

The VICTIM'S INFORMER

TEXAS CRIME VICTIM CLEARINGHOUSE

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GRATITUDE

By Angie McCown, Director
TDCJ Victim Services Division



*"Gratitude makes sense of your past, brings peace for today, and creates vision for tomorrow."
-Melody Beattie*

As the fall season approaches, I am reminded of the importance of gratitude. With all that life throws at us we tend to become reactive rather than proactive. Moving

through each day in a reactive state may cause us to feel out of control and overwhelmed. We may begin to focus on deadlines, struggles, problems, issues and other stressors in our life. Although these things can be real, without life balance, they can create negative thoughts and emotions. It is important to take time to shift our focus to the more positive aspects of our life in order to find and maintain that life balance.

About midway through my career in victim services, due to some very traumatic cases, I begin to feel overwhelmed, out of control, sad, and sometimes angry. I even considered leaving the victim services field. I reached out to my

mentor, Janice Harris Lord, and she listened to me, validated my feelings, and suggested that I practice a gratitude exercise. At the time my thought was that something this simple could never work, however I agreed to give it a try. The instructions were that every morning, right as I was waking up, I would think of three things in my life I was grateful for. Then every evening just before I fell asleep, I again would think of three things in my life that I was grateful for. It only took four days for my attitude to change, and I began to feel calmer and happier.

Positive Psychology research indicates that practicing gratitude increases feelings of happiness and leads to longer lasting positivity. It also increases one's ability to enjoy good experiences, achieve improved health, tolerate adversity, and build strong relationships. So as we move into the fall season and the changes that it brings, let us remember to be more proactive and intentional by practicing gratitude.

"Happiness cannot be traveled to, owned, earned, worn or consumed. Happiness is the spiritual experience of living every minute with love, grace, and gratitude."

- Denis Waitley

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COMMITTED TO REPLENISH

by Derrelynn Perryman, Texas Board of Criminal Justice



“Even in its darkest passages, the heart is unconquerable. It is important that the body survives, but it is more meaningful that the human spirit prevails.”

- Dave Pelzer

As I write this on August 6th, my heart is heavy with the recent news. As of today, according to CBS News, there have been more mass shootings than days this year.

The toll of 255 mass shootings include five high-profile massacres in the past eight days, in which more than 100 people have been shot:

- A shooting in a historic district of [Dayton, Ohio](#), with nine people killed and 27 injured.
- A shooting at Walmart in [El Paso, Texas](#), with 22 people killed and at least 24 wounded. It was the deadliest shooting of the year.
- A shooting at the [Gilroy Garlic Festival](#) in the San Francisco Bay Area, with three people killed and 15 injured.
- A shooting at a Brooklyn block party, one person killed and 11 injured.
- A shooting at a [Walmart in Southaven, Mississippi](#), with two people killed and two injured.

There have been 101 line of duty deaths of officers this year alone, including 12 in Texas.

We may not always agree on what the solutions should be, but we know better than most exactly what the cost in human suffering is for each one of these events. The fear, grief, and sorrow extend far beyond the direct victims. Families, communities, and all of us are affected every single time. It's difficult to keep facing it. Vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue are real conditions that affect us as a natural result of being caring people who are exposed to the suffering of others. Whether you are a survivor, a volunteer, or a victim services provider, news like this is just more trauma heaped upon what you've already had to contend with.

There are many ways to get involved in solutions, and I won't go into those here. There is also an urge sometimes to just let ourselves 'go numb' in order to protect ourselves.

What I urge you to do is strengthen your efforts to remember that self-care is vital. It's not something we do when we 'have time' and it's not something we get around to 'eventually.' I'm talking to myself here, too, by the way! We have got to be committed to doing those things that nurture and replenish if we are going to make it through. Whatever your healing activities are, please put those things at the top of the 'to do' list! Although a spa day or beach vacation might be just the ticket, if you can't do that today, do something! Stop and breathe, listen to music, take a walk, call someone you enjoy talking with about pleasant things. Give and accept hugs. And be gentle with yourself and everyone around you as we all struggle to navigate through.

INTRODUCING IVSS!

TDCJ Victim Services Division's new Integrated Victim Services System

by Mary McCaffity, Deputy Director
TDCJ Victim Services Division

IVSS | INTEGRATED VICTIM SERVICES SYSTEM



We are pleased to announce that the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Victim Services Division (VSD) has implemented a new **Integrated Victim Services System (IVSS)** to manage victim notification and resource information. IVSS is a free, automated service that provides crime victims, criminal justice professionals and victim advocates with vital information and notification 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. This system will allow you to obtain information about offenders in TDCJ custody or on parole/mandatory supervision and to register for notification of changes in offender status, such as offender release. All registrations through IVSS are kept completely confidential.

A self-service web portal is now available through IVSS to allow you to manage your personal information directly. Updates to your information are made in real time and are available to view immediately. You have the ability to search for limited offender information, register for notifications, see past notifications and update your preferences for receiving information from VSD through this portal. The portal is accessible through any device with internet capabilities including desktop and laptop computers, mobile phones and tablets.

Notifications are available by letter, email and text message. Some notifications are also available by automated phone call or personal phone call. The system processes offender status changes 24 hours a day, which may prompt notifications to generate at all hours. You may choose to receive certain types of information in different ways – for example, urgent notifications by text message and all others by email. The options for receiving notification are flexible and can be customized to your needs and preferences.

It is important to note that portal accounts are an option and are not required to receive offender notifications from TDCJ

VSD. You must have an email address to set up a portal account; however, you do not have to receive email notifications if you do not wish to do so. A portal user guide is available at <https://ivss.tdcj.texas.gov/portal-user-guide/>.

Additional Portal Features **Offender Search**

The portal includes an offender search page to conduct a search for TDCJ incarcerated or paroled offenders. You can search by Name, State Identification Number or TDCJ Number. Offender information includes the expected release date, age, unit or parole office the offender is currently incarcerated in or reporting to, offender status (i.e. in custody, on supervision), and actual release date, if the offender was released.

Texas Victim Resource Directory

The Texas Victim Resource Directory is a compilation of non-profit and governmental agencies that provide services to crime victims free of charge in Texas. The directory is searchable by crime type, services provided, organization type, geographic location or organization name. You can make your search as broad or as limited as you need, but keep in mind that

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Integrated Victim Services System (IVSS)

Integrated Victim Services System (IVSS)

The mission of the Victim Services Division is to provide a central mechanism for crime victims to participate in the Criminal Justice System.

About IVSS

IVSS stands for the Integrated Victim Services System operated by the TDCJ Victim Services Division. IVSS is a free, automated service that provides crime victims and Texas Department of Criminal Justice Victim Services Division with vital information and notification 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. This system will allow you to obtain information about offenders in TDCJ custody or on parole/mandatory supervision and to register for notification of changes in offender status, such as offender release. All registrations through IVSS are kept completely confidential.

Get Registered

If you are a victim of crime, surviving family member, witness or concerned citizen, you can create an account and register for notifications on offenders in TDCJ custody or on parole/mandatory supervision in IVSS. You may search for offender status information and update your account at any time. [Click here to register now](#)

Feedback

We want to hear from you! Please take a minute to provide us with some feedback in order for us to make future enhancements to our site. Comments or suggestions are greatly appreciated. You can also click the link in the bottom left corner of every page to go to the [submit feedback page](#).

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searching by multiple parameters will limit the number of results returned. Results are organized by local resources and statewide resources.

You have the option of subscribing to a provider, which will save the organization's information on your dashboard. The 'My Providers' section of the dashboard provides a convenient place to compile the contact information for all of the service providers a victim is in contact with. The directory can be used by crime victims seeking assistance, or by victim advocates and criminal justice professionals looking to connect a victim to resources. It is mobile friendly so you may search with your cell phone on-scene, or in your office depending on the situation.

My Dashboard

The My Dashboard feature provides a list of offenders that you are registered for, notifications that were sent regarding those offenders, and providers that you

have subscribed to. The 'My Registrations' section allows you to modify your notification preferences. The 'My Recent Notifications' section provides a list of notifications sent to you. You can open a notification to see what was reported and to stop phone calls in case you have forgotten your personal identification number.

Existing Registrants

Existing registrants are those individuals who were already receiving offender notifications from TDCJ VSD prior to IVSS. These existing registrants will continue to receive notifications based on their prior preferences. Existing registrants that have an email address on file with VSD and an incarcerated or supervised offender, were sent an invitation code by email to create a portal account in June.

New Registrants

Victims, criminal justice professionals and victim advocates that were not previously

registered for notification can create a portal account through the Sign In – Register form.

If you have questions regarding portal accounts, please contact our office for assistance at 1-800-848-4284. We look forward to your feedback and suggestions about the IVSS. Feedback can be submitted through the Feedback tab on the portal or by contacting our office.

It is our mission at the TDCJ VSD to provide a central mechanism for crime victims to participate in the criminal justice system. IVSS provides an additional tool for crime victims to access their rights to notification, information, to be heard, and to participate in the criminal justice system. We will announce new features of the system as we continue to adapt to the needs of crime victims and service providers throughout the state.

<https://ivss.tdcj.texas.gov>

LEGAL REMEDIES FOR VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE

by Amber Van Schuyver, Managing Attorney & Family Law Deputy Group Coordinator and
Adriana Rodriguez, Managing Attorney & Legal Aid for Survivors of Sexual Assault (LASSA) Team Manager
Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, Inc.

Let's blame it on "Law & Order," but most victims (and their advocates) think almost exclusively about the criminal justice system after an incident of violence. However, some victims of domestic violence and sexual assault may choose not to press charges against abusive partners, family, or friends. Victims who gather

the courage to report are often frustrated by delayed investigations, insufficient evidence, and the limitations of criminal prosecution. Some victims say they want justice, but what does that mean? Is justice focused on the victim's needs? How, if at all, does justice promote victim autonomy and empowerment?



Some advocates are looking beyond the criminal justice system to first help victims with safety, then identify and achieve other legal goals beyond punishment for the offender. There are civil legal remedies that help victims and their families escape abuse, promote autonomy, and achieve long-term stability.

Protective Orders

In Texas, victims of violence, including dating and family violence, stalking, sexual violence, and human trafficking, can apply for a civil protective order (PO) to prohibit future abuse. A PO can order an abuser:

- not to hurt, threaten, or harass a victim or their family, either directly or indirectly;
- to stay away from the victim, their family, home, workplace, and children's daycare or school;

- not to carry a gun, even with a license; and
- if needed, order the offender out of the home ("kick out order").

A PO can include orders regarding visitation with children and child/medical support. POs can order abusers to attend anger management/parenting classes, submit to drug testing, participate in substance abuse treatment programs or whatever else is needed to maintain family safety.

Victims who want to apply for a protective order should:

- *Consider calling the police when an incident occurs.* Though police reports are not required to get a PO, they are considered evidence and help prove the violence. Late reports are best made with advocate support.
- *Avoid delay in applying for a protective order.* Waiting months or years after an incident to apply for a PO may reduce your chances of getting a PO, because the threat of immediate danger can diminish.
- *Document incidents of abuse.* Photograph injuries and save

threatening voice messages, texts and emails. Gather as much evidence as possible to prove the harm experienced.

Victims of violence in Texas can apply for a protective order with help from:

- the local county or district attorney's office;
- the local family violence shelter or rape crisis center (*call 1-800-799-SAFE or 7233 to find help close to you*);
- the local legal aid office;
- a private attorney; or
- www.texaslawhelp.org where you can find a complete do-it-yourself PO Kit.

Note: Applying for a PO without an attorney should be a last resort.

Victims must show the court what kinds of violence they've experienced and why they need protection by proving it with evidence, including testimony. Some victims do not feel comfortable testifying about violence and may decide not to apply for a PO. Respect for survivor privacy is very important.

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Family Violence Protective Orders

- Family violence (FV) means any intimate partner violence, including dating violence, violence between same-sex partners, violence within a household, between parents and children, among relatives, or between roommates.
- To obtain a FVPO, you must be able to show (1) that violence has occurred and (2) it is likely that violence will occur in the future.
- POs for FV usually last two years, but can be longer, including for life, depending on the severity of past violence.

Stalking, Sexual Assault and Human Trafficking Protective Orders

- Unlike an FVPO, a specific relationship with the abuser is not required for sexual assault, stalking, and human trafficking POs.
- For these POs, you must be able to show the abuser committed either stalking, sexual assault, or trafficking against the victim applicant.
- Sexual assault and stalking POs can last for any amount of time, including for life.

If the abuser violates a PO, he or she can be arrested and charged for the offense. Multiple PO violations can result in felony charges.

Family Law: There are remedies within family law to help victims protect their families and secure property. In Texas, spouses with children must resolve custody matters as part of the divorce. Parents who are not married or couples who are not

yet ready for divorce, can resolve custody matters in a suit affecting parent child relationship (SAPCR), and sometimes with the help of the Office of the Attorney General - Child Support Division. Evidence of family violence and/or cruelty can result in more rights for the protective parent; denied, limited, or supervised visits for the abusive parent; and more than half of the marital property for the abused spouse in a divorce. In addition, victims of violence can request special orders called injunctions, permanent or temporary, to prevent an abuser from doing something that affects the family safety and stability. Victims can also ask that their address and employment information be confidential and/or that their legal names be changed.

Housing Law: Victims of violence sometimes feel unsafe in their homes or fall behind on rent. Attorneys can advise victims of special housing laws to break leases, negotiate time to move out, or pay rent as needed. Attorneys can help victims identify legal solutions for accessing public and private housing.

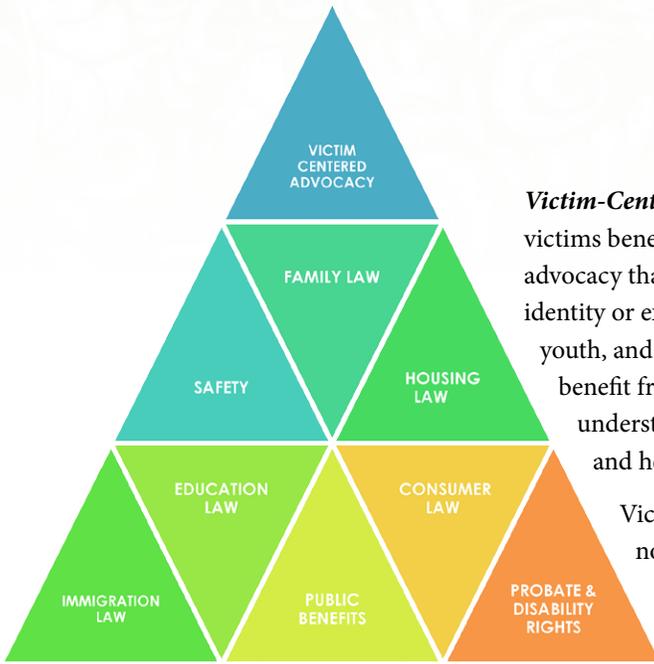
Immigration Law: Victims of violence who are undocumented and/or non-citizens may be eligible to apply for lawful status and work permits to remain in the U.S. Congress created special immigration status for victims of violence who wish to remain in the U.S. to cooperate with criminal investigations and receive support to heal from trauma. U Visas are for cooperative victims of crime, while T Visas are for victims of severe forms of sex and/or labor trafficking. Violence Against Women (VAWA) self-petitions can help children or spouses of abusive lawful permanent residents (LPR) or U.S. citizens who did not petition, or file papers

for their abused, immigrant relative, sometimes as part of the abuse. There are also special waivers for abused, immigrant spouses whose partners threaten to terminate or abandon their immigration petition. Some victims fleeing persecution in their home countries or victims who have lived in the U.S. for many years may have special defenses to deportation before an immigration judge. It is very important for victims to consult with immigration attorneys, not notary publics or notarios, who can advise immigrant victims.

Education Law: From Pre-K to university students, victims of dating violence, bullying, or sexual harassment sometimes need help to feel safe at school and achieve their education goals. Knowing their rights empowers student victims to request safety plans to avoid abusers or accommodations to help with a disability or trauma. Federal laws protect against gender discrimination under Title IX, and schools are required to investigate incidents of violence (regardless of whether they are reported and investigated by police) and take steps to ensure students can continuously access a safe learning environment.

Employment Law: Victims who experience violence in the workplace or elsewhere sometimes have challenges at work. Economic independence is important to the long-term stability of the victim and their family. An attorney can help with safety plans at work, workers compensation claims, wage recovery, and discrimination complaints to address harassment, violence, and unfair treatment.

Public Benefits: Victims whose public benefits are denied or who are accused



Victim-Centered Advocacy: Many victims benefit from culturally-competent advocacy that supports a part of their identity or experience. Veterans, foster youth, and victims who are LGBTQ benefit from an advocate who can understand how a victim identifies and help connect them to resources.

Victims and their advocates are not alone. Texas RioGrande Legal Aid (TRLA) provides civil legal services in 68 counties throughout

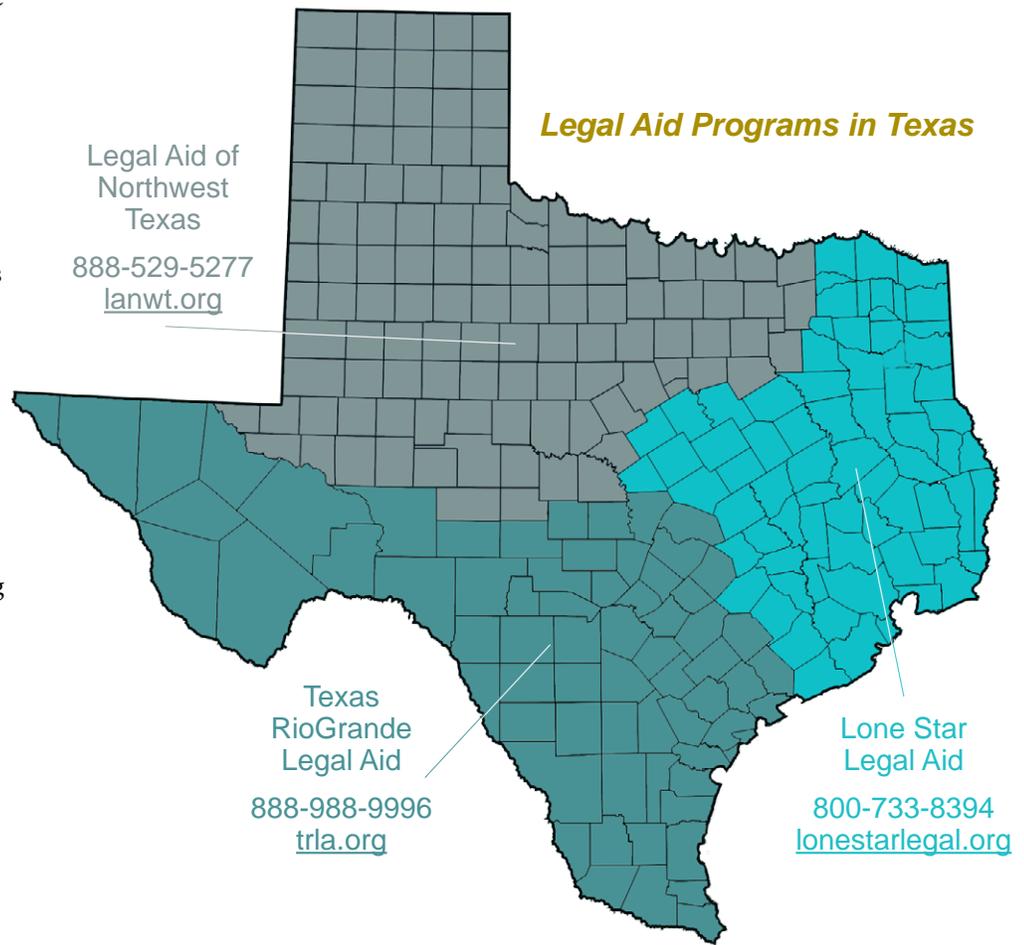
Central and Southwest Texas. TRLA focuses on providing holistic services to victims of abuse and has attorneys who

specialize in civil legal remedies like the ones described above. TRLA works directly with partner agencies, including rape crisis centers and domestic violence shelters, for community outreach, education, and referrals. TRLA can help victims who speak a variety of languages. Learn more at www.trla.org. If you or someone you know has a legal problem within TRLA's service area and can't afford an attorney, you can apply at your local rape crisis centers and domestic violence shelter or by calling our general civil legal aid hotline at 1-888-988-9996 or leave a voice message on our intake line for sexual assault survivors, 1-800-991-5153.

of fraud benefit from consultation with a lawyer. For victims who are indigent or who have disabilities, regular access to a public benefit may be critical to economic stability and safety.

Consumer Law: Victims of violence, including human trafficking, sometimes need help resolving credit issues, identity theft, predatory lending and debt collection. Talking with an attorney helps victims understand consumer protections and their rights to promote long-term economic stability and hopefully ease the overwhelming stress of financial uncertainty.

Probate and Disability Rights: People with disabilities or serious mental illness, including victims, their caretakers, and loved ones, sometimes need help securing powers of attorney, supported decision making agreements, and guardianships. There are civil remedies to promote autonomy and self-determination. Sometimes victims approaching end of life and their families need help drafting or probating a will based on a recent or impending death.



HOW TRAUMA AND PTSD MAY LEAD TO SUBSTANCE ABUSE

by Alana Brenner, Awareness Advocate
The Recovery Village®

Victims of violent crime are vulnerable to more than just the direct dangers of the incident. These individuals are at risk for developing post-traumatic stress disorder, also known as PTSD. PTSD is an anxiety disorder that causes the person to feel overwhelmed and unable to cope

after being exposed to a terrifying or life-threatening event. The disorder develops because the emotional response to the trauma remains unresolved. If PTSD is left untreated, the affected individual may develop other disorders, including drug or alcohol addiction.

Not everyone who experiences trauma develops PTSD. Most people cope with their emotions and recover in a relatively short period. However, according to an article on the website for the International Center for Comparative Criminology, 1 in 7 victims of violent crime develop PTSD following a traumatic incident.

Sam, a Story of Assault and PTSD

Take the following example of a physical assault and robbery. A young man named Sam is physically assaulted in his apartment building by two larger men trying to steal his wallet. Sam is physically injured, surprised by the attack and unable to escape at first. The two men run away once they get the wallet and leave Sam wounded and alone in his apartment building.



Most people would agree that this was a scary and potentially traumatic situation for Sam. At first, he would likely appear shaken and unsettled, according to the National Center for Victims of Crime. While many victims of violent crime return to fairly normal functioning, some go on to develop PTSD. If this was the case, how would Sam's family know that his early troubles developed into a disorder like PTSD?

If Sam developed PTSD from his experiences, his mood and behavior would be quite different from his usual demeanor. For Sam to be diagnosed with PTSD, he would have to show at least one symptom from the following four categories of functioning, according to the National Institute of Mental Health:

1. Arousal and Reactivity

Sam finds that he is startled by small occurrences and feels jumpy throughout the day. Sam also reports feeling on edge all the time. Sleep and relaxation are hard for Sam. He often feels wound up and doesn't

rest much.

2. Cognition and Emotional Symptoms

Sam has a lot of negative thoughts running through his mind during the day. He also feels guilt over the incident, as if it is his fault for being assaulted. Despite having flashbacks and nightmares, Sam's memories of the incident have holes and gaps. Sam also hasn't felt much like participating in social activities or hobbies he previously enjoyed.

3. Avoidance

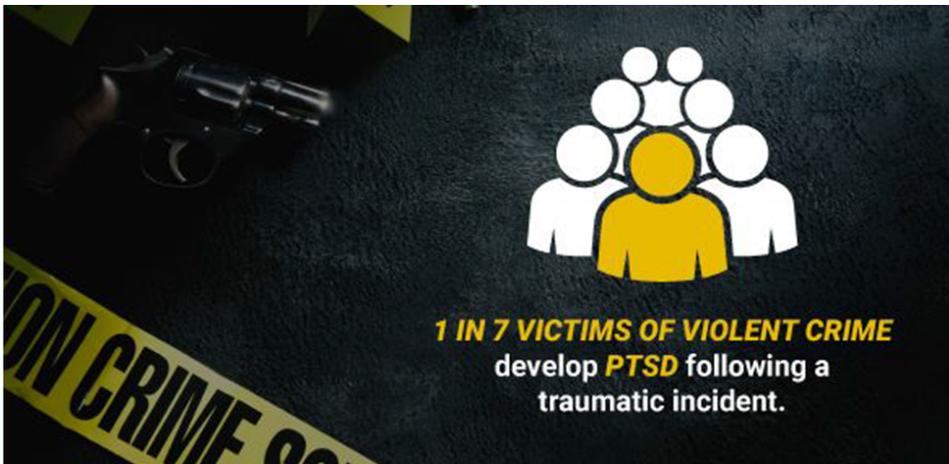
Sam completely avoids the area inside and near his apartment building where the assault took place. He actively pushes away thoughts or feelings related to the assault. Sam withdraws from any interactions or situations that might remind him of that terrifying moment.

4. Reexperiencing

Sam replays the scene of the assault over and over in his mind. These replays happen randomly and repeatedly despite attempts to make them stop. Sam has nightmares when he's asleep and flashbacks when he is awake. Sam's mind is triggered by certain smells, sights and sounds that remind him of the assault.

"The only reason I am alive
is because I could not die."

- Anonymous



When these replays happen, he feels as if the assault is happening all over again.

Substance Misuse and Addiction

According to the Department of Health for the state of Hawaii, risk factors play a large part in the development of substance misuse and addiction. For example, a person who has a stable income, social support and high psychological functioning is likely to choose lower risk substances and settings for use. On the other hand, a person with high levels of family stress, unstable housing or an untreated mental health disorder is at a much higher risk of addiction.

Typically, a person starts using substances that are easy to obtain and seem less intense. A person might have an alcoholic drink or two with friends, but not often and not before driving. Some people won't expand their use much beyond this level. Others may decide they don't like substances and will abstain.

People with risk factors, like preexisting mental health conditions, high stress or family problems, may choose to push their limits. These individuals may use more

dangerous substances, use substances more frequently and ignore the consequences of their use.

Substance Addiction and Trauma

The story becomes complicated when a person's substance use is coupled with trauma. Recall the story of Sam and how he was assaulted in his apartment building. If he develops PTSD after his assault, his risk of misusing substances goes up significantly, according to the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies. Traumatic experiences are often a driver of substance misuse.

For a person like Sam, drugs and alcohol may be used to cope with painful feelings. As trauma is left untreated, Sam's substance use may increase and become dangerous. Because of this connection, simply trying to get a person with trauma experiences to quit drinking or using a certain drug is not enough. As long as the trauma remains raw and powerful, the drive to use substances remains. Even if their substance use causes other problems, a person like Sam may feel like it's the one way he can deal with his pain.

Unfortunately, substance use generally makes the symptoms of PTSD worse. While Sam may sometimes get a break from his pain, heavy substance use can lead to many other problems. His relationships may become strained. Personal health often also declines as a result. Work or school responsibilities may be interrupted or dropped entirely, and financial problems can develop.

Recognizing PTSD and Addiction

Friends and family members may see these problems clearly. However, the person with untreated trauma and substance misuse may be reluctant or unable to change course on their own. No matter how obvious these problems may seem to others, the affected person often has a very different perspective.

Sometimes a person may have some insight into the connection between their trauma and substance use. This person may even say that they want to stop using substances and process their traumatic experiences. However, thoughts and emotions can be so tangled up in the power of their addiction that it's often nearly impossible to see a way out.

A person's emotions, beliefs, thoughts and behaviors are all driven by the way substances and trauma affect them. It's important to understand that a person

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JIM BUFFINGTON RECEIVES PATHFINDER AWARD

2019 Governor's Criminal Justice Volunteer Service Award

by Mike Jones
Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse

Jim Buffington was presented the Pathfinder Award at this year's Governor's Criminal Justice Volunteer Service Awards program. The Pathfinder Award is given to individuals who have demonstrated leadership qualities in their volunteer service and made significant contributions to the welfare of victims. As a volunteer with the TDCJ Victim Services Division, as well as with other various prison ministries, Jim has been able to help many crime victims. But this wasn't his first time to be the focus of a TDCJ camera at the award ceremony.

Saturday evening, March 20, 1976, a police officer with the San Antonio ISD Police Department noticed an abandoned car in the parking lot of Longfellow Junior High School. When he investigated the car, he found the nude body of a young woman in the back seat floor board. She had been shot in the face three times from close range.

That young woman was 29-year-old Chere Buffington, the mother of three young



Chere Buffington and her three sons in 1970.

boys, Jim and his younger brothers, Oscar and Louis, who were 12, 11, and 10 years old at the time. For Jim and his brothers, the murder of their mother was almost unbearable. Over the next several years, three men would eventually be convicted for the murder of the young mom. Too young to perhaps fully grieve for their murdered mother and too young at the time to really understand what lay ahead, the boys' road to recovery would prove to be long and difficult.

An Offender's Kid

Over the next year as he began working through his grief, Jim and his younger brothers were dealt another blow. Jim's father, James Buffington, was arrested and charged with capital murder and criminal solicitation. He would eventually be found guilty and sentenced to death. James had paid Charles County and Charles Moore to murder Chere and make it look as if she had been raped. Charles County was also convicted of capital murder, and he and James would spend time on the Ellis Unit

In 2008 Jim was awarded the, "Carole S. Vance," Volunteer of the Year Award. As the son of a former Death Row offender and as a crime victim, Jim's path through healing, forgiveness, and public service has taken him deep into both sides of the criminal justice system. Because of his life experiences, he is able to connect with offenders and has a unique insight into the feelings of their families. As a crime victim, Jim works to help offenders better understand the profound effects that their choices have had on victims and their families.

Death Row. However, both of those death sentences would be commuted to lesser penalties: life in prison for James and 20 years for Charles County.

For his role in the murder, Charles Moore was convicted of murder and sentenced to two years in prison. Moore already had a lengthy record and would reoffend again after he was discharged from the murder sentence. As a habitual offender, he is currently serving life for aggravated assault and is back in custody for serious parole violations. For the next several years through high school, Jim took many trips to the prison to visit his dad, who, of course, had maintained his innocence. Jim moved to Arkansas to finish high school and to go to college, and for the first time since he was 12, no one around him knew what had happened or that his dad was in prison.

Without the burden and stigma of being known as an "offender's kid," Jim attended the University of Arkansas, and met his wife, Marilyn, in Fayetteville. At first, he

*“He has achieved success ...
Who has left the world in a better place than he found it
Who has always looked for the best in others and given them the best he had
Whose life was an inspiration
Whose memory a benediction”
- Bessie Anderson Stanley*

didn't tell her about his mom and dad but later filled her in on what all had happened. After graduation, Jim and Marilyn got married and began to make their lives together. Jim enjoyed a thirty-year career in financial/legal services and in the aerospace industry, and Marilyn is an elementary school teacher in Arlington.

Changes

Until now, much of the focus of Jim's life had been about dealing with the effects of his relationship with his dad. In 1989, after James's second trial, Jim went to see his mother's grave. Now 26, it was the first time he had had the chance to really grieve for her and remember her. It would be life changing for him. In the coming years, Jim began volunteering for the TDCJ Victim Services Division as a speaker on victim impact panels. For him, speaking on the panels allowed him to share the story of his mom and keep her memory alive. Eventually, he met Connie Hilton.

In 1990, Connie Hilton and her husband were the victims of a violent home invasion. Her husband was murdered and she was beaten, raped, and left for dead. As part of her recovery, Connie and her sister founded Voices for Victims Justice, a platform for helping others like themselves cope with the pain and suffering of being a victim of crime. After learning about the Bridges To Life (BTL) Program, Connie became one of its earliest volunteers. Connie encouraged Jim to volunteer with BTL, but he didn't want go to prison units just to help "those guys." She told him,

"Don't do it for them; do it for you. Your story may help other offenders not hurt anyone else." After he witnessed a BTL graduation, he signed on.

Bridges To Life was founded by John Sage in 1998. John's sister, Marilyn, was brutally murdered in 1993. Her murderer remains on Death Row. John began volunteering for a prison ministry where crime victims shared their stories with offenders. In the process, he witnessed the powerful restorative effect it had on offenders and victims alike, and wanting to expand it to others, John developed the Bridges To Life program. Jim became the Chief Operating Officer of Bridges To Life in 2016.

While spending time on the old Ellis Unit Death Row, Jim's dad met Richard Lopez, the Death Row Chaplain. Through his relationship with Chaplain Lopez, James began to change as well. After his death sentence was commuted, James remained at Ellis. Eventually, he came to terms with all that he had done and became a mentor to other offenders. He died in 1994, and Jim attended the memorial service at Ellis. Here, he learned about the positive effect his dad had on fellow offenders. Many offenders at the service told him, "I became a Christian because of your dad."

Just as he was feeling better about some of the positive things that occurred over the years since his mom's murder, Jim would be dealt another blow. It had been difficult enough to know that his dad was responsible for his mom's murder, but in

2005, Jim learned that his dad had hired Charles County and Charles Moore not only to kill his mom, but also to murder him and his two younger brothers for life insurance money. However, he also learned that, his mom Chere, although she was tortured and raped, she would not tell her murderers where her sons were, saving their lives.

Being an offender's kid, Jim has had the opportunity and maybe all the reason in the world to become bitter and angry. Perhaps because of the love and support of those around him at the right time and right place; because of his mother's love – in life and in death; because he knows all too well what violent crime does to the families of victims and offenders alike; and because of his faith and how it has worked through him and worked through his dad, Jim now uses his unique life experiences to offer help for others who now need it.



Jim Buffington

ON THE JOB TRAINING FOR NEW CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS

After Five Weeks of Training Academy, There is Still a Lot to Learn

by Felice Nicole Garcia
TDCJ Victim Services Division

Lights out is usually a routine process on the unit. Not today. As the CO enters the dayroom, she yells, "Lights Out. Rack up!" Most of the offenders begin the slow shuffle to their houses, grumbling under their voices but still begrudgingly obeying the order. One offender does not. Angry about missing the ending of the season finale of *Empire*, she breaks from the group of compliant offenders and starts to yell at the boss. With menacing movement, the offender raises her arms in a tirade and

approaches the smaller and now cornered officer, who orders the offender to stand down. But the situation begins to worsen. "Step back! Step back!" she orders. The offender yells back, complaining to the young officer about all of the things in her life that are unfair. "Come on, Boss! Why you gotta hassle me?!" Suddenly backed into a corner and with only a radio in one hand and pepper spray in the other, the officer has but seconds to decide what to do.

The above scenario was not real, but it could be. It was designed as a training exercise, but it simulates what could be a situation faced by correctional staff. That is precisely why new correctional officer (CO) candidates in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Training and Leader Development Division's academies are required to role play these types of scenarios and are graded on how they react. For obvious reasons, it's extremely important that officers are trained to anticipate, respond, and de-escalate these potential situations, not only for their own safety but for the safety of others as well.

CO Training Academy

New CO cadets are required to complete a six-week academy style training course and 240 of core curriculum textbook instruction. In the state of Texas, there are currently six locations that conduct the Correctional Officer Training Academy. Those locations are Beeville, Huntsville, Gatesville, Palestine, Plainview, and

Rosharon. The post-graduation process for cadets is an assignment to a unit and additional on-the-job training where they are essentially supervised by a seasoned officer. The Field Training Officer's (FTO) role is actually much more of a mentor; FTOs get the new COs acclimated to their new day-to-day environment and provide more hands-on training with immediate feedback and guidance. This ensures that new staff are comfortable in their environment and effectively and confidently keep their units safe and secure and respond well in a variety of day-to-day situations.

Before new COs are allowed on the unit there is an additional requirement of 144 hours of pre-service training.

The pre-service training includes tool control, key control, offender property, and gender specific training to name a few.

Recently, on a tour of prison units near the Gatesville Training Academy, I was able to observe this training up close and personally, and it was an educational experience.

The day of the Hughes Unit tour, I really wasn't sure what to expect. Our "tour guide" showed my coworker and I around



Correctional officer cadets learning the basics.

the unit and how the unit functions on a daily basis. That afternoon we met cadets or so-called, “new boots” (new correctional officers) and observed several facets of the CO Academy curriculum firsthand. The current class was scheduled to graduate that Friday but had three different scenario trainings to pass before graduation. The training was a series of roleplays in which the trainers would play an offender and other cadets in the class would play the compliant offenders. The cadets were observed and critiqued on how they handled the situations.

The first scenario was set in the day room, the second in the lunch room, and the third a simple out of uniform compliance. The process was extremely intense to witness. The training officers certainly knew how to play the parts, and the roleplays played out incredibly authentic. One of the things I remember vividly

was how loud the shouts were in such a small room. They echoed back and forth around the walls and made the situation more intense and feel more realistic. The offenders were instructed to “rack up” and head back to their cells or “houses.” The mock offenders slowly began to shuffle out of the day room, and then one of the “bad guys” we’ll say, started to cause potentially dangerous problems for the cadet.

Once each scenario ended, the cadet left the room for an immediate evaluation of the role play from another trainer who observed from the audience. Being on the outside looking in, it was easy to see some challenges the inexperienced cadets encounter. In what could potentially be high-stress situations, the cadets are taught how to recognize and mollify possible confrontational behavior before it starts.

Sergeant Lilljedahl, an FTO on the Hughes Unit – and our tour guide for the day –

explained that new officers “learn the policies at the academy, but then are taught how to apply those policies while doing hands-on training.” It’s important for new COs to learn to recognize a variety of offender behaviors as soon



[Apply for Correctional Officer Positions](https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/divisions/hr/coinfo/apply4co.html)

(<https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/divisions/hr/coinfo/apply4co.html>)

as possible, and then determine how to engage offenders with thought and reasoning when something does not seem right.

Like all units, the Hughes Unit also conducts a variety of other specific training, testing, and exercises daily on such topics as emergency response, extreme hot and cold weather training, fire drills, evacuations, and other training that may involve other nearby units.

The overall visit was incredibly eye opening. Quite a lot goes into becoming a correctional officer and learning how to manage a large, confined offender population. TDCJ correctional staff are among the finest security staff in the state, and the agency works diligently to provide them with professionalism and the practical skills they need to effectively and safely do their job.

My time on the unit and in the academy was an incredible experience, and I would highly recommend anyone interested in learning more about our agency and becoming a correctional officer, to apply.



Correctional officer cadets learning the basics.

SPREADING AWARENESS: Youth Suicide and Technology Use

by Lacette Valerio – Texas School Safety Center at Texas State University
Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute

National and Statewide Statistics on Prevalence of Adolescent Deaths from Suicide

In the U.S., youth suicide rates equate to a considerable public health concern. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among children and youth ages 10 to 24 years.¹ Nationally in 2016, the rate of death from suicide among individuals ages 10 years and older was about 16 deaths per 100,000 people, the highest rate in decades.² Males are at the highest risk and account for 85 percent of those who die.³ However, the rate of death from suicide for females has recently been on the rise. Alarming, rates of death have recently increased among children and youth to the highest rates since the 1970s. Over the past two years, the increase in deaths due to suicide among youth in Texas have outpaced national averages, as shown in Figure 1 below.⁴

As youth suicide rates climb toward a record high since the 1970s, understanding

all the factors contributing to this phenomenon is critical to identifying proactive, preventative efforts. An elusive, yet suspected contributing factor is the pervasiveness of technology in society and social networking.

Technology and Youth Suicide

Although no empirical evidence to date shows a causal link between technology use and suicide, several recent studies demonstrate a correlation between digital technology use and youth mental health, such that as technology use increases, youth exhibit decreased self-esteem and increased mental illness.⁵ Given that over 90 percent of individuals who commit suicide suffer from mental illness, this research does suggest that social media and technology dependency may play a part in the rise of teen suicide rates in recent years.

Currently, Instagram and Snapchat are the two most popular social media sites for teens. Among U.S. youth ages 13-

17, 76 percent report using Instagram and 75 percent report using Snapchat. Additionally, 94 percent of teens in this age group generally report using any of the available social media platforms (NORC and the University of Chicago) and 91 percent report using some sort of text messaging tool. These findings demonstrate the ubiquity of technology and social media use among youth and suggest a need to further understand potential implications. Critical factors to consider are the content and types of interactions youth may be exposed to via technology.

Years of research examining suicide coverage across various media platforms, particularly newspaper and TV news reporting, strongly indicates increased suicide rates following coverage, with the significance of the correlation corresponding with the amount, duration, and prominence of media coverage.⁶

Although such a body of research does not yet exist regarding social media outlets,

several theoretical perspectives – namely, behavioral contagion theory, social learning theory, and the infectious disease model of contagion – suggest that exposure to suicidal stories via any type of media outlet could result in imitative behavior. The likelihood of behavior imitation increases as the celebrity or familiarity (i.e., how much

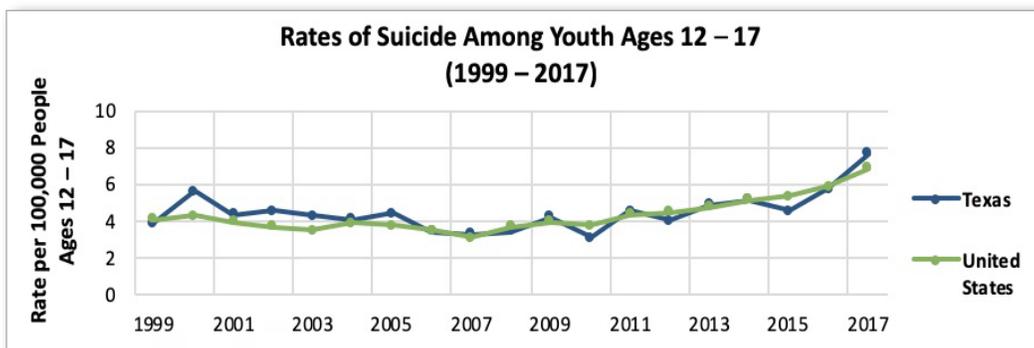


Figure 1

AMONG U.S. YOUTH AGES 13-17



76% Report using Instagram



75% Report using Snapchat



94% Report using any of the available social media platforms



91% Report using some sort of text messaging tool

the viewer identifies with the model) of the individual modeling the behavior increases, and the more reward (i.e., public attention) the individual receives.^{7,8}

Further, cyberbullying can occur via multiple modes of technology including text and direct messaging apps, email, social media, online forums, and online gaming.⁹ According to the National Center for Education Statistics, approximately 15 percent of ninth through twelfth graders reported being electronically bullied in 2017.¹⁰ Compared to other types of bullying, cyberbullying is particularly concerning for several unique capacities: the potential for persistence inside and outside of school; the permanence of online communication; and increased difficulty for adults to recognize that it is

happening (CyberBullying.gov, 2019). Victims of cyberbullying are at increased risk of depression and anxiety,¹¹ as well as suicidal ideation and behavior.¹²

While the technology influx of the past decade has created new opportunities for communication, connectedness, and societal advancements, it has not come without challenges. Technological advancements have transformed certain aspects of child development,

both socially and cognitively, and youth experiences today differ from prior generations. Unfortunately, alongside these advancements, teen suicide rates have continuously increased. Therefore, it is important to understand factors that may contribute to a youth considering suicide and to be aware of the possible signs of suicidal ideation.

Factors Associated with Teen Suicide and Suicidal Ideation

As youth suicide rates climb toward a record high since the 1970s, understanding factors contributing to this phenomenon is critical to identifying proactive,

preventative efforts. Characteristics such as age and gender, mental health or serious physical health conditions, a family history of mental illness, and childhood abuse or trauma are some of the factors associated with heightened risk of death from suicide. Historically, the death rate for males from suicide is three to five times higher than the rate for females in any given year. However, over time, the relative increases have been similar, as suicide rates for both groups have been increasing over the past decade.

Risk factors differ greatly from warning signs. Risk factors indicate that a person is at a higher risk for suicide, but they reveal little or nothing about the immediate risk of that individual attempting suicide. By contrast, warning signs indicate an immediate risk of suicide.¹³



15% of 9th through 12th graders reported being electronically bullied in 2017

continued from previous page

Warning Signs of Suicidal Ideation

Warning signs for suicide may include a change in behavior or the emergence of entirely new behaviors, particularly if they are associated with a painful event, loss, or change.¹⁴ Warning signs that a person may exhibit when contemplating a suicide attempt include:

- Talking about wanting to die or kill themselves;
- Talking about feeling hopeless or having no reason to live;
- Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain;
- Talking about being a burden to others;
- Increasing their use of alcohol or drugs;
- Looking for a way to end their lives, such as buying a gun or searching online for methods;
- Withdrawing from activities;
- Sleeping too much or too little;
- Calling people to say goodbye; or
- A marked loss of interest in daily activities.

It is important not to discount warning signs and to take each case seriously. If warning signs are detected, and suicidal ideation is suspected, steps can be taken to aid a youth in need.

Prevention and Intervention Strategies to Assist Children and Youth Who Are at Risk of Suicide

Despite increasing recognition of the rising risk of suicide among youth, it is still dramatically underestimated. One possible reason for this is the common perception that asking questions or discussing suicide with children or youth will increase suicidal ideation. To the contrary, research shows that acknowledging and talking about suicide may in fact reduce – rather than increase – suicidal ideation and

may also lead to improvements in mental health in treatment-seeking populations.¹⁵

Research also indicates that identifying children and youth who are at risk for suicide can be more reliably accomplished through brief screening tools than through a provider's personal judgment or by indirectly or unclearly asking about suicidal thoughts.¹⁶ Suicide screening is a procedure that uses a standardized instrument or protocol to identify who may be at risk for suicide.¹⁷ When suicide screening shows that a child or youth is at elevated risk, there are multiple treatments that have been shown to reduce the risk, including medication for mood disorders, targeted evidence-based psychotherapy, restriction of access to lethal means (such as firearms), and school-based suicide prevention education.^{18,19} Parents, peers, teachers, school administrators, service providers, and many others can play a role in preventing suicide and supporting the mental health of children and youth.

In addition, recent legislation in Texas requires school districts to incorporate suicide prevention and intervention strategies in their schools, as well as providing resources to schools to help children and youth who are at risk. Most notably, Senate Bill 11 from the just-completed 86th Texas Legislature Regular Session addresses various mental and behavioral health concerns, including a requirement for schools to include mental health and suicide prevention in their enrichment curriculum, funding through a new school safety allotment that can be used for these programs, and expanded mental health services through linkages to our state-supported medical schools for districts and primary care providers. Through this new law, schools must also develop strategies to increase parental

awareness of suicide-related risk factors and warning signs as well as available community suicide prevention services. Complimentary legislation in House Bill 18 enhances related training requirements for school employees, curriculum requirements, education programs, and mental health care services for students.

Senate Bill 11, also requires school districts to form multidisciplinary threat assessment teams modeled under guidance and procedures developed by the Texas School Safety Center (TxSSC). Threat assessment teams, in addition to assessing and reporting threatening behaviors directed at others, are tasked with identifying students who may be at risk of self-harm and to act in accordance with their district's suicide prevention program.

In support of the efforts of the Texas Legislature, the TxSSC offers free digital threat assessment training to school districts across the state and provides free online resources as well. The training and resources equip generations of non-native social media users with knowledge and tools to effectively navigate common apps and websites frequently used among youth. Specifically, participants leave this training with an increased capacity to intricately understand the current landscape of digital media and increased knowledge on which social networks are favored by youth, how social networks and digital devices function, and how to obtain critical data from those networks and devices to identify potential cyber threats and youth who may be in crisis.

Ultimately, youth mental health is a shared responsibility. The recent increase in youth suicide underscores the importance of knowing the warning signs that may accompany suicidal ideation,

understanding how to monitor youth technology and social media use and practices, and being aware of available resources that can assist youth in need. Suicide is a difficult topic to discuss, but it is necessary to address suspected suicidal ideation in an appropriate manner to prevent the act from materializing. Through concerted efforts, we can work to build mental health awareness and create an environment of acceptance in which youth mental health can flourish.

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² National suicide data are sourced from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Fatal Injury Reports on the CDC's Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System, released December, 2017. The reported crude rates are reported for all people excluding children under age 10. The national murder rate is sourced from FBI, Uniform Crime Reports, prepared by the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data.

³ Casselman, B., Conlen, M., & Fischer-Baum, R. (2017). Gun deaths in America. *FiveThirtyEight*. Retrieved from <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/gun-deaths/>

Suicide data are based on the CDC's Multiple Cause of Death database within the National Center for Health Statistics.

⁴ National suicide data are sourced from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Fatal Injury Reports on the

CDC's Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System, released December, 2017. The reported crude rates are reported for all people excluding children under age 10. The national murder rate is sourced from FBI, Uniform Crime Reports, prepared by the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data.

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⁸ Stack, S. (2000). Media impacts on suicide: A quantitative review of 293 findings. *Social Science Quarterly*, 81, 957-971.

⁹ StopBullying.gov (2019). What is cyberbullying? Retrieved from <https://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/what-is-it/index.html>

¹⁰ National Center for Education Statistics. (2019). Indicators of school crime and safety. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/crimeindicators/ind_10.asp

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¹³ Rudd, M. D., Berman, A. L., Joiner, T. E., Jr., Nock, M. K., Silverman, M. M.,

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¹⁴ American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. Risk Factors and Warning Signs. (2019). Retrieved from: <https://afsp.org/about-suicide/risk-factors-and-warning-signs/>.

¹⁵ Dazzi, T., Gribble, R., Wessely, S., & Fear, N. (2014). Does asking about suicide and related behaviours induce suicidal ideation? What is the evidence? *Psychological Medicine*, 44(16), 3361-3363. doi:10.1017/S0033291714001299.

¹⁶ Allen, M. H. et al. (2013, June). Screening for suicidal ideation and attempts among emergency department medical patients: Instrument and results from the Psychiatric Emergency Research Collaboration. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 43(3), 313-323.

¹⁷ Roaten, K. (2019). *Universal screening for pediatric suicide risk: Strategies for success and lessons learned*. Dallas, TX: The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, Department of Psychiatry.

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NATIONAL VICTIM AWARENESS DATES

NOVEMBER 2019

International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day

In 1999, Senator Harry Reid, who lost his father to suicide, introduced a resolution to the United States Senate which led to the creation of International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day. Also known as Survivor Day, the day was designated by the United States Congress as a day on which those affected by suicide can join together for healing and support. It was determined that Survivor Day would always fall on the Saturday before American Thanksgiving (November 23, 2019) as the holidays are often a difficult time for suicide loss survivors.

Each year, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention supports hundreds of large and small Survivor Day events around the world, in which suicide loss survivors come together to find connection, understanding and hope through their shared experience. For more information: <https://afsp.org/find-support/ive-lost-someone/survivor-day/>.

DECEMBER 2019

National Impaired Driving Prevention Month

According to the National Criminal Justice Reference Service, 28 people every day in the United States die on average in motor vehicle crashes that involve an alcohol-impaired driver. This is one death every 51 minutes. The annual cost of alcohol-related crashes totals more than \$44 billion. Drugs other than alcohol – legal and illegal – are involved in about 16 percent of motor vehicle crashes.

In many cases, the impact of impaired driving on survivors can be similar to the impact of other types of crimes, especially homicide. Impaired driving offenses often result in much lower charges and sentences – and sometimes no sanction. The survivor perceives that the offender “got away with” a serious crime.

Effective measures to help prevent deaths and injuries from impaired driving include actively enforcing existing 0.08 percent

blood alcohol content laws, minimum legal drinking age laws, and zero tolerance laws for drivers younger than 21 years old in all states, as well as using community-based approaches to alcohol control and DWI prevention.

JANUARY 2020

National Mentoring Month

Mentoring, at its core, guarantees young people that there is someone who cares about them, assures them they are not alone in dealing with day-to-day challenges, and makes them feel like they matter. Quality mentoring relationships can have powerful positive effects on young people in a variety of personal, academic, and professional situations. Ultimately, mentoring connects a young person to personal growth and development, and social and economic opportunity. Yet one in three young people will grow up without this critical asset.

National Mentoring Month is an annual campaign that aims to recruit volunteer mentors to help America’s youth achieve their full potential.

The National Mentoring Partnership, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) is committed to raising awareness and sharing resources that support this important cause.

For more information on how to become a Mentor, visit the CNCS Mentor Program at <https://www.nationalservice.gov/mentor>.

National Stalking Awareness Month

In January 2004, the National Center for Victims of Crime launched National Stalking Awareness Month (NSAM) to increase the public’s understanding of the crime of stalking. NSAM emerged from the work of the Stalking Resource Center, a National Center program funded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice, to raise awareness about stalking and help develop and implement multidisciplinary responses to the crime.

NSAM began in response to a 2003 call to the Stalking Resource Center from Debbie Riddle, the sister of murdered stalking victim, Peggy Klinke. Riddle wanted to transform her family's painful tragedy into a force for good – and to help improve law enforcement's response to stalking and save lives.

In the United States, 7.5 million people are stalked each year. The majority of stalking victims are stalked by someone they know, especially regarding victims of femicide, where 54

percent of femicide victims reported stalking to police before they were killed by the stalkers. For more information about stalking awareness, visit the Stalking Resource Center at <https://victimsofcrime.org/our-programs/past-programs/stalking-resource-center>.

Trauma and Substance Abuse; *continued from page 9*

with these issues is making choices to survive. The choices may be harmful, and they may not make sense to someone on the outside. Because of the complex nature of trauma and substance misuse, specialized treatment and support are needed.

Treatment for PTSD and Addiction

When untreated PTSD and substance misuse occur at the same time, both must be addressed together as co-occurring disorders. If only one disorder is treated, any improvements will likely be short-lived. For the most enduring, healthy outcome, both disorders need specific attention in treatment.

Co-occurring treatment that addresses both PTSD and addiction is available in various facilities nationwide. For many, inpatient treatment is an appropriate choice for stabilization in the beginning. When a less intense level of care is needed, people transition to outpatient counseling services and support groups for ongoing therapy and social support.

If you or a loved one need specialized treatment for co-occurring PTSD and substance use, The Recovery Village can

help. Visit our website at <https://www.therecoveryvillage.com> or call 888-492-4084 to speak to a representative today.

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TREE OF ANGELS

The Tree of Angels ceremony is a meaningful Christmas program specifically held in honor, memory, and support of victims of violent crime. The first program was implemented in December 1991 by Verna Lee Carr, Victim Advocate with People Against Violent Crime (PAVC) in Austin.

The Tree of Angels program provides an opportunity for communities 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 supports surviving victims and victims' families by making it possible for loved ones to bring an angel ornament to place on a Christmas tree.

Over the past 28 years the Tree of Angels has become a memorable tradition observed in many communities and counties throughout Texas. The designated Tree of Angels week is December 2-8, 2019.

If you are interested in hosting a Tree of Angels in your community, a How-To-Guide is available that provides information about establishing a Tree of Angels ceremony. Please note the Tree of Angels is a registered trademark of PAVC. PAVC is committed to ensure that the original meaning and purpose of the Tree of Angels continues. For this reason, PAVC asks that you complete the information form on the website: www.treeofangels.org to receive the How-To-Guide. After the form is completed electronically and submitted back to PAVC, you will receive instructions on how to download the How-To-Guide. PAVC asks that you do not share the electronic document to avoid unauthorized use or distribution of the material. If you have any questions regarding the How-To-Guide or hosting a Tree of Angels in your community please contact Licia Edwards at 512-837-PAVC or email Licia at pavc@peopleagainstviolentcrime.org.



The Hair

by Kathleen Sheeder Bonanno

Bernadette in blue jeans,
and Suzanne in her swishy skirt and boots,
in another time
would have worn veils
and wailed at the wall for her,
or washed her gently
and prayed for her Victorian soul,
or put pennies on her eyes
for the ferryman.

Today they work with what they've got—one
healthy hank of hair,
chopped off the back of her head by the funeral
director.

They shampoo it three times until it smells like
honeysuckle, brush it and tie it and lay
the curling bundles
on the dining room table.

They put one in an abalone box, one in an amber
box,
one in a wooden box,
and one in a locket for me,
to fasten around my neck.

Kathleen Sheeder Bonanno was an award-winning author and poet who received the Beatrice Hawley Award for her book of poetry, Slamming Open the Door, published by Alice James Books in April 2009. Slamming Open the Door is a collection of poems re-counting the true story of the murder of her daughter, Leidy Bonanno, in 2003. Bonanno's heartrending collection inspires both compassion for and awe of the human spirit. Of all the losses we may be asked to bear, the murder of one's child must be the most terrible.

"The Hair" from Slamming Open the Door. Copyright © 2009 by Kathleen Sheeder Bonanno. Used with the permission of The Permissions Company, LLC on behalf of Alice James Books, www.alicejamesbooks.org.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE VICTIM'S INFORMER

The Victim's Informer e-newsletter is published quarterly. Articles 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 or emailed to tdcj.clearinghouse@tdcj.texas.gov. If you would like to submit materials, the deadline dates for articles, meeting notices, and other submissions are below. For questions or comments, please call us at 800-848-4284 or 512-406-5931.

Deadlines for articles and other information:

October 2, 2019 for December 2019/January 2020 issue

January 2, 2020 for March/April 2020 issue

Please Note: You may access the publication at the TDCJ VSD website by going to www.tdcj.texas.gov/publications/victim_informer_newsletter.html. If you wish, we will notify you via email each time The Victim's Informer becomes available on the TDCJ VSD website and provide an electronic link to The Victim's Informer.

Subscribe/Unsubscribe/Update your email address on the Integrated Victim Services System portal at <https://ivss.tdcj.texas.gov>.

Angie McCown, Director

Texas Department of Criminal Justice

Victim Services Division

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