

“Today was a Difficult Day,” said Pooh.

There was a pause.

“Do you want to talk about it?” asked Piglet.

“No,” said Pooh after a bit. “No, I don’t think I do.”

“That’s okay,” said Piglet, and he came and sat beside his friend.

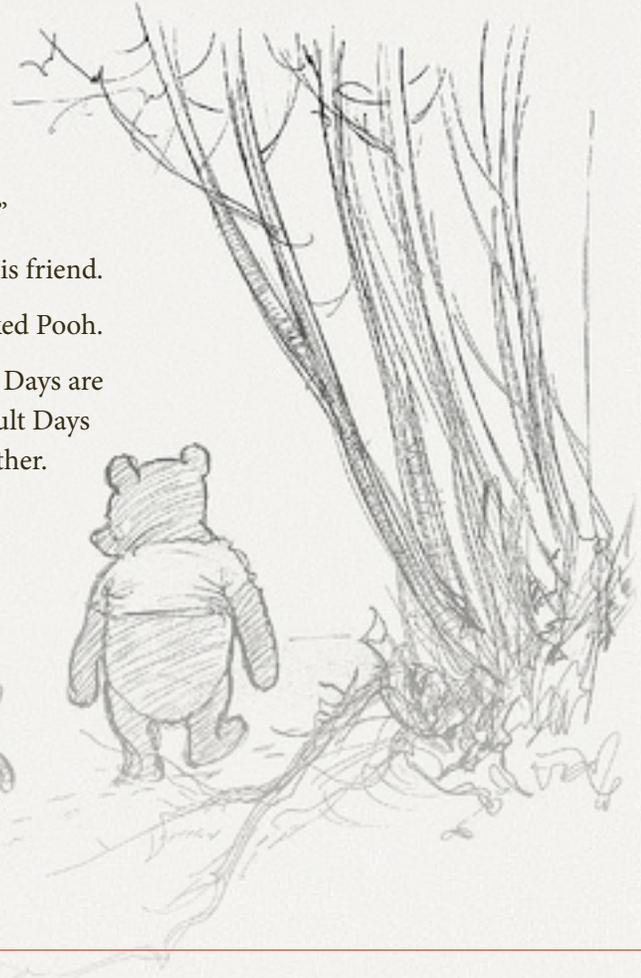
“What are you doing?” asked Pooh.

“Nothing, really,” said Piglet. “Only, I know what Difficult Days are like. I quite often don’t feel like talking about it on my Difficult Days either.

“But goodness,” continued Piglet, “Difficult Days are so much easier when you know you’ve got someone there for you. And I’ll always be here for you, Pooh.”

And as Pooh sat there, working through in his head his Difficult Day, while the solid, reliable Piglet sat next to him quietly, swinging his little legs ... he thought that his best friend had never been more right.

A. A. Milne



Strange and Difficult Days

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice Victim Services Division has always been there for you, and we will continue to be there for you throughout this pandemic.

*Angie McCown, Director
TDCJ Victim Services Division*



Click on the article title to go to the page it starts on!

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WISHING YOU WELLNESS

Facing COVID-19 with Resilience and Grace

by Derrelynn Perryman, Vice-Chairman
Texas Board of Criminal Justice



As I write this we are a few short weeks into the COVID-19 response and all of us are adapting to unexpected and unwanted change.

First and foremost, I want to recognize and appreciate the dedicated personnel of TDCJ and the Windham School District who have risen to the challenge that comes with their responsibility for keeping Texas safe. Thank you to all of you for remaining focused on the mission of TDCJ, to provide public safety, promote positive change in offender behavior, reintegrate offenders into society, and assist victims of crime.

I also want to honor and acknowledge that this is a time of grief, for a multitude of losses, for so many of us on so many levels.

I also want to emphasize that beyond the challenge and the grief, I see reason for hope. I see people focusing on helping others, checking on each other, and finding creative ways to keep things going despite at times overwhelming obstacles. I have seen time and time again in my work with survivors of violent crime that there is an astounding capacity in people for resilience and grace even in the face of overwhelming tragedy. I hope that this season of change has brought each of us a new appreciation for what is important in our lives, and an opportunity to grow, as we overcome in big and small ways.

WHY VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENTS ARE IMPORTANT in Death Penalty Cases

by Janice Sager, Regional Victim Services Coordinator,
Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse

Education and information related to the Victim Impact Statement (VIS) has historically been focused on its use and importance during the prosecution and sentencing of a case, and during the parole review process of incarcerated offenders.

A prosecutor must consider the information in the VIS prior to entering into a plea agreement. A judge must consider the VIS before accepting a plea agreement or pronouncing a sentence. The Board of Pardons and Paroles (Board) must review the VIS during the parole review process.

Due to the unique process for sentencing in capital murder cases, the VIS becomes vitally important in a different way.

Possible Reasons Victim Impact Statements are Rare in Death Penalty Cases

In order to impose a death sentence after a capital murder conviction, a jury must answer these questions:

1. Is there a probability the defendant would commit criminal acts of violence that would constitute a continuing threat to society?

2. Are there circumstances of the offense, the defendant's character and background, and the personal moral culpability of the defendant that offer sufficient mitigating circumstances to warrant a sentence of life imprisonment rather than a death sentence?

Since the sentence in a capital murder case is decided by the jury and not the judge, the information in a VIS is not considered by them. Also, we know that VISs are considered by the Board during

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SPOTLIGHT ON VICTIM SERVICES DIVISION STAFF

Meet the Correspondence Team

by Jenny Brantley, Special Projects Coordinator
TDCJ Victim Services Division

As the name of their team suggests, the Correspondence team’s primary responsibility is processing incoming correspondence from victims, families of victims, concerned citizens, criminal justice professionals and, occasionally, legislators writing on behalf of a victim constituent. The team receives correspondence by email, letter and sometimes by fax.

After receiving correspondence, most often protest letters or questions regarding an offender’s status, the team sends an acknowledgement letter and answers any questions that the sender may have asked. If applicable, the correspondence is then scanned and placed into the offender’s file so that it is available for the Board of Pardons and Paroles (Board) during the next parole review.

Correspondence also processes incoming Victim Impact Statements (VIS), as well as printing and folding the letter notifications being sent each day. During Fiscal Year 2019, the correspondence team received and processed more than 15,750 pieces of correspondence and sent close to 59,800 notifications through USPS mail.

When fully staffed, the correspondence team consists of seven staff members and a supervisor. In this issue, we will meet three. Be sure to check back in the next issue to meet the others!

Lisa Leitch

As an Administrative Assistant IV, Lisa is the team lead for the Correspondence Section. Born and raised in California, Lisa and her family moved to the Austin area in 2017. Lisa and her family, husband Andy, their two young daughters and a dog,

Lisa with her younger daughter working from home.

Conner, enjoy spending as much time as possible outdoors. Together they go biking, rollerblading, hiking, swimming, and camping. Indoors, Lisa enjoys watching movies, reading about current events and thriller/mystery books, and spending time with her family.

Lisa started with the Victim Services Division (VSD) in October 2018, working on the hotline. She promoted to her current position in June 2019. Before moving to Texas, Lisa worked for the California Prison Industry Authority (CALPIA), a division of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, for almost 11 years. Her job with CALPIA involved working with offenders, but Lisa was drawn to the idea of helping victims.

In her current position with VSD, Lisa’s primary responsibility involves responding to victim inquiries by email or phone. Lisa



says that she enjoys working for TDCJ VSD because she finds it both challenging and rewarding, though her favorite part is how caring and compassionate all of her coworkers are.

Dee Maxwell

“Ms. Dee,” as much of the division calls her, tells us she is a very private person, though her big personality and *thousand-watt* smile might disagree. Dee is married, has two children and four grandchildren. She feels very blessed to still have both of her parents. Dee is the oldest of three siblings and the only girl. She loves traveling, especially on cruise ships, dancing, having fun, and attending services at Olivet Baptist Church. Her favorite color is black.

Ms. Dee has been working for TDCJ for 17 and a half years, coming to Victim Services in 2007. She was interested in assisting victims and helping to meet their needs. Dee says that “working with VSD has taught me to be a good listener and be able to put myself in their shoes. I enjoy being able to reassure the victim with facts and to keep them updated of any changes.” Dee is also an active volunteer at various victim-services related events.

Some of Dee’s responsibilities as an Administrative Assistant III include researching and processing US Mail, faxed

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AUSTIN POLICE DEPARTMENT VICTIM SERVICES

Responding to Trauma in a Rapidly Growing Community

by Stephanie Gonzales, LCSW, Victim Services Supervisor
Austin Police Department

“10-4, I’m 76.” Austin Police Department Crisis Response Team Counselors utter this quick phrase on their communication radios multiple times a day, every day. “10-4” to acknowledge the request for their assistance and “76” to let those listening know “I’m on my way!”

This short hand statement not only applies to communication the counselors have with officers out in the field, but is also indicative of how fast-paced and busy APD Victim Services has become over the years.

Founded in 1980, APD Victim Services has changed and grown as much as the city of Austin has in the same time frame. In its infancy, APD Victim Services consisted of a very small cohort of counselors embedded within the police department, responding mostly to domestic violence related calls and other various significant incidents. Nearly 40 years later, APD Victim Services has 35 counselor positions, one counselor dedicated to officer wellness, four supervisors, and one division manager, who all work to meet the needs of a rapidly growing city.

For many years one of the requirements to work for APD Victim Services is having a master’s degree in a mental health-oriented field. For this reason, we refer to ourselves as counselors, and much of the work we do is clinically focused with attention to the values and ethics of the counseling profession.

APD Victim Services is comprised of two large teams: Crisis Response Team (CT) and Investigation Support Team (IST). Between these two teams, APD Victim Services counselors collectively provide assistance on thousands of cases every year. The APD Crisis Team is currently

made up of 15 team members. This team is responsible for providing crisis counseling, support, and assistance to victims of crime and crisis circumstances 24 hours a day and 7 days a week. Shifts are 10 hours long and staggered throughout the day. Typically, at least two counselors are on shift most hours of the day with more on the schedule during evenings, weekends, special events, and holidays.

CT counselors respond to any and every kind of call you can think of. Many situations involve intimate partner violence and sexual assaults. APD Victim Services works very closely with partner agencies who provide needed services such as sexual assault forensic exams, child forensic interviews, local domestic violence programs within the Austin area, and agencies who assist victims of human trafficking. CT counselors also respond to homicide scenes, traffic fatalities, suicides, natural deaths, robberies, aggravated assaults, unaccompanied children, as well as various other

circumstances. It is not uncommon for CT counselors to spend their entire 10-hour shift going from call to call. Responsible for providing death notifications in the city of Austin, CT counselors are contacted by our local medical examiner’s office once the decedent has been identified and information is available for next-of-kin. In the interest of safety, a police officer always accompanies the counselor on these in-person notifications, but it’s the counselor who provides the devastating news in a trauma-informed and sensitive way. The counselor is present to help the client process the information and anticipate the next steps they will need to take.

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“10-4. I’m 76!” APD Counselor Summer Davenport monitors incoming 911 calls on her vehicle’s built-in mobile computer.

A CT counselor's main goal on any scene is reducing the impact of trauma for those involved in the crisis. Counselors must build rapport quickly with clients and work to assess where they are in terms of physical and emotional safety. They use a variety of counseling techniques in their interventions. Sometimes this involves grounding techniques to help a victim regulate their breathing or remind them that the life-threatening event is over and that they are safe now. Other interventions may include motivational interviewing or solution-focused counseling with techniques from an array of evidence-based theories.

A huge piece of intervention also involves providing psychoeducation on the neurobiology of trauma so the individual can prepare them for the symptoms they may experience in the coming days, weeks, and months. Also of great importance is providing victims with information on the criminal justice process and what will happen next if they are the victims in criminal cases. APD CT counselors juggle several balls in the air at any given time while also regulating themselves and their own response to the often tragic circumstances they go running toward. It can be a demanding job, but also one that is incredibly rewarding.



APD Counselor Kristen Yesensky consults with officers while responding to a scene.

The APD Victim Services Investigation Support Team, currently made up of 20 counselors, is equally important to providing services to victims of crime in crisis circumstances. IST counselors are housed within various investigative units and work alongside the detectives and sergeants who are conducting these investigations. These units include Family Violence, Sex Crimes, Child Abuse, Human Trafficking, Vehicular Homicide, Homicide, Robbery and non-family Aggravated Assault. These counselors often begin working with a victim a day to a few days after the police report is made and will continue to work with them throughout the duration of the investigation or however long services are needed. They often carry a high case load and are subject matter experts on the crime types they specialize in and the various resources for which their clients may qualify. These counselors also attend a number of community-based committees and coalitions whose goals are typically to reduce the barriers victims of crime face in receiving services and navigating the criminal justice system.

IST counselors often initiate contact by calling the victim and introducing them to the ways in which APD Victim Services can be a resource. They share with the

victim that there are individuals within the system who exist to support them through the often complicated criminal justice process and the aftermath of a traumatic experience. They listen, validate, safety plan, provide useful information, and often connect victims to additional resources, such

as Crime Victims' Compensation, long-term counseling, and even accompany victims to court dates and protective order hearings.

IST counselors also serve the extremely important role of being present when victims provide statements to detectives, a process that is often lengthy and emotionally taxing. IST counselors meet with them before statement appointments to discuss what to expect and plan for the feelings and reactions that may arise. They also offer to remain in the room and provide support as needed throughout the victims' time with the detectives. After this kind of appointment, counselors also often meet with the victim once more to process the experience with them and continue to offer individual and focused support. Incorporating the counselor into this process helps detectives focus their attention on conducting a thorough investigation while still offering victims trauma-informed support during a time that is likely to activate trauma symptoms. They continue to support their clients for an indefinite length of time regardless of the outcome of the case.

With over 40 staff personnel, APD Victim Services also has the ability to engage in a number of projects. One project of note involves connecting victims of crime and crisis circumstances to EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) therapy, an evidence-based intervention that can significantly reduce the symptoms associated with trauma and can allow the impacted individual to resume their life and daily activities more successfully. While APD Victim Services has a handful of counselors on staff who are trained in EMDR therapy and can provide a limited number of sessions to clients, we also have the ability to refer

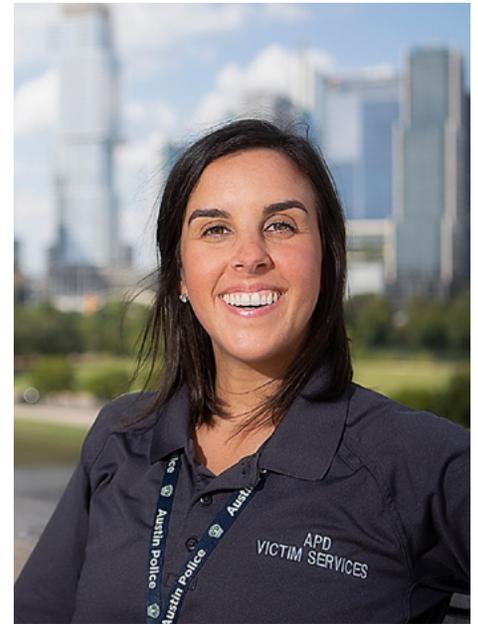
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clients to therapists in the community who can provide this service pro bono. Through special funding, APD Victim Services assists in providing free EMDR training to local private practice therapists in exchange for their pledge to offer 50 free sessions of EMDR to clients referred by APD Victim Services counselors. This project is currently in its third year and going strong.

In addition to directly serving victims of crime and crisis circumstances, APD Victim Services is also involved in training law enforcement personnel and local community groups. APD Victim Services typically spends two to three days providing classroom training to APD cadets on trauma-informed response to victims of crime. Starting in 2019 APD Victim Services also began presenting mindfulness to police cadets. In addition,

counselors present to field training officers, 911 call takers, and members of various local agencies who serve the public, such as medical providers and advocates from community-based organizations.

Looking into the future, APD Victim Services hopes to continue our mission of engaging with those in crisis to offer our support and guidance as they navigate the often complicated criminal justice system and the aftermath of a life-changing tragedy. While we work in a variety of fast-paced settings, out on the busy streets of Austin or inside a bustling police station office, our goal is always to mitigate the impact of trauma for those we serve and provide them with as many tools as possible as they do the real work of processing what happened to them and rebuilding their sense of safety and normalcy.



*APD Crisis Response Team Counselor
Kristen Yesensky*

CRISIS 40

My Rideout with Austin Police Department Victim Services

*Sarah Corbett-Imeny, Training Specialist II
Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse*

This article is about the experience of shadowing a member of the APD Crisis Response Team, who assist with several traumatic events each day. Some details have been altered to maintain confidentiality.

I rode out with Haleigh Bolton, LMSW, a crisis counselor with Austin Police Department (APD) Victim Services on December 19, 2019; her radio handle is "Crisis 40." I met Haleigh at the Austin Police Department North

Substation where I had to sign a waiver of liability. As my imagination took me to televised police shows, I felt I was entrusting her with my life.

I sat in the passenger seat. To my left was Haleigh's laptop, showing all the active calls. We went to the main APD station downtown. After entering the secured garage and spiraling up toward the top, we entered the building's side entrance to the APD Victim Services office. We were greeted by a receptionist, then a quick turn and we were in the break room. The room

looked like it also served as a conference room, and has a communal computer on a convertible standing desk. There were Christmas gift bags in the middle of the table that a fellow counselor made for everyone working for the team. A sample of what was inside was sitting next to them: DIY sugar wash and a homemade card. It would be easy to imagine the room

being used for debriefings as there were many photos of tranquil nature scenes adorning the walls.

Haleigh emptied her pockets and a small top spiral notebook of yesterday's events came out while she stood writing reports on the computer. I met Stephanie Gonzales, LCSW, Victim Services

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Haleigh Bolton, "Crisis 40" counselor with APD Victim Services

Supervisor, who had arranged my rideout with Haleigh. She was an APD crisis counselor prior to her current position. There are about 35 counselors spread across the Crisis Response Team and in their follow-up units. They have about 15 on the Crisis Response Team and 20 on Investigation Support. Coverage depends on the time of day, with the heaviest coverage of four to five counselors in the afternoon and evening. The coverage tapers off at the end and beginning of the shift. Haleigh also works as a social worker in the ER at a local hospital one day a week. Her schedule with APD is 4 days working, 3 days off.

Notified by Haleigh's pager about a health event, we headed to south Austin. On scene were four APD officers, EMS, and fire department staff; the usual for a 911 call. A woman had been found unresponsive and not breathing. EMS administered CPR for about 10 minutes in the ambulance, continuing as they left for the hospital. Haleigh spoke to one of the APD officers to obtain the patient's name,

date of birth, phone number, names of family members, and a brief description of what happened to her. The Crisis Response Team was called to the scene primarily to speak to the patient's loved ones and to keep them informed.

Haleigh then spoke with the patient's brother and boyfriend until her sister arrived. Visibly panicked, she ran to Haleigh to find out what happened. Haleigh spoke calmly with the family members and explained what EMS was doing and, if they wanted to follow her, they could meet her at the hospital.

At the ER, the family met Haleigh in the lobby. She then led them to a waiting/consulting room where the hospital's social worker would meet them. Haleigh updated the social worker who would now be the family's point of contact while in the care of the hospital. As we headed for the exit, the hospital tech team that had administered CPR in a timed rotation, stood in the hallway outside the patient's room. The patient might have died without their help, but the tech team resuscitated her after about 45 minutes of continued CPR. The hospital social worker commended their work, so well-practiced that it almost looked choreographed. I was amazed to see the heart cardiogram displaying the patient's heartbeat. She lived! In addition to the social worker, Haleigh met with and updated the hospital's chaplain, who was kind and did not want to give the family the wrong idea that the patient had died. She was mindful to let the family know that she was available if they wanted to talk with her.

After leaving the hospital, Haleigh checked for anything pending on the laptop in her vehicle. We took the only break of the day in a drive-thru at Starbucks. Haleigh ordered a coffee and a sugar cookie, and then it wasn't long until we were headed

back to the same hospital ER to meet a victim of domestic violence.

Back at the hospital, Haleigh was given some details about the victim, such as her name, phone number, and a brief description of what happened. As we entered the room, the victim was sitting on the exam table and another APD officer was completing forms on his laptop. We were told that two plain-clothed officers observed a woman being assaulted in a fast food restaurant parking lot. When APD arrived, the victim's attacker was apprehended and she was taken to the hospital.

The victim said her boyfriend was hitting her for wearing his jacket. She has suffered multiple instances of brutality, including being strangled many times. She expressed that she had had enough of living with him and wanted to be safe. Being homeless at the time, she would prefer to not be in her tent that night. Haleigh arranged housing for her in a shelter.

The APD officer was attentive, assuring the victim that her attacker was in jail. The officer would step in the exam room periodically, not only to ask questions but also to let the victim know what to anticipate from the police, particularly about the police report for her and Haleigh.

Haleigh approached the victim with the same confidence and care as she showed the patient's family she helped earlier. Her careful questions kept the victim comfortable to talk about what happened, allowed her to make choices about where to stay, her transportation to the shelter, and who she could talk to at the shelter.

Throughout the interview, hospital personnel would appear to answer questions for the victim and to ask her

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how she was doing at that moment. Before leaving, Haleigh gave her a pink Victim Assistance Information pamphlet with the police report number written on it, information about crime victim's rights and the first steps for victims of domestic violence. Haleigh also circled the phone numbers for the resources that she had referred to the victim.

Since Haleigh works at the same hospital on her off days, she knew where to go to retrieve a form from the social worker's station in the ER. It was also a place where she can speak with the on-duty social worker freely.

I witnessed another smooth transition from the care of the Crisis Response Team to the hospital's social worker. We again left the hospital, this time headed to a neighborhood for a call to assist a woman whose brother had died on her driveway.

As we arrived, children were walking down the street on their way home from school. For privacy, bedsheets had been placed over the gate of the home as well covering the deceased. There were a few observers and close friends of the grieving sister nearby. Staff from the Medical Examiner's Office arrived around the same time as we did. The APD officer had been keeping the flow of passersby moving and preserving the scene for an hour; he was very relieved to see Crisis 40!

Haleigh spoke to the officer, noting the same information she asks at each event and then approaching the deceased man's sister. She was clearly distraught. As Haleigh drew near the woman, she kneeled to make eye contact with her. The scene was very quiet. From 10 feet away, I could hear Haleigh speak to the woman, expressing her sympathy for her loss. She continued by asking if she could

ask her some questions, to which she agreed. Haleigh asked if they could move to the chairs by the table as she knew the medical examiner staff needed access to the immediate area. I remember noticing the stark contrast of Christmas decorations on the house and the feel of the somber afternoon; even the chickens and ducks around the yard were quiet.

As the medical examiner staff moved the deceased man to their van, his sister had a wave of emotion that Haleigh carefully helped her with. Haleigh helped the woman with what she could expect next and gave her a short list of what she will do soon, to get her back from being in her "gut" to her "head." Something I learned during a Texas Victim Assistance Training (TVAT) Academy is to try to leave victims in their head, i.e thinking about things to do, instead of their gut and emotions about what happened.

Haleigh drove us back to the hospital for the third time, where she met with an APD officer, to gather the basic information of the next case, a victim of domestic violence reporting a couple of days after the assault. Much like the earlier domestic violence case, there was another APD officer entering information on his laptop in the exam room. The victim had been hurt by her boyfriend in her home. She came to the ER to find out if the pain she was experiencing was normal. She was not breathing well and that scared her.

Haleigh approached this victim with the same awareness of the environment, with mindfulness towards the victim, and with compassion. She started with questions of what happened and asked questions like, "How are you feeling now?" "Do you feel safe where you live?" "Do you have someone that you can contact if you need help?"

Haleigh referred this victim to the Travis County Sheriff's Office Victim Services because she resides outside of Austin city limits. However, this didn't stop Haleigh from supplying the victim with information and resources available to her, if she wanted to use them.

The last thing I witnessed was a hospital staff member waving us over to a parking lot across from the hospital as we were leaving. She had a dead battery and needed a set of jumper cables. Haleigh has never been asked to help with this type of request on the job, so she made a quick call to her supervisor to ask if she could use a public vehicle for this purpose. She got the "all-clear," and found a pair of jumper cables in her trunk. Soon help arrived and got the car started.

Our ride back to my car was quiet, as I processed the events of the day. I contemplated all that had occurred; witnessing first responders, APD officers, medical examiners, and the ER staff, as well as the way those professionals interacted with the victims we saw. I find Haleigh's actions to be admirable. I have confidence in the way the APD Crisis Response Team helps victims through such traumatic events. What may seem normal to Crisis 40 was extraordinary for me.

Victim Impact Statement: *continued from page 2*

the parole review process, but in cases where life without parole or the death sentence has been given, the offender will not go through the parole review process. So, other than for notification purposes, family members of the deceased victims may not be asked to complete one or they may not feel there is sufficient reason to complete one.

The Purpose of the Victim Impact Statement During Death Penalty Cases

Each death penalty case is unique and has varying reasons that affect the length of time prior to execution, and the time before the death sentence is finally carried out can be many years. Although the current average time on Death Row is just under 11 years, there are several offenders who have been waiting on Death Row for over 40 years. Billy Coble and Robert Jennings were on Death Row for 29 and 30 years, respectively, before they were executed.

Death Row offenders have the opportunity to file an executive clemency application

with the Board once a date has been set for execution by the court of conviction. The offender has 21 days before their scheduled execution date to file the application, and the majority of requests in clemency applications are for the Board to recommend to the Governor a reprieve of execution and commute the death sentence to a lesser penalty.

When clemency applications are submitted to the Board, the deceased victims' family members are notified of their rights through the TDCJ Victim Services Division, if they are registered for notification and have kept their contact information current. Victims' family members then have the opportunity to have their voices heard in the clemency process by submitting protest letters to the Board members for consideration prior to voting on the offender's clemency application.

Unfortunately, due to the amount of time that may have passed since the court sentenced the offender to death and set an execution date, close family members

of the deceased victim may have died or otherwise are unable to offer their voice during the clemency process.

Just as the Board considers the information in the VIS prior to voting during the parole review process, they also consider the information in any VISs in death penalty cases, prior to voting on the clemency application. When victims' family members take advantage of the opportunity to complete and submit a VIS, it helps to ensure they will have a voice and be able to participate in the clemency process. The VIS, in some cases, may outlive the person who submitted it and be his or her voice when they can no longer speak.

Few people can speak more profoundly on the impact of the crime on their lives than the close family members of the deceased victim. In death penalty cases, the VIS allows them the opportunity to have a voice in the clemency process even when their voices may otherwise be silent.

The Victim Impact Statement

The Victim Impact Statement (Declaración de Impacto de la Víctima) along with all related documents are available on the TDCJ Victim Services Division website. Included with the **Victim Impact Statement Packet** are the **Additional Page** (Página Adicional) and the **Supplemental Page** (Suplementario de Custodia de Niños Órdenes Judiciales). A **Victim Impact Statement Just for Kids** (Declaración de Impacto de la Víctima Solo para Niños) is also available. All English versions are available in PDF format, PDF fillable format, and MS Word format. Spanish versions are available in PDF format and PDF fillable format.

The **Victim Impact Statement For Victims of Juvenile Offenders** (Declaración de Impacto de la Víctima de Delito Juvenil) is available in English and Spanish in PDF format and PDF fillable format.



Victim Impact Statement

It is your right!

▶ ATENCIÓN: Si Ud. requiere asistencia en español o tiene preguntas sobre este documento, favor de llamar al # ◀

VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENT PURPOSE AND IMPORTANCE

This Victim Impact Statement (VIS) will be used throughout the criminal justice system (by the prosecutor, the judge, and the parole board) to better understand the emotional/psychological, physical, and financial impact of the crime.

The contact information you provide in this Victim Impact Statement is important and will be used to contact you if you wish to receive case information from:

- Community Supervision and Corrections Department (probation);
- Texas Department of Criminal Justice (prison); and
- Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles.

Please return
the Confidential Victim Contact Information page and
the Victim Impact Statement to the Victim Assistance Coordinator
at the agency assisting you.

Keep this page for your records.

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE VICTIM ASSISTANCE COORDINATOR

A DAY THAT CHANGED Everything

by Mike Jones

Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse

As humans, we seem to have this need to be able to understand everything and logically explain why things happen. We want to believe that everything happens for a reason, that the world is just and fair. If we do the

things we are supposed to do: if we go to school, if we work hard, raise our families, and treat others the way we should, the world will provide us with our just rewards.

At TDCJ we sometimes refer to people who aren't locked up and people who are not somehow involved in the criminal justice system, as "Free World People." Free World People want to try and reason away violent crime from their lives. They want to believe violent crime happens to someone else. They want to believe that victims did something that somehow allowed violent crime to happen to them. Free World People believe if they don't do as that victim did, surely violent crime can't happen to them.

But bad things do happen to good people, and there are people in the world who do what they want and take what they want without care. It doesn't matter to them whether or not we were a good person, if we had a bright future, if we had a job or a hobby we loved, or if we had family and friends who depended on us, who loved us, and who miss us.

The world isn't always just and fair, and it's difficult to imagine anything more painful and challenging than to move forward in life after the senseless, violent death of a loved one and to summon the strength and courage each day to somehow keep functioning. Healing can be a slow and painful process. Sometimes physically; always emotionally.

I was Free World People

I became a victim advocate on May 4, 2004.

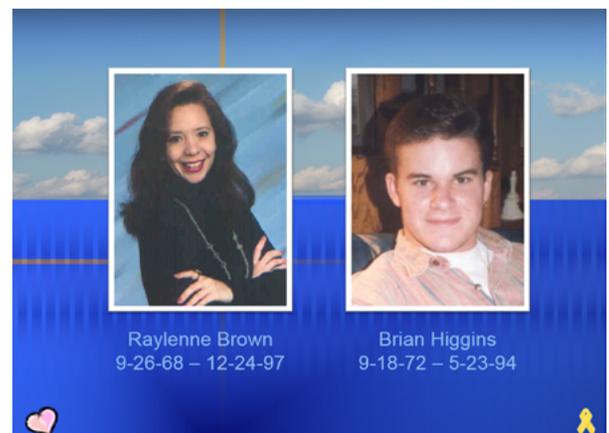
My career with TDCJ began in January 1993. I had never heard of Victim Services. I was Free World People. Around that time, TDCJ began placing personal computers on our desks, right next to our mainframe terminals. Our IT department was called Data Services back then, and they were primarily geared to maintain the mainframe computer systems. Unfortunately, most of the time, they were unable help when we had issues with our IBM 286 PCs. So, I was encouraged to learn to work on the PCs, to troubleshoot, to install devices, and so on. With that experience, I got the job as Victim Services' first network manager when it became a Division in November 1997.

After a couple of years I became the special projects coordinator, and so, on top of working on computers, I got to do a lot of other supporting jobs. The Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse used to hold an annual statewide conference for victims and victim advocates. One of my

supporting jobs was fetching and toting. At a conference, fetching and toting is the art of moving a bunch of things from one place to other places, usually at the direction of another person. In between fetching and toting, I helped presenters with PC connections, PowerPoint questions and with audio/visual tasks. I was also the conference photographer.

At each conference we had the Victims' Tribute Program, and part of that was a victim tribute slide presentation. Creating and presenting the slide show was my responsibility. The tribute was a moving, 30-minute photo presentation to music, where photos of victims of crime, mostly victims of murder, faded in and out as the music played. There was a fairly large

continued on next page



A slide from the 2007 Victim Tribute presentation.

section that had photos of young people. The last Clearinghouse conference was held in 2007, and the victim's tribute had 132 slides with 286 photos. Over the several years I worked on the tribute, I got to know all of the photos, all of those faces, and all of those names.

At one Clearinghouse conference in Dallas, we all hopped on buses to go on a field trip to visit [Our Garden of Angels](#) in Euless. It is a serene place where dozens of white crosses have been placed to honor victims of murder, mostly young people. I was going there with the group to photograph, but during the trip for reasons I can't explain, several people started talking to me about their lost loved ones: who they were and how and when they had been taken from them. Most of the people I talked to that day were the mothers of children represented at the Garden. Many were also mothers of children represented in our Victim's Tribute. It was a day that changed my life

forever. It was May 4th, 2004.

Over the years that I have worked in Victim Services, my colleagues and I have met some of the most remarkable people under the most undesirable circumstances. Very often our paths do not cross for years after the awful day they became a victim of violent crime and their loved ones were taken from them.

Even though some of the details of their memory may have faded over time, we still see the same level of grief, pain, and loss they have carried in their hearts for all of that time.

At Victim Services I have been fortunate to have been called on to do an incredible array of jobs, and I have experienced some very interesting and unique situations over the years. I know I am not the same person I was before. Above everything else, the



A slide from the 2007 Victim Tribute presentation.

most important thing to me – working in Victim Services – has been working with victims. I feel truly blessed to have been given that opportunity, and I am very grateful to the people who have given me the chance to get involved. I hope I have been able to make a positive change, even a small one, on each of the lives of other advocates I've worked with and the victims I've worked for.



Our Garden of Angels in 2004.



The Garden in 2010, the last time I visited the site.

Correspondence Team: *continued from page 3*

correspondence and VISs, attempting to contact registrants who have emails or letters returned to VSD to update their contact information, and assisting on the hotline as needed.

Christina Bocanegra

Tina is also an Administrative Assistant III in the Correspondence Section. She's been married to her husband for 27 years and together they have three children. She loves spending time with her family, including her nieces and nephews. They plan family vacations and make as many memories as they can. Tina enjoys taking

many pictures and capturing all of these special moments.

Tina has always considered herself to be an empathetic person and loved helping others as much as possible, even before working with victims. She was drawn to VSD by the idea of working somewhere that victim sensitivity and advocacy are core beliefs. Making a difference in the lives of victims and concerned citizens is very important to her. Tina's goal is to provide victims with a sense of relief with pertinent information, a listening ear or a friendly voice. She says, "the appreciation

we receive from victims is what makes my day and affirms my decision to work in this field."

Tina has been with TDCJ for 14 years, the last six years with VSD. Her primary responsibilities include assisting with emails sent to the division email, letters received by mail, and processing VISs. Tina does a majority of the translations for correspondence received from Spanish speakers. She also sends reports to the Negative Mail Office* and the Institutional Parole Offices*, and assists with the hotline as needed.

**The Negative Mail Office processes victims' and concerned citizens' requests that incarcerated offenders not be able to contact them by mail. Institutional Parole Officers are assigned to TDCJ units and are employed by the Board of Pardons and Paroles. They interview incarcerated offenders at TDCJ Units, federal correctional institutions, contracted facilities, and county jails statewide to prepare offender cases for the parole review process.*

SHELTER IN PLACE VIOLENCE Nothing to Laugh at

by Mike Jones
Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse



People adjust to uncomfortable, unusual, and dire circumstances in many ways. Very often, trying times are endured with the use of humor. The COVID-19 disaster is no different. Check out any social media website, and you can find unending ways people are trying to laugh about being stuck at home, teleworking, home schooling, hoarding, and deserted streets in our towns and cities.

If you or someone you love became ill from the virus, laughing about the situation at the time was perhaps not the first thing on your mind. If a loved one became very ill or died from the coronavirus, knowing that countless other people are making light of the situation may even be offensive. But as time passes and we think about loved ones we've lost, we tend to think about their smiles, their quirky habits, funny things they did, and the ways they made us laugh.

Nothing about COVID-19 is funny, of course. Humor is a coping mechanism. In victim advocacy, appropriate humor can be very helpful when dealing with resiliency issues, such as vicarious trauma or compassion fatigue. However, a disturbing trend relating to shelter in place orders arose in late March and early April, and no one was laughing about

it. All across Texas, the number of calls to law enforcement as well as women's shelters and children's advocacy centers increased as victims of family and intimate partner violence found that during shelter in place orders, home was not always the safest place to be.

Going into April 2020, law enforcement agencies and local and state advocacy organizations were building their capacity to respond to a significantly increasing number of calls. Organizations that provide legal remedies for victims of family and intimate partner violence are gearing for a substantial increase in the number of people who will be seeking help to get out of abusive homes. These agencies and organizations were also working diligently to get the word out: Help is Available!

In upcoming issues of The Victim's Informer, we hope to publish articles on how COVID-19 affected victims of crime and the agencies and organizations that work with them. If you are a victim, victim advocate, law enforcement, or other criminal justice or mental health professional and would like to share how COVID-19 and shelter in place orders affected you, please contact the Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse at tdcj.clearinghouse@tdcj.texas.gov.

NATIONAL VICTIM AWARENESS DATES

June 2020

National PTSD Awareness Month

June is National Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Month and National PTSD Awareness Day is observed annually on June 27. This is a day to recognize the effects that PTSD has had on the lives of those affected by it.

The United States Senate established PTSD Awareness Day in 2010 to designate a day of awareness as a tribute to Army Staff Sgt. Joe Biel of the North Dakota National Guard. Biel suffered from PTSD and took his life in April 2007 after returning to North Dakota following his second tour of duty in the Iraq War. Biel's birthday, June 27, was chosen to mark PTSD Awareness Day and honor his memory.

PTSD has a profound effect on the lives of those who suffer from it. The statistics alone are staggering, but they tell only a portion of the story. The trauma and anxiety associated with PTSD is a constant burden, inseparable from the sufferer. It was once a condition that was attributed only to returning combat veterans, but more and more the condition is diagnosed in those who have experienced violent crime or lived through catastrophic events. According to PTSD United, 20 percent of adults in the United States who have experienced a traumatic event suffer from PTSD. Learn more about PTSD at the [National Institute of Mental Health](#). Use #NationalPTSDAwarenessDay to share on social media.

July 2020

World Day Against Trafficking of Persons

Every year, millions of children, women, and men fall into the hands of traffickers, lured by fake promises and deceit. Human trafficking has become a global multibillion-dollar enterprise, affecting nearly every country in the world.



Today, there are millions of people whose liberty, dignity, and essential human rights have been stolen. They are coerced into sexual exploitation, forced labor, domestic servitude, and forced begging and stealing. Together, we can change that.

On the 2020 World Day against Trafficking in Persons, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) focuses on responding to the trafficking of children and young people.

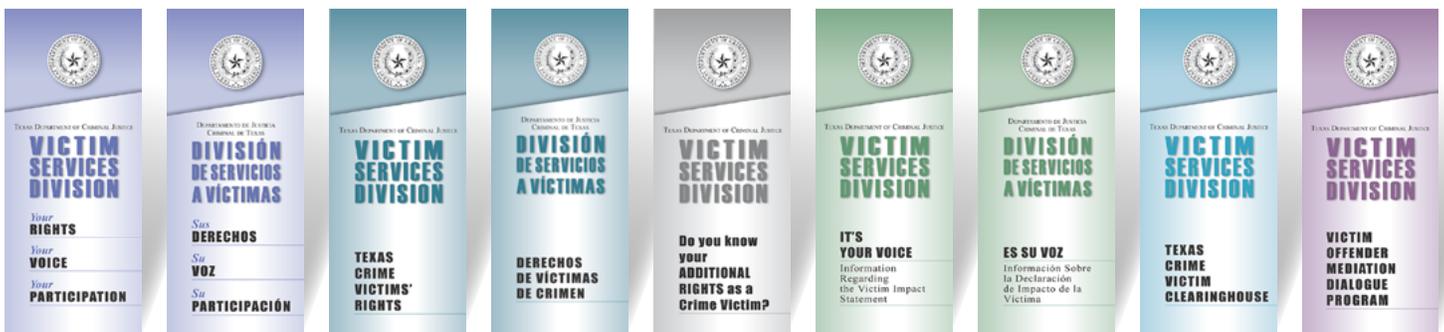
This year's campaign highlights the fact that almost a third of trafficking victims are children.

Consequently, the theme draws attention to the issues faced by trafficked children and to possible action initiatives linked to safeguarding and ensuring justice for child victims.



Publications

The Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse provides a variety of publications that are available for download and in print that contain information about crime victims' rights and post-conviction resources available in the criminal justice system for the general public and for criminal justice and victim services professionals. To download and print a brochure, click on the brochure image below; to request up to 50 hard copies, visit the [Integrated Victim Services System \(IVSS\)](#) portal. Click on the "Resources" dropdown menu and select "Publications."





Rose Treviño

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:

June 26, 2020 for September/October 2020 issue

September 25, 2020 for December 2020/January 2021 issue

Please Note: You may access the publication at the TDCJ VSD website by going to tdcj.texas.gov/publications/victim_informer_newsletter.html. If you wish, we will notify you via email or text 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 here:
<https://ivss.tdcj.texas.gov>.

Angie McCown, Director
Texas Department of Criminal Justice
Victim Services Division
victim.svc@tdcj.texas.gov

Victim Services Staff on the Move!

Rose Treviño, Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse, Regional Victim Services Coordinator (RVSC) out of the Corpus Christi office, has been promoted to the position of Program Supervisor V, TDCJ Reentry and Integration. She will be working out of the Region IV office in Beeville, providing oversight and support to unit and community-based reentry case managers in the important work they perform to fulfill TDCJ's mission to promote positive change in offender behavior and reintegrate offenders into society.

When Rose was hired in April 2013, the Victim Services Division was looking for someone who could fill the role of one of our newly-created RVSC positions. Former Deputy Director, Mark Odom said, "Rose has proven to be a tenacious advocate, always demonstrating a willingness to take on each project with spirit and vitality. Rose has become a model for how we envisioned the RVSC position to evolve." We wish her well; she will definitely be missed!