



Office of the Texas Governor Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force

Greetings all and welcome to the March issue of the Governor's Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force (SASTF) newsletter!

We are thrilled to embark on our 5th year as the SASTF and remain grateful to all of our Task Force and working group members for your continued efforts to transform Texas' response to sexual violence.

In this issue of our newsletter, we are highlighting resources for survivors of sexual assault and professionals responding to sexual assault. As part of our legislative mandate, the SASTF was directed to make information about services and resources for sexual assault survivors available to the public and to provide law enforcement agencies and prosecutors with information and resources to maximize effective and empathetic investigations and prosecutions. The SASTF successfully launched the Resources for Sexual Assault Survivors online directory in 2022 and compiled some additional resources for survivors and professionals included in this issue.

In addition to the resources featured below, we spotlight a community event organized by Survivor Leader, Marcus Reese, which is the **2nd Annual Break the Silence Fun Run**. This event will raise awareness of child sexual abuse and teen dating violence, as well as provide education and resource networking. We also highlight sexual assault cold cases in Texas that have recently been solved with advanced DNA technology and include information about two Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI) Grantees that utilize Forensic Genetic Genealogy in their work.

Finally, this issue includes a list of upcoming training opportunities including the SASTF's first webinar, **SARTs in Texas: What We Have Learned and What's Next**. We hope you can join the webinar!

Sincerely,

SASTF

Survivor Resources

Resources for Sexual Assault Survivors Online Directory

The Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force has assembled a [searchable on-line directory](#) containing up-to-date information about resources for survivors.

This service provider directory is searchable by organization name, services, and city. Search results may include local and statewide service providers. If you are unsure about which services are included under each category, please visit the [Service Definitions](#) page.

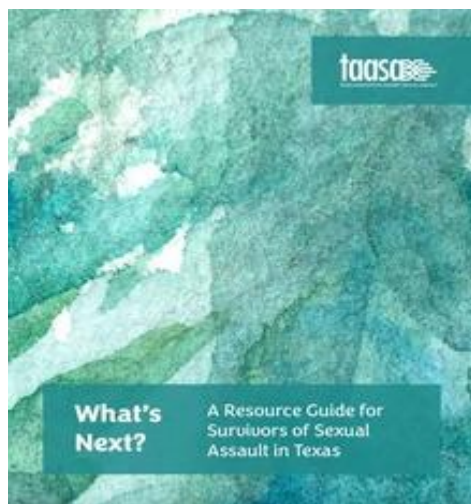


SASTF Adult Survivor Rights Guide

The Adult Survivor Rights Guide was written by and for adult survivors of sexual assault in Texas. Its purpose is to empower survivors by providing them with an accessible overview of their rights, informing them about the systems designed to serve them, and promoting access to appropriate and timely care. Please visit the [Resources for Survivors](#) page to view the guide in additional languages.

[English Version](#)

[Spanish Version](#)



A Resource Guide for Survivors of Sexual Assault in Texas: Texas Association Against Sexual Assault

Facing the aftermath of sexual assault can feel overwhelming and isolating. This resource guide, created by survivors and advocates, offers compassionate support and practical information to help you navigate your healing journey.

[English Version](#)

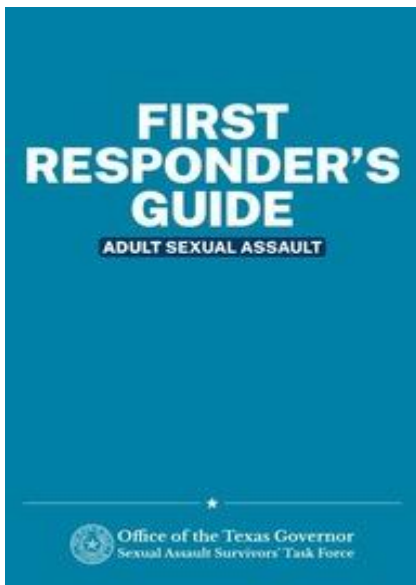
[Spanish Version](#)



Health and Human Services Commission Information Sheets for Sexual Assault Survivors

The Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) has updated their Information Sheets for Survivors of Sexual Assault. For more information and to view the updated documents, please visit the [HHSC website](#).

Resources for Professionals



SASTF First Responder's Adult Sexual Assault Guide

The [First Responder's Adult Sexual Assault Guide](#) provides best practices for initial interactions with an **adult** sexual assault survivor through a trauma-informed, victim/survivor-centered, and offender-focused response. The guide was developed through a multidisciplinary, collaborative approach and is available for download in pdf format and as a pocket information guide for law enforcement officers.

SASTF Resources for Prosecutors

In an effort to bring awareness to best practices, better equip Texas prosecutors, improve trial outcomes, and ultimately, encourage a more trauma-informed and survivor-centered court system in Texas, the SASTF compiled a list of resources and training opportunities for prosecutors. For more information and to view these resources, please visit the [SASTF website](#).

Community Spotlight - Break the Silence



By **Marcus Reese**, Taylor Area Tennis Association

About 35 miles northeast of Austin is the City of Taylor, Texas. Recent buzz revolves around the Samsung semiconductor plant being built here but there is another buzz-worthy event worth mentioning: The [2nd Annual Break the Silence Fun Run](#).

This year we collaborated with Impact Counseling Services, Taylor Independent School District, and the Williamson County Children's Advocacy Center. As we finish preparations, we are constantly reminded of the lasting impact the first event had. When we plan this event, every part of it is centered from a survivor's standpoint. We are aware that some in attendance are child and adult victims that have not yet outcried. We want the event to be warm and inviting for all. What makes this event truly unique is the fact that it's more than just a fun run to raise awareness, we also provide education and resource networking. Just like last year, we will have community resources and agencies on site to highlight their services and share how their work directly impacts survivors. For our youngest participants, there will be a kid zone with fun activities and education provided by the Williamson County Children's Advocacy Center. This year, we added a breakout session focused on teen dating violence. One of the things I'm most excited about this event is a portion that is dedicated to showing a pathway to breaking the silence. We will bring in some of the people who helped me navigate my own story. We will put faces to these agencies, law enforcement, and advocates who help victims on their journey to justice and healing.

Silence can crush a soul. As a survivor who was silenced for more than twenty years, I wish I had an event like this back then. Not every silence is golden. Sometimes silence can be a prison.

Let's break the Silence.

2nd Annual Break the Silence Fun Run

When: April 13, 2024, from 8:00am - 12:00pm

Where: Murphy Park (1600 Veterans Drive, Taylor, TX 76574)

[Register for this Event](#)

Using Advanced DNA Technology to Solve Sexual Assault Cold Cases

With Texas' new statutory requirements for the handling of Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) database matches and the increased utilization of Forensic Genetic Genealogy (FGG), more serial sexual offenders are being identified and sexual assault cold cases are being solved. Survivors who have waited years, some even decades, are finally able to seek justice and have their offender identified and held accountable.

- **CODIS** is the computer software program that operates local, state, and national databases of DNA profiles from convicted offenders, unsolved crime scene evidence, and missing persons.
- **FGG** is an investigative technique that combines traditional genealogy research with DNA analysis utilized when a CODIS search does not yield probative matches.
- **House Bill 4628** (88R) - Requires crime labs to inform law enforcement agencies of DNA matches in the CODIS database, and mandates law enforcement to respond and attempt to collect and return to the lab DNA samples from identified suspects within 30 days of a match in order to advance sexual assault criminal investigations.
- **House Bill 3956** (88R) - Requires law enforcement agencies booking defendants who are arrested for felony offenses to collect DNA samples from those defendants to be entered into the CODIS database.

University of North Texas Health Science Center - Center for Human Identification's Forensic Genetic Genealogy Unit

The Center for Human Identification (CHI) on the campus of the University of North Texas Health Science Center at Fort Worth has implemented a Forensic Genetic Genealogy (FGG) unit as part of its normal casework operations. The laboratory has become the first publicly accredited crime laboratory in the U.S. to conduct FGG testing. CHI offers this technology to hundreds of law enforcement agencies across Texas at no cost, and to assist partners in the resolution of thousands of cases that have gone without answers for far too long.

Contact Information:

Dr. Michael Coble
Executive Director of the Center for Human Identification
University of North Texas Health Science Center
(817) 735-0228
www.untchi.org
michael.coble@unthsc.edu

Texas Department of Public Safety Sexual Assault Kit Initiative

The Texas Department of Public Safety's (DPS) Texas Rangers use SAKI funds to resume investigative efforts on cold cases by performing CODIS Familial Searches and outsourcing Forensic Genetic Genealogy testing of DNA samples from unknown offenders linked to sexual assaults and sexually related homicides. The Texas Rangers use the information obtained from the tests to investigate cold cases and to partner with external law enforcement agencies and prosecutors to bring these violent offenders to justice. Texas DPS' goal is to identify, arrest, and bring to justice, individuals whose DNA produces a match to cold case sexual assaults and homicides. Click [here](#) to learn more about DPS's SAKI Grant.

Contact Information:

Lawfully Owned DNA Collection
Orlando C. Salinas, MBA, MHA
SAKI Program DNA Collection Coordinator
Texas Rangers - HQ
Texas Department of Public Safety
(512) 424-7303
orlando.salinas2@dps.texas.gov

Cold Case Investigation and Prosecution
Trampas Gooding, Staff Lieutenant
SAKI Cold Case Investigation & Prosecution Coordinator
Texas Rangers - HQ
Texas Department of Public Safety
(210) 289-0780
trampas.gooding@dps.texas.gov

Below are links to recent sexual assault cases that have been solved through the collaborative use of Forensic Genetic Genealogy and CODIS database hits:

- [Advanced DNA Technology Helps Solve 2004 Cold Case](#)
- ['Same eyes, same monster' | How Genealogy DNA helped crack a 38-year-old, unsolved Dallas cold case](#)
- [Man sentenced after admitting to multiple North Texas sex assaults](#)

SASTF Webinar Series

The Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force is excited to announce our new Quarterly Webinar Series! Each quarter, we will partner with different stakeholders and organizations around the state to help continue to build a survivor-centered, trauma-informed, collaborative, and coordinated response to sexual violence experienced by adults and children in Texas. Please join us for our inaugural webinar in April, "SARTS in Texas: What We Have Learned and What's Next!"

SASTF Webinar: SARTs in Texas: What We Have Learned and What's Next

April 25, 2024, from 12:00 p.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Join the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault's CEO Rose Luna and SART Project Coordinator Deepika Modal for a discussion on the formation and implementation of SARTs across the state of Texas due to the passing of SB 476 in 2021. As new SARTs find their rhythm and functioning and examine their frameworks, Rose and Deepika will dive into the findings from the first statewide SART biennial reports while sharing how the coming together of SARTs can result in better community care and support for sexual assault survivors.

[Register for this Webinar](#)

Training Opportunities

End Violence Against Women International (EVAWI) International Conference on Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, and the Cycle of Justice

End Violence Against Women International

April 1-3, 2024, in San Diego, California

Join law enforcement, prosecutors, advocates, health care providers, judges, faith leaders, educators, researchers, and others for this intensive 3-day conference highlighting promising practices and emerging issues to effectively respond to gender-based crimes.

**Fee Required*

[Register for this Conference](#)

19th Annual Conference on Crimes Against Women

Conference on Crimes Against Women

May 20-23, 2024, in Dallas, Texas

Conference on Crimes Against Women (CCAW) is an annual in-person conference that convenes the leading experts from across the country to educate and train first responders and community stakeholders on best practices regarding the identification, investigation, and prosecution of crimes against women. Offering more than 200 workshops, case studies and hands-on computer labs, CCAW creates an interactive learning experience for professionals to help them best serve women in need of their support.

**Fee Required*

[Register for this Conference](#)

Texas Department of Public Safety IPC Training Course

IPC is designed to make patrol officers aware of the variety of resources available to assist them in establishing the status of a child who may be missing, exploited, or at risk of exploitation and what courses of action are immediately available.

IPC courses are open to law enforcement, first responders, prosecutors, child advocacy centers, victim services, other related NGOs, and fusion centers.

- April 23-24, 2024: Longview, Texas
- April 23-24, 2024: Lewisville, Texas
- May 7-8, 2024: Liberty, Texas
- June 3-4, 2024: Austin, Texas
- June 5-6, 2024: Early, Texas

[Register for these Trainings](#)

