

The VICTIM'S INFORMER

TEXAS CRIME VICTIM CLEARINGHOUSE

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In Memory of Derrelynn Perryman

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In Remembrance of Derrelynn Perryman

By Texas Department of Criminal Justice

The Texas Board of Criminal Justice (TBCJ), Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), and the Windham School District (WSD) are saddened to announce the passing of TBCJ member Derrelynn Perryman.

Perryman began her service with the TBCJ in August 2015. During her tenure, she served as Vice Chair, Secretary, and as Chair of the Victim Services Committee. She was also a member of the Board's Health Care, Human Resources, and Rehabilitation and Reentry Programs committees.

"Derrelynn Perryman was a true partner in service for those of us who had the privilege to work with her on the Texas Board of Criminal Justice. She leaves behind a legacy of strong support for the women and men of TDCJ and Windham and the mission of those agencies, including unwavering dedication to the cause of victims' rights," TBCJ Chairman Eric J.R. Nichols said. "Her contributions will never be forgotten."

"Derrelynn Perryman was a natural leader whose dedication, compassion, and wisdom touched the lives of everyone she served," TDCJ Executive Director Bryan Collier said. "Her absence will be deeply felt, and her contributions will be remembered and cherished by all who had the privilege of working alongside her."

"Derrelynn Perryman was a champion for the Windham School District and education. Her unwavering commitment helped transform the lives of our students and shape the future of our district," WSD Superintendent Kristina J. Hartman, Ed.S. said. "Her vision and leadership will continue to inspire for years to come."

Throughout her career, Perryman was a staunch advocate for victims' rights and assisting those affected by crime. Perryman was the former Victim Advocate Director for the Tarrant County Criminal District Attorney's Office and served as the Victim Services Coordinator at the Arlington Police Department for 21 years before her retirement.

During her career, Perryman also worked as a therapist and consultant in private practice. Additionally, she taught the next generation of victims' advocates as an adjunct instructor for the School of Social Work and the Criminal Justice and Criminology Department at the University of Texas at Arlington, as well as the Department of Social Work at Texas Christian University. She was a certified peace officer instructor and a member of the Critical Incident Team with the Arlington Police Department. She earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in social work from The University of Texas at Arlington.

She will be greatly missed.



Message of Thanks

By Derrelynn Perryman, Vice Chairman
Texas Board of Criminal Justice

In honor of Derrelynn, we are re-publishing an article previously written for the Victim's Informer Newsletter; the last article that Derrelynn wrote for the Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse (TxCVC). Thank you Derrelynn, for always sharing words of encouragement to your fellow victim service and criminal justice professionals, for helping victims and advocates work through their grief whether they are mourning the loss of a loved one or dealing with the effects of burn out, and for your years of service advocating for all citizens of Texas as the Vice Chairman and Victim Services Representative on the Texas Board of Criminal Justice. You are missed and the work you have done will not be forgotten.

"It seems like daily we see stories of people being hurt in so many ways. Victims of crime see others join their ranks and do what they can. Victim Advocates are on the front lines helping people pick up the pieces after the worst moments of their lives. It's easy to get discouraged, tired, overwhelmed.

First responders keep responding no matter how daunting the tasks have become.

I want to remind you all that although you don't get to hear it often enough, what you do matters. People don't always remember in a crisis to say thank you or let you know how much your kindness and support means to them, but it does. I see the work that people all over Texas do, and I'm thankful for everyone out there day in and day out doing what it takes.

I see you and so do others. Know that!

I also want to remind you to take some time to be present in the now. Slow down and rest a moment in a place of peace. Right now, at this very moment, all is well. It's okay to stay still for a little while no matter how much there is to do. You need time for you no matter how much there is to do. You need to recharge especially because there is so much to do.

My wish for you is that you continue, and that you find peace and hope amidst all this chaos and tragedy. Thank you for being you."

"My wish for you is that you continue. Continue to be who you are, to astonish a mean world with your acts of kindness." -Maya Angelou

The Clearinghouse Looks Forward

By Kayla Smart, Training and Development Specialist IV
Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse

There have been many changes in staffing in the TxCVC since the beginning of 2023. At the time of writing, there were just two staff members working diligently to maintain TxCVC operations: Jenny Brantley, TxCVC Program Supervisor, and myself. We are ending 2023 by welcoming our new Programs Manager, Tamara Young-Niquette, and Megan Mohr, Training and Development Specialist II, who joined our team in October. As we enter into 2024, we are feeling optimistic for any new opportunities that may arise for TxCVC and we wanted to take a moment to discuss current projects and goals for the upcoming year.

The Informational Video Library was created to connect victims of crime to information they may need to navigate the criminal justice system, exercise their rights, and access support and assistance. The Crime Victims' Rights video has been viewed over 1,200 times since launching in 2022, informing victims of their six fundamental rights. Plans for a secondary video titled "Overview of the Criminal Justice System" are underway. Upon release, the video will help to explain navigating the criminal justice system, which can be a very confusing and overwhelming experience for victims.

The Texas Victim Assistance Training (TVAT) Online has been instrumental in providing foundational-level victim assistance training to victim service and criminal justice professionals, with a total of 597 registrants completing the self-paced virtual training in the 2023 Fiscal Year. Wanting to reach a wider audience of advocates, we aim to modernize the TVAT Online's appearance and make the training modules more accessible for hearing and sight-impaired registrants. Legislative updates from the 88th Texas Legislative Session will also be reflected in the updated modules.

This is the first Victims' Informer Newsletter published since March/April 2023. As we continue sharing information that affects crime victims and the professionals that serve them, we hope to expand the Newsletter's audience and the means we use to do so. Whether we continue to utilize the e-newsletter format or expand to social media platforms, we appreciate your patience and continued support of the Victims' Informer Newsletter.



Hope for the Holidays: Survival Tips for Homicide Survivors

By Janice Harris Lord

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

Following are some suggestions to help you cope:

Change traditions

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

Balance solitude with sociability

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

Relive the happy memories

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

Set aside "letting go" time

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

Counter the conspiracy of silence

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

Find a creative outlet

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

Don't forget the rest of the family

Even if it takes energy you think you don't have, try to have a good holiday season for the children. If you need help preparing your home or buying gifts, ask a trusted friend to help. Christmas tree ornaments carry so many emotionally-laden memories that many families choose to buy different ornaments for a few years until they can face unpacking the old ones. Put the tree in a different room or space this year. Utilize available resources. If you are a person of faith, participate in church or synagogue services or go to the mosque more often for prayer. Many veterans of the faith have a serenity about them, a special kind of healing wisdom that can be very comforting. Seek out a support group that is meeting specifically to help people through the holidays. Many funeral homes, non-profits and faith communities offer them. Or start your own small group of others who have experienced something similar.

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

This article is a reprint from *The Victim's Informer*, Volume 20, Number 4, December 2015/January 2016 and is excerpted from a chapter in *No Time for Goodbyes: Coping with Sorrow, Anger, and Injustice After a Tragic Death* by Janice Harris Lord. There is a new and revised version of this book titled *Goodbyes: The Many Faces of Grief after a Tragic Death*, that published in the summer of 2023. Ms. Lord grants permission for victim advocates to copy this article.

The TxCVC has hosted several webinars titled Grief and the Holidays that discuss grief and loss during the holiday season. If you are interested in viewing one of these webinars, click [here](#) or refer to page thirteen for information on how to access recordings of previously held webinars hosted by TxCVC.

Texas Victim Assistance Training Academy Class of 2023

By Jenny Brantley, Program Supervisor V
Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse



In June, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Victim Services Division (VSD) hosted the 8th Annual TVAT Academy, a three-and-a-half-day foundational-level training for victim advocates and criminal justice professionals with less than three years of experience in the field.

This year, we hosted forty-four attendees, including two service dogs with the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS), our very first canine participants! Other attendees joined us from various police departments, prosecutors' offices, Community Supervision and Corrections Departments, and other governmental and non-governmental victim services programs throughout the state of Texas.

Funding for the TVAT Academy is part of a grant awarded to the TxCVC by the Criminal Justice Division of the Office of the Governor. The training is designed to help participants develop a better understanding of crime victims' experiences, as well as their rights, available services, and overall needs. Instruction is facilitated by experienced victim services and criminal justice professionals from the Austin Police Department, DPS, Bexar County Criminal District Attorney's Office, 81st Judicial District Attorney's Office, Texas Juvenile Justice Department, the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles, the Office of the Attorney General, and the TDCJ.



Victim Impact Statement Revision Committee and Brochure Updates

By Jenny Brantley, Program Supervisor V
Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse

VIS Revision Committee

Following the completion of the 88th Regular Legislative session of the Texas Legislature, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Victim Services Division (VSD) hosted a Victim Impact Statement (VIS) Revision Committee to discuss ways to update and improve the VIS and associated forms, like the VIS Just for Kids and the *It's Your Voice* brochure. The VIS Revision Committee consists of stakeholders and end users of the VIS from various agencies and roles within the criminal justice process, from Crime Victim Liaisons within police departments to a member of the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles. Committee members travel to Austin from across the state to participate in the monthly meetings during June, July, and August. The updated VIS is currently available on the TDCJ VSD website, which you can access by visiting https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/publications/victim_impact_statement.html.



2023 VIS Revision Committee



Brochure Updates

Much like April showers bring May flowers, legislative changes bring brochure updates. The TxCVC has been hard at work reviewing and revising all of our publications to ensure they contain the most up-to-date information regarding Texas crime victims' rights. All of our brochures are available for free to download from the Integrated Victim Services System portal by scanning the below QR code or visiting <https://ivss.tdcj.texas.gov/publication-list/>. You may also use the "Request Publication Hardcopy" to place an order to be mailed to you. You must be signed into your portal account to place an order.



88th Texas Legislative Session Updates

By Caleb Taylor, Special Projects Coordinator
TDCJ Victim Services Division

During the Regular Session of the 88th Texas Legislature, 8,046 bills were introduced for consideration and 1,246 bills were passed (Texas Legislature Online Statistics Report). Of the bills that passed, many will affect the criminal justice and victim services fields. Below are summaries of bills tracked by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Victim Services Division (VSD). Unless otherwise stated, these bills went into effect on September 1, 2023. To see the full text of any bill mentioned, refer to www.capitol.texas.gov.

House Bill (HB) 393

Topic: Restitution payments for the support of a child whose parent or legal guardian is a victim of intoxication manslaughter.

Discussion:

- Requires the court to order a defendant that is convicted of intoxication manslaughter to pay restitution for a child whose parent/guardian was the victim of the offense.
- The court determines the amount that is to be paid monthly for the support of the child until the child is 18 years old or graduates high school, whichever is later.
- If the defendant is unable to make restitution payments because of imprisonment, the defendant shall start payments not later than the first anniversary of the date of release from a correctional facility.

HB 517

Topic: Persons who may provide information to a parole panel considering the release of an inmate on parole or to mandatory supervision.

Discussion:

- Expands the definition of “victim” in Texas Government Code Section 508.153 to include close relatives of deceased victims, regardless of whether the death of the victim was related to the offense that was committed.
- Expands the rights of close relatives to deceased victims to testify before a parole panel.

HB 660

Topic: Law enforcement’s duty to enter certain protective order information regarding conditions of stalking offenses.

Discussion:

- Temporary ex parte orders are enforceable to

the same extent as a final protective order.

- Requires law enforcement agencies to enter protective order information into local agency’s records of outstanding warrants by the next business day after information is received.

HB 1161

Topic: Expansion of the address confidentiality program (ACP) by the Office of the Attorney General, to include victims of child abduction.

Status: HB 1161 went into effect immediately on May 24, 2023.

Discussion:

- Expands the eligibility for ACP to victims of child abduction.

HB 1423

Topic: Extensions of protective orders when the subject of the order is imprisoned.

Discussion:

- Requires the DPS to update the Texas Crime Information Center to reflect the date a protective order will expire following the release of the subject.
- Expiration date and notice of pertinent extensions are required to be on new protective orders on or after September 1, 2023.
- This bill applies to respondents that have been released from prison on or after September 1, 2023.

HB 1432

Topic: Relating to required findings for the issuance of a protective order.

Discussion:

- Removes the requirement for the application and issuance of protective orders to find that family violence is likely to occur in the future.

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HB 3130

Topic: Protections of occupational licensing information regarding specific clients.

Discussion:

- Allows occupational/professional license holders that are current or former clients of a family violence center, trafficking shelter, or sexual assault program, to restrict public access to the information held by the licensing entity.
- The bill allows victims to keep information about their license or application from being subject to the Texas Public Information Act.

HB 5202

Topic: Creates a central database about offenders who have committed certain violent offenses against intimate partners.

Discussion:

- The bill creates a database of offenders who have committed intimate partner violence, have been convicted on two or more occasions, and were at least 17 years old when the offenses were committed.
- The database is to be public with the exception of the offender's social security number, driver's license or state issued identification number, telephone number, and any information that would identify the victim.
- The database will be maintained by DPS and must be searchable on a website and include contacts for family violence organizations.
- DPS is required to permit persons in the database to petition for removal if there is an order of expunction or if the person is not convicted of an eligible offense for seven years.
- The database shall be available by January 1, 2024.

Senate Bill (SB) 49

Topic: Expansion of Crime Victims' Compensation (CVC).

Discussion:

- Expands eligibility for CVC to include family members or household members of a victim.
- Modification of relocation and housing rental expense limits and limits of lost wages as a result of bereavement leave.

- Removal of the limit to one-nights' lodging to witness an execution.
- Relocation expenses expanded to all crime types.

SB 409

Topic: Relating to the rights of victims, guardians of victims, and close relatives of deceased victims in the criminal justice system.

Discussion:

- Modifies the rights of sexual assault victims to include victims, guardians of victims, and close relatives of deceased victims of continuous sexual abuse of a young child or disabled individual, indecency with a child, sexual assault, indecent assault, aggravated sexual assault, and stalking.
- Allows victims, guardians, or close relatives to assert their rights either orally or in writing.
- Adds the right to be informed about and to confer with the prosecutor regarding the disposition of the offense including sharing the victim's, guardian's, or close relative's views regarding the decision to not file charges, the use of pretrial intervention programs, or a plea bargain agreement.

SB 578

Topic: Protection of personal information of an applicant for or a person protected by a protective order.

Discussion:

- Applicants for protective orders can now request to protect county of residence in addition to their mailing address.
- Allows person protected by the order to exclude address to their place of employment and the child-care facility or school a child protected by the order attends. Applies to all protective orders regardless of when they were rendered.

SB 806

Topic: Relates to the duties of law enforcement regarding interactions of victims of sexual assault.

Discussion:

- Law enforcement is required to provide a written

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notice of rights, a written referral to the nearest sexual assault program, and information about the statewide sexual assault database as well as offer to request a forensic medical examination, coordinate with the local sexual assault response team to provide continuing care or to further investigation, and all other information required by Texas Code of Criminal Procedure (CCP) Article 56A.

SB 1325

Topic: Creation of a written notice to certain victims of family violence.

Status: SB 1325 went into effect on May 13, 2023.

Discussion:

- Directs the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to adopt a written notice that shall be provided to victims of family violence.
- Peace Officers investigating allegations of family violence or responding to a disturbance call that may involve family violence must provide written notice and additional written information regarding local resources for victims of family violence.
- Information required to be provided by medical professionals to victims of family violence has been modified to include the requirements of the notice that will be developed by HHSC.
- HHSC must develop the written notice by December 1, 2023 and all requirements of peace officers, campus police, and medical professionals are effective January 1, 2024.

SB 1401

Topic: Expansion of rights and reimbursements to victims of sexual assault or other sex offenses.

Discussion:

- Sexual Assault Survivors Task Force in the Office of the Governor made policy recommendations to transform the state's response to sexual violence. The goal is to increase the accessibility of forensic medical exams by granting survivors and their medical providers more discretion over forensic medical exams, improve compensation eligibility and reimbursement procedures, and allow for survivor-centered sexual assault kit notification procedures.
- Changes apply only to offenses reported or for which medical care is first sought out on or after September 1, 2023.

SB 2101

Topic: Clarifying how certain notifications shall be provided to crime victims.

Discussion:

- Article 56A.0525 is added to CCP, outlining the requirements of how notification shall be sent to crime victims: electronically, through text message, video conference, or e-mail; by mail; through an anonymous portal; or by telephone or other personal contact.
- The victim, guardian, or relative is to provide an e-mail address and update changes to that address if they wish to receive electronic notification.

Victim Advocacy: Touching the Lives of TDCJ Staff

*By: Dawn McKeegan, Employee Support Services Manager
TDCJ Victim Services Division*

"A year ago, I was physically assaulted by an inmate on a unit. It was a day like any other day: walking the unit, monitoring inmate movement, and chatting with coworkers. The clanging of cell doors opening and closing, the chattering amongst the inmates, and the distant radio talk was all part of the daily grind. There are those days when an inmate gets out of their assigned area or doesn't want to follow command. On this day, an inmate wasn't happy with the instruction I was giving him and responded by punching and kicking me several times until I was on the ground. This resulted in multiple bruises, lacerations, and a concussion. The aftermath left me struggling with flashbacks, nightmares, anxiety, and hypervigilance. At the time of the incident, my unit supported me by taking me to a medical center and the warden stayed by my side until my family could be there to comfort me. In the following days, I received lots of well wishes from coworkers and friends. Having that initial support was beneficial but my reactions and physical pain were unresolved and lingered for over a year.

Fast forward, one year later, I am back working on a different unit. I received a call that someone was at the unit to see me. She identified herself as a Crisis Response Intervention Support Program (CRISP) Victim Advocate assigned to support staff that have been assaulted while on duty. What I didn't know a year ago was that I have rights afforded to me as a crime victim and that there is a compensation program that can help me, resources for counseling, and the assurance that I can continue to resolve my physical ailments by reaching out to workers' compensation again.

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I am beginning my road to recovery with the support of a staff victim advocate who first taught me relaxation breathing. I have applied for CVC, learned about the investigative process, self-advocated, and received a call from an Office of the Inspector General (OIG) investigator about my case. I was referred to a center that is providing therapy at no cost and I have reopened my workers' compensation claim to see a specialist. No one deserves to be assaulted at work or suffer long term. I now know that I can heal but I will always carry the pain of that day."

-TDCJ Correctional Officer

The TDCJ, with its 16 divisions, is not an agency that keeps regular business hours. It is a 24-hour intense work environment. For many staff, returning to work after victimization is difficult. The impact of traumatic events on staff mentally, physically, and emotionally come with a high price tag as members struggle to return to work or cope with the impact at home.

The urgency to figure out how to best support staff who experience victimization while on duty became a cornerstone of building staff victim advocacy within TDCJ. It was the leadership of the VSD, with extensive support from TDCJ Executive Director, Bryan Collier, and the entire executive leadership team, who championed for those voices needing to be heard and, in their quest, were able to develop and implement staff victim advocate positions through grant funding. The staff victim advocate positions are embedded within the Employee Support Services (ESS) section of the VSD and work hand in hand with the ESS Regional CRISP Coordinators responding to the needs of those victimized while on duty or impacted by a critical event, like an inmate suicide.

These staff victim advocates don't work alone. The new initiative created the perfect opportunity for a partnership between the TDCJ, the OIG, and the ESS Victim Advocates. Since its implementation in May 2023, the alliance between OIG and the advocates has gained momentum, reflected by the sheer number of cases referred for assistance. The advocates have even been able to provide assistance retroactively to staff members who were previously victimized, have learned about this new initiative, and are now requesting help.

The three advocate positions are specifically earmarked to assist staff who are victimized while performing their duties, provide peer support, help staff in understanding their rights as a crime victim, assist with applying for CVC, and provide accompaniment through the justice process if the case goes to prosecution. The advocates help to research and link victims to resources in the community if the staff requires more long-term support for their recovery and healing process. The role of the victim advocate is to ensure TDCJ staff are afforded the same support and victims' rights as a

person in the community who is victimized. We are working to remove the stigma of appearing weak when reaching out for help, especially after victimization, within TDCJ agency culture. This is something that the ESS team is working hard to change. The impact of trauma and victimization often goes unheard and leaves the victim to struggle in their own silence. The victim advocates approach staff with kindness, empathy, care, and knowledge to help sift through the emotional fallout of trauma and victimization.

The TDCJ has found a way to fundamentally invest in and support the wellness of staff who experience victimization at work. The victim advocates provide a safe, judgement free, space for staff to unpack the unprocessed or stuck emotions of their experience. They listen, console, embrace, lift-up, and provide solid ground for staff to begin to rebuild. Mostly, these advocates give support to those who courageously and without question ensure public safety both inside and outside the walls of TDCJ, thereby ensuring communities across the state of Texas rest peacefully at night.

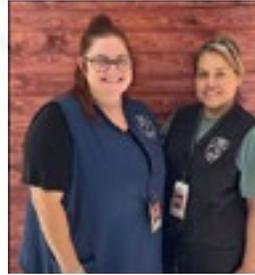
"Before taking on the role of a victim advocate for the VSD, it hadn't crossed my mind that agency staff put themselves in danger every day to keep the public safe while inmates serve their sentences and parolees complete their supervision. For many staff this means returning to work the same week, sometimes even the same day, that they were victimized. The mental and emotional toll this can take on a staff is something to be taken very seriously.

I quickly learned in my role as an advocate that I needed to educate and support staff and to show them TDCJ does care. As part of that education, I also link them to other members of my team, an ESS CRISP Coordinator, who they can speak to confidentially about personal or work-related stressors, if additional peer support is needed.

I found when speaking with staff, specifically correctional officers, many say that chunking, dashing, and being spit on (these are terms for assaulting staff with bodily fluids) are just part of the job. They knew the risks of the job when they signed up and understand they can be assaulted on any given day. However, it is part of my job to remind those same staff that while it is okay to understand those instances may happen, it is not okay to normalize it as being a part of their job. Yes, they work inside of a prison, nonetheless they are afforded the same rights as victims who do not work for TDCJ.

It is our goal as victim advocates to be with a staff member from the moment they are victimized, throughout the investigation and the justice process, if the case goes to prosecution. The staff I have provided outreach to in the last six months have been very welcoming of the support. They are often doing well but state the phone call to check on them has been very meaningful."

-CRISP Victim Advocate



Photos of the ESS team



Staff Wellness Resource Library

By Kayla Smart, Training and Development Specialist IV, Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse

While stress and trauma can be an inherent part of the job, you are not alone in navigating your experiences. In addition to victim assistance from the CRISP Victim Advocates and TDCJ Victim Services Division, the Staff Wellness Resource Library provides links to helpful tools and information for TDCJ staff regarding wellness and resiliency. Our goal is to connect you to information that may be helpful for you in your work and personal life. By equipping yourself with skills and knowledge for managing the stress of the job, it will help you maintain your quality of life off-duty. The Staff Wellness Resource Library is accessible through the Integrated Victim Services System (IVSS), under the Resources tab, but you may also click the following link or scan the QR code below: <https://ivss.tdcj.texas.gov/staff-wellness-resources/>



IVSS Links Library and Resource Directory

The TDCJ VSD maintains a Links Library on the IVSS website to provide links to helpful tools, information, brochures, and help lines for victims of crime covering topics ranging from Crime Victims' Compensation and safety planning to suicide and self-harm prevention. The Links Library is accessible through the IVSS portal under the Resources tab, but you may click the following link as well: <https://ivss.tdcj.texas.gov/links-library/>



The Texas Victim Resource Directory is also located on the IVSS portal at <https://ivss.tdcj.texas.gov/resource-search/>. This directory features a searchable database with over 1,100 service providers from governmental agencies and non-profit organizations that provide services to victims free of charge.



New VSD Position: Domestic Violence Services Coordinator

By: *Yesenia Bravo-Vazquez, Domestic Violence Services Coordinator*
TDCJ Victim Services Division

The Domestic Violence Services Coordinator (DVSC) position was established in April 2022 through grant funding. The purpose of the position is to provide enhanced support and assistance to victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking who have an offender currently incarcerated in the TDCJ Correctional Institutions Division (CID) or under supervision of the TDCJ Parole Division for an offense that may or may not be related to domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking. This outreach is intended to help ensure that these victims are afforded their rights and access to services.

Domestic violence victims remain at risk when their offender is incarcerated, as the perpetrator may continue their power and control behaviors from prison. Victims in these circumstances may need additional assistance in exercising their rights as crime victims. This could include providing information to the Board of Pardons and Paroles, reporting unwanted contact to the OIG, and developing safety plans when the offender is preparing to re-integrate into society.

With assistance from the TDCJ Research and Development Department, we have determined that approximately half of the newly convicted inmates TDCJ receives from county jails each month have a previous felony domestic violence conviction. Additionally, only a small percentage of these inmates have registered victims. Our goal is to bridge this gap and reach out to the victims of these offenses to ensure they are aware of their rights, including but not limited to: registering for and receiving notification through IVSS, assistance with CVC, in-depth safety planning, submitting protest materials, and being informed of additional post-conviction rights and the services available.

To assist with developing this DVSC position, we have received input from several non-profits, including the National Domestic Violence Hotline, Texas Council on Family Violence (TCFV), Texas Advocacy Project (TAP), SAFE (Stop Abuse For Everyone), and Hope Alliance (Williamson County Resource Center), as well as the Travis County District Attorney's Office-Special Victims Unit.

The DVSC identifies newly received offenders with domestic violence histories, regardless of the offense they are currently

servicing time for. The previous offenses screened for include kidnapping, unlawful restraint, sexual assault, aggravated assault, stalking, assaulting a family member, sexual coercion, violation of a protective order, and burglary of habitation with intent to commit other felony. After the offenders have been identified, the DVSC checks the TDCJ VSD IVSS for the victims of the offenses. If they are not already registered on IVSS, further research is conducted to locate victim contact information by reaching out to the Victim Assistance Coordinator or Crime Victim Liaison that may have worked with the victim in the past. When contact information is located, the DVSC will reach out to the victim to offer support, information, services, and referrals.

Unfortunately, many offenders who have been convicted of domestic violence often have short sentences ranging from two to five years. It is not uncommon for a recently convicted offender to begin the parole review process upon transfer to TDCJ from the county jail. This makes safety planning with those victims a special priority. The DVSC will also pay particular attention to any ongoing domestic violence that may be perpetrated from inside the correctional facilities to ensure that the victim has the necessary support, knowledge, and resources that they may need.

If you or a loved one has experienced domestic violence due to the actions of an offender incarcerated within the TDCJ CID, you may contact the TDCJ VSD or the DVSC to receive information regarding your right to receive information and notification regarding this offender, as well as safety planning, and assistance locating community resources.



Yesenia Bravo-Vasquez, Domestic Violence Services Coordinator
Office: 512-465-5179
VSD Hotline: 1-800-848-4284

Training Opportunities

The TxCVC provides training statewide for our partners in the criminal justice and victim assistance fields.

Texas Victim Assistance Training Online

The Texas Victim Assistance Training (TVAT) Online is designed to provide a foundational-level training for new victim services professionals who routinely work with victims of crime. Topics include: crime victims' rights, ethics in victim services, stress management, compassion fatigue, crime victims' assistance standards, effective communication skills for working with victims of crime, and guiding principles and practices of the victim services field. For more information, please visit the TVAT Online web page https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/divisions/vs/tvat_online.html.

Resiliency Module

Working as a victim service professional can be incredibly fulfilling and rewarding. However, assisting people who have endured horrible criminal acts and continued exposure to all the malicious things people do to each other can lead to burnout. Information, preparation, and positive self-care practices can help victim service professionals moderate any adverse effects they may experience. The TVAT Online Resiliency Module explores strategies that can help you recognize, reduce, and transform those effects that may come from working with people who have suffered extreme trauma, grief, and loss. This module teaches coping practices, skills, and techniques that can help you build a resiliency program and prevent or mitigate vicarious trauma. To register for the Resiliency module please go to [TVAT Online Resiliency Module](#) event registration page.

Webinars

The TxCVC hosts a webinar series designed to provide training on a wide range of topics for criminal justice and victim services professionals. Information regarding webinars and other victim services related trainings and events scheduled in Texas are provided through the search tool found here <https://ivss.tdcj.texas.gov/search-training-event/>. The database includes trainings, conferences, memorial/remembrance events, webinar recordings, and other relevant events hosted in the state of Texas.

To keep abreast on all upcoming TxCVC webinars, please refer to the Upcoming Webinars page on the TDCJ VSD website: <https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/divisions/vs/webinars.html>

If you would like to share ideas for future webinars or would be interested in presenting in our webinar series, please email the Clearinghouse with your contact information at tdcj.clearinghouse@tdcj.texas.gov

Other Trainings Available

The TxCVC can provide training to your agency or coalition. Training content and topics can be developed and integrated to meet your specific training needs and can vary in length. The TxCVC is committed to providing training to meet the individualized needs of communities working to enhance services provided to victims. Trainings provided by TxCVC staff are free of charge. If you would like the TxCVC to present a training event for your organization, please go to the Event/ Training Request page found here <https://ivss.tdcj.texas.gov/training-request/>.

Victim Impact Panel

The TDCJ VSD facilitates victim impact panels for criminal justice and victim services agencies and organizations. The attendees of the panels are usually either groups of criminal justice/victim services professionals or groups of offenders. Panelists are typically victims of crime who are also TDCJ volunteers. Volunteer panelists can indicate if they prefer to speak at panels with only criminal justice and victim services professionals, panels with only offenders, or both. Anyone interested in serving as a panelist may contact the VSD office at (800) 848-4284 and ask to speak with the Victim Offender Mediation Dialogue Administrative Assistant. Crime victims who wish to volunteer as panelists will need to apply to be a TDCJ approved volunteer. For more information, please visit https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/faq/victim_impact_panel.html.

National Victim Awareness Dates

December 2023

National Impaired Driving Prevention Month

The holidays can be a dangerous time on the road. The holiday season has a higher crash rate on average than any other time of the year and victim services agencies like Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) are making the effort to provide support and assistance to victims and survivors who continue to feel the impact after a major crash. Please visit: <https://madd.org/>

January 2024

National Human Trafficking Prevention Month

Every year since 2010, the President has dedicated the month of January to raising awareness about human trafficking and to educate the public about how to identify and prevent this crime. The U.S. Department of State raises awareness of human trafficking domestically and abroad through U.S. embassies and consulates. During this month, the efforts of national, state, and local entities are celebrated and the following link shares ways that we can all do our part to help fight human trafficking: <https://www.state.gov/20-ways-you-can-help-fight-human-trafficking/>

National Stalking Awareness Month

January is recognized as National Stalking Awareness Month (NSAM) and was created to increase the public's understanding of the crime of stalking. 2024 marks the 20-year anniversary of the NSAM's creation as a result of the 2003 murder of Peggy Klinke, sister of activist and NSAM founder Debbie Riddle. The Stalking Prevention Awareness Resource Center (SPARC) provides resources and referrals to victim assistance for victims experiencing stalking as well as training to victim service professionals. Please visit: <https://www.stalkingawareness.org/>

February 2024

Identity Theft Awareness Week

Identity Theft Awareness Week is January 29 through February 2, 2024. The week serves as an opportunity for the public to educate themselves on how to protect their information if it has ever been compromised. For information on how to protect the personal information of yourself and others around you, please visit: <https://consumer.ftc.gov/identity-theft-and-online-security/identity-theft>

National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month

Dating violence is more common than you may think, especially amongst teens and young adults. One in three U.S. teens will experience physical, sexual, or emotional abuse from someone they are in a relationship with before becoming an adult. Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month (TDVAM) focuses on advocacy and education to stop dating abuse before it starts. For more information, please visit: <https://www.loveisrespect.org/get-involved/tdvam/>

Information About *The Victim's Informer*

The Victim's Informer e-newsletter is published quarterly. Articles and other submissions should be emailed to tdcj.clearinghouse@tdcj.texas.gov. If you would like to submit materials or events, please email the TxCVC or call us at 512-406-5931.

Please Note: You may access the publication on the TDCJ VSD website by going to https://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 a link to *The Victim's Informer*.

Subscribe/Unsubscribe/Update your email address here: <https://ivss.tdcj.texas.gov>.

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