



Office of the Texas Governor Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force

Greetings,

As we embark on our 6th year as a statewide task force and the 89th Texas Legislative Session, we are reminded of our past accomplishments and are hopeful to see additional the positive impact from policy recommendations we have made this session on behalf of Texas' sexual assault survivors'.

In this issue we are excited to introduce to you two new Task Force members, Brian Baker and Rachel Rinehart, and give special thanks for past members. In addition, former Task Force member, Tracy Matheson, shares her reflections of serving on the SASTF.

We are honored to spotlight the 3rd Annual Break the Silence Fun Run, which is an annual event to raise awareness on the importance of advocacy and service provision to vulnerable children and victims. We also recognize April as both Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month and Child Abuse Prevention Month.

Lastly, we highlight training opportunities including the Sexual Assault Family Violence Investigator Course (SAFVIC), a free statewide law enforcement training that satisfies the mandate for officers to attend a specialized training about trauma-informed child abuse and sexual assault investigations, and the SASTF's April Webinar entitled Children's Advocacy Centers and CACTX: 30 Years of Providing Safety, Justice, and Healing to Child Abuse Victims in Texas.

Together we will transform Texas' response to sexual violence and ensure survivors are heard, believed, and supported.

Sincerely,
The SASTF Team

New Task Force Members



Brian Baker

First Assistant District Attorney
Brazos County District Attorney's Office

Brian Baker is a prosecutor in the Brazos County District Attorney's Office where he has had the pleasure of serving as the First Assistant since 2013. Brian began his career in the Williamson County Attorney's Office in 1999 where he specialized in family violence and intoxication crimes, before relocating to Bryan, Texas in 2003. Brian served as the Chief of the 85th District Court for six years before he transitioned into the role as the First Assistant in 2013. During his career, Brian has prosecuted hundreds of felony cases, including capital murders in which the death penalty was sought.

While Brian's true passion is trial advocacy, his more than 20 years of experience as a prosecutor and his exceptional understanding of the law and trial skills make him a valuable teacher and leader within his office and around the State of Texas. Brian often travels around the state to share his knowledge with other prosecutors on topics ranging from Voir Dire Strategies and Juror Bias to Strategies for Successful Prosecution of Interpersonal Sexual Assaults. Brian has spent countless hours studying biases and interpersonal relationships. Using that knowledge, he has curated a unique and innovative approach to jury selection and trial strategy. Brian's expertise in these topics has revolutionized the way the Brazos County District Attorney's Office prosecutes sexual assault cases, leading to an increased number of guilty verdicts.

Brian has taught for the Texas District and County Attorney's Association (TDCAA) for over 15 years. He was awarded the C. Chris Marshall Distinguished Faculty Award in 2020. This award is for outstanding contributions to the education of Texas prosecutors. In addition to his training with TDCAA, Brian has been asked to teach

law enforcement, victim groups and social service agencies across Texas. Brian's teaching and outreach stretches beyond his work in Texas. Brian has spoken for the Association of Government Attorneys in Capital Litigation and was honored to be asked to serve on the board and is currently serving as President of that Board.

Rachel Rinehart

Education Services Division Director Supervisor
Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE)

Rachel Rinehart is the Education Services Division Supervisor at the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE), where she leads the development of innovative and impactful learning solutions. With a decade of experience in education, Rachel brings deep expertise to her role. Prior to joining TCOLE, she served as the Academic Program Supervisor for the Texas Department of Public Safety, where she managed the academic program at the Training Academy for all incoming Texas State Troopers.



Rachel's background also includes teaching first-year writing at St. Edward's University, where she earned her Master's degree in Liberal Arts with a concentration in Humanities. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Texas A&M-Corpus Christi, with an emphasis in Marketing and a minor in Public Relations.

Passionate about education and driven by a strategic focus on excellence, Rachel is committed to creating learning experiences that not only meet regulatory compliance but also support the ongoing success of law enforcement professionals. She views her role as both a privilege and a responsibility, believing that the work done through TCOLE is making a lasting impact on the law enforcement profession and the communities they serve—one learning experience at a time.

Special Thanks

The SASTF extends its sincere thanks and gratitude to three founding members who have recently stepped down: Tracy Matheson, Jarvis Parsons, and Gretchen Grigsby.

Tracy Matheson is a trailblazer in the fight to end sexual violence in Texas and nationally. When Tracy tragically lost her daughter Molly at the hands of a serial rapist, she was inspired to found [Project Beloved: The Molly Jane Mission](#). Project Beloved puts survivor-centered, trauma-informed care for sexual assault survivors into action; installing 128 [Soft Interview Rooms](#) and providing design help for 53 Soft Interview Rooms at law enforcement agencies, SAFE Programs, Children's Advocacy Centers and federal agencies across the nation and donated over 26,000 [Beloved Bundles](#) for survivors who have gone to the hospital for a forensic exam and have their belongings taken into evidence. Tracy is dedicating her life to ensuring all survivors of sexual violence are heard, believed, and supported, and that they receive the best trauma-informed response from those who are there to support them. Though Tracy is stepping down from the Task Force, we are honored to continue our work together to transform Texas' response to sexual violence. With sincere gratitude, we thank you for all you do, Tracy!

As the District Attorney of Brazos County, **Jarvis Parsons** has represented the Texas District and County Attorneys Association (TDCAA) on the Task Force since its inception. He made significant contributions as a member of the Prosecutor Working Group, sharing his vast expertise and experience in successfully prosecuting adult sexual assault cases. Furthermore, Jarvis helped bring awareness of the SASTF's work to District Attorneys from across Texas at the 2021 TDCAA Elected Prosecutor Conference. As Brazos County DA, Jarvis also played a pivotal role in developing an Adult Forensic Interviewing Program, partnering with local law enforcement agencies and the rape crisis center to ensure adult survivors received trauma-informed interviews akin to those offered to child survivors at Children's Advocacy Centers. We thank Jarvis for his dedication to improving the justice system for survivors and look forward to his ongoing involvement as a member of the Prosecutor Working Group.

Gretchen Grigsby, Government Relations Director for the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE), has been a vital part of the Task Force since its inception. Gretchen's dedication was instrumental in implementing key Task Force recommendations regarding law enforcement training. She played a significant role in developing the SASTF Law Enforcement Training Inventory, leveraging TCOLE data to help the Task Force compile a comprehensive training catalog that has enhanced law enforcement's response to sexual violence in Texas. Throughout her time with the Policy Working Group during the 87th, 88th, and 89th Texas Legislatures, and as a founding member of the Law Enforcement Working Group, Gretchen's

contributions have had a lasting impact on the work of the Task Force. We are deeply grateful for her service and wish her continued success in all her future endeavors.

Survivor Voices

My Reflections

Written by Tracy Matheson -- President and Founder of Project Beloved and former SASTF member, and member of the SASTF Prosecutor Working Group



Fall of 2019 was an exciting time for me personally because it was when Molly Jane's Law was signed by the Governor and officially became law in the state of Texas. Walking HB 3106 through the 86th Texas Legislature was one of the most fascinating and also nerve-wracking times of my life. I had been warned the chances

were slim that it would make it through on its first attempt. While I appreciated the insight, I also knew it had to make it because I did not have two more years to wait.

This journey taught me something else as well. I learned that what happens in Austin is important, and I discovered I wanted to play my part. I knew our story had the potential to impact change...in the systems and beyond. So, when HB 1590 which established the Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force was passed in that same legislative session, I decided I wanted to be member.

I have never been the person who says, "pick me." In fact, I would suggest I have been quite the opposite. However, I knew if I was going to serve on the Task Force, I was going to have to be bold and speak out and make my wishes known. I did just that. I sent emails to those who were working to establish the Task Force and offered my name for consideration as "other members considered appropriate by the steering committee."

February 6, 2020, I walked into the Capitol to attend the very first meeting of the Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force for the State of Texas. I recall the long conference table and the dark paneled walls. There were a few familiar faces and some familiar names. Mostly it was a room of people I did not know. And they did not know me or my story and why serving on this Task Force meant that world to me.

We spent most of that first meeting establishing our mission and vision and discussed how we could best do this work and maintain a climate of respect. We got to know one another just a bit, and I walked away feeling invigorated and hopeful for what we might accomplish together.

One of the highlights for me personally was serving on the working groups. I enjoyed the deeper focus on areas that interested me...trauma-informed, data, survivor-centered, law enforcement, prosecutors. I was grateful to get to know the members and subject matter experts better and to be able to offer my perspective and experience. Together we created the Trauma-Informed Rubric, a Survivors' Rights Guide, and more.

It was thrilling to have a front row seat as decisions about policy recommendations were made. Policy change will not fix everything, but it can go a long way to make improvements for survivors of sexual assault. The right policy can equip those in the systems to better do their jobs and serve survivors and assist them in finding justice...no matter how justice is defined.

As I reflect on my five years serving on the Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force, I am filled with many emotions.

Gratitude for the many people I did not know and now consider a friend and ally.

Honor for being treated as someone whose voice matters.

Respect for the amazing people I met who are truly committed to do better.

Resolve to continue to do this work on behalf of Molly Jane and all the others.

While I may not be attending the quarterly meetings and working group meetings, I am still here and am committed to continue do this work with you. It is my hope that we will get down this road and be able to look back and clearly see we that there is an improved outcome for survivors of sexual assault in the state of Texas. Together we can and will Transform Texas.

Community Spotlight - Break the Silence Fun Run





The Break The Silence Project was created to provide victims of child sexual abuse the ability to break their silence and get them the resources they need to heal and be safe. The event that started it all is back in its 3rd year. We are excited to announce we are just a few short weeks away from our Annual Break The Silence Fun Run.

As the name suggests, this event reminds us that many victims of childhood sexual abuse feel their voice has been muted. Which causes them to remain silent.

This event aims to educate and remind participants that there is hope and a way back from that silence. That victims are deserving of being heard, believed, and advocated for. Our event combines a fun run with an awareness component. We know that in rural areas access to preventative education and even the belief that these things happen can be a barrier for victims. It goes a step further by bringing direct services to the event so the community can learn about the resources available to them.

This year we are once again collaborating with Taylor Independent School District (ISD) and other community partners who have a vested interest in advocating and creating pathways for victims. We also believe there is power in seeing local resources, law enforcement and ISD representatives come together for this event. It reinforces the reminder that child sexual abuse is an issue that we should all be vigilant about.

Through generous sponsors this event is totally free to attend. There will be opportunities to talk with direct service providers, participate in the fun run, win prizes, enjoy food, all in a family friendly environment.

We hope to see you there.

3rd Annual Break the Silence Fun Run

When: April 12, 2024, from 8:00am - 12:00pm

Where: Murphy Park (1600 Veterans Drive, Taylor, TX 76574)

[**Break the Silence Registration**](#)

Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month

April is around the corner, as is our observance of [Child Abuse Prevention Month](#) and [Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month](#). The SASTF was established to ensure a survivor-centered, trauma-informed, collaborative, and coordinated response to sexual violence experienced by both adults and children in Texas. A critical component of the SASTF is to address the prevention of sexual violence.

Next month, we proudly stand alongside survivors, organizations, and communities who work tirelessly to prevent child abuse and sexual assault. Click below to learn more about Child Abuse Prevention Month and Sexual Assault Awareness & Prevention Month.

[Child Abuse Prevention Month](#)

[Sexual Assault Awareness & Prevention Month](#)

SAFVIC Training



The Sexual Assault Family Violence Investigator Course (SAFVIC) is designed to provide Texas law enforcement officers and 911 dispatchers with the tools they need

to effectively respond to, investigate, and prevent sexual assault and family violence. SAFVIC is funded by a grant from the Criminal Justice Division, the Office of the Governor, and the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW). SAFVIC was developed by a statewide steering committee composed of representatives from law enforcement, prosecution, and victim services. The SAFVIC Program uses a network of certified trainers to deliver training locally, thus enabling more officers and telecommunicators across the state to have access to this essential training.

The SAFVIC Program comprises 5 courses:

SAFVIC for Law Enforcement

This 24-hour course, TCOLE #3264, is designed to provide law enforcement officers around the state with the tools they need to effectively investigate and prevent sexual assault and family violence. The SAFVIC satisfies both of the following TCOLE Training Mandates: Trauma-Informed Approach to Sexual Assault Investigations (TCOLE #470 or TCOLE #4070) and Special Investigative Topics (TCOLE #3232).

SAFVIC for Telecommunication Professionals

This 8-hour course, TCOLE #3267, is designed to provide 911 call-takers around the state with the tools they need to effectively identify and facilitate sexual assault and family violence calls.

SAFVIC - Human Trafficking

This 8-hour course, TCOLE #3268, is designed to provide law enforcement officers around the state with the tools they need to effectively recognize, respond to, and investigate human trafficking. The curriculum satisfies the TCOLE mandated training courses Human Trafficking (TCOLE #3270) and Advanced Human Trafficking (TCOLE #3271).

Texas Investigation & Prosecution of Strangulation (TxIPS)

This 8-hour course, TCOLE #53271, is designed to provide law enforcement officers with tools to investigate and prosecute strangulation crimes effectively.

SAFVIC - Advanced Investigator Course

This 8-hour course, TCOLE #3273, is designed to provide law enforcement officers around the state with advanced interviewing and investigative techniques.

In addition to the 5 courses, the SAFVIC Program also oversees **SAFVIC Systems**, a web-based reporting tool that assists officers in completing an advanced case report designed by expert law enforcement officers and prosecutors. SAFVIC Systems currently allows users to input family violence cases and generates a comprehensive case report along with all other associated processes and forms. SAFVIC Systems also has a separate portal for magistrates to electronically sign PC Affidavits and issue emergency protective orders, conditions of bond, and family violence holds. SAFVIC Systems also has a MOU with the Texas Department of

Family and Protective Services, which allows officers to submit CPS referrals electronically through the program. Systems did a full "live release" in 2023 and is seeking additional interested agencies to join the project in 2025.

SAFVIC Systems also facilitates two courses in conjunction with onboarding new users: The 3-hour Trauma-Informed Victim Interviews, TCOLE #53272, and the 5-hour Introduction to SAFVIC Systems, TCOLE #3280.



Training Opportunities

SASTF April Webinar - Children's Advocacy Centers and CACTX: 30 Years of Providing Safety, Justice, and Healing to Child Abuse Victims in Texas

April 3, 2025, from 11:30am - 1:00pm

[SASTF Webinar Registration](#)

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

- April 3 - 4, 2025: Galveston, Texas
- April 9 - 10, 2025: Corpus Christi, Texas
- May 7 - 8, 2025: Decatur, Texas
- May 27 - 28, 2025: Round Rock/Austin, Texas

[IPC Registration Link](#)

There for You! Awareness Summit
Fulton Convention Center - Fulton, Texas
April 15 - 17, 2025

There for You! Registration

Every Victim, Every Time Conference
Brazos County Expo Center - Bryan, Texas
April 29 - 30, 2025

Every Victim, Every Time Registration

Conference on Crimes Against Women
Sheraton Hotel - Dallas, Texas
May 19 - 22, 2025

Scholarships are being offered that cover the full registration fee, apply by Friday, April 18th for your chance to participate!

CCAW Registration