



Office of the Texas Governor Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force

Greetings,

We are excited to share the September issue of the Governor's Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force (SASTF) newsletter, filled with the latest updates and news. In this issue, we feature the powerful story of Dr. Gregory Williams and extend special thanks to former SASTF Member Chief Ed Drain. Additionally, we recognize our summer intern, Ethan Choi for his valuable contributions.

This issue includes key updates on the transition the Statewide Victim Notification Service (SAVNS). We also include highlights from the recent Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) Conference, including the presentation of the Harold Cottle Justice Award to SASTF Leadership in Law Enforcement Working Group Member Chief Mike Smith of Lubbock Christian University and the presentation of a letter of recognition from Governor Greg Abbott to SASTF Founding Member Emeritus Tracy Matheson. In addition, we spotlight the release of TAASA's new Male Survivor Guidance Document, a vital resource for inclusive and trauma-informed support for boys and men.

Finally, be sure to explore upcoming training opportunities, including the SASTF October Webinar, entitled *It's Your Voice: The Victim Impact Statement*.

Thank you for your continued dedication to supporting survivors and strengthening our statewide response.

Sincerely,
The SASTF Team

Special Thanks

Chief Ed Drain

The SASTF extends its sincere thanks and deep appreciation to Chief Ed Drain of the Plano Police Department, a founding member of the Task Force who recently stepped down from his role. Chief Drain has been a steadfast leader for improving Texas' response to sexual assault, both through his service on the Task Force and in his day-to-day work leading one of the state's most impactful law enforcement agencies. Under his leadership, the Plano Police Department reported a 53.7% clearance rate of rape offenses in 2024, according to the [Texas Department of Public Safety's Crime in Texas report](#). This achievement reflects the department's commitment to accountability and victim-centered investigations. During his time on the Task Force, Chief Drain served on the Law Enforcement Working Group and played a critical role in the development of the First Responder's Guide for Adult Sexual Assault Investigations, ensuring that law enforcement officers across Texas are equipped with the tools and training needed to respond to survivors with empathy and professionalism. Although he is stepping away from the full Task Force, we are grateful that he will continue as a member of the Leadership in Law Enforcement Working Group. With sincere appreciation, we thank you, Chief Drain, for your unwavering dedication to survivors and your lasting impact on law enforcement response in Texas.



SASTF Summer Intern: Ethan Choi

Hello everyone! My name is Ethan Choi, and I recently had the privilege of interning with the SASTF in the OOG. I am a political science, pre-law student and a rising junior at Texas A&M. As the SASTF's intern, I attended various working group meetings comprised of prosecutors, judges, and other professionals. My primary workload consisted of research review: combing through notes or summarizations to consolidate important information for future use. Since working at the OOG, I can confidently say that I have refined my abilities in revision and research, while serving a noble cause. The Task Force's work is

truly inspiring; the passion of this team and their focus on a survivor centered solution to sexual assault create hope for a better future. The SASTF staff has been so enthusiastic about my participation within their team, and I am extremely grateful for their help and encouragement. This job has been my first government and first office position ever, and I am honored to have interned with the SASTF. Thank you!

Survivor Voices

Stop Hiding Your Scars!

Written by Dr. Gregory Williams - Administrative Leadership Team, OB/GYN at the Baylor College of Medicine - Texas Children's Hospital and SASTF Services for Male Survivors Working Group Member

Growing up in the country just on the outskirts of a small town in Southern Illinois automatically brings memories of times when I was hurt by doing the things that every young boy raised in the country attempts to do. For instance, sliding down the rusty tin metal roof of my grandpa's barn on my backside and falling into a stack of hay. Of course, never even thinking about looking first to see if the pitchfork was somewhere hiding in the hay of my "landing pad." Or

maybe, lighting a firecracker and waiting until the last minute to toss it before it exploded in our hand. How about the times we had army fights with our Daisy BB guns in the back yard not even thinking about the dangers of being hit by a solid piece of copper flying at a pretty good rate of speed? Many of those scars can probably still be found somewhere on my body, and it might even bring a small grin to my face and remind me of another one of “oh, there goes Greg again” stories. Unfortunately, the many scars that I have tried to hide all my life are the ones for instance, like the physical scars on the inside of my thighs from the metal zipper tabs on Levi jeans during an unusually rough sexual abuse episode when I was a young child. Those “unseen” scars that are forever on my heart seem to be the most difficult to “erase” or “delete” from the depth of my memory bank. Those words that were said to me that I just can’t stop hearing. Those hundreds of nights crying myself to sleep and begging God to provide me an emergency exit into safety.

So, just exactly how is a person expected to get over the pain of a traumatic hurt or episode and move on with their life? Well, that is the \$64,000 question that seems to keep me bewildered for over 50 years now. Just when I think that I have it all figured out, something happens that takes me back to the late 1960s and I get trapped in that proverbial ditch of past memory pain that often sets me back to a very dark place emotionally and mentally. You may be asking these questions: “How do I move forward in life? What is the roadmap to true inner peace? Where is the place that those of us that have been hurt and traumatized turn to get rest?”

Well, that is exactly what I am hoping to help you with in these next few paragraphs. So, fasten your seatbelts and hang on, this may be a bumping ride but hopefully with a smooth landing and understanding of something that may just work for you or someone that you may know. To access the full article, please click [here](#).

Victim Notification for Crime Victims

System Change Coming!

The Office of Attorney General (OAG) administers the Statewide Victim Notification System (SAVNS) to provide an automated method to notify victims of crime about changes in offender status and court events 24 hours a day. Attorney General Ken Paxton is enhancing SAVNS and transitioning to a new service provider, Sylogist, effective September 1, 2025.

Sylogist's platform will replace the legacy VINELink program. Crime victims will be able to register an account in the new SAVNS portal and customize how and when they receive notifications. The Texas Department of Criminal Justice uses Sylogist for its Integrated Victim Services System, so victims will no longer need to re-register when an offender is transferred from county to state custody, ensuring a more seamless and user-friendly experience.

Participating counties will transition to the new system without any service gaps, data loss, or disruption in victim notifications. The new platform will continue to provide timely, automated alerts for critical custody events, including release, transfer, and parole, just as it does today. There will be NO interruption in victim services during the transition.

This change supports the OAG's continued commitment to:

- Safeguarding the rights and safety of crime victims
- Promoting transparent, consistent communication
- Advancing survivor-focused technology and services

The OAG will update its [website](#) with more information as the implementation date approaches.

TAASA Annual Conference

2025 Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) Conference: Seeds of Change

Task Force members, survivor leaders, and staff recently attended the 2025 TAASA Conference in Denton, Texas. The conference theme, Seeds of Change, allowed presenters to explore personal and professional growth, primary prevention, survivor-centered direct services and advocacy, system responses, SARTs, policy initiatives, and strategies for advancing the movement in Texas.



Chief Mike Smith (Lubbock Christian University) and Rose Luna (TAASA)
(left to right)



Rose Luna (TAASA), Tracy Matheson (Project Beloved: The Molly Jane Mission), Hillary England (OOG)
(left to right)

During the TAASA Award Ceremony, Leadership in Law Enforcement Working Group Member, Chief Mike Smith of Lubbock Christian University, received the Harold Cottle Justice Award, which recognizes someone who demonstrates outstanding support for victims and a willingness to educate self and colleagues within the criminal justice system about sexual assault. Tracy Matheson, President and Founder of Project Beloved, Founding SASTF Member Emeritus, and SASTF Prosecutor Working Group Member, received a Letter of Recognition from Governor Greg Abbott presented by Hillary England.

TAASA Legislative Updates

TAASA is pleased to share its [89th Texas Legislative Session Update](#) guide with summaries of legislation impacting survivors of sexual assault passed during the 89th Legislative Session. Thanks to the support and advocacy of our members, stakeholders, the SASTF and critical legislative champions, important strides were made in passing legislation that will have a meaningful impact in the lives of survivors. Highlights include:

An emphasis on safeguarding the privacy of survivors of sexual assault, including obtaining consent to livestream sexual assault/trafficking trials, and requiring law enforcement to notify rape victims of their right to use a pseudonym.

Tangible mechanisms through which survivors can enforce their crime victims' rights, like requiring prosecutors to give survivors notice at least five business days (or as soon as reasonably practicable) before any court proceedings or the filing of a continuance request, requiring courts to double check that prosecutors confer with victims before accepting a plea bargain, and adding a documentation requirement to insure a victim's right to have a sexual assault program advocate present during a sexual assault forensic medical exam is not violated.

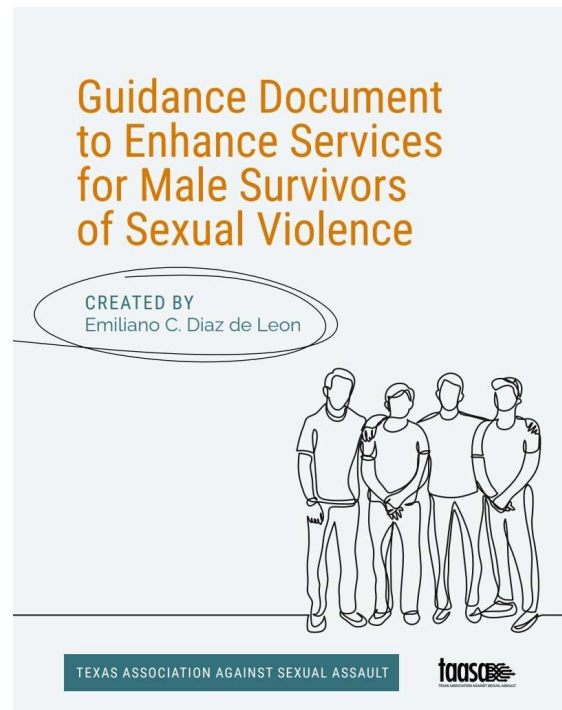
The clarification of the definition of consent with regard to sexual assault, aligning it with the definition provided in Section 1.07(11) of the Penal Code.

The full comprehensive guide contains more information regarding these laws and the many others that will impact survivors in Texas.

TAASA Male Survivor Guidance Document

TAASA is excited to share its newest publication, "[Guidance Document to Enhance Services for Male Survivors of Sexual Violence](#)." This document serves as a valuable resource for advocates, counselors, and educators, with its primary purpose being to assist these professionals in initiating or improving their support services for male survivors of sexual violence. The guide offers practical steps for organizations to implement, aiming to facilitate healing for male survivors across Texas.

The document is structured into seven sections, each addressing a specific aspect of supporting male survivors. These sections cover topics such as understanding sexual violence and its impact on boys and men, improving hotline access, providing medical advocacy, increasing access to emergency



housing, broadening community education efforts, and enhancing support group services. The guidance provided is based on research and best practices from victim advocates and rape crisis centers throughout Texas and around the country.

If you or your organization would like to learn more or need assistance with implementing the recommendations outlined in the guidance document, please contact Emiliano Diaz de Leon, TAASA's Men's Engagement Specialist, at ediazdeleon@taasa.org.

Training Opportunities

TAASA Survivor Advisory Board Webinar - The Overlooked Link Between Climate Disasters and Sexual Violence

September 19, 2025, from 10:00am - 11:30am

[TAASA Webinar Registration](#)

Conference on Crimes Against Women Summit: Beyond the Bounds

Courtyard by Marriott South Padre Island - South Padre Island, Texas

September 22 - 23, 2025

[CCAW Summit Registration Link](#)

Texas District & County Attorneys Association (TDCAA) Annual Criminal & Civil Law Conference 2025

Kalahari Resort - Round Rock, Texas

September 22 - 25, 2025

For more TDCAA Training Opportunities please click [here](#)

[Criminal & Civil Law Conference Registration](#)

TAASA Survivor Advisory Board Webinar - After the Verdict: Navigating Justice Beyond the Trial

September 25, 2025, from 10:00am - 11:30am

[TAASA Webinar Registration](#)

2nd Annual Crime Victims' Institute Conference

Sam Houston State University Beto Criminal Justice Center - Huntsville, Texas
October 15 - 17, 2025

[CVI Conference Registration Link](#)

SASTF October Webinar: *It's Your Voice: The Victim Impact Statement*

October 30, 2025, from 11:30am - 1:00pm

[SASTF Webinar 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](#)