



Office of the Texas Governor Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force

Greetings all and welcome to the March edition of the Governor's Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force (SASTF) newsletter!

We have begun another exciting year on the SASTF with a continued focus on implementing core components of our mandate related to law enforcement and prosecutorial training, processes, and procedures. We also continue to make great progress on several special projects, including the creation of a statewide safety planning protocol; a trauma-informed rubric; a comprehensive resource database for survivors; and a compliance and monitoring program for forensic nursing programs. We have successfully launched a sexual assault evidence kit data pilot in collaboration with the Houston Forensic Science Center, the Texas DPS Crime Laboratory/Sexual Assault Evidence Tracking Program, and the Houston Police Department.

In this edition, we are pleased to highlight other exciting news and developments including Governor Abbott's *Report to the People*, and recent research related to sexual violence from The University of Texas at Austin's Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault (IDVSA) and The University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB). We also spotlight current SASTF member Major Derek Prestridge, new SASTF survivor leader/advocate Brad Watson, and include a *Survivor Voices* submission from the co-chair of our Survivor-Centered Working Group, Melissa Prentice.

This month also brings an exciting update on our Task Force Leadership!

We are delighted to bring you the great news that Office of the Governor/Public Safety Office staff member Nicole Martinez has been promoted to Administrator of the SASTF! Nicole has served in the role of SASTF Associate Administrator since late 2019. Since these early days of the SASTF's development, Nicole has consistently led from a place of survivor-centered service and deep dedication to the SASTF's mission. Her leadership has been demonstrated in so many ways – planning, implementation, working group facilitation, detailed meeting preparation and documentation, and extensive communication with external partners. Nicole has also done a great deal behind the scenes through positive, practical, daily leadership, to

ensure that the Task Force continues to make measurable progress on behalf of Texas' sexual assault survivors.

We know you will join us in congratulating Nicole in her new role!

~ Hillary England – Director of Trafficking and Sexual Violence Prevention Programs

New Task Force Member – Welcome Brad Watson!



Brad Watson

Consultant, Author, Advocate

Brad is a survivor of childhood sexual abuse and an advocate for other survivors and their families. His extensive first-hand experience with childhood sexual abuse and subsequent addictions to drugs and alcohol has allowed him to act as a trusted resource and mentor for many adults struggling to cope with the lasting impacts of their trauma.

His recently released memoir, [Prey: The Secret That Almost Killed Me](#), documents his journey through the grooming and abuse he experienced, as well as the confusion and anxiety associated with keeping the secret into adulthood. Sharing his story has led to an extraordinary outpouring of support.

An overwhelming number of male survivors and family members have contacted him looking for answers. This entire process has renewed his passion for speaking up and bringing awareness to this important issue.

Today, his focus is on the insufficient resources available to adult male survivors and the limited understanding regarding the link between childhood trauma and the undesirable actions of those survivors. His main goal is to get providers and authorities to ask the question, “What happened to you?” instead of “What’s wrong with you?” His ultimate ambition is to promote better services so that male survivors feel comfortable seeking the care they need and providing education on the relationship between childhood trauma and the coping mechanisms that many develop just to survive. Brad strives to help all survivors realize that they aren’t inherently bad people and that the events they endured as children had a huge impact on the rest of their lives.

Survivor Voices

Restoring Power

Written by Melissa Prentice - Outreach, Education, and Prevention Manager at the Bay Area Turning Point, TAASA Survivor Advisory Board Member, and Co-Chair of the SASTF Survivor-Centered Working Group

I often get asked how I can feel any sense of power as a sexual assault survivor. After all, I was stripped of my power, right? This could not be further from the truth.

During my healing journey, I did feel powerless quite often. I did not even really start my healing journey until 20 years after I was sexually assaulted. Why, you ask? 1) I was still not 100% convinced myself that it could be considered sexual assault, 2) I didn't think it was that bad...I mean agreed to go with him.....once I felt like I was in danger if I didn't, and 3) I was not convinced it wasn't my fault. After all, why did I even go that night? I started second guessing myself, thinking maybe I did not remember the details of the night correctly. There is one thing that stuck though, that I remember clear as day. My "NO" was not accepted and my submission was due to fear that I might get hurt if I said no again. I DID NOT provide consent on my own free will. I consented out of FEAR, which is not consent at all.

My power came back to me when I stopped second guessing myself and accepted what had happened to me. My power came back when I spoke up. My power came back when I spoke out. My power came back when I was not scared to start telling people in positions of power we need education in schools that helps children establish healthy boundaries and provides information on how to keep themselves safe. I vowed to get to the top leaders to make a change in education and policies around sexual assault and consent. I know what is needed because I have been in the seat of the advocate, in the seat of the educator, in the seat of the young person that needed this education, and the most important seat...that of the survivor.

One day all the right doors opened to allow me to be a part of state level change. So what does my power look like? It looks like being labeled a subject matter expert. My power looks like top leaders seeking out advice from me, the professional that is also a survivor because I have been down that long, hard road. It looks like being the change I have always wanted to see.

Task Force Member Spotlight: Major Derek Prestridge



Major Derek Prestridge

Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) Training
Operations Division

Major Derek Prestridge has served with the Texas Department of Public Safety for 27 years. He started with the Department in 1994, assigned to the Highway Patrol Service as a Trooper until becoming a Sergeant in 2003. In 2007, he transferred to the Department's Training Operations Division, where he worked with others to develop and implement the [Interdiction for the Protection of Children](#) (IPC) program, echoing the motto "*Stop waiting for children to ask for your help.*" In 2013, Derek promoted to Lieutenant within the Texas Ranger Division assigned to coordinate Department efforts to combat crimes against children. In 2017, Derek moved back into the Department's

Training Operations Division as a Captain until appointed Major in 2020. Major Prestridge is an ardent supporter of protecting children and uses education and training to promote cultural change. He champions trauma-informed practices and embraces a multi-disciplined approach beginning with law enforcement training, including response, and services.

Studies and Reports

Voices of Texas Sexual Assault Survivors: Services, Gaps, and Recovery Journeys

Researchers at University of Texas Austin's Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (IDVSA) just released the second of two reports sponsored by the Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force. Together, these studies focus on the services needed by and available to adult and child survivors of sexual violence in Texas with the goal of improving service delivery and accelerating recovery for survivors. [The first study](#), released in 2020, surveyed sexual assault service providers in Texas about their service offerings and gaps in services.

The new study, "[Voices of Texas Sexual Assault Survivors: Services, Gaps, and Recovery Journeys \(2022\)](#)," expands the scope of that inquiry by presenting findings from interviews with 70 sexual assault survivors and parents/guardians of child sexual abuse survivors about services they received and/or services needed but not received. It also highlights the gaps and barriers they have experienced in the Texas service system. Researchers conducted in-depth interviews with survivors about their experiences seeking and receiving services following sexual violence; organized the qualitative interview data into themes; and made

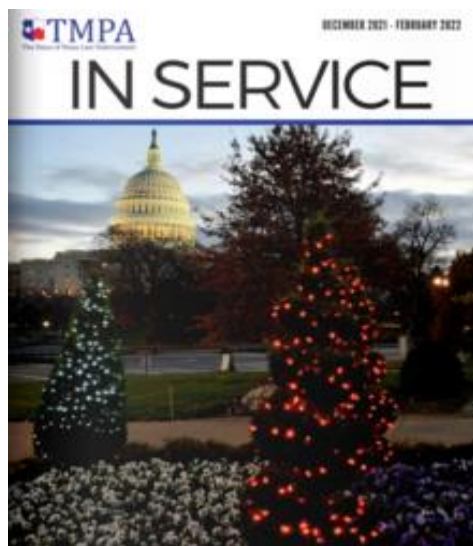
recommendations to improve service delivery based on the needs, experiences, and barriers expressed by survivors themselves.

Collectively, the two studies have built a comprehensive understanding of the services provided to sexual assault survivors, the services that survivors say they need, and gaps in service provision and availability.

Other Reports and Articles

Snapshot Report: Adult Sexual Assault Case Characteristics in Texas

Through the Snapshot project, IDVSA worked to broaden the understanding of sexual assault cases in Texas that moved forward for prosecution—and of those that did not. IDVSA previously shared [four briefing sheets](#) highlighting key findings based on various statewide data sets. IDVSA is now pleased to share a [visual report](#) with detailed notes reflecting an analysis of county-level administrative data from four professional settings in three Texas jurisdictions as well as interviews with key stakeholders to examine sexual assault case flow and attrition.



Let's Give Texas Sexual Assault Survivors Our Best Effort

The Texas Municipal Police Association (TMPA) publishes an In Service Magazine that is distributed to members of TMPA, legislators, and law enforcement departments across the state. The [December 2021 – February 2022 issue](#) featured an article highlighting the work of the SASTF Law Enforcement Working Group. The article also included quotes from members of this focused working group.

Campus-based Advocacy Toolkit: Implementation and Evaluation

The University of Texas Medical Branch Center for Violence Prevention is excited to announce the release of the updated toolkit, *Evaluation of Campus-based Advocacy*. The [Campus-based Advocacy Toolkit: Implementation and Evaluation](#). The toolkit is the result of a study led by researchers at the University of Texas Medical Branch, the University of Texas Arlington, and the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley., funded by the Office of

the Governor Criminal Justice Division. This toolkit expands the 2019 edition and includes an extended section on implementation of advocacy, adaptations of campus-based advocacy for victims of crime, and extensive evaluation guidance. Toolkit 2.0 also features impact evaluation data from a study of campus-based services. Impact evaluation data revealed that people who use campus-based advocacy services reported significantly reduced violence experiences and had increased safety and academic engagement at follow-up. The toolkit and other project materials can be found below. Contact Leila Wood leiwood@utmb.edu for questions or more information.

Governor Abbott Releases 2022 Report To The People Of Texas

Governor Greg Abbott released his "[2022 Report to the People of Texas](#)," which looked back at all that was accomplished by and for the people of Texas over the previous year. This is the Governor's fourth Report to the People since taking office in 2015. It is released in interim years when the Texas Legislature does not meet and no formal State of the State address is given. The Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force (SASTF) was highlighted in the Public Safety section of the report, under Restoring Texas.



Emergency Preparedness Plan for Reduced Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kit Stock

Recent events, including the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting supply chain issues, have impacted Sexual Assault Evidence Kit (SAEK) vendors' ability to maintain production levels to fill current and future orders for SAEKs.

To ensure that forensic nursing programs can continue collecting and submitting sexual assault evidence while the supply chain issues continue, key SASTF members developed an emergency preparedness plan including guidelines for creating non-vendor SAEKs during circumstances when vendor production is low.

The Texas Office of the Attorney General has approved the Emergency Preparedness Plan's guidelines and non-standard kit specifications. This Emergency Preparedness Plan does not supersede other guidance provided by the Texas Evidence Collection Protocol for health care professionals in Texas providing forensic medical assessments of persons who present with concern for, or history of, sexual victimization, or for assessment of those who are suspected of committing sexual offenses.

Special thanks to the following Task Force Members for developing this plan:

- *Stacey Mitchell (Texas A&M – Center of Excellence in Forensic Nursing)*
- *Rebecca Vieh (Texas Department of Public Safety - Crime Lab)*
- *Kaye Woodard-Hotz (Office of the Attorney General)*
- *Amy Castillo (COO of the Houston Forensic Science Center)*

Emergency Preparedness Plan for Reduced SAEK Stock

Training Opportunities

- Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) Annual Conference
Look Who's 40: Reflecting on our past and Shaping a Brighter Future
Omni Houston Hotel – Houston, Texas
July 11 – 13, 2022

TAASA Conference

- Texas District and County Attorney's Association (TDCAA)
Prosecuting Violent Crimes Conference
Hyatt Regency Houston West – Houston, Texas
April 11 – 13, 2022

TDCAA Prosecuting Violence Crimes Conference

- National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)
Emerging Trends - Texas (ETTX) Training Program
Topic: Child Sexual Abuse Material (*law enforcement only*)
The Berry Center of Northwest Houston – Houston, Texas
April 13, 2022

NCMEC Emerging Trends - Texas

- Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ)
Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse Webinar
Topic: Supporting Male Survivors of Sexual Violence
April 20, 2022 from 9:30am to 11:00am

[TDCJ Webinar Registration](#)

Join our Team!

The Office of the Governor (OOG) is looking to fill the Public Safety Outreach & Information Coordinator position. The Public Safety Outreach & Information Coordinator will report to the Director of Trafficking and Sexual Violence Prevention Programs and will coordinate the preparation and distribution of statewide protocols, reports, e-newsletters and other products created by Public Safety Office (PSO) divisions including the Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force and the Child Sex Trafficking Team. This position will be responsible for the development of training materials, technical assistance guides and marketing materials for PSO projects, compiling and disseminating project materials, and acting as a liaison with Information Services to ensure posting of content via the OOG website and digital platforms.

[Job Posting](#)

New Resources for Professionals

The SASTF was mandated by the legislature to provide law enforcement agencies with information and resources to maximize effective and empathetic investigations. As a response, a new Resources for Professionals [webpage](#) was created. The page currently includes resources for Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs) and Law Enforcement Officers, with additional resources coming soon.