

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

*Angie McCown, Director
TDCJ Victim Services Division*

“A day can seem so empty without the opportunity of making a difference in the life of one more person.”

Ellie Braun-Haley

From the knowledge of traumatic stress in victimology, comes an increased awareness of the high cost of caring. As Charles Figley has often remarked, “The capacity for compassion and empathy seem to be at the core of our ability to do the work and at the core of our ability to be wounded by the work.”

Professionals who work with survivors of violent crime recognize the potential impact of exposure to trauma, yet they can also be strengthened and energized by the work. Research has shown that just as professionals help survivors integrate and move

through trauma, they too, are challenged to find effective ways to cope with and manage traumatic exposure.

Resilience has been identified as the primary force that motivates professionals to adapt, grow and sometimes flourish while bearing witness to unspeakable trauma. As we end this long hot summer, it is my hope for each of you that you take time to reflect on the important work each of you do to assist survivors of violent crime, and that you make a commitment to self-nurturance and resiliency so that you can continue to make a difference in so many lives.★



Angie McCown

*The Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse (TxCVC) previously hosted a webinar presented by Eugenia Barr Ph.D. titled *Compassion Fatigue and Vicarious Trauma*. To view a recording of this webinar, please visit: http://www.tdcj.texas.gov/divisions/vs/victim_webinars.html.*

“Often we set out to make a difference in the lives of others only to discover that we have made a difference in our own.”

Ellie Braun-Haley

The

VICTIM'S INFORMER



by: Andrea Sparks, Executive Director, Texas Regional Office of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Victim Services Division is proud to provide you with an email notification service. Email notifications may be retrieved directly from your computer, mobile device, or wherever internet access is available. Email notifications are time sensitive and notify you of changes in an offender's status. Being a current Victim Notification System registrant will not automatically register you for this email service.

To register, contact the TDCJ Victim Services Division at 800-848-4284 or visit our website at www.tdcj.texas.gov and complete the victim email notification form. You continue to have the option to receive notifications by letter, email, or both. We would like to encourage all victim service providers who utilize the Victim Notification System to elect to receive email notifications only whenever possible.

Thirty years ago police could enter information about stolen cars, stolen guns, and even stolen horses into the FBI's crime database but, there was no standard process to enter information about missing children.

In 1981 six-year-old Adam Walsh was abducted from a Florida shopping mall and later found brutally murdered. To the Walsh's disbelief, there was no coordinated effort among law enforcement to search for Adam and no organization to help them. In response to their tragedy, the Walsh's established the Adam Walsh Outreach Center for Missing Children to serve as a resource for families with missing children. The Adam Walsh Outreach Center later merged with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children® (NCMEC).

Since then, with help from corporate partners, the NCMEC has circulated billions of photos of missing children, assisted law enforcement in the recovery of more than 216,000 missing children and trained more than 312,000 law enforcement officers, prosecutors and health care professionals¹. With better

public awareness, training, laws and technology, the recovery rate of missing children has increased from 62 percent in 1990 to more than 97 percent today².

Services:

Finding Missing Children

You might know that NCMEC provides resources and technical assistance to law enforcement and other professionals to help find missing children, reduce child sexual exploitation, and prevent child victimization. But did you know that NCMEC also provides support services to victims and families coping with the traumatic experiences of abduction and sexual exploitation?

Support Network

The Family Advocacy Division's master-level trained mental health and child welfare professionals provide a support network for child victims and their families. Services include:

- Immediate crisis intervention when a family needs help with a missing, exploited or recovered child;



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- Support for survivors of abduction and exploitation, including helping them to connect with other victims;
- Emotional support for endangered runaways, parents, guardians and families;
- Referrals to appropriate agencies and mental health professionals;
- Reunification assistance from skilled therapists to help reintegrate a recovered child back into the home during each stage of reconnecting and rebuilding; and
- Assistance in locating federal, state and local organizations for sexually exploited youth.

Team HOPE: Help Offering Parents Empowerment

Team HOPE is another way that the NCMEC helps victims. Team HOPE is made up of extraordinary volunteers, family members of victims who give their time and energy to offer peer support to help others going through the pain, fear, frustration and loneliness that comes with having a missing or sexually exploited child.

FAON: Family Advocacy Outreach Network

The NCMEC also runs the Family Advocacy Outreach Network (FAON), a referral network of mental health service providers that provide sliding scale fees or pro bono services to parents and families of missing and sexually exploited children. While the NCMEC provides crisis and mental health support via telephone, families often require immediate in-person intervention.

The FAON professionals provide ongoing crisis management and therapy to strengthen families as they work through their traumatic experiences. The FAON is currently seeking the expertise of treatment professionals experienced in crisis

management for family trauma who are willing to provide therapeutic services for these families. For more information about the requirements and expectations of the FAON members and to signup online click on this link: <http://www.missingkids.org/FAON>.

Training Resources

The NCMEC also provides safety and prevention training and resources for families and professionals focusing on child abduction, child sexual exploitation and Internet safety, as well as free online child safety and prevention publications. For information about free prevention programming for your organization, school or law enforcement agency, contact the NCMEC Texas Regional Office at 1-512-465-2156.



Members of Team HOPE

The NCMEC stands ready to provide support and assistance to missing and exploited children and their families 24/7. Call us at 1-800-THE-LOST® (1-800-843-5678).★

The Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse (TxCVC) previously hosted a webinar presented by Andrea Sparks titled “Leveraging Prevention Resources to Fight Crimes Against Children.” To view a recording of this webinar, please follow this [link](http://www.tdcj.texas.gov/divisions/vs/victim_webinars.html) or go to: http://www.tdcj.texas.gov/divisions/vs/victim_webinars.html

1. National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. 2015. Web. Accessed 29/7/2015. URL <http://www.missingkids.com/history>
 2. National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. 2015. Web. Accessed 29/7/2015. URL <http://www.missingkids.com/KeyFacts>

THE INTERSECTION OF VICTIMOLOGY AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

by: Jose Juan Lara, Jr, MS., National Trainer National Latin@ Network

Professionals operating within various systems of help including the criminal justice system, victim services and allied professions, share many common values and purposes. We seek to uphold justice, promote safety from violence, hold offenders accountable, and build strong families and communities. Diversity within our communities is a source of strength for all cities, counties and states. However, as individuals, we all approach our work with biases that subtly or overtly influence our behavior. If we work to discover, challenge and transform our own biases, we can achieve better outcomes for victims of violence.

Often, when we think of diversity or bias, we think almost exclusively about race, language and outward expressions of culture like dress, cuisine or other traditions. Unfortunately, looking only at these elements limits our understanding of the impact of culture, and also limits the opportunities that are presented when we integrate cultural understanding into our work. In order to enhance services to victims, we must move beyond race to an exploration and responsiveness based on culture. Digging a little deeper leads to an exploration of cultural specificity.

Cultural specificity is an attempt to understand the victims' perspective while at the same time identifying how the stereotypes that inform the

work of the service provider create systemic barriers for groups of people based on their cultural identities. Stereotypes can be based on the victims' physical appearance, English proficiency, socioeconomic status, gender, and other axes of identity. A critical analysis that includes culture engages systems not only to consider, but also to provide services that are responsive to the cultural traits of a person impacted by crime.

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How Culture Influences Help-Seeking

Culturally responsive service frameworks require a holistic response to the individual factors that prevent someone from seeking help from mainstream agencies.

Experiences of victimization occur within a broader context of the person's daily life, which is deeply affected by numerous factors, both personal and systemic. For example, in the case of Latin@ survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV) the following may be some contextual factors to consider¹ :

- Familismo refers to the central place that the family has in

most Latin@s' lives. Strong family roles point to the father as the primary breadwinner and to the mother as the person responsible for the well-being and cohesiveness of the family (although this role is rapidly changing with shifting family compositions; i.e. grandparents taking care of children, LGBT relationships).

- Religious beliefs or social unacceptability of separation or divorce may stop some Latin@s from using services because they believe that the "sanctity of marriage" precludes their taking steps that could result in divorce or separation.
- Language barriers and immigration issues may also heavily impact some Latin@s decisions about who to reach out to for help.

Simultaneously, adopting a culturally specific framework challenges systems to view these issues as more than barriers. Studies in the field have begun to highlight how IPV affects Latin@ survivors and encourages programs that build on their strengths and resistance strategies². Listed below are some of the resistance strategies Latin@ survivors have reported to survive abuse. While the resistance strategies listed here may benefit any individual, it is important

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1. Note: The use of the @ sign: National Latin@ Network uses "@" in place of the masculine "o" when referring to people or things that are either gender neutral or both masculine and feminine in make-up. This decision reflects our commitment to gender inclusion and recognizes the important contributions that both women and men make to our communities.

2. Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network Fact Sheet Resilience and Resistance Strategies Facts on Intimate Partner Violence Among Latin@s found at http://www.nationallatinonetwork.org/images/files/Factsheet_-_Resilience_Factors.pdf.

THE INTERSECTION OF VICTIMOLOGY AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

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to consider individuals' culture when discussing these resistance strategies.

- Avoiding (placating batterer, walking away, talking with the batterer to calm them down, and encouraging counseling for the batterer)
- Defending (protecting one's body, fighting back, locking self in room, and teaching children to call the police)
- Spiritual or psychological (joining a support group or maintaining a relationship with a higher power)
- Social or familial (maintaining relationships with supportive people, not involving family members to protect them, and support/advice from other battered women)
- Escaping (moving to an undisclosed location, disguising themselves, and saving personal money)

Studying cultural nuances can help shed light on the low rates of reporting and help-seeking among Latin@s experiencing IPV.

Toward Greater Responsiveness to Cultural Identity

Organizations, systems and individual professionals can begin to assess their own services, approaches and models by asking questions such as:

- How well does our agency understand the cultural

perspectives of other cultural groups in our community?

- Can lack of understanding of a person's cultural identity be a barrier to accessing our services?
- What is our agency culture? Does it create barriers for different communities?
- What are the issues within the culturally specific community that need to be considered when providing services?
- What are the issues within our own organization that need to be considered?

Culturally informed intervention approaches vary depending on cultural identity of survivors and the community they belong to. However, some fundamental strategies can be employed to increase access.

First, it is important to build collaboration among culturally specific programs and mainstream victim assistance providers to increase the availability of culturally competent services for victims of crime. To do this we must develop partnerships based on mutual benefit, fair compensation and reasonable distribution of work, avoidance of tokenism, and joint training for criminal and civil justice system personnel and victim assistance providers on cultural considerations for victims.

Second, we must assess and evaluate the implementation of state and

federal protections for victims of crime and promote policy and legislative changes to assure that all victims have equal access to protections. Language access issues can be a good place to start working toward cultural responsiveness. Increasing public awareness of the extent and impact of victimization against different communities is equally important. This can be achieved by developing culturally informed public awareness, education and outreach campaigns on crime victims' rights and services, and by developing strategies to engage culturally specific communities in crime prevention.

Systems change is a long-term process that requires developing strategic relationships, building allies and cultivating champions for change. Each of us, as individuals, expects to be seen and treated as a whole person by our doctors, pastors, supervisors, teachers, etc... So too, do the victims that approach us for services. Culture is a powerful factor that influences our motivations, fears, strengths and dreams for the future. Our collective efforts are enhanced when we begin to explore and integrate culturally responsive approaches into our work with victims of crime. ★

The Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse (TxCVC) previously hosted a webinar presented by Jose Juan Lara, Jr. titled "When the Intersections of Cultural Identity and Victimology Collide: Looking Beyond the Mainstream." To view a recording of this webinar, please follow this [link](http://www.tdcj.texas.gov/divisions/vs/victim_webinars.html) or go to: http://www.tdcj.texas.gov/divisions/vs/victim_webinars.html

The National Latin@ Network for Healthy Families and Communities, is a project of Casa de Esperanza that builds bridges and connections among research, practice and policy to advance effective responses to eliminate domestic violence and to promote healthy relationships within Latin@ families and communities. For more information click on their logo.

national **latin@** network
casa de esperanza

84TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION

VICTIM'S INFORMER LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

by Brooke Ellison, Manager, Program Section
Texas Department of Criminal Justice Victim Services Division

During the Regular Session of the 84th Legislature, 6,276 bills were filed and 1,322 passed (Texas Legislature Online Statistics Report). Of the bills that passed, many will impact the criminal justice system and the victim services field. Below is a summary of some of the bills that passed that directly address crime victims' rights, protective orders, parole revocation procedures and restitution.

HB 1447/SB 630

Topic: Crime Victims' Rights and Protective Orders

Status: The provisions of House Bill (HB) 1447 and Senate Bill (SB) 630 apply to a victim of criminally injurious conduct for which a judgment of conviction is entered or a grant of deferred adjudication is made on or after September 1, 2015.

Discussion: HB 1447 and SB 630 expanded the type of victims who can apply for a sexual assault or abuse, stalking or trafficking protective order to include victims of continuous trafficking of a person.

HB 1447 also expanded for whom the prosecuting attorney can file a protective order to include: a parent or guardian acting on behalf of a person younger than 17 years of age who is the victim of continuous sexual abuse of young child or children, indecency with a child, sexual assault, aggravated sexual assault and stalking and a parent or guardian acting on behalf of a person younger than 18 years of age who is

the victim of trafficking, continuous trafficking of a person or compelling prostitution.

HB 1447 and SB 630 also modified the title of Code of Criminal Procedure art. 56.021 to read, "Rights of Victim of Sexual Assault or Abuse, Stalking or Trafficking." The provisions of the bill also expanded the rights of victims of trafficking, continuous trafficking of a person, continuous sexual abuse of young child or children, indecency with child, sexual assault, aggravated sexual assault, stalking and compelling prostitution. These victims or his/her parent or guardian are entitled to the right to:

- be informed that the victim or the victim's parent or guardian, as applicable, may file an application for a sexual assault or abuse, stalking or trafficking protective order;
- be informed of the court in which the application for a protective order may be filed;
- be informed, on request of the victim or the victim's parent or guardian, as applicable, and subject to the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct, that the attorney representing the state may file the application for a protective order;
- and request that the attorney representing the state, subject to the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct, file an application for a sexual assault

or abuse, stalking or trafficking protective order on behalf of the victim.

If the victim or the victim's parent or guardian *is* present when the defendant is convicted or placed on deferred adjudication community supervision, he/she has the right to be given by the court the information regarding his/her right to:

- be informed that the victim or the victim's parent or guardian, as applicable, may file an application for a sexual assault or abuse, stalking or trafficking protective order;
- be informed of the court in which the application for a protective order may be filed;
- and be informed that, on request of the victim or the victim's parent or guardian, as applicable, and subject to the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct, the attorney representing the state may file the application for a protective order.

If the victim or the victim's parent or guardian is present when the defendant is convicted or placed on deferred adjudication community supervision, he/she has the right to file an application for a sexual assault or abuse, stalking or trafficking protective order immediately following the defendant's conviction or placement on deferred adjudication community supervision, if the court has jurisdiction over an application

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for this type of protective orders.

If the victim or the victim's parent or guardian, as applicable, *is not* present when the defendant is convicted or placed on deferred adjudication community supervision, he/she has the right to be given by the attorney representing the state information regarding their right to:

- be informed that the victim or the victim's parent or guardian, as applicable, may file an application for a sexual assault or abuse, stalking or trafficking protective order;
- be informed of the court in which the application for a protective order may be filed;
- and be informed that, on request of the victim or the victim's parent or guardian, as applicable, and subject to the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct, the attorney representing the state may file the application for a protective order.

SB 1296

Topic: Crime Victims' Rights

Status: SB 1296 becomes effective September 1, 2015.

Discussion: This bill recodifies without making substantive changes to various statutes, including the Code of Criminal Procedure art. 56.02 Crime Victims' Rights.

HB 388

Topic: Extension of Family Violence Protective Orders

Status: The provisions of HB 388 apply to protective orders issued on or after June 9, 2015. A protective order issued before June 9, 2015 will be governed by the laws in effect on the date the order is issued, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose.

Discussion: HB 388 mandates the automatic extension of a family violence protective order that was issued for two years or more, if the person who is the subject of the protective order is confined or imprisoned on the date the protective order would expire or if the protective order would expire not later than the first anniversary of the date the person is released from confinement or imprisonment. The protective order will be extended to the first anniversary of the date the person is released from confinement or imprisonment, if the person was sentenced to confinement or imprisonment for more than five years. If the person was sentenced to confinement or imprisonment for five years or less, the protective order would be extended to the second anniversary of the date the person is released from confinement or imprisonment.

HB 710

Topic: Revocation Hearings Summons

Status: The provisions of HB 710 apply only to a person who on or after September 1, 2015 is charged with a violation of the terms of the person's release on parole or to mandatory supervision. Provisions of HB 710 apply only to a hearing held on or after September 1, 2015.

Discussion: HB 710 allows the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Parole Division to issue a summons, instead of a warrant, if the person is charged only with committing a new offense that is alleged to have been committed after the first anniversary of the date the person was released on parole or to mandatory supervision. The new offense has to be a Class C misdemeanor under the Penal Code, except for an offense committed against a child younger than 17 years of age or an offense involving family violence. The person also had to maintain a steady employment and stable residence for at least a year and he/she cannot have previously been charged with an offense after the person was released on parole or to mandatory supervision. Government Code §508.251(c) does not allow a summons to be issued for a release who is on intensive supervision or super intensive supervision, an absconder or determined by the division to be a threat to public safety.

HB 710 also allows the TDCJ Parole Division to issue a summons to a person to appear for a hearing, if the person is charged only with committing an administrative violation of release that is alleged to have been committed after the first anniversary of the date the person was released on parole or to mandatory supervision. Prior to this legislation it was the third anniversary.

HB 710 also allows for a warrant to be issued, if the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles (the board) or a parole panel makes a final determination that a releasee has violated a condition of

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release, requiring the releasee to be held in a county jail pending transfer to an intermediate sanction facility or the return of the releasee to the institution from which the releasee was released.

SB 790

Topic: Revocation, Bond

Status: SB 790 becomes effective September 1, 2015.

Discussion: SB 790 allows a magistrate of the county in which the person is held in custody to release the person on bond pending the revocation hearing if: the person is arrested or held in custody only on a charge that the person committed an administrative violation of release; the Parole Division included notice on the warrant for the person's arrest that the person is eligible for release on bond; and the magistrate determines that the person is not a threat to public safety.

The Parole Division is required to include a notice on the warrant for the person's arrest indicating that the person is eligible for release on bond, if the division determines that the person: has not been previously convicted of robbery, a crime against a person punishable as a felony or an offense involving family violence;

is not on intensive supervision or super-intensive supervision; is not an absconder; and is not a threat to public safety.

SB 790 requires a designated agent to notify the board, if he/she determines that a releasee who appears in compliance with a summons has violated a condition of release. After the board or the parole panel makes a final determination regarding the violation, the Parole Division may issue a warrant requiring the parolee to be held in a county jail pending the return of the releasee to the institution from which the releasee was released.

HB 2159

Topic: Restitution, Family Violence, Child Witness

Status: HB 2159 applies to an offense committed on or after September 1, 2015.

Discussion: If a defendant is placed on community supervision for a family violence offense, the court is required to order the defendant to pay restitution in an amount equal to the costs of necessary rehabilitation, including medical, psychiatric, and psychological care and treatment, for a person younger than 15 years of age, if the offense was committed in the physical presence of, or in the same

habitation or vehicle occupied by the person younger than 15 years of age and at the time of the offense, the defendant had knowledge or reason to know that the person younger than 15 years of age was physically present or occupied the same habitation or vehicle. The court is required to make this determination from the complaint, information, indictment, or other charging instruction, the presentence report, or other evidence before the court.

The court is required to specify in a restitution order the manner in which the defendant must pay the restitution, after considering the financial circumstances of the defendant. The restitution order must require the restitution payments be delivered to a community supervision and corrections department for transfer to the victim or person. The restitution order may be enforced by the state, or by a person or a parent or guardian of the person named in the order to receive the restitution, in the same manner as a judgment in a civil action. The court may hold a hearing, making of facts, and amend a restitution order if the defendant fails to pay the person named in the order in the manner specified by the court. ★

Additional resources to learn more about legislative changes impacting crime victims:

Texas Legislature Online: <http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/Home.aspx>

Texas Constitution and Statute Page: <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us>

Texas County and District Attorneys Association (TCDA) legislative update <http://www.tdcaa.com/legislative/index.asp>

REGIONAL VICTIM SERVICES COORDINATORS

by: Julie Jespersen, Program Specialist II, Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse

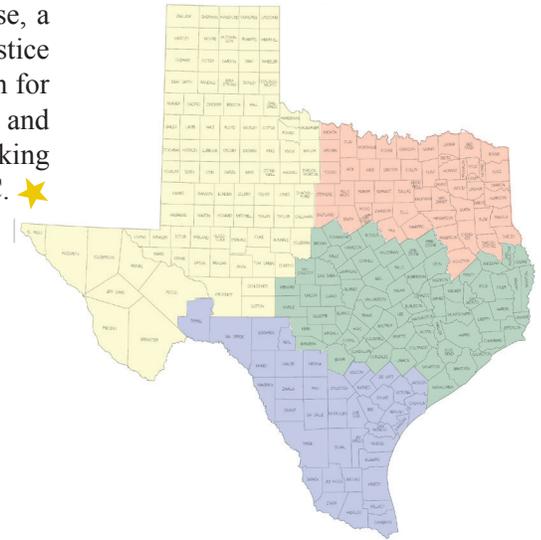
The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Victim Services Division (VSD) Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse (TxCVC) staff includes Regional Victim Service Coordinators (RVSCs) located strategically throughout Texas, in Dallas, Abilene, and Corpus Christi.

The RSVCs provide direct services to crime victims and training to criminal justice and victim services professionals within their respective region. Training topics include the Victim Impact Statement, services offered by the TDCJ VSD and post-conviction crime victims' rights. The RVSCs also provide information, assistance and direct services to crime victims to include support and accompaniment to meetings with the Board of Pardons and Paroles, to revocation hearings, to victim impact

panels, and during the execution process.

The TxCVC staff is proud to welcome our new RSVC for the Abilene Region, Shane Siebrant. Prior to her new position as a RSVC, Shane worked for a tribal community assisting victims of sexual assault, domestic violence and drug abuse, a sheriff's office and served as a Justice of the Peace. Shane has a passion for working with victims of crime and community partners and is looking forward to her new role as RVSC. ★

<p>TDCJ VSD Headquarters tdcj.clearinghouse@tdcj.texas.gov 1-800-848-4284</p>
<p>Hunstville Satellite Office Janice Sager janice.sager@tdcj.texas.gov 936-437-4842</p>



Regional Victim Services Coordinators Areas

<p>Abilene-based RVSC Shane Siebrant shane.siebrandt@tdcj.texas.gov 325-672-1495 #228</p>
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<p>Corpus Christi-based RVSC Rose Trevino rose.trevino@tdcj.texas.gov 361-878-3538</p>
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<p>Dallas-based RVSC Gabriella Lucero gabriella.lucero@tdcj.texas.gov 214.565.2617</p>
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VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENT REVISIONS UPDATE

by: Lynn Hyde and Julie Jespersen, Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse

As required by the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure art. 56.03(h), the Texas Crime Victim's Clearinghouse (TxCVC) facilitates the process of revising the Victim Impact Statement (VIS) form for the next biennium. The VIS Revision Committee, comprised of victim assistance coordinators representing counties from across the state, criminal justice professionals from many state agencies including the Office of the Attorney General, Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Community

Justice Assistance Division, Texas Juvenile Justice Department, Texas Department of Public Safety, Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles and other criminal justice and victim services professionals met to review and update the VIS form including the Supplemental Page, the VIS Quarterly Statistical Report, the VIS Recommended Processing Procedures, and the *It's Your Voice* brochure. Updates to these documents are being finalized and will be made available on the TDCJ

website by December 1, 2015. In addition, the TxCVC will provide comprehensive statewide training on the new VIS form. Training will be offered via webinar, customized trainings in your local community and round table discussions between criminal justice system participants. For more information, including how to attend or host a training session, please contact the TxCVC at 1-800-848-4284 or by email at tdcj.clearinghouse@tdcj.texas.gov. ★

TEXAS CRIME VICTIM CLEARINGHOUSE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Live Trainings:

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Victim Services Division (VSD) Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse (TxCVC) staff provides training on a variety of topics, which can be tailored to the needs of the requestor. If you would like to host a training in your community, contact the TxCVC at tdcj.clearinghouse@tdcj.texas.gov or call 512-406-5931.

TVAT Online:

Texas Victim Assistance Training (TVAT) Online is a state-wide online victim assistance training focused on victim-centered service delivery and professional development that enables new advocates to acquire baseline professional skills and competence. To register or obtain more information click [here](#) or visit: <https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/php/tvatonline/>

Webinars:

The TDCJ VSD TxCVC hosts a webinar series designed for criminal justice professionals, victim service professionals, and victims of crime. Webinar topics cover a wide range of victim related topics. The Fall 2015 webinars focus on victim services within different phases in the criminal justice system. Webinar descriptions and registration information, as well as recordings and related documents for past webinars may be accessed by at the TDCJ VSD website or by clicking [here](#).

September 10, 2015 9:30 - 11:00 Protective Orders

Presented by: Erin Martinson, Prosecuting Attorney at Travis County Attorney's Office

September 17, 2015 9:30 - 11:00 Victim Services in Law Enforcement

Presented by: Derrelyn Perryman LCSW, Arlington Police Department Victim Services Coordinator and University of Texas at Arlington Faculty

October 1, 2015 9:30 - 11:00 Victim Services in Prosecution

Presented by: Jalayne Robinson, Texas District & County Attorneys Association

October 15, 2015 9:30 - 11:00 Victim Services in Probation

Presented by: Kristi Heiman, TDCJ-Community Justice Assistance Division; Blanca Campuzano, TDCJ-Community Justice Assistance Division; and Todd Jermstad, Bell County Community Supervision and Corrections Department

November 5, 2015 9:30 - 11:00 Victim Services Post-Conviction

Presented by: Rose Trevino and Gabriella Lucero, TDCJ VSD Regional Victim Services Coordinators

November 19, 2015 9:30 - 11:00 Victim Services in Non-Profit

Presented by: Panel TBD

Texas Victim Assistance Training Online

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CALENDAR

The Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse wishes to remind our readers that a calendar feature has been added for the Texas Victim Assistance Training (TVAT) Online.

Criminal justice and victim services professionals can [view](#), [search](#), and [submit](#) victim-related trainings and events on the TVAT Calendar webpage.

www.tdcj.texas.gov/php/vscalendar/

THE TEXAS BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES:

Frequently Asked Questions and Policy Explanations: Confidentiality of the Victim Impact Statement Form and Protest Materials During the Parole Review Process



by David Gutierrez, Board Member, Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles

The primary role of the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles (the board) is the discretionary release of eligible offenders sentenced to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Correctional Institutions Division to a plan of parole supervision. In addition, the board is responsible for determining the conditions of release, imposing any special conditions for parole or mandatory supervision offenders on a case-by-case basis, and responding to violations of the conditions of release with sanctions to include revocation and re-incarceration.

The Governor, with the advice and consent of the Texas Senate, appoints the seven-member board. Members hold office for six-year staggered terms. To be eligible to serve, board members must be representative of the general public, a resident citizen of Texas and have resided in Texas for the two years preceding appointment.

The board has offices in Amarillo, Angleton, Austin, Gatesville, Huntsville, Palestine and San Antonio. Three-member panels consisting of at least one board member and any combination of board members and parole commissioners, may either meet together or review cases separately, to make decisions on parole, discretionary mandatory supervision, conditions of parole or mandatory supervision, and revocation of parole or mandatory

supervision.

The seven-member board makes recommendations to the governor on executive clemency matters, including pardons, reprieves, and commutation actions. The board employs professional staff to assist with legal matters, the parole process, hearings, clemency and administrative duties.

A victim of crime in the state of Texas has several protections under Texas Government Code §508.313(a), including: “All information obtained and maintained, including a victim protest letter or other correspondence, a victim impact statement, a list of inmates eligible for release on parole, and an arrest record of an inmate, is confidential and privileged...”

When an offender enters the parole review process and prior to an offender’s scheduled release, the TDCJ Victim Services Division (VSD) notifies those victims registered on the Victim Notification System (VNS). Individuals can register on the VNS by submitting a Victim Impact Statement (VIS) form that indicates their request for notification, or by contacting the VSD directly. These parties are notified in advance of the scheduled parole review in order to solicit their comments regarding the individual’s release. Also notified are the trial

officials (district judge, sheriff, and prosecuting attorney) of the county of conviction, the police chiefs of the county of conviction, the county in which the offense was committed (in cases with a change of venue), and the county to which the offender is to be released.

All correspondence regarding an offender, whether written in support of or in opposition to parole, will be added to the offender’s permanent file and will be available to the parole panel at the time of parole deliberations. It is important for comments to be submitted in a timely fashion. However, if protest letters received after a parole review appear to contain significant information previously unavailable to the parole panel, the case will be submitted to the parole panel for reconsideration in light of the objection. Each objection is carefully weighed on its own merits. ★

This article is provided by the Board of Pardons and Paroles; Board Member David Gutierrez, the liaison between Texas Department of Criminal Justice Victim Services Division and the Board. Additional information about factors the Board considers, decision reasons and other topics is available on the Board of Pardons and Parole website: www.tdcj.texas.gov/bpp/.

1. For the exact language of the statute click this link to [Texas Government Code § 508.313\(a\)](#)

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

OUR GOAL IS TO PRINT NEWS OF INTEREST FOR VICTIMS AND VICTIM ADVOCATES

The Victim's Informer newsletter is published quarterly. Articles, meeting notices, and other submissions should be sent to the TDCJ Victim Services Division, Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse, 8712 Shoal Creek Blvd, Suite 265, Austin, Texas 78757-6899; faxed to 512-452-0825; or e-mailed to tdcj.clearinghouse@tdcj.texas.gov. If you would like to submit materials, the deadline dates for articles, meeting notices, and other submissions are identified in the box on this page. For questions or comments, please call us at 800-848-4284 or 512-406-5931.

Please Note:

You may access the publication at the TDCJ VSD Internet website. If you wish, we will notify you via e-mail each time The Victim's Informer becomes available on the TDCJ VSD Internet website and provide an electronic link to The Victim's Informer. Send your e-mail address to: tdcj.clearinghouse@tdcj.texas.gov

Angie McCown, Director

Texas Department of Criminal Justice

Victim Services Division

victim.svc@tdcj.texas.gov

8712 Shoal Creek Blvd., Suite 265
Austin, Texas 78757



"The Tree of Angels has given me a place to honor my daughter's memory during the holiday season ..."

The Tree of Angels is a meaningful Christmas program specifically held in memory and support of victims of violent crime. The Tree of Angels is an opportunity for your community to recognize that the holiday season is a difficult time for families and friends who have suffered the crushing impact of a violent crime. This special event honors and supports surviving victims and victims' families by making it possible for loved ones to bring an angel ornament to place on a Christmas tree. The first program was implemented in December 1991 by People Against Violent Crime (PAVC) in Austin. Over the past 24 years the Tree of Angels has become a memorable tradition observed in many communities, providing comfort, hope, support and healing. This year the designated Tree of Angels week is December 7th - 13th.

Interested in hosting a "Tree of Angels" in your community?

A How-To-Guide is available electronically that provides information on how to establish a Tree of Angels ceremony in your community. The Tree of Angels is a registered trademark of the PAVC and we are extremely sensitive to ensuring that the original meaning and purpose of the Tree of Angels continues and is not distorted in any way. For this reason, PAVC asks that if your city or county is interested in receiving a copy of the How-To-Guide, please complete the informational form on the website: www.treeofangels.org. After the form is completed electronically and submitted back to the PAVC, you will receive instructions on how to download the How-To-Guide. We ask that you do not share the electronic document to avoid unauthorized use or distribution of the material. ★



Carol Tompkins, Vice Chair, People Against Violent Crime (PAVC)

If you have any questions regarding the How-To-Guide or hosting a Tree of Angels in your community, please contact Carol Tompkins at PAVC (512-837-PAVC) or e-mail carol@peopleagainstviolentcrime.org.

The Victim's Informer newsletter is published quarterly. If you would like to submit materials, the deadline dates for articles and other submissions are:

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