to extend our appreciation to all Task Force members, working group members, subject matter experts, and state agency partners for their dedication to the invaluable work of the SASTF this year. We would especially like to recognize and express our deepest gratitude to the survivors and family members of victims/survivors, who have contributed their voices and shared their lived experiences to create meaningful change and improve Texas' response to sexual violence.

In this issue of our newsletter, we are pleased to introduce *new* SASTF Associate Administrator, Alex Jones, and four new Task Force members. We feature an article written by Survivor Leader, Lavinia Masters, and highlight other Task Force members in the field. Finally, this issue includes information about training opportunities and funding opportunities through the Office of the Governor.

### **Did You Know?**

The Office of the Governor has funds available for District Attorney's Offices for costs associated with forensic analysis of physical evidence.

SASTF Activities – 2023 Summary:

- Senate Bill 1401 and Senate Bill 1402, containing a majority of the SASTF's 2022 policy recommendations, passed in the 88<sup>th</sup> Legislature and were signed by Governor Abbott. These bills promoted survivor healing, strengthened statewide efforts, and enhanced systems responses.
- Added a representative from the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) to the Task Force to provide insight into the child welfare system.
- Onboarded 10 new survivor leaders to the Survivor-Centered Working Group and Services for Male Survivors Working Group.
- Contracted with Texas A&M Health Center of Excellence in Forensic Nursing to implement a pilot project for coaching and developing Forensic Nursing Programs. This program will support the development of SAFE-Ready Facilities, including hospitals, freestanding emergency centers, and SAFE programs (community-based

SANE Programs), and increase access to high-quality medical forensic examinations for adult and child sexual assault survivors in Texas.

- Initiated focused working group discussions on the seven Whole Survivor Care Guiding Principles, which are a preliminary articulation of statewide standards for best practices of funding and provision of services to survivors.
- Pursuant to SB 1401, created an 8-hour law enforcement training articulating a trauma-informed, survivor-centered law enforcement response to child sexual abuse and adult sexual assault cases.
- Collaborated with the Texas Department of Public Safety to ensure continued progress and improvements are made to Texas' sexual assault evidence kit backlog.

Again, our heartfelt thanks to all of you who made these memorable moments and milestones possible, and our best wishes for a safe and happy holiday season. We look forward to seeing you in 2024!

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## New Staff Member



**David "Alex" Jones**

SASTF Associate Administrator

David "Alex" Jones has joined SASTF as the Associate Administrator. Alex comes to us with a diverse range of professional experience and is greatly looking forward to contributing to the SASTF's mission. Alex is a native of West Houston and graduated from The University of Houston with a degree in Criminal Justice. Out of college, Alex went to work as a sales professional in the IP Security and Business Technology Industry. Alex later followed his heart and God's calling on his life and went to work as an investigator with The Department of Family & Protective Services (DFPS).

Alex has spent the past 5 years as a high school social studies teacher in his home district of Cy-Fair. Alex and the love of his life, Jennifer, were married in 2021 and welcomed their beautiful baby boy, Jackson, in December 2022. They are expecting a second baby boy in February of 2023.

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## New Task Force Members



### **Joy Rauls**

Chief Executive Officer, Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas (CACTX)

Joy Rauls is Chief Executive Officer of Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas, Inc, the largest statewide network of children's advocacy centers (CACs) in the nation, representing 70 CACs who serve over 70,000 children annually. Joy began her work with CACTX in 2007 as the Director of Community Relations and has been the CEO since 2010. Prior to joining CACTX, she worked as the General Counsel and Chief of Staff to State Senator Florence Shapiro. Joy holds a BA in Government from the University of Texas at Austin and a Juris Doctorate from Southern Methodist University School of Law. Joy and her husband of 18 years, Doug, live in Austin with their daughter, Kate and son, Bennett. She is an avid runner and enjoys a daily cappuccino at the local coffee shop. Joy has been recognized with the Community Impact Award by the OneStar Foundation, the National Children's Alliance's Outstanding Chapter Leader award, and as an Austin Business Journal Profiles in Power Finalist.

## **Clint Cox**

Deputy Associate Commissioner - Child Protective Services,  
Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS)

Clint Cox is a former Texas Peace Officer who joined DFPS as a Special Investigator in 2010 and has since dedicated his career to making a positive impact on individuals and families. Clint has embraced leadership positions at DFPS, serving as the Program Director for Special Investigations and Regional Director for Special Investigations, and later assuming the role of Director of Child Care Investigations, where his strategic insights and adept leadership enhanced the department's approach to ensuring family welfare. His skillful blend of empathy and effective action indelibly shaped the Department's commitment to providing essential services. Currently, Clint holds the position of Deputy Associate Commissioner for Child Protective Investigations.



## **Allison Garcia**

Assistant Attorney General & Sexual Assault Prevention and  
Crisis Services (SAPCS) and Policy Manager - Crime Victim  
Services Division - Office of the Attorney General (OAG)

Allison Garcia worked as the Legislative Director and General Counsel for a Texas state representative from 2013 to 2015, where she became interested in providing direct legal services to underserved communities. That interest led her to work for nearly eight years as a legal aid attorney, providing legal services to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, as well as community education and outreach to domestic violence and sexual assault service providers. She now manages Sexual Assault Prevention and Crisis Services and Policy for the Crime Victims Services Division at the Office of the Attorney General. Allison is a proud graduate of the University of Texas School of Law and Austin College in Sherman, Texas.

## **Catherine Bass**

Chief Strategy Officer & Executive Vice President, CACTX

Catherine Bass is the Chief Strategy Officer and Executive Vice President at CACTX and began her work with the organization in 2006. In this role, she provides leadership for strategic program initiatives and overall organizational strategy. Prior to joining CACTX, she served as Executive Director for the Children's Advocacy Center of the South Plains in Lubbock. Catherine has spent her entire career working with children in non-profits, including serving as Program Director for the Boys and Girls Clubs of Lubbock and Assistant Program Director of an AmeriCorps program that focused on mentor programs. Catherine's husband is a high school English teacher/writer/musician/comic book aficionado and teenage daughter is a musical-loving thespian, whose first love is our one-year-old maltipoo.



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## **Thank you, Justin Wood!**

Justin Wood has been a member of the SASTF since inception in December of 2019. Justin's dynamic, thoughtful, wise, creative and supportive leadership flowed through every aspect of his work with our group, including as a member of the Steering Committee, co-chair of the Policy Working Group, and chair of the Prosecutor Working Group. Justin has been by our side through every challenge met, every milestone achieved, every tear shed, and every laugh shared. Those who have been part of our collective journey thus far know that Justin has been key to the extraordinary partnership we have created on our Task Force – one that has led to direct, impactful change for sexual assault survivors in Texas. Such history we have shared! Justin, you will always be a part of this team. We will miss you so much, and we wish you the very best!

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## **The Darkness of Rape to The Light of The Texas Women's Hall of Fame**



In recognition of her selfless commitment to speak for survivors of sexual violence, bring awareness to the nationwide rape kit backlog, and bring justice through legislative action, Task Force member and Survivor Leader Lavinia Masters was inducted into the Texas Women's Hall of Fame in November 2023. In celebration of her induction, we are honored to present the following excerpt from Mrs. Masters' article, "The Darkness of Rape to the Light of the Texas Women's Hall of Fame". To access the full article, please click [here](#).



When Governor Greg Abbott signed HB 8: The Lavinia Masters Act, into law in September 2019, I knew beyond a shadow of doubt that I was doing exactly what I was purposed to do! Although I am the namesake of this law, it was never about me because I knew that going back into the darkness that I could never prosecute or seek justice against my assailant. I went in knowing that with my rape kit sitting on the shelves for over 20 years that I had already missed 2 statute of limitations and even the possibility of not identifying my rapist had he not been in CODIS as a known felon. However, none of this mattered now because I had already found my light and was determined to go back and rescue others.

Many say that I was still denied justice but when I get to speak publicly to empower victims, serve in spaces or on boards such as Congress and or legislation as I advocate for victims and their justice, train and facilitate trauma informed and survivor centered agendas to law enforcement and various organizations, while knowing whom my rapist is, I would say that is my justice reward.

Then there are the accolades, recognitions and awards that I have received over the years that bring my heart so much joy, yet I still say that none of that really matters because I do not shine my light to be seen for personal recognition but to be seen as a beacon of hope for all survivors. However, it was the unexpected recognition of being inducted into the Texas Women's Hall of Fame that literally took my breath away.

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## Task Force Members in the Field



Task Force members Rose Luna and Dr. Stacey Mitchell participated in the [Texas Association Against Sexual Assault's \(TAASA\) Ask Me Anything](#) on the topic of TAMU's Assessment and Care for Trauma Survivors (ACTS) Clinic. The ACTS Clinic provides virtual follow-up care for individuals 18 and older who have experienced trauma and violence such as sexual assault, domestic violence, strangulation and physical assault.



Jarvis!

Jarvis Parsons, Task Force member and Brazos County District Attorney, was presented the C. Chris Marshall Award by the Texas District and County Attorneys Association (TDCAA). This award is presented each year to the most distinguished trainers of law and ethics in the state of Texas. Parsons' award recognizes his work in training new prosecutors at TDCAA's Trial Skills Course. This course is held twice a year and trains new prosecutors from across the state on the fundamentals of prosecution. Congratulations,

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## Funding Opportunities

### Office of the Governor Funding Opportunities

- [District Attorney Testing of Forensic Evidence Grant Program](#)

The purpose of this announcement is to solicit applications from district attorney offices for costs associated with the forensic analysis of physical evidence.

- [General Victim Assistance Grant Program](#)

The purpose of this program is to provide services and assistance directly to victims of crime to speed their recovery and aid them through the criminal justice process.

- Sexual Assault Evidence Testing Grant Program

The purpose of this announcement is to solicit applications from law enforcement agencies for costs associated with the forensic analysis of physical evidence in relation to sexual assault or other sex offenses.

- Sexual Assault Forensic Exam (SAFE)-Ready Facilities Program

The purpose of this announcement is to solicit applications from hospital facilities seeking to achieve or maintain a Sexual Assault Forensic Exam (SAFE)-Ready designation, as well as non-profit corporations seeking to operate or maintain a SAFE Program as defined in Chapter 323 of the Texas Health and Safety Code.

- Violence Against Women Justice and Training Program

The purpose of this announcement is to solicit applications for projects that promote a coordinated, multi-disciplinary approach to improve the justice system's response to violent crimes against women, including domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking.

These and other funding opportunities of interest can be found on the [eGrants website](#).

## **Texas Association Against Sexual Assault Funding Opportunity**

- Sexual Assault Program Capacity Building

This grant will support non-profit organizations that are rape crisis centers, stand-alone rape crisis centers, or dual sexual assault/domestic violence programs seeking to build a strong program to serve adult survivors of sexual violence. For more information about this grant and to apply, please visit [TAASA's website](#).

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## **Training Opportunities**

### **Following the Evidence in Child Abuse and Child Exploitation Cases**

National Criminal Justice Training Center

December 12-13, 2023



[Register for this Training](#)

## **Interdiction for the Protection of Children (IPC) Training Course**

Texas Department of Public Safety

- January 23-24, 2024: Pharr, Texas
- January 30-31, 2024: Plano, Texas
- February 20-21, 2024: Fort Worth, Texas
- February 28-29, 2024: Dallas, Texas
- March 6-7, 2024: Blossom, Texas

[Register for these Trainings](#)

## **Creating a Community Action Plan for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse**

National Criminal Justice Training Center

January 30-31, 2024

[Register for this Training](#)

## **International Conference on Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, and the Cycle of Justice**

End Violence Against Women International

April 1-3, 2024 in San Diego, California

*\*Fee associated with this conference*

[Register for this Conference](#)



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