



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

Greetings,

We are pleased to share the December issue of the Governor's Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force (SASTF) newsletter, featuring the latest updates, resources, and opportunities from across our statewide network.

In this issue, we are proud to spotlight Working Group Member Vicki Mason and share important updates to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Victim Impact Statement forms. We also introduce the House Bill 47 Lease Termination Guide, which serves as a valuable resource to help advocates support survivors navigating the lease termination process. Additionally, we share new resources supporting Sexual Assault Support Teams (SARTs).

Additionally, we are pleased to announce that new resources for male survivors have been added to the SASTF "Resources for Survivors" webpage. This issue also includes current funding opportunities and upcoming training opportunities for professionals working to strengthen Texas's response to sexual assault.

As we close out the year, we extend our gratitude for your continued commitment to supporting survivors and advancing this important work. From all of us at the SASTF, including our members and staff, we wish you a joyful holiday season.



Sincerely,  
The SASTF Team

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## New Task Force Member



**Judge Andrew Bench**  
196<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court

Judge Bench is a graduate of Greenville High School, East Texas State University, and the Southern Methodist University School of Law. He was elected Judge of the Hunt County Court at Law in 2006 and served as Judge of that court until 2014. He has been Judge of the 196<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court for the last 10 years.

In addition to his judicial service, Judge Bench is a member of the Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force Judicial Working Group, a member of the Texas Board of Legal Specialization's Judicial

Administration Advisory Committee, and former member of the Board of Directors of the Texas Center for the Judiciary.

He has been the Chairman of the Hunt County Bail Bond Board since 2009 and a member of the Hunt County Juvenile Board from 2007 to present, serving as chairman from 2007 to 2014.

Judge Bench resides in Greenville, Texas with his wife and two children.

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## Working Group Member Spotlight: Vicki Mason

Vicki Mason is an Administrative Assistant with the Harris County District Attorney's Office and has been employed there for over twenty years. Vicki thought she was familiar with the legal process, but did not realize how complex that process would be when navigating the justice system with a special needs child. With the help of community resources, her daughter was able to bravely testify. That testimony helped the jury be able to clearly understand her challenges and how the defendant had preyed upon her vulnerabilities and trust. The defendant was ultimately found guilty and sentenced to thirty-five years in the Texas Department of Corrections. To overcome and heal from the trauma, Vicki knew she wanted to be able to represent her daughter and advocate for others who were or might be going through similar situations.



Since 2020, Vicki has been a member of the Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force's Survivor Working Group and recently joined the Prosecutors' Working Group. In April, she was able to share her daughter's story for Autism Awareness, Sexual Assault Awareness, and Child Abuse Awareness Month. Vicki was also asked to give her input to TDCJ's Victim Impact Statement (VIS) Revision Committee. She continues to share the needs and benefits of having resources that accommodate children and adults with differing abilities and hopes to keep sharing for the foreseeable future.

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## TDCJ Victim Impact Statement Forms

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) has released updated Victim Impact Statement (VIS) forms. Following each legislative session, TDCJ convenes a VIS Revision Committee to incorporate statutory changes and to ensure that VIS documents remain trauma-informed and responsive to the needs of crime victims.

SASTF Administrator Nicole Martinez participated in this year's committee as part of the revision process. We would like to acknowledge SASTF Member Allison Garcia and Vicki Mason, member of the SASTF Survivor-Centered Working Group and Prosecutor Working Group, for their participation in and contributions to the 2025 VIS Revision Committee. Their involvement provided important insight into the needs and experiences of survivors and system partners.

The SASTF recently hosted a webinar with Angie McCown, Director of TDCJ Victim Services, highlighting the critical importance of the VIS process. This webinar, along with all previous SASTF webinars, can be viewed anytime on the [SASTF Webinar Archive](#).

Online versions of the updated documents are available [here](#). All updated brochures can be downloaded as PDFs and ordered as hard copies through your IVSS account [here](#).

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## House Bill 47 Implementation Guidance

### **Texas Association Against Sexual Assault's (TAASA) Lease Termination Guide**

The [Lease Termination Guide](#) serves as a valuable resource for advocates who support survivors of sexual assault. It offers clear, step-by-step instructions for terminating lease agreements, highlighting the legal protections provided by House Bill 47, which took effect on September 1, 2025. The primary goal of this guide is to empower advocates with the knowledge and tools they need to provide accurate information and empathetic support,

helping survivors navigate a challenging and often overwhelming period in their lives.

The Guide outlines the survivors' rights as detailed in the revised Texas Property Code § 92.0161 and walks advocates through each stage of the process. This includes determining eligibility, preparing necessary paperwork, notifying landlords, planning for safe move-outs, and conducting follow-ups after relocation. The Guide also emphasizes trauma-informed practices and encourages advocates to respect survivors' choices and autonomy throughout this process to ensure that survivors receive safe and respectful assistance.

### **Texas Association Against Sexual Assault's (TAASA) SART Report Guides**

County and regional Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs) play a key role in coordinating trauma-informed responses to adult survivors across Texas. Each SART is required to submit a biennial report to their Commissioners Court outlining team membership, key data, and a review of their local sexual assault response protocols. With the passage of [House Bill 47](#), these reports must also be submitted to the Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force, strengthening statewide understanding of community needs and supporting more consistent responses across Texas. To assist with this transition, TAASA has developed clear and accessible guidance to help SARTs and County Commissioners understand their responsibilities under the new reporting mandate, with step-by-step instructions and practical information to support successful implementation. These resources include the [SART Reporting Guide](#) and the [Commissioner's Court Reporting Guide](#), both available on TAASA's website. Please contact TAASA at [sart@taasa.org](mailto:sart@taasa.org) for additional information or with any questions.

### **Office of the Attorney General's Emergency Medical Care**

[Emergency Medical Care \(EMC\)](#) compensation helps ease the financial burden of costs of medical care provided during a sexual assault exam, which can include medical treatment during the exam, medications prescribed at the time of the exam, and EMS transport to the hospital. House Bill 47 brings meaningful updates for sexual assault survivors. For forensic exams conducted after August 31, 2025, House Bill 47 expands EMC benefits to include follow-up medical treatment that is prescribed and directly related to the sexual assault. This follow-up care will now be covered for up to 30 days

after the initial exam, helping survivors receive necessary medical support without added financial strain during an important stage of healing.

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## Resources for Male Survivors

Sexual assault and abuse can affect anyone, including boys and men, yet male survivors often encounter significant barriers to recognition, disclosure, and healing. To help raise awareness, reduce stigma, and connect male survivors with compassionate, trauma-informed support, the SASTF has added a new Resources for Male Survivors section to our [Resources for Survivors](#) page.

This section was developed through discussion with the SASTF's Services for Male Survivors Working Group, ensuring the resources reflect the unique needs and experiences of male survivors. Together, we remain committed to ensuring that every survivor has access to the understanding, validation, and support they deserve.

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## Funding Opportunities

### 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 or from local law enforcement, district attorneys, medical examiners, and coroner's offices for costs associated with forensic genetic genealogical DNA analysis.

### **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 assist hospital facilities in achieving or maintaining the 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.

This solicitation is for programs seeking to provide general victim services to broad categories of victim populations that may include victims of commercial sexual exploitation or trafficking, including emergency and long-term residential placements, drop-in centers, and innovative direct services for children and transition-age youth.

### **DNA Testing Grant Program**

The purpose of this announcement is to solicit applications from law enforcement agencies for costs associated with performing duties imposed on those agencies under Sec. 411.1471 (DNA Records of Persons Arrested or Convicted of Certain Offenses) or Subchapter B-1, Chapter 420, Government Code (Analysis of Evidence of Sexual Assault or Other Sex Offense), as applicable.

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

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## **Training Opportunities**

### **SASTF January Webinar: *Exploring Texas DPS' Limited-Consent DNA Testing Program***

January 29, 2026, from 11:30am - 1:00pm

**SASTF Webinar Registration**

**Correctional Management Institute of Texas (CMIT) 2026 Women in Criminal Justice Conference**

Galveston Island Convention Center - Galveston, Texas

February 9 - 12, 2026

[CMIT Registration](#)

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

[IPC Registration Link](#)

**Sexual Assault Family Violence Investigator Course (SAFVIC) Trainings**

[SAFVIC Registration Link](#)