

LET CHANGE LEAD US TO STRENGTH, RESILIENCE AND JUSTICE

By *Angie McCown, Director*
TDCJ Victim Services Division

*"I alone cannot change the world,
but I can cast a stone across the
waters to create many ripples."
Mother Teresa*

I hope everyone's 2017 is off to a great start. We are in the midst of many changes and it can sometimes be hard to chart a course in such choppy waters. However, with change comes opportunity for introspection and new directions. It is important to remember Mother Teresa's quote and to know that although as individuals we may not be able to change the world, our individual actions can contribute to the community change.

As many of you know, the Texas Legislature convened the 85th Session on January 10, 2017, and the regular session will end on May 29, 2017. During this time many victims and victims' advocates will engage members of the Senate and the House of

Representatives to discuss public policy to expand victims' rights and enhance services to victims of crime, with the goal of victim empowerment in the criminal justice system. Participating in the legislative process is one way to contribute to the community by supporting victims' strength and resilience while furthering their ability to seek the justice they deserve. The Texas Legislature Online website www.legis.state.tx.us is a tool that anyone can use to follow bills that are filed and to receive alerts about bills that may impact victims.

In April, we will once again commemorate National Crime Victim's Rights Week (NCVRW). This year's theme "Strength – Resilience - Justice" offers each of us the opportunity to examine what we as Texas citizens and criminal justice professionals are doing to recognize and support victims' strength and resilience while helping them to seek justice.



Angie McCown

I encourage everyone reading the Informer to think creatively about how you might engage your community to better support victims and to join your community in commemorating NCVRW April 2 - 8, 2017. I also hope you will determine ways in which you might contribute to the legislative change process to expand victims' rights and enhance services to crime victims. It is going to be a busy spring so go out there and create some ripples to contribute to our collective future! ★

"Change is the law of life and those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future."

John F. Kennedy

PASSING THE TORCH

By: Mark Odom, Deputy Director for the TDCJ Victim Services Division

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Victim Services Division (VSD) 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 (VNS) registrant will not automatically register you for this email service.

To register, contact the TDCJ VSD 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 VNS to elect to receive email notifications only whenever possible.

I began my criminal justice career as a Parole Officer in Austin, Texas in 1987 and then conducted administrative release revocation hearings for the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles. I appreciated working with offenders and believed then, as I do now, that assisting an offender's transition back into society is a tremendous career and community service.



Mark Odom

In February 1998, I began working for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Victim Services Division (VSD) as an analyst and victim liaison preparing victims who witnessed executions. For the next five years I served as the Training Coordinator, the Director of the Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse and as a Staff Mediator for the Victim Offender Mediation Dialogue program (VOMD). Since 2004 I have served as the Deputy Director.

I was immediately drawn to working for victims of violent crime and they have taught me so much about human spirit, tenacity and resilience. Victims' reflections on their experiences are always deeply moving. Victims not only talk about the crime and devastating aftermath, they often relate back to their journey through the criminal justice process and how their entire lives have been shaped by the experiences.

It has always been amazing to me that the victim's emotional re-telling of their experiences can be so transformational, frequently turning personal tragedy into a new reflection on life and often a desire to make positive changes for themselves, as well as others. The victim's experiences and the power of their story is what drew me to the restorative justice options for victims such as victim impact panels and VOMD. These programs are often utilized by victims who seek accountability and rehabilitation processes beyond sentencing sanctions in both corrections and community supervision.



Having previously worked with offenders, I came into

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Passing the Torch

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victim services with a different perspective than a lot of victim advocates. At first, I was naive about what crime victims go through. I had read case files on the facts of the crimes and I had interviewed victims during parole revocation hearings. However, the files and the brief testimonies that I read and heard did not reflect the nature, scope and depth of the victim's experience.

Reflecting back, I wish I had the knowledge I have gained over the past twenty years when I was working with offenders. Now working with offenders in the VOMD program, we have learned that many offenders welcome the opportunity to be held accountable and/or make amends for their actions when offered the opportunity to meet with their victim. It's important for us in the field of victim services, in Texas as well as the rest of the country, to continually work within correctional organizations and in community supervision to ensure that victim's needs, experiences and perceptions are a core element of criminal justice as well as offender rehabilitation.

Before the Texas Legislature adopted the first Crime Victim Bill of Rights in 1989, victims had little or no opportunity to participate in the criminal justice process. Prior to the 1980s few people in Texas wanted to

address the almost universal needs of victims of violent crime: to be informed, to feel safe, to participate in the criminal justice process, and to have a voice. Since the 80's there has been an explosion of advancement in the victim rights movement in Texas and nationally.

Today in victim services we are learning to adapt to new ways of working with victims. Although there have been challenges, the core of why we are in this field remains the same. Those of us who have been in the field for a while should be proud of what was created from a social movement that was born out of a need to seek changes. The organization and institutionalization of victim services is a sign of success of the social movement. Also, we realize strong collaborative working relationships among law enforcement, district attorneys offices, statewide victim services programs and advocacy groups create a more cohesive system for crime victims in the state of Texas and nationally. However, as we have become more institutionalized, we must all strive to make sure that the mission of assisting victims comes first.

For those new folks who enter the victim services field today, it is important that they learn about the history and progress of the victim services movement, and we should

all embrace the enthusiasm and fresh ideas they bring to the field. By reflecting upon the history of the movement and looking ahead to the future, we aim to challenge the field to continually build on the past successes while striving to improve services by listening to the needs of the victims and improving access to programs and services.

Looking back on my career, I truly appreciate the relationships that I have developed in the field of victim services, with both victims and colleagues. And, I believe that this work draws us together in a way that is unique, as well as difficult. Through the years I have noticed that the ranges of emotions that victims go through can often be reflected in our staff and colleagues' demeanors and actions. I want to thank Angie, among other things, for the steps we have taken within our division to address the stress that comes with this work. Going forward, we must continually strive to take care of ourselves, as well as those we serve.

And finally, I would like to thank the staff that I have worked with for the past 20 years with the TDCJ VSD. It has been an honor to work with such a dedicated and sincere group of individuals. If you need to see me this spring, I'll be at the ranch! ★

Standing in the Shoes of My Heroes

By: *Derrelynn Perryman, Victim Services Liaison for the Texas Board of Criminal Justice*

In October 2015 I had the honor of being appointed by the governor to the Texas Board of Criminal Justice. As the reality set in, I began to truly realize that I was stepping into the shoes of some of Texas' pioneer victim services leaders.

Governor Ann Richards appointed Ellen Halbert, who was an advocate and survivor, in 1991. She was the first victim appointed to the board. Due to her dedication to crime victims and tireless advocacy for rehabilitation of offenders, a 500-bed female substance abuse treatment facility was named the Ellen Halbert Unit in 1995. In 1996, both the Texas Corrections Association and the Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse established awards in her name to recognize her work on behalf of crime victims. In 1997, she won the National Crime Victim Service Award, the highest federal award for service to victims. In 1999, she was named as one of Texas' Women of the Century.

In 1997, Governor Bush appointed Patsy Day to the board. Patsy was also a survivor. In 1986, she founded Victims Outreach, a Dallas-based not-for-profit organization that advocated the rights of crime victims and provided vital support to victims and their families. She served as executive director of Victims Outreach for 14 years, a period in which the organization provided

support services to over 20,000 victims. As an ardent supporter of victims' rights, she received numerous awards and citations for her work, including the Texas Governor's Award for Victim Assistance for peer advocacy in 1989 and a Certificate of Appreciation from the United States (U.S) Department of Justice in 1993.

In 2008, Governor Perry appointed Janice Harris Lord to the board after Patsy retired. Janice began her career standing with neglected children as a Child Protective Services worker in Dallas. In 1982, she turned her focus to victims of drunk driving crashes as National Director of Victim Services for Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), a position she held for 14 years. She developed the Victim Services program nationally and for the states. She founded the magazine, MADDvocate. In 1993, Janice received the U.S. Presidential Award for "Outstanding Service on Behalf of Victims of Crime" from President Bill Clinton and U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno. She helped develop the curriculum for the first National Victim Assistance Academy sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime, wrote the curriculum for the first Texas Victim Assistance Academy, and served for several years as a consultant to the 34 State Victim Assistance Academies throughout

the nation. She was also a member of the National Victim Assistance Standards Consortium, which developed standards and ethics for the emerging field of Crime Victims Services.

Words cannot express the honor and humility I feel following in the footsteps of these great women. I believe that having a strong voice for victims on the board is essential, just, and right. I also believe that having a victim advocate on the board has shaped the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) and the way victims are considered in the processes of such a huge, offender-focused organization. It is a lot to live up to, and I am excited about the challenge! And I very much want to hear from you. How can we continue to improve the way TDCJ supports victims of crime? ★

You may contact Derrelynn Perryman through the board office at 512-475-3250 or at tbcj@tdcj.texas.gov



Derrelynn Perryman

The

VICTIM'S INFORMER

SPOTLIGHT ON



children's advocacy
centers™ of texas

By: Lindsey Jordan, LMSW, Program Administrator, CACTX

April Is Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month.

Last year, Child Protective Services (CPS), a division of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), investigated nearly 177,000 cases of suspected child maltreatment, and over 66,000 Texas children were confirmed victims of abuse and/or neglect.¹ Child maltreatment includes physical, sexual, and emotional abuse as well as various forms of neglect, and often results in adverse impacts on a child victim's development and functioning. Child abuse is a community problem, and each April, child-serving organizations set out to spread awareness of the issue and educate the community on strategies to prevent, recognize, and report child abuse.

Sexual Abuse Is a Common Form of Child Maltreatment.

Educating the community about child sexual abuse is particularly important and is often a focus during April. While physical abuse may leave marks, sexual abuse may not, and the unique dynamics of sexual abuse make

it difficult for adults to know that a child they care about is being abused. Perpetrators of child sexual abuse tend to target children and build relationships with them and their family over time in order to gain their trust and cooperation, a process professionals call "grooming." In fact, approximately 90 percent of child victims are abused by someone they know and trust. Sometimes, sexual abuse is even committed by family members or members of the child's household. Both boys and girls of all ages, races, and socio-economic statuses can be abused, and perpetrators can be either male or female.

Children are often reluctant to disclose abuse out of shame, embarrassment or fear. Children

Approximately 1 in 10 children are sexually abused before their 18th birthday.

may fear they will not be believed or helped or that they will be blamed for the abuse. Children who are abused by family members often face conflicted feelings about the perpetrator and may want to

protect them. These children may fear that if they tell, it will break up their family. Of the children who do disclose, many delay their disclosure for months or even years.

To learn more about recognizing and reporting child abuse, visit www.onewithcourage.org.

Adults can help by knowing the facts about sexual abuse and about perpetrators, learning the signs of abuse, and reporting suspected abuse to CPS and/or law enforcement.

Reporting suspected child abuse is required for all adults in Texas, and doing so is the first step in promoting a child's safety and healing. In Texas and throughout the United States, children's advocacy centers play a key role in helping child victims and their families recover from abuse.

What Are Children's Advocacy Centers?

Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) support and coordinate the efforts of the multidisciplinary

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1. Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). (2015). DFPS 2015 Data Book. Retrieved from https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About_DFPS/Annual_Report/2015/.

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team (MDT) partners including law enforcement, CPS, prosecutors, and medical and mental health professionals that investigate and respond to child abuse allegations. The CACs also offer comprehensive victim advocacy services and specialized, trauma-focused mental health services to child victims and their non-offending family members.

The CACs are child-focused, trauma-informed settings where the physical and psychological safety of child victims and their family members is prioritized throughout the investigation. The CACs facilitate a joint investigation process in which CPS, law enforcement and prosecutors coordinate, work together and share information in order to ensure the best possible outcomes for children and cases. The CACs employ forensic interviewers who have received specialized training in conducting developmentally- and culturally-sensitive, non-leading interviews of alleged victims. These interviews are observed by the case investigators and are video- and audio-recorded with the goal of minimizing the number of times a child is asked to talk about what may have happened to them.

The CACs also employ trained family advocates who work

with the family throughout the investigation to help ensure that the child's and family's needs are met. These advocates provide crisis intervention, information about crime victims' rights and Crime Victims' Compensation (CVC), and education about the dynamics of abuse and the coordinated MDT response. They also assess each family's needs and connect them with resources and support within the community, such as emergency financial assistance, food pantries and housing assistance. Family advocates connect child victims and their non-offending caregivers with mental health services, both within and outside of the CAC. The CAC mental health programs offer clients free, evidenced-based, trauma-focused treatment, such as Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Parent-Child Interaction Therapy.

There are currently 70 CACs throughout Texas, covering 97% of the state's population and serving over 43,000 children annually. CACs officially serve 194 Texas counties, and many counties without a CAC receive courtesy services from centers in neighboring counties.

What Is CACTX?

While each CAC in Texas is an independent organization, all Texas CACs are part of a network

supported by the Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas, Inc. (CACTX). The CACTX, a non-profit organization, is the statewide membership association representing local CACs in Texas. The CACTX supports the 70 local CACs through:

- tailored technical assistance and strategic guidance;
- professional training for front line CAC staff and child abuse professionals working within the CAC MDT;
- grant administration and funding to support local CACs; and
- public affairs and legislative advocacy for CACs and issues impacting CAC clients and the work of MDT partners.

Texas is part of a network that includes over 700 CACs operating nationally and internationally. As the largest state network of CACs in the nation, our membership reflects the vast diversity of Texas, all with their own unique approaches to fulfilling our shared mission of ensuring justice and healing for abused children.

For more information about CACTX or to find your local CAC, please visit www.cactx.org or contact Lindsey Jordan at ljordan@cactx.org.★

Remember, you are obligated by law to report suspected abuse.
 If you suspect a child, an elderly person or person with disabilities is in immediate danger, call 911. For all other cases in Texas, call the abuse and neglect hotline at 800.252.5400.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A FAMILY ADVOCATE

By: Janet Morris, Family Advocate Supervisor and Community Outreach Coordinator, Garth House, Mickey Mehaffy Children's Advocacy Program, Inc. and Sonya Hall, CAC of Smith County in Tyler, Texas

Editor's Note: We reached out to the Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas and requested articles about what a day in their life at the center is like. The below article depicts the life of a family advocate from two current advocates' perspectives.

Each Day Is Different

Janet: My name is Janet Morris, Family Advocate Supervisor/Community Outreach Coordinator with Garth House, Mickey Mehaffy Children's Advocacy Program, Inc., where I have been employed for fourteen years. Our Family Advocate Program consists of myself, two advocates, Anali and Juan; and two canines, Taffee and Daisee.

Each day in the life of a Children's Advocacy Center (CAC) Family Advocate (FA) is unique. There is no such thing as a typical or routine day. Each situation, family, caregiver and child is different, and their needs and experiences of trauma vary. At the beginning of each day, we never know who we will be working with as far as personalities and needs. This is what makes the job so interesting, motivating, satisfying, challenging, demanding and rewarding.

Sonya: No two days in the life of a Family Advocate are the same.

We work with many families whose lives have been forever changed by the abuse their child has endured; each family and each family member processes this differently, reacts differently and has different needs. But, for

all, they are forever changed. It is my job as a family advocate to walk with them, to be a resource for them and to be strong for them through the process of their child's and their family's healing.

A Day In The Life of a FA

Janet: As our day begins, a family arrives at the center for a forensic interview of a child. This means that allegations of abuse have been reported to law enforcement and/or Child Protective Services (CPS). A FA is the first contact with the family at the center; greeting everyone, being the gracious host, and making the family feel at ease as they fill out the intake paperwork. The family advocate can literally "set the tone" for the entire process of the case. During this time, a family advocate dog (Taffee or Daisee) is present, sitting next to the child and/or caregiver to visit freely, giving their friendship and love. They also provide "entertainment" as they do their "tricks." It is amazing to see the face of a frightened child suddenly change into a smile or laughter as they feel the kindness and start to feel safe.

While the child is being interviewed, the FA and family will meet. The FA reviews the intake information, informs caregivers



Janet Morris, Taffee and Daisee

of the role of the CAC and the interview process, and gives them a "Handbook for Parents" which has all the information needed to guide them through the entire process. The FA explains the counseling program and services offered to child victims and their non-offending family members. They refer caregivers to community agencies to help with crime victim assistance and applications, food, housing, daycare and transportation. The advocate is the "go to" person for anything the family may need.

FAs are trained in assessment of trauma levels and can provide crisis intervention with parents when needed. Lowering stress levels is important when meeting with parents. Some may be experiencing the unknown of a child abuse case for the first

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A Day in the Life of a Family Advocate

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time, while others may have had previous history with CPS and law enforcement and are concerned about dealing with “the system.” When the interview and paperwork are complete, the FA joins law enforcement and CPS as they visit with the family and explain the next steps in the case and their investigation. The whole process usually takes about two hours.

Once the initial meeting with the family has ended, the second phase of helping the family begins. FAs enter case information into databases. Follow-up phone calls and/or emails to caregivers, law enforcement, and CPS are scheduled, made, and documented. Continued family contact is a must when helping the family receive the information and services they need throughout the case. The FA plays an important role staying in contact with the family building an ongoing relationship. The advocate may have important information about the family that will aid the multidisciplinary team members during the time before the case goes to trial. Information about updated family contact information or changes in family dynamics may be helpful to the district attorney’s office when beginning court preparation. The FA and the advocate dogs are available for court accompaniment and can be with the child and witnesses during the times when the district attorney and staff

prepare for the court proceedings, which can be very stressful. The dogs provide not only stress relief but also empowerment.

Along with their other many tasks, the family advocates offer child abuse training sessions to our families and community members. Each holiday season, the advocates help with the Family Christmas Drive by gathering information from our low income families and providing gifts for the children.

Sonya: There are no words that appropriately describe what a family goes through when their child has been sexually or physically abused. Often the primary financial supporter of a family is the perpetrator, which results in an immediate loss of income, insurance, transportation, and perhaps even the family home. There are cases where a sibling is the perpetrator, causing the family to be dismantled and the children to be separated.

When families are referred to our advocacy center, it is our job to assess their needs with emergency resources including counseling services, medical care, housing, employment, clothing, and other basic living needs. Depending on the family’s situation, I provide referrals and coordination of additional family and social services.



Sonya Hall

Most often, when a child is scheduled for a forensic interview, I am notified of the appointment and briefed on the family’s history and the child’s disclosure. However, there are times that I meet with the family or protective caregiver and do not know anything about the case. The caregiver often comes in filled with uncertainty having been referred to the CAC by a law enforcement agency or CPS. It is my responsibility to provide neutral ground for the family. The emotional state of those involved in the cases we work range from one extreme to another, and it is my responsibility to calm them so they will better understand what I am explaining to them regarding the next step for their child.

Prior to the forensic interview, the protective caregiver completes paperwork allowing us to conduct the interview and providing information about the family dynamics and history. This guides me in understanding what resources I am able to help them with and allows me to assist the interviewer, law enforcement and

A Day in the Life of a Family Advocate

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CPS with their fact finding in the case.

After the child finishes the interview, I conduct a follow-up meeting with the caregiver while law enforcement and CPS explain what the next step will be for their family. Once that meeting is complete, I strongly encourage the family to accept our offer for free counseling.

If the case becomes a criminal case, I continue to work with the family when the court date is near and act as a liaison between the family and law enforcement agencies and/or CPS. The family may become frustrated when they feel their case isn't moving fast enough or not getting enough attention. At this juncture, I spend time with the family to restore them to a point of calmness and understanding. I gather information from the partnering agencies and relay it to the family to keep them updated with the progress of their case.

Some days are spent helping prepare clients for court through our "Kids in Court" program that allows me to educate the child on the expectations of the courtroom so they are fully prepared to face their perpetrator. In addition to my assistance, Smith County has a court appointed dog, Petra, who is allowed to go into the court room

with the child while they testify.



Petra

How FAs Feel About Their Role

Janet: At the end of the day, the goal of the FAs is our mission statement: "To prevent child abuse and neglect and to lessen the trauma to child victims of sexual and severe physical abuse during the investigative, prosecutorial and healing process." We aim to fulfill this mission by helping families understand the child protective and legal systems, making the process as comfortable as possible, and giving families the tools that can help them begin to heal. Our purpose is to do this with kindness, guidance, compassion and encouragement.

"It is a beautiful thing when a Career and a Passion come together."

Sonya: I am often asked how I mentally handle doing this job every day. My response is that when a family walks through our door, I know they are taking their first steps towards healing. Being

a part of the team that guides the family from their child's outcry of abuse to the child's graduation from therapy and hopefully, to justice in the legal system, fuels my soul to give all that I have to support and advocate for these children and their families.

My favorite part of being an advocate is when a child specifically asks for me during their therapy sessions or graduation and depends on me in court. If the protective caregiver is unable to be with them during the trial, I provide strength and encouragement. What has happened to them does not define who they are or who they will become, and I am blessed to assist them on their journey of healing.

I believe I provide a sense of security and comfort to caregivers as they desperately try to find their way through their darkest days. I provide a clear mind to help them make the right decisions and encourage them when they feel like all hope is lost. Sometimes it is a phone call, an unexpected visit, an email or simply a hug or pat on their back.

I know I am serving my purpose when I am with my families and advocating for their child. There is nowhere else I would rather be.★

STRENGTH ★ RESILIENCE ★ JUSTICE

By: Christina Alcorn, Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse

In 1981, President Ronald Regan proclaimed an official National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) to be observed in April and intended to bring communities together through various events focused on recognizing victims and survivors.

Every year in April, the weeklong initiative promotes victims'

rights and honors crime victims and those who advocate on their behalf. Communities celebrate past successes, and highlight national community and victims service organizations. This week-long recognition helps tell the story of a community's capacity to help victims rebuild their lives and the organizations that help them do so.

"The NCVRW will be commemorated April 2–8, 2017, and this year's theme (Strength. Resilience. Justice.) reflects this vision of the future. One in which all victims are strengthened by the response they receive, organizations are resilient in response to challenges, and communities are able to seek collective justice and healing."¹★



Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Victim Services Division (VSD) employee, Delores Maxwell, holds the TDCJ VSD wreath during the Victim Tribute ceremony.



TDCJ VSD employees at the 2016 NCVRW Victim Tribute ceremony at the Bexar County Courthouse.

For more information regarding NCVRW and to view 2017 events, please visit the Office for Victims of Crime website by clicking [here](https://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrw/) or by visiting the following link: <https://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrw/>

As a reminder, the Texas Victim Assistance Training (TVAT) Calendar is available to users to submit, search and view victim-related events. The TVAT Calendar may be accessed at: <https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/php/vscalendar/>

1. Accessed 12/29/2016. <https://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrw/>



Texas Victim Services Association

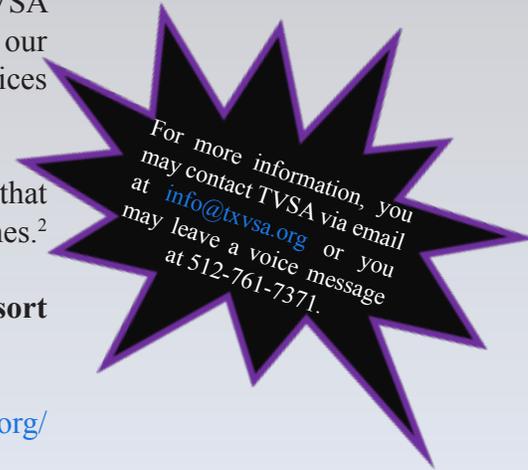
A professional organization for Victim Service Providers

Founded in 1997, the mission of the Texas Victim Services Association (TVSA) is education, support, and recognition for victim service providers in Texas. The TVSA biannual conference is one of the ways TVSA perform their mission and realize our vision: the delivery of a full range of consistent, high-quality, professional services to crime victims, their families, and communities.¹

The three-day event is designed to provide a forum to share current expertise that is informing practice and emerging responses in different settings and disciplines.²

This conference will be held May 2-5, 2017 at the Schlitterbahn Beach Resort in South Padre Island, Texas.

For more information, please visit the following link: <http://www.txvsa.org/event-2431499>



The Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) is the statewide organization committed to ending sexual violence in Texas. A non-profit educational and advocacy organization based in Austin, TAASA member agencies comprise a statewide network of more than 80 crisis centers that serve rural as well as metropolitan areas. Founded in 1982, the agency has a strong record of success in community education, legal services, youth outreach, law enforcement training, legislative advocacy, and curricula and materials development.³

TAASA will be hosting the 2017 National Sexual Assault Conference June 7-9, 2017 at the Hilton Anatole Dallas.⁴

For more information, please visit the following link: <http://taasa.org/nsac/>



1. Accessed 12/27/2016. http://www.ncdsv.org/TVSA_Call-for-proposals_2-3-2017.pdf
2. Accessed 12/27/2016. http://www.ncdsv.org/TVSA_Call-for-proposals_2-3-2017.pdf
3. Accessed 12/27/2016. <http://taasa.org/about/>
4. Accessed 12/27/2016. <http://taasa.org/nsac/>

TEXAS CRIME VICTIM CLEARINGHOUSE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Webinar Highlights:

Victim Impact Statement: Recommended Processing Procedures

The Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse (TxCVC) along with other state and local agencies develop the Victim Impact Statement (VIS) and the VIS Recommended Processing Procedures. This webinar provides information regarding the VIS Recommended Processing Procedures developed by victim services and criminal justice professionals with the goal to help ensure that completed VISs are submitted to the correct supervising entity and to assist individuals that handle the VIS to meet the statutory mandates regarding the VIS processing. To register and view this previously recorded webinar, please click [here](#).

The Victim Impact Statement: The Victims' Voice in the Criminal Justice System

The VIS is key to ensuring victims are afforded their rights in the criminal justice system. This training discusses recent revisions to the VIS and offers valuable information for individuals working with crime victims and those handling VISs, including judges, prosecutors, victim assistance coordinators, district clerks, court coordinators, probation officers and law enforcement personnel who assist victims or assemble pen packets. To register and view this previously recorded webinar, please click [here](#).

In-Person Trainings:

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Victim Services Division (VSD) 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. Previously recorded webinars include Grief and the Holidays; The Victim Impact Statement: The Victims' Voice in the Criminal Justice System; and Services and Programs Provided by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Victim Services Division. Webinar descriptions and registration information, as well as recordings and related documents for past webinars may be accessed on the TDCJ VSD website:

http://www.tdcj.texas.gov/divisions/vs/victim_webinars.html

TVAT Online:

Texas Victim Assistance Training (TVAT) Online is a statewide 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/>

TVAT Academy:

The TVAT Academy will provide a three-and-a-half day, in-person, foundational training for victim assistance providers.

More information regarding the in-person TVAT Academy is available online at <https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/php/tvatacademy/index.php>

Texas Victim Assistance Training Online

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CALENDAR

The Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse wishes to remind our readers that a calendar feature is available on 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/

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, 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

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HAMILTON NAMED BPP VICTIM SERVICES PROGRAM LIASON

By Ed Robertson, Board Member
Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles



The Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles (the Board) recently announced the hiring of its first Victim Services Program Liaison, Elizabeth "Libby" Hamilton. The newly created position is among the many initiatives Board Chairman, David Gutierrez, has developed after his appointment to the Presiding Officer role, allowing the agency to be more efficient and proactive to serving the state of Texas. Due in part to a Federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grant, Hamilton will assist victims regarding the parole review process and interviews with the Board.

"We met with numerous very qualified candidates, Libby stood out noticeably with a tremendous background of related experience, education and drive," stated Gutierrez. "Our agency is honored to have her on board and look forward to her sharing her expertise and knowledge – she brings a proven track record of success in the victim services arena, which will be invaluable in meeting our mission in the Texas criminal justice system."

Among her responsibilities, Hamilton will implement, monitor and evaluate a coordinated strategy to identify and assist crime victims. She will coordinate compliance with agency policies and procedures, regulations as well as legislative mandates to

include providing direct victim services to Texas victims and/or their families.

Hamilton graduated from St. Edward's University, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in criminal justice. She began her TDCJ career at the Victim Services Division in 2007, and worked in Notification and the Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse sections. She also served as a mediator for the Victim Offender Mediation Dialogue program.

The public can contact Hamilton at: Elizabeth.Hamilton@tdcj.texas.gov or (512) 406-5833. ★

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. For more information, please visit: <http://www.tdcj.texas.gov/bpp/index.htm>

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