The
VICTIM'S INFORMER
TEXAS CRIME VICTIM CLEARINGHOUSE DECEMBER 2015/JANUARY 2016 VOL. 20, NO. 4

IN THE LINE OF DUTY

Angie McCown, Director
TDCJ Victim Services Division

Many of us have either worked with officers or been assisted in a time of need by them. Throughout my career I have worked with some of the finest men and women in law enforcement, corrections, probation and parole. I have also had the fortune and misfortune of working with many of their families after a line of duty death.

As we approach this holiday season, in a time of turmoil for law enforcement, let us remember the sacrifices they and their families make for all of us each day they walk out of the door of their homes, willing to serve their community, not knowing what lies ahead and whether or not they will be able to return home safely after their shift.

Congressman Ted Poe shared the story of just one of these sacrifices on March 16, 2006, on the House Floor.

Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor New York State Trooper Andrew Sperr. Each person who wears a badge walks a thin blue line between life and death. Their families wonder when their police officer reports for duty, if that person will return home.

Angie McCown

On March 1, 2006, Trooper Sperr did not return. He was shot and killed in the line of duty during a blazing gun fight with bank robbers in Big Flats, New York. Just after noon, Andrew Sperr stopped to investigate a suspicious pickup truck on the side of the road. As he approached the vehicle, the robbery suspects opened the door and opened fire on him, striking him multiple times. At least one round struck him in the right side above his body armor.

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The
VICTIM'S INFORMER

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Victim Services Division is proud to provide you with an e-mail notification service. E-mail notifications may be retrieved directly from your computer, mobile device, or wherever internet access is available. E-mail notifications are time sensitive and notify you of changes in an offender's status.

Being a current Victim Notification System registrant does not automatically register you for e-mail notification service. To register, contact the TDCJ Victim Services Division at 1-800-848-4284 or visit our website at www.tdcj.texas.gov and complete the victim e-mail notification form. You continue to have the option to receive notifications by letter, e-mail, or both. Whenever possible, we would like to encourage all victim service providers who utilize the Victim Notification System to elect to receive only e-mail notifications.

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He was a dedicated lawman, so Trooper Sperr was able to return fire, and he wounded both of the suspects, which eventually led to their arrest, even though he was mortally wounded himself. Andrew Sperr was 33 years of age. He was from Greece, New York, and he had been a member of the New York State police force for 10 years.

Though he had no kids of his own, he was greatly involved in the lives of his 10 siblings and their kids, and was godfather to several of his nieces and nephews. He was known as AJ to close family and friends, and he was remembered as always being the center of all activity. He spent his free time on his 80-acre farm in Steuben County, New York. He loved the outdoors and in his other free time he was a hunter and a wildlife photographer. As a young kid, Andrew Sperr had wanted to serve his community by becoming a peace officer.

In his life and his death, service was his mission. Friends, family and co-workers remember him as a compassionate public servant who generally cared about the people he came in contact with on a daily basis, no matter who they were. He had recently won the outstanding trooper award for the second year in a row.

When terrorists struck the World Trade Center in New York City on September 11, 2001, Andrew Sperr was there. He volunteered to go and help the people of New York, as well as the citizens of the United States, by providing law enforcement in the aftermath of that attack on America. Trooper Sperr also traveled to Louisiana [during] Hurricane Katrina and helped those folks in that area.

Madam Speaker, as a former judge in Texas, I have had the opportunity to speak several times in New York and to the troopers at the New York State Police Academy in Albany, New York. After we got through the language barrier, I found these right-thinking Americans to be passionate about protecting the citizens of New York State and bringing outlaws to justice.

Trooper Andrew Sperr was proud to be a member of this group of law officers. Trooper Andrew Sperr died doing what he wanted to do, protecting, serving and defending the people. As thousands of his fellow state troopers, law enforcement personnel, friends

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and family mourn his loss, our prayers go out to his family for allowing his life to be sacrificed for the rest of us.

Andrew J. Sperr was a dedicated officer and a compassionate friend to all. He served with distinction and honor, and he will be missed. America and Americans were better because of the life of Andrew Sperr. He wore the badge and proudly took the oath to protect and serve.

Madam Speaker, peace officers are the last strand of wire in the fence between safety and anarchy. They are all that stands between the people and the barbarians. Trooper Andrew Sperr died protecting the rest of us from those outlaws.

So God bless those that wear the badge of the American peace officer. That's just the way it is.

Congressman Ted Poe read this speech on the floor of the United States House of Representatives on March 16, 2006 and it is reprinted here with his permission.

DERRELYNN PERRYMAN APPOINTED TO TEXAS BOARD OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Reprinted with permission from The Connections Newletter.

In August, Texas Governor Greg Abbott appointed Derrelynn Perryman to the Texas Board of Criminal Justice (TBCJ). Derrelynn Perryman replaces Janice Harris Lord as the victim services liaison on the TBCJ.

Ms. Perryman commented that she is "deeply honored by this appointment, and excited about the opportunity to work with the TDCJ [Texas Department of Criminal Justice]. I've been impressed with the entire agency, the amazing work done by the Victim Services Division, and the important progress being made in our criminal justice system in Texas. I see great things ahead!"

Derrelynn Perryman serves as victim services coordinator for the Arlington Police Department, a position she has held since 1994. During Ms. Perryman's term of service, the Arlington Police Department has been twice recognized by the International Association of Chiefs of Police for excellence in providing victim services. She also serves as an adjunct instructor for the School of Social Work and the Criminal Justice and Criminology Department at The University of Texas at Arlington.

Prior to that, she served as a therapist at Family Assessment, Consultation and Therapy Service, where she developed programs for court-ordered offenders. She is a certified peace officer instructor, trains officers and first responders, and is a member of the Critical Incident Team with Arlington Police Department.

Ms. Perryman has counseled children who have lost a parent in the line of duty and has held leadership positions with the Texas Victim Services Association and the Tarrant County Criminal Justice Planning Committee. Ms.

Perryman earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in social work from The University of Texas at Arlington.

Governor Greg Abbott also appointed the Honorable Dale Wainwright as Chairman of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice and appointed Tom G. Fordyce as a new TBCJ member.

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SPOTLIGHT ON

PARENTS OF MURDERED CHILDREN (POMC)

by: Julie Jesperson, Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse

Parents Of Murdered Children (POMC) was founded by Robert and Charlotte Hullinger in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1978 after their 19-year-old daughter Lisa was murdered by her former boyfriend. Lisa had broken off their relationship. He begged her to take him back and when she refused to continue their relationship, he attacked Lisa with a hammer. Two weeks after the attack, Lisa died.[1]

A few months after Lisa's death, Charlotte Hullinger contacted Father Ken Czillinger who put the Hullingers in touch with three other parents whose children had been murdered. In December 1978, just three months after Lisa's death, the Hullingers opened their home and held the first meeting of parents of murdered children.

From their humble beginning of five parents, including themselves, the Hullingers' determination to survive and help others grew into the National Organization of POMC.[2]

Tragically, each year more than 14,000 persons are murdered in the United States.[3] The mission of POMC is to make a difference through on-going emotional support, education, prevention, advocacy and awareness. POMC strives to provide nationwide assistance to anyone who has lost a loved one to murder with over 60 chapters and 100 contact people throughout the United States.[4]

POMC Programs and Services

Second Opinion Services

The purpose of Second Opinion Services (S.O.S.) is to provide answers to questions and concerns regarding a death and subsequent investigation. Volunteer medical, law enforcement and investigative experts apply an independent objective viewpoint to materials submitted to POMC for review.

These professionals lend their time and expertise to S.O.S., volunteering to evaluate materials. They look for evidence that needs follow up, findings that may have been misinterpreted and areas that may need further investigation. S.O.S. is not an investigative agency. However, its findings have proved valuable in several cold cases.[5]

Parole Block Program

At the request of survivors, members of the POMC's Parole Block Program (PBP) will write and circulate petitions to protest the parole or early release of a loved one's murderer. The petitions are sent to people across the United States.[6]

This POMC program strives to give survivors a sense of control, as well as a positive outlet for their anger and frustration by allowing them to participate in the parole process via petitioning.

Murder Wall ... Honoring Their Memories

The Murder Wall was created in 1987 by Nancy Ruhe-Munch, the then Executive Director of the National Organization of POMC, and designed by Ann Reed, a parent/survivor and member of POMC. The Murder Wall is a traveling tribute honoring the memory of all murdered loved ones. The Murder Wall carries the names of murder victims on engraved, solid walnut plaques.

Each plaque contains 120 names, dates of birth and dates of death. There are now almost 4,000 loved ones commemorated on the Murder Wall with approximately 250 names added each year.[7]

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SPOTLIGHT ON: PARENTS OF MURDERED CHILDREN (POMC)

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Murder Is Not Entertainment (MINE)

In November 1993, the National Organization of POMC launched the Murder Is Not Entertainment (MINE) program. The MINE program strives to instill empathy and respect for victims of murder within society. Through education, crime prevention and promoting an overall change of attitude, the MINE program drives home the message that Murder Is Not Entertainment.[8]

Text for this article was excerpted from the National Organization of POMC website. To find out more information about local Chapters, support networks or POMC events in your area contact the National Organization of POMC office at (888) 818-7662 or via e-mail at natlpomc@pomc.org.

1. Parents Of Murdered Children National website http://www.pomc.org/index.html
2. Ibid.
3. FBI Annual Crime Report. 2014. https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s/2014/crime-in-the-u.s.-2014/tables/table-1
4. Parents Of Murdered Children National website http://www.pomc.org/index.html
5. Parents Of Murdered Children National website http://www.pomc.org/sos.html
6. Parents Of Murdered Children National website http://www.pomc.org/pbp.html
7. Parents Of Murdered Children National website http://www.pomc.org/murderwall.html
8. Parents Of Murdered Children National website http://www.pomc.org/minel.html

NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE 2015

Material submitted by: Anne Garza, POMC San Antonio Chapter

September 25th was chosen by the National Organization of Parents Of Murdered Children (POMC) as a Day of Remembrance as it marked the anniversary of Lisa Hullinger's death in 1978. In 2007, Congress designated September 25th as the National Day of Remembrance for all murder victims.

This September, I read the following tribute in support for survivors of homicide victims at Bexar County's National Day of Remembrance event. The tribute provides insights for those supporting parent survivors of victims of homicide.

None of us asked nor did we want to belong to this club we are in. The dues to belong are way too high for any of us to want to pay. We weren't asked to join, but because we are in this club (of having our family members murdered)….at least we have each other to lean on and to help us along the way.

Remember our Children

The loss of children is a pain all bereaved parents share, and it is a degree of suffering that is impossible to grasp without experiencing it first-hand. Often, when we know someone else is experiencing grief, our discomfort keeps us from approaching it head-on. But we want the world to remember our child or children, no matter how young or old our child was.

If you see something that reminds you of my child, tell me. If you are reminded at the holidays or on his/her birthday that I am missing my son, please tell me you remember him. When I speak his/her name

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NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE 2015

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or relive memories…relive them with me, don't shrink away. If you never met my son/daughter, don't be afraid to ask about them. One of our greatest joys is talking about our children.

Accept that you can't "fix" us

An out of order death such as child loss breaks a person (especially a parent) in a way that is not fixable or solvable – EVER! We will learn to pick up the pieces and move forward, but our lives will never be the same.

Every grieving parent must find a way to continue to live with loss, and it is a solitary journey. We appreciate your support and hope you can be patient with us as we find our way. Please don't tell us it's time to get back to life, that's it's been long enough or that time heals all wounds. We welcome your support and love, and we know sometimes it is hard to watch, but our sense of brokenness isn't going to go away. It is something to observe, recognize and accept.

Know there are at least two days a year we need a time out

We still count birthdays and fantasize what our child would be like if he/she were still living. Birthdays are especially hard for us. Our hearts ache to celebrate our child's arrival into this world, but we are left becoming intensely aware of the hole in our hearts instead. Some parents create rituals or have parties while others prefer solitude. Either way, we are likely going to need time to process the marking of another year without our child.

Then there's the anniversary of the date our child became an angel. This is a remarkable process similar to a parent of a newborn, first counting the days, then the months the one year anniversary, marking the time on the other side of that crevasse in our lives.

No matter how many years go by, the anniversary date of when our child died brings back deeply emotional memories and painful feelings (especially when murder is involved). In the days leading up to that day, survivors may feel a sense of impending doom or like it's hard to breathe. We may or may not share with you what's happening.

This is where the process of remembrance will help. If you have heard me speak of my child or supported me in remembering him/her, you will be able to put the pieces together and know when these tough days are approaching.

Realize we struggle each day with happiness

It's an ongoing battle to balance the pain and guilt of outliving your child with the desire to live in a way that honors them and their time on this earth. One mother said she remembered going on a family cruise 18 months after her son had died. On the first day, she stood at the back of the ship and bawled that she wasn't sharing the experience with him. Then she had to steady herself and recognize that she was also creating memories with her surviving children and enjoying the time with them in the present moment.

As bereaved parents, we are constantly balancing holding grief in one hand and a happy life after loss in the other. You might observe this when you are with us at a wedding, graduation or other milestone celebration. Don't walk away, witness it with us and be part of our process.

Accept the fact that our loss might make you uncomfortable

Our loss is unnatural, out-of-order; it challenges your sense of safety. You may not know what to say or do, and you are afraid you might make us lose it. We have learned all of this as part of what we are learning about grief.

We will never forget our child. In fact, our loss is always right under the surface of other emotions, even happiness. We would rather lose it because you spoke his/her name and remembered our child, than try and shield ourselves from the pain and live in denial. Grief is the pendulum swing of love. The stronger and deeper the love the more grief will be created on the other side. Consider it a sacred opportunity to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with someone who has endured one of life's most frightening events. Rise up with us.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS:
Texas Council on Family Violence: Go Purple Update

by: Aaron Setliff, Public Policy Director at The Texas Council on Family Violence

Since 1978, the Texas Council on Family Violence (TCFV) has been a nationally recognized leader in the efforts to end family violence through partnerships, advocacy and direct services for women, children and men. One of the largest domestic violence coalitions in the nation, the TCFV serves as a membership organization comprised of family violence service providers, survivors of domestic violence, businesses and professionals, communities of faith, supportive organizations and other concerned citizens.

The TCFV firmly commits to serving its members, communities in Texas and thousands of victims of domestic violence and their families. As a part of these efforts the TCFV leads efforts each legislative session to obtain funding for family violence programs and pass key legislation aimed at preventing family violence and intervening when it does.

Purple represents the domestic violence movement and the TCFV's efforts at the Capitol during session. The good news: the Legislature strongly supported the over 84,000 people (mostly women and children) that accessed services last year by increasing key funding. The Legislature listened when we called on them to **GO PURPLE**, passing the TCFV's entire agenda and increasing key funding. For more on our success at the Legislature, take a look below.

Appropriations: Full Funding for a Safer Texas:

Family Violence Services

The TCFV commends the Texas Legislature for its continued commitment to supporting lifesaving services, such as emergency shelters and hotlines for victims of family violence and their children. Per the final budget for the 2016-2017 biennium, the Health and Human Services Commission's Family Violence Program (HHSC FVP) will distribute $53.9 million for core services provided by family violence programs across Texas. This funding comes at a critical time: nearly 85,000 Texans sought assistance from HHSC-funded family violence programs last year alone, yet 39% of those who sought services were turned away due to lack of space or funding to provide services.

Recognizing this significant need, the Legislature also funded the HHSC's "Exceptional Item Request" of $3 million dollars. These funds will support these key unmet needs: legal services, economic stability measures such as housing and childcare, domestic violence fatality review teams, primary prevention aimed at ending violence before it starts, and underserved needs according to the Texas State Plan for family violence services.

Battering Intervention Prevention Programs (BIPP)

The Legislature increased funding for BIPPs to $3.5 million. Along with our state's strong commitment to family violence services, Texas has long prioritized funding for BIPPs. According to statute, all offenders who plead guilty to a family violence offense and who are referred to a program must be referred to an accredited BIPP; the Family Code allows and encourages courts to refer protective order respondents to accredited BIPPs.

Funding over the last 20 years has allowed family violence centers to establish BIPPs to address both victim's safety and offender accountability within a holistic framework, but prior to the session, BIPPs had not experienced an increase to this important funding since 1999. The one million dollar increase will allow programs to make ends meet, expand current services and add innovative approaches to what they currently do. This funding came as a part of Rider 48 within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Community Justice Assistance Division's appropriations.

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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS:
Texas Council on Family Violence: Go Purple Update

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Program Response:

Senate Bill 59

SB 59 strengthens the current statutory framework governing contracts for family violence services outlined in Human Resources Code Chapter 51. This bill requires the Health and Human Services Commission Family Violence Program (HHSC FVP), in collaboration with the TCFV, to create an application process that will guide funding processes and clearly establish that in the event of a conflict with another code, the Human Resources Code Chapter 51 prevails.

The bill further requires the HHSC to work within the Texas State Plan for family violence services, entitled Access to Safety, Justice and Opportunity: A Blueprint for Domestic Violence Interventions in Texas, in decisions guiding the funding process. Prior to the passage of SB 59, efforts by HHSC to consolidate all contracting and procurement services created unacceptably lengthy delays in disbursement of funds to critical services for victims of family violence and did not comply with long-standing provisions within the Human Resources Code Chapter 51.

Prevention Efforts:

House Bill 2455

In 2007 Texas became one of the first states to pass legislation aimed at preventing dating violence by requiring every school district in Texas to implement dating violence policies and provide training and awareness education to teachers, students, parents and administrators. In the nearly ten years since HB 2455 passed, implementation has been inconsistent with no true picture being provided on if, and how, these policies and trainings are being addressed.

HB 2455 seeks to convene a task force comprised of issue area experts to assess the full spectrum of how data related to dating violence, family violence, stalking and sexual assault is collected and provide recommendations for enhanced efficacy. It also includes provisions to examine the implementation of required dating violence policies, awareness education and training with a goal of providing recommendations that will strengthen this key prevention effort with Texas' youth.

House Bill 2645

Family violence results from the use of power and control by one intimate partner over another. This occurs over time and context, and too often happens when other non-physical but still damaging tactics fail. Prosecutors who try family violence cases have long identified the Code of Criminal Procedure and Rules of Evidence as in conflict with this well-accepted concept. Previously the rules often disallowed mention of previous conduct that would help the jury to understand the nature of the relationship and the batterer's use of power and control; in effect, the jury has to make a decision regarding guilt with less than the full picture. This bill changes the Code of Criminal Procedure to allow the jury to hear more information about the relationship of the parties in the guilt-innocence phase of a trial involving family violence.

In addition, the bill addressed family offenders being monitored by global positioning systems (GPS) as a part of a protective order. Previously, when law enforcement observed tampering or outright removal of GPS by an offender, the law enforcement officer had to go back to the court that ordered the protective order to obtain permission to arrest. This bill allows law enforcement to arrest the violator in real time for a violation of a protective order, thereby increasing victim safety and offender accountability.

Please note that the foregoing bill summaries, although thoroughly researched, do not constitute controlling interpretations of law. To read the full statutory text enacted by these bills, visit Texas Legislature Online at www.capitol.state.tx.us.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS:

Texas Association Against Sexual Assault: Protective Order Update

by: Chris Kaiser, Staff Attorney for the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault

The 84th Legislature enacted several changes to Texas law concerning civil protective orders. These laws affect various aspects of protective order (PO) practice, including eligibility, extensions, enforcement of violations, information given to victims, and processes for entering orders into the Texas Crime Information Center (TCIC). Each of the bills took effect on September 1, 2015 or earlier. The following explains legislative changes to PO laws in 2015.

House Bill 388

HB 388 provides that the duration of a PO expiring while the person subject to the order is in confinement or within one year following release is extended. If the person subject to the order was sentenced to more than five years confinement, the order is extended for one year from the date of release, but if the person was sentenced to five years or less of confinement, the order is extended for two years from the date of release.

House Bill 1447

HB 1447 amended crime victims' rights. If the victim or parent or guardian of a minor victim is present at the time of an offender's conviction or placement on deferred adjudication community supervision for sexual assault, aggravated sexual assault, indecency with a child, continuous sexual abuse of a young child, sex trafficking, compelling prostitution, or stalking, the victim or victim's parent or guardian has the right to be informed of the procedures for obtaining a PO and for seeking assistance from a prosecutor to apply for a PO. If the court has jurisdiction over applications for POs filed under Code of Criminal Procedure art. 7A.01, the court must allow a PO application to be filed immediately following the defendant's conviction or placement on deferred adjudication community supervision. If the victim or the parent or guardian of the victim is not present at the time of conviction or placement on deferred adjudication community supervision, the attorney representing the state must inform the victim or victim's parent or guardian of the procedures for obtaining a PO and for seeking assistance from a prosecutor to apply for a PO.

Senate Bill 147

SB 147 relates to violations of POs issued to protect victims of sexual assault or abuse, stalking, and trafficking. It applies enhanced penalties for repeated violations of family violence POs and bond conditions in family violence cases to POs issued to protect victims of sexual assault or abuse, stalking and trafficking. SB 147 repeals the separate offense in the Penal Code § 38.112 for violation of POs issued under the Code of Criminal Procedure art. 7A. SB 147 also requires the Department of Public Safety (DPS) Bureau of Identification and Records to collect and report information related to persons subject to POs imposed for the protection of a victim of trafficking and requires DPS to adopt administrative rules related to such collection and reporting.

Senate Bill 737

SB 737 authorizes magistrates to issue orders for emergency protection to protect victims of human trafficking. The bill requires a magistrate issuing a Magistrate's Order of Emergency Protection (MOEP) to send a copy of the order to the chief of police in the jurisdiction where the victim resides and requires the clerk of the issuing court to send a copy of the order to the victim's last known address within one business day of issuance. SB 737 also requires that the law enforcement agency in the jurisdiction where the victim resides enter the order into the TCIC within three business days of receipt. In addition, not later than the next business day following the issuance of a PO, the clerk of the issuing court must send a copy of the order to the chief of police, the appropriate constable, and sheriff of the county where the protected person resides and, if applicable, to the relevant Title IV-D agency.

Please note that the foregoing bill summaries, although thoroughly researched, do not constitute controlling interpretations of law. To read the full statutory text enacted by these bills, visit Texas Legislature Online at www.capitol.state.tx.us.

VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENT PACKET

It is your right!

by: Julie Jesperson, Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Victim Services Division (VSD) Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse (TxCVC), with the participation of the TDCJ Community Justice Assistance Division and the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles develops the Victim Impact Statement (VIS) in accordance with the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure art. 56.03.

VIS Purpose

Victims of crime have a right to participate in the criminal justice process. In exercising their right to submit a VIS and have it considered by key decision makers in the criminal justice system, victims are provided a voice in several phases of the criminal justice system.

The VIS serves to provide information to crime victims concerning their rights, enumerated by the Code of Criminal Procedure arts. 56.01 and 56.021. The VIS offers crime victims an opportunity to provide valuable victim impact information, that only the victim can provide, concerning the economic, physical, and psychological impact of the crime (to be used in the criminal justice system). This information is to be considered by those who make sentencing and parole decisions.

Additionally, the VIS is designed to collect the crime victim's name and contact information in order to facilitate notifications at different stages of the criminal justice system. Crime victims can also use the VIS to indicate their wishes regarding future notifications concerning parole information from the TDCJ.

The VIS is intended to follow the offender throughout the criminal justice system, enabling criminal justice and victim services professionals to contact crime victims throughout the process, and provide key decision makers information regarding the impact of the crime.

VIS Revision

Pursuant to the Code of Criminal Procedure art. 56.03(h), the TxCVC, in collaboration with the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles and the TDCJ Community Justice Assistance Division, revise the VIS form. This year the VIS Revision Committee also included victim advocates, victim assistance coordinators representing counties from across the state, and criminal justice professionals from many state agencies including the Office of the Attorney General, the Texas Juvenile Justice Department, the Texas Department of Public Safety and the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles.

The committee met for several sessions over the summer to review and update the VIS including the Supplemental Page, the VIS Quarterly Activity Report, the VIS Recommended Processing Procedures, and the *It's Your Voice* brochure. Updates to these documents are available on the TDCJ website or by clicking this link.

VIS Training

The TxCVC is excited to offer free specialized training on the VIS. This training entitled, "Victim Impact Statement: The Victim's Voice in the Criminal Justice Process," has been developed exclusively for those individuals and agencies who bear a legal responsibility regarding the handling of VISs. The target audience includes judges, prosecutors, victim assistance coordinators, district clerks, court coordinators, probation officers, law enforcement personnel and

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VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENT: ITS YOUR RIGHT

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sheriff's department staff who assist victims, handle the VIS or assemble penitentiary packets.

The training will focus on the importance of the VIS at key stages of the criminal justice process. It will discuss the legal responsibilities of the various agencies affected by VIS laws and will offer ideas for addressing gaps that may exist between agencies.

What You Will Gain From This Training:

- Increased knowledge of crime victims' rights;
- Increased knowledge of the important role the VIS plays at key stages of the criminal justice process;
- Increased knowledge and awareness of the statutory responsibilities of the various criminal justice entities with regards to the VIS;
- Familiarity with the revisions to the VIS forms and statistical reporting requirements; and
- Ideas for developing VIS standards in your community that will help to ensure victims' voices are heard at all stages of the criminal justice process.

Please join us for this important training. By working collectively, we can better ensure that the voices of victims in Texas are heard.

To learn more about Victim Impact Statement training contact the TxCVC via e-mail at tdcj.clearinghouse@tdcj.texas.gov or via telephone at 512-406-5931 or (800) 848-4284, or visit the TxCVC training page.

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 512-406-5931.

Webinars:
The TDCJ VSD TxCVC hosts a webinar series. Webinar descriptions and registration information, as well as recordings and related documents for past webinars may be accessed on the TDCJ VSD website: http://tdcj.texas.gov/divisions/vs/victim_webinars.html

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, visit: https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/php/tvatonline/

Texas Victim Assistance Training Online

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CALENDAR

The Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse reminds readers that a calendar feature has been added for the 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.state.tx.us/php/vscalendar/

HOPE FOR THE HOLIDAYS:
Survival Tips for Homicide Survivors

by: Janice Harris Lord

You are facing the holidays, and someone you love will be missing from your holiday table because they were killed. As you think about their empty chair throughout the holiday season, you may feel overwhelmed. Following are some suggestions to help you cope.

Change traditions

If you have always had your holiday meals at one place, have them at someone else's home this year. The more you try to make it the same as it was before, the more poignant your loved one's absence will feel.

Balance solitude with sociability

Solitude can renew strength. Being with people who love you can help you feel less lonely. Plan to attend some holiday gatherings even if you don't think you want to. You can leave early if you choose. You may surprise yourself by having a good time.

Relive the happy memories

Pick three special memories of past holidays with your loved one. Think of them often and allow yourself to smile. It's good to feel both happiness and sorrow.

Set aside "letting go" time

Schedule times in your planner or calendar for grieving. When you know you have set aside these times, listening to music, journaling, or visiting the cemetery, it will be easier to postpone unwanted spasms of grief in public or at work.

Counter the conspiracy of silence

Family and friends don't know what to do, so they sometimes conspire to not mention your loved one for fear of upsetting you. They may not realize that you are already thinking about the death many times a day. Break the ice by mentioning your loved one first. If they seem surprised, gently inform them that it is important to you to talk about your loved one during the holidays.

Find a creative outlet

Write a memorial poem, song, or story about your loved one and share it. Use the money you would have spent on your loved one for holiday gifts to donate to a charity he or she supported. Consider volunteering.

Don't forget the rest of the family

Even if it takes energy you think you don't have, try to have a good holiday season for the children. If you need help preparing your home or buying gifts, ask a trusted friend to help. Christmas tree ornaments carry so many emotionally-laden memories that many families choose to buy different ornaments for a few years until they can face unpacking the old ones. Put the tree in a different room or space this year.

Utilize available resources

If you are a person of faith, participate in church or synagogue services or go to the mosque more often for prayer. Many veterans of the faith have a serenity about them, a special kind of healing wisdom that can be very comforting. Seek out a support group that is meeting specifically to help people through the holidays. Many funeral homes, non-profits and faith communities offer them. Or start your own small group of others who have experienced something similar.

It is tempting to conclude that life is "awful" during the holidays. Yes, you will have some difficult times, but you can also experience some joy. Having pleasurable moments does not mean that you have forgotten your loved one or that you loved him or her any less. Let yourself feel both grief and joy. Above all, remember that you cannot change the past. You can, however, live fully in this moment. Total recovery may never come, but what you kindle from the ashes of your tragedy is largely up to you.

This article is excerpted from a chapter in *No Time for Goodbyes: Coping with Sorrow, Anger, and Injustice After a Tragic Death* by Janice Harris Lord. Ms. Lord grants permission for victim advocates to copy this article.

Ms. Janice Harris Lord presented a webinar on December 4, 2014 on Grief and the Holidays.
To view this webinar click here or refer to page ten for information on how to access recordings of previously held webinars hosted by the Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse.

THE TEXAS BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES:

Frequently Asked Questions and Policy Explanations

Board Updates

by David Gutiérrez*, Chairman Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles*

Governor Abbott Names Board of Pardons and Paroles New Chair and Board Member

Governor Greg Abbott recently announced his reappointment of David Gutiérrez of Belton, Texas to the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles (BPP) and his new commission as Presiding Officer, with a term set to expire Feb. 1, 2021. Additionally, the governor appointed Ed Robertson of Pflugerville, Texas, Board Member with the same term.

"This is a tremendous honor for me and my family – to be reappointed to the board and additionally now, as Presiding Officer – I welcome the opportunity to lead BPP and am grateful to the Governor for his confidence in me and my qualifications. I am also thankful to our retiring Chair, Rissie Owens. Thanks to her and her tenure I feel prepared and up to task for the role," stated Gutiérrez.

Mr. Gutiérrez has served on the BPP since 2009. He has 35 years of experience in criminal justice and law enforcement, including 11 years as sheriff of Lubbock County. He formerly served as chair of the Texas Commission on Jail Standards and the Texas Correctional Office on Offenders with Medical or Mental Impairments Advisory Board, and he is a past president of the Texas Corrections Association and the Texas Jail Association. Sheriff Gutiérrez received a Bachelor of Science from Wayland Baptist University.

Ed Robertson is a 22 year veteran of public service. He is currently an advisor in the Governor's planning and policy office. Previously, he served as a budget and performance analyst for the Legislative Budget Board and as a budget analyst for the City of Austin. He volunteers as an assistant coach for the Pflugerville Little League and as a parent volunteer at Hendrickson High School. Mr. Robertson received a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Texas at Austin and a Master of Science from Trinity University.

"I am humbled Governor Abbott has selected me as a Board Member to the Board of Pardons and Paroles. This is a tremendous privilege and I look forward to working with such a qualified and illustrious group," shared Robertson. "I'm anxious to provide my unique insight into the Criminal Justice segment and welcome the opportunity to collaborate with my new colleagues."

House Bill 1914

HB 1914 is an Act relating to the frequency with which the BPP considers the eligibility of certain inmates for release on parole. The bill was signed by Governor Abbott and became law effective September 1, 2015. The bill authorizes up to 10-year set off for offenders serving a sentence for Aggravated Sexual Assault or a life sentence for a capital felony. It also requires an amendment to the board rules, policies and directives.

The Act was authored by State Representative Dennis Bonnen (District 25, Angleton) and State Representative Pat Fallon (District 106, Frisco) and sponsored by State Senator Kelly Hancock (District 9, North Richland Hills).

HB 1914 was passed by the House April 17, 2015 with 141 Yeas, 0 Nays, 2 present, not voting; it was passed by the Senate May 26, 2015 with 31 Yeas and 0 Nays. It reads:

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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 Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Victim Services Division (VSD), Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse, by mail to 8712 Shoal Creek Blvd, Suite 265, Austin, Texas 78757-6899; via fax 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

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Board Updates

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BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. § 508.141(g-1), Government Code, is amended to read as follows:
(g-1) The month designated under Subsection (g)(1) by the parole panel that denied release must begin after the first anniversary of the date of the denial and end before the fifth anniversary of the date of the denial, unless the inmate is serving a sentence for an offense under § 22.021, Penal Code, or a life sentence for a capital felony, in which event the designated month must begin after the first anniversary of the date of the denial and end before the 10th anniversary of the date of the denial.

SECTION 2. The Board of Pardons and Paroles shall adopt a policy consistent with § 508.141(g-1), Government Code, as amended by this Act, as soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act.

To read the full statutory text visit Texas Legislature Online at www.capitol.state.tx.us.

The Board of Pardons and Paroles, established by the Texas Constitution, decides which eligible offenders to release on parole, the conditions for parole and whether to revoke parole if conditions are not met, as well as recommendation of resolution of clemency matters to the Governor.

This article is provided by the Board of Pardons and Paroles; Board Chairman David Gutiérrez has been the liaison between the TDCJ Victim Services Division and the Board of Pardons and Paroles. Additional information about the Board of Pardons and Paroles is available on the Board of Pardons and Paroles website: www.tdcj.texas.gov/bpp/.

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

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