



Office of the Texas Governor Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force

As we approach the end of 2024 and begin planning for 2025, we want to extend our deepest gratitude to the SASTF Steering Committee, Task Force members, working group members, and survivor leaders for their continued efforts to improve Texas' response to sexual violence.

In this issue of our newsletter, we offer sincere thanks to former Task Force/Steering Committee member, Liz Boyce, and our Fall Intern, Mark Eliff. We also spotlight current SASTF Survivor-Centered Working Group Member, Brittany Johnston, for her work with Alliance for Children and advocating for child survivors of sexual abuse. Finally, we highlight funding opportunities through the Office of the Governor's Public Safety Office, along with upcoming training opportunities.

SASTF Activities – 2024 Summary

- Collaborated with the Office of the Attorney General to **remove** the requirement for law enforcement to authorize a sexual assault forensic medical exam for exams after August 31, 2023, and **streamline** the Crime Victims' Compensation process.
- Implemented two new subject matter expert working groups: the **Judicial Working Group** and the **Leadership in Law Enforcement Working Group**.
- Developed a one-hour mandated sexual assault training for hospital emergency room administrative staff.
- Translated the [Sexual Assault Survivors' Rights Guide](#) for adult survivors into six additional languages, including Spanish, to ensure it can be widely utilized by individuals who speak languages other than English
- Added a new service category, *Specialized Services for Male Survivors*, to the [Resources for Sexual Assault Survivors Online Directory](#) to assist male survivors more easily identifying providers in their communities.
- Launched a new [Quarterly Webinar Series](#).

- Continued to work closely with the Texas Department of Public Safety to ensure law enforcement agencies meet statutory guidelines for submitting **Sexual Assault Kits (SAKs)** to crime laboratories for processing.
- Completed focused working group discussions on Whole Survivor Care Guiding Principles #1 - #4, a preliminary articulation of statewide standards for best practices for funding and provision of services to survivors.
- Submitted the [2024 SASTF Biennial Report to the Texas Legislature](#).

We are deeply honored to continue this work on behalf of all Texans, particularly those who have been impacted by sexual violence. 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 2025!

Working Group Member Spotlight: Brittany Johnston

Brittany Johnston

Sr. Executive of Administration
Alliance for Children

Brittany Johnston is the Sr. Executive of Administration at Alliance for Children, the Child Advocacy Center (CAC) serving Tarrant County, Texas. She, like so many others, was not familiar with CACs until she had to walk through the doors of one with her brave five-year-old daughter. Brittany began her career in child advocacy in 2017, a few years after her firsthand experience as a client family. The mission to protect children through teamed investigations, healing services and community education is something that is very dear to her heart.

Brittany became a member of the Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force's Survivor-Centered Working Group in 2020 to share her voice as a parent of a survivor. In this role, she hopes to use her unique perspective as a parent with lived experience and as a CAC professional to help make improvements



for survivors of sexual assault. She believes everything we do to ensure quality care, protection, services, and support matters and is vital to healing.

Brittany currently lives in Arlington with her two children, along with several furry and feathery animals.

Special Thanks!

Liz Boyce

The Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force expresses our deepest gratitude to Liz Boyce for her exceptional service and unwavering commitment to survivors across Texas.

Since the Task Force's inception, Liz has been a cornerstone of the SASTF's work; serving as a member of the Steering Committee, Co-Chair of the Prosecutor Working Group, and Chair of the Policy Working Group.

Liz's leadership has left an indelible mark on the Task Force, and her contributions have been vital to our success. Liz oversaw the implementation of the Survivor Liaison, ensuring that survivor leaders receive the support needed to engage in this vital work. Working closely with staff, she played a key role in driving Task Force initiatives and projects forward. Her dedication ensured SASTF's policy recommendations were effectively drafted, successfully filed, and ultimately, passed and implemented.

While we will miss her dearly, we are thrilled to see her continue making a meaningful impact in her new role as an Administrative Law Judge with the Health & Human Services Commission (HHSC). Please join us in thanking Liz and wishing her well in this next chapter of her career!



SASTF Fall Intern: Mark Eliff

Hello everyone! This fall I had the privilege of interning with the Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force (SASTF) in the Office of the Governor. Over the course of my internship, I was provided with many opportunities to attend meetings, virtual and in-person, with remarkable people and participate in tough conversations regarding sexual assault in the state of Texas. I was assigned research projects that made me feel confident that real change can be done. Furthermore, my favorite project was being able to conduct interviews with prosecutors who gave me great advice as I pursue becoming a prosecutor myself and allowed me to gather additional insight for the Task Force to have a better understanding of what goes on during the trial process. The work that the SASTF has done is nothing short of incredible and has helped me

tremendously by emphasizing the importance of victim advocacy. As I leave this internship, I am very grateful to have worked with amazing people contributing to the greater good. Being an intern here has been an honor, and I look forward to witnessing the SASTF's ongoing influence.

Community Efforts and Successes

Soft Interview Room Installation at Lubbock Christian University Police Department

Chief Mike Smith, member of the SASTF's Leadership in Law Enforcement Working Group, and Stacy Terrell, member of the SASTF's Survivor-Centered Working Group, teamed up with Tracy Matheson, Task Force Member and Founder of [**Project Beloved: The Molly Jane Mission**](#), to install a Soft Interview Room for sexual assault survivors at the Lubbock Christian University Police Department. Soft rooms help survivors feel physically and emotionally safer, minimize the potential for re-traumatization, and have a positive impact on a survivor's ability to participate in the investigative interview process.

This collaborative project also brought together [**One Voice**](#), a nonprofit serving both teenage and young women who have been sex trafficked in Lubbock and surrounding areas, and the [**Voice of Hope**](#), Lubbock's rape crisis center that provides support to all

persons impacted by sexual violence through advocacy, awareness, and collaboration. The Lubbock Christian University Associates participated in the project by funding the video and audio equipment, and the furniture and decoration for the Soft Interview Room were donated by Project Beloved.



(Left to Right: Stacy Terrell – M Ed LPC-S and TAASA Survivor Advisory Board Member, Dacia Hamby, CEO – One Voice Home, Kristin Murray, ED – Voice of Hope, Jessica Treharne, Officer – Lubbock Christian University Police Department, and Mike Smith, Chief – Lubbock Christian University Police Department)

Statewide Electronic Tracking System Report

Texas Government Code, Section [420.034](#) (h) requires the Texas Department of Public Health to publish the "Statewide Electronic Tracking System Report" by December 1st of each year. The report uses data from the Texas Sexual Assault Evidence Tracking System, also known as Track-Kit, to identify the number of sexual assault evidence kits that have not yet been submitted for laboratory analysis or for which laboratory analysis has not yet been completed. **Track-Kit only tracks evidence kits collected on or after September 1, 2019.**

[Statewide Electronic Tracking System Report \(2024\)](#)

Funding Opportunities

Office of the Governor Funding Opportunities Fiscal Year 2026:

District Attorney 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.

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.

Types of continuing education eligible through the SAFE-Ready Facilities Grant funding include:

- Foundational SANE education courses (adult/adolescent & pediatric)
- Conferences related to forensic health care topics
- Leadership education/courses/conferences for SANE coordinators
- Preceptor training courses
- Coaching/mentoring courses
- Competency assessments
- Simulation courses
- Certification prep courses and examinations
- Education materials such as reference books
- Licenses for electronic materials for education

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.

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.

Services may include the following:

- Responding to the emotional and physical needs of crime victims;
- Assisting victims in stabilizing their lives after a victimization;
- Assisting victims to understand and participate in the criminal justice system; and
- Providing victims with safety and security.

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

Training Opportunities

End Violence Against Women International (EVAWI): International Conference on Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, and Forging New Pathways

Marriott Anaheim – Anaheim, California

April 22 – 24, 2025

[EVAWI Conference Registration](#)

2025 Crime Victim Services Division Conference

The University of Texas at Austin AT&T Hotel and Conference Center – Austin, Texas

January 21 – 22, 2025

[Crime Victims Services Conference Registration](#)

Texas Department of Public Safety – Interdiction for the Protection of Children (IPC) Training

- January 8 – 9, 2025: Dallas, Texas
- January 15 – 16, 2025: Fairfield, Texas
- February 19 – 20, 2025: Crockett, Texas
- March 3 – 4, 2025: North Carolina
- March 11 – 12, 2025: Tyler, Texas

[IPC Training Registration Link](#)

Texas District & County Attorneys Association (TDCAA) Prosecutor Trial Skills Course

Double Tree by Hilton – Austin, Texas
January 12 – 17, 2025

[TDCAA Prosecutor Skills Course Registration](#)

Texas District & County Attorneys Association (TDCAA) Investigator Conference

Texas A&M Hotel & Conference Center – College Station, Texas
February 3 – 6, 2025

[TDCAA Investigator Conference Registration](#)

SASTF February Webinar - Addressing College Campus Sexual Assault: Prevention, Response, and Support

February 27, 2025, from 11:30am - 1:00pm

[SASTF Webinar Registration](#)