



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

Welcome to the first edition of the Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force (SASTF) newsletter!

It has truly been an incredible year since the Task Force launched on February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Despite the significant challenges experienced by our state and our nation in 2020, we've made meaningful progress for Texas' adult and child survivors of sexual violence. Highlighted in the SASTF's **first Biennial Report to the Texas Legislature**, the Task Force held over 50 meetings, and submitted over 150 recommendations to the Texas Evidence Collection Advisory Board, the Office of the Attorney General of Texas, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, and the Texas Department of Public Safety; set forth 11 policy recommendations for consideration in the upcoming 87th Legislative Session; and worked with UT Austin's Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault to produce a comprehensive, statewide sexual assault survivors' **resource inventory**.

As we head into our second year, we are focused on objectives that get to the core of some of the most difficult challenges and meaningful opportunities facing our state as we continue to improve services and supports for adults and children affected by sexual violence. We are excited to be launching this newsletter as a forum to keep our Task Force members, working group members, subject matter experts, and other SASTF stakeholders up-to-date on the latest SASTF-related news, announcements, learning opportunities, and much more.

We are hoping this newsletter will be a collaborative endeavor, and we welcome any contributions you may have! Please feel free to **message us** your suggestions, feedback, and contributions.

Thank you for all you do on behalf of Texas' victims and survivors of sexual violence.

Sincerely,

The Public Safety Office - SASTF Team

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## SASTF Member Organizations

The SASTF comprises the following member organizations, which were mandated by HB 1590 (86<sup>th</sup> Regular Session), as well as additional subject matter experts (SMEs):

- Office of the Governor (OOG)\*
- Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA)\*
- Children's Advocacy Center of Texas (CACTX)\*
- Office of the Attorney General (OAG)
- Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC)
- Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE)
- Texas Forensic Science Commission
- Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS)
- Texas Association of Crime Laboratory Directors
- Texas District and County Attorney's Association (TDCAA)
- Texas Society of Pathologists
- International Association of Forensic Nurses (IAFN) - Texas Chapter
- Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS)
- Law Enforcement Representatives
- Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Representatives
- Child Abuse Pediatrician Representative
- Survivor/Family Survivor Representatives
- Judicial Representatives

*\*Member of SASTF Steering Committee*

**SASTF 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.

**SASTF Mission:**

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

***Special thanks to all of our Task Force members for your ongoing commitment and dedication to the SASTF's mission, vision, and values. It is an honor to work alongside each of you.***

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## **SASTF Policy Recommendations Status – Texas 87th Legislative Session**

The Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force included **11** policy recommendation in their first Biennial Report to the Texas Legislature. Several bills have been filed this session that contain SASTF recommendations. You can follow the links below to review these bills via **Texas Legislature Online (TLO)**:

- **SB 409** by Rep. Menéndez - Relating to **evidence included in the statewide electronic tracking system for evidence** of a sexual assault or other sex offense.
- **HB 1426** by Rep. Shaheen - Relating to the **forensic medical examination of a victim of sexual assault who is a minor**.
- **HB 2462** by Rep. Neave - Relating to a **forensic medical examination** occurring with respect to a **sexual assault reported to a law enforcement agency**.
- **HB 2463** by Rep. Neave - Relating to the **tracking of evidence** of sexual assault and other sex offenses.
- **HB 2464** by Rep. Neave - Relating to **noncompliance with provisions regarding the collection, analysis, and preservation of evidence** of sexual assault and other sex offenses.
- **HB 2706** by Rep. Howard - Relating to the **reporting of sexual assault** and other sex offenses, to the **emergency services and care provided to victims** of those offenses, and to the processes associated with **preserving and analyzing the evidence** of those offenses.
- **SB 1299** by Sen. Nelson - Relating to the **reporting of sexual assault** and other sex offenses, to the **emergency services and care provided to victims** of those offenses, and to the processes associated with **preserving and analyzing the evidence** of those offenses.

Below are other sexual-assault related legislation:

- **SB 476** by Sen. Nelson - Relating to **establishment of county sexual assault response teams**.

- **HB 3607** by Rep. Leach - Relating to nonsubstantive additions to, revisions of, and **corrections in enacted codes**, to the nonsubstantive codification or disposition of various laws omitted from enacted codes, and to conforming codifications enacted by the 86th Legislature to other Acts of that legislature.

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## Task Force Member Spotlight: Rebecca Fears

### Rebecca Fears, RN, CEN, SANE-A, CA-CP SANE

Forensic Nurse Coordinator at University of Texas Tyler Health  
International Association of Forensic Nurses (IAFN) – Texas Chapter  
Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force Member



Rebecca Fears is a Registered Nurse with over thirty years of experience providing bedside care to victims of violent crimes and their families. She is also a proud United States Army Veteran who served for 26 years both as a Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) and as an Officer in the Army Nurse Corps. As a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner SANE/SAFE/SAMFE (66H8AM5) she cares for women, men, soldiers, and children who need Medical/Forensic care. She is a RAINN maker and believes in the need to prevent and eliminate the pandemic of violence that we all currently face. To this end, she is a Lifetime member of the International Association of Forensic Nurses (IAFN) and Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA). She has also joined the Texas Council of Family Violence (TCFV) and believes in their [mission](#) to create safer communities and

freedom from domestic violence. In 2017 she joined the University of Texas Health East Texas family and is working full-time as their Forensic Nurse Coordinator. As of the first of this year, she took the reins as the President of the Texas Chapter of IAFN and has set about rewriting their bylaws to create a seat at the table for more Forensic Nurses across the state in regional chairs, a Novice chair, and has plans for many more exciting changes!

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## SASTF in the News

The Texas Tribune released an article on February 3, 2021 titled [Texas lawmakers reformed key sexual assault laws in 2019. Advocates hope the progress continues this session despite the pandemic.](#) Referenced in this article are the 11 policy recommendations the SASTF made in the [SASTF's Biennial Report to the Texas Legislature](#), as well as some key findings from UT-IDVSA's [Resources for Texas Sexual Assault Survivors Report](#).

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## New SASTF Administrative Assistant

### LaDonna McCray

We are excited to introduce our new SASTF Administrative Assistant, LaDonna McCray! LaDonna joined the Public Safety Office team on Monday, March 15<sup>th</sup>. She has spent the last several years working in a variety of capacities for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), Victim Services Division (VSD). LaDonna brings a wealth of administrative and program operational support experience to our team, including meeting planning, coordination and documentation; development and evaluation of administrative policies, procedures and guidelines; maintaining divisional calendars; preparing communication documents and correspondence; and managing document databases and repositories.



LaDonna also has extensive experience interacting with victims/survivors, external stakeholders, and the general public as a member of the TDCJ-VSD team.

Welcome, LaDonna!

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## Learning Opportunities

### EVAWI's Virtual Conference on Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Trauma and Resilience

- **Dates:** Tuesday, April 6, 2021 - Thursday, April 8, 2021
- **Description:** The End Violence Against Women International (EVAWI) annual conferences focus on sexual assault, intimate partner violence, stalking, human trafficking and elder abuse. EVAWI consistently brings together law enforcement personnel, prosecutors, victim advocates, judges, parole and probation officers, rape crisis workers, health care professionals, faith community members, educators, researchers and others in this three-day conference highlighting promising practices and emerging issues to effectively respond to these crimes in all communities.
- **Cost:** \$645

[EVAWI Conference Website](#)

### 16th Annual Virtual Conference on Crimes Against Women

- **Dates:** May 17-19 & 24-26, 2021 This year's Virtual Conference will feature 6 half-days of training split over 2 weeks to allow for maximum flexibility in your schedule!
- **Description:** The Conference on Crimes Against Women (CCAW) is the national clearinghouse of best practices for law enforcement, prosecuting attorneys, advocates, medical personnel, emergency telecommunicators, probation and parole officers and others who work in the area of crimes against women. Recognizing that these crimes are unique in nature, CCAW provides the most up-to-date, relevant and effective training and techniques that exist to battle this epidemic.
- **Cost:** \$425
- **More information can be found on the [Conference Brochure](#).**

[CCAW Website](#)

### Strangulation Series: The Sexualization of Strangulation: Felony or Fetish?

- **Dates:** Thursday, May 20, 2021 & Friday, May 21, 2021



- **Cost:** 2-day Strangulation Pass \$150 or Add-on with Virtual CCAW Conference Pass = \$125

[Strangulation Series Website](#)