



Office of the Texas Governor Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force

Greetings to all from the SASTF team in the Governor's Public Safety Office!

We are delighted to bring you our September Newsletter, featuring the latest news and updates from the Governor's Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force. In this edition, we introduce two of our newest Task Force members and update you on TAASA's new Survivor Advocate and Community Organizer, who will be working closely with the SASTF. We also spotlight Task Force member Tracy Matheson, the founder of non-profit organization Project Beloved: The Molly Jane Mission, and Task Force contributor Brad Watson, survivor, advocate, and author of *Prey*. Finally, we provide links to new sexual assault-related research and articles, and implementation guidance for pertinent legislation passed during the 87th Session.

Our thanks to everyone who contributed to this month's newsletter, and our gratitude to all of you for your service to child and adult survivors of sexual violence across our state.

New Task Force Members



Detective Kamesha Baker

Special Investigations Command | Special Victim's Division
Houston Police Department

Detective Kamesha D. Baker is currently a Detective with the Houston Police Department, Special Victim's Division, Adult Sex Crimes Unit. Det. Baker is a unit trainer, and has become an instructor for sexual assault trainings at the Houston Police Academy. Det. Baker is currently pursuing her Doctorate in Criminal Justice with plans to write her dissertation on the impact and influence of a victim-centered approach by law enforcement and prosecutors on case solvency and prosecution of sexual assault cases.

Megan Bermea

Interim Director for the Office of Family Services
Health and Human Services Commission



Megan Bermea currently serves as the Interim Director for the Office of Family Services at Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) in Austin, Texas. She is the state administrator of the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act Federal grant. Ms. Bermea oversees the Family Violence Program, Child Advocacy Program, and Human Trafficking Resource Center and will be representing HHSC on the Task Force.

Implementation Guidance for Recently Passed Legislation

House Bill 2462 and House Bill 2706: Law Enforcement Request for Sexual Assault Exam, Reimbursement for Sexual Assault Exam and Related Medical Care

HB 2462 and HB 2706 made changes regarding sexual assault exams and the reimbursement process that impact medical professionals and law enforcement agencies. **These changes are effective September 1, 2021.**

HB 2462 amended the Code of Criminal Procedure and the provisions for law enforcement requests for sexual assault exams. The OAG revised the *Law Enforcement Request for Sexual Assault Exam* form to include the new request/decline provisions. A copy of the revised form is available [here](#). The new version will be added to the OAG website and distributed statewide.

HB 2706 amended the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Health and Safety Code to expand eligibility for emergency medical care reimbursements to SAFE Programs. Additional information about the reimbursement process is attached to this email, will be added to the OAG website, and will be distributed statewide.

Please email sapcs@oag.texas.gov if you have any questions about HB 2462 or HB 2706. You can also monitor the OAG [website](#) for implementation updates, including information on proposed administrative rules and reimbursement rates.

House Bill 2462: Forensic Medical Exams for Children

[HB 2462](#) increases access to non-acute forensic medical exams for children who report abuse outside of 120 hours and shifts discretion on forensic medical exams to the survivor, the parent/guardian, and the SANE or medical professional performing the exam.

The Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas (CACTX) has provided the following tips for implementation of this new provision:

- **Conduct open and clear communication with your MDT partners**, particularly your law enforcement partners and SANEs/medical professionals who provide forensic medical evaluation services for your CAC.
- **Convene your MDT** to discuss implementation of HB 2462. This can be achieved through targeted communication with relevant MDT partners, discussion at your next case review meeting or facilitating an MDT meeting for the specific purpose of discussing the impact of this bill.
- **Encourage medical and law enforcement partners** to have conversations with their respective teams and colleagues regarding the relevant changes in HB 2462.
- **Be mindful of partnerships** when discussing HB 2462. Reiterate that the intent of the bill was to increase access to non-acute exams for child survivors of sexual assault.
- **Ensure your CAC's protocols align with HB 2462, are reflective of agreed-upon practices**, and are fully re-executed by leadership of all MDT partner agencies. We strongly recommend that MDTs use the [Medical Evaluation Guidelines](#) to inform their team's local practices and protocols. These guidelines represent best practices in determining which children should be referred for a forensic medical evaluation.

Note: The CACTX implementation guidance provided above is specific to the portion of the bill related to law enforcement's request for non-acute exams for children. More information is available via the podcast link below, as well as in the [CACTX Implementation Guide](#). If you have any questions about implementation or any of the information provided here, do not hesitate to contact Justin Wood directly at jwood@cactx.org.

Task Force Member Spotlight: Tracy Matheson



(Tracy and Molly Matheson)

Tracy Matheson of Fort Worth, Texas is the president and founder of Project Beloved and an active member of the Governor’s Sexual Assault Survivors’ Task Force. She is married to the love of her life and parent to four amazing children, three sons and a daughter, Molly Jane. Tracy enjoyed an especially close relationship with Molly and considered her a best friend and frequently referred to Molly as her “right hand.” Molly was light on the darkest of days, and she had a sense of humor that could make the coldest heart laugh. She was a friend to all and went out of her way to connect with others, especially those who needed it most. When Molly was 22 years old she was raped and murdered, and she is the inspiration for the founding of [Project Beloved: The Molly Jane Mission](#). In the wake of this unspeakable tragedy, Tracy was inspired to find a way to bring light to the heavy darkness. She was determined to find a way to make Molly's story matter and drive meaningful change in the survivorship community. Tracy has devoted the rest of her life to finding ways we can do better on behalf of those who experience sexual violence.

Project Beloved: The Molly Jane Mission is a non-profit organization, and its mission is to “Educate, advocate, and collaborate to change the conversation about sexual assault and empower survivors to find their voices.” Project Beloved has three areas of focus:

- Provide **Beloved Bundles** to survivors who visit the hospital for a forensic exam and have their belongings taken into evidence. Beloved Bundles include toiletry items to take a shower and brush teeth, fresh clothing, and other items so that survivors can leave the hospital with dignity and know that someone cares. To date, Project Beloved has donated almost 8000 Beloved Bundles across the United States.
- Install **Soft Interview Rooms** at law enforcement agencies and rape crisis centers, which are an integral component of Trauma Informed Care (TIC). The room is a multi-person seating space that looks like it belongs in a living room. However, it’s not just a pretty room! The rooms create a more comfortable environment allowing the survivor to feel physically and emotionally safe, minimize the potential for re-traumatization, and can have a significant impact on the interview process. In 2019 and 2020, 23 rooms were installed across the country. Project Beloved is slated to install one room a month in 2021.
- Partner with the University of Arkansas to establish the **Molly Jane Matheson Memorial Scholarship** in Social Work. Molly planned to be a social worker and hoped to work with troubled youth. The Scholarship is awarded to two students on an annual basis in the amount of \$2200 each in honor of Molly’s 22 years of life. 4 Scholarships have been awarded.

On September 1, 2019, Molly Jane’s Law ([HB 3106](#) – 86th Legislative Session) became law in the state of Texas. Molly Jane’s Law states that when law enforcement in the state of Texas investigates a case of sexual assault, they shall use ViCAP (Violent Criminal Apprehension Program) to input information about the reported offender and nature/details of the offense. Molly Jane’s Law allows law enforcement agencies in Texas to communicate with one another through the use of ViCAP, which is administered by the FBI. ViCAP was created to help identify serial murderers and rapists. It has been in use since the mid-1980s and is available in all 50 states. When law enforcement utilizes ViCAP, the ability for them to connect dots between offenses across Texas and maybe even other states will become an easier process. Molly Jane’s Law facilitates the identification of patterns of offense so that law enforcement can act decisively before an offender commits another rape or their pattern escalates.

“We got Molly Jane’s Law Passed in Texas. It helps us identify serial rapists and get them off of the street. Additionally, it makes me really proud when I hear from law enforcement or a SANE department and they’re asking to get a soft interview room or bundles. This means people are talking about Project Beloved and our services. People realize the value that we provide.” – Tracy Matheson

Most recently, Tracy Matheson received the GOTU (Get on the Up) 2021 Crucial Point Award in tribute to her tremendous activism in the space of providing survivor after care resources. [GOTU](#) (formerly known as THE U.P.) was founded in 2020 as an on-line community for survivors, survivor-supporters, and advocates by a sexual assault survivor who experienced the lack of readily available support resources and the impact it had on her wellness. GOTU was developed to help reduce feelings of isolation and shame by providing a community of empathetic resources for survivors who want to connect, be empowered and improve personal wellness.



Task Force Members in the Field

SASTF Steering Committee member Justin Wood of CACTX and SASTF member Jarvis Parsons, Brazos County District Attorney, presented a well-received overview of the Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force at the 2021 Texas District and County Attorney's Association (TDCAA) Elected Prosecutor Conference in San Antonio, Texas.



(Justin Wood and District Attorney Jarvis Parsons)

Justin Wood, SASTF Steering Committee member, and Nicole Martinez, SASTF Associate Administrator, teamed up with Tracy Matheson, SASTF Member and founder of Project Beloved: The Molly Jane Mission, Commander Catherine Johnson of Austin Police Department and her amazing daughter Reid to help install a Soft Interview Room for sexual assault survivors at Brave Alliance, a local non-profit providing forensic medical exams to sexual assault survivors in Williamson County. The furniture and decoration for the Soft Interview Room were donated by Tracy's non-profit [Project Beloved: The Molly Jane Mission](#).



Hillary England, SASTF's Administrator, delivered the closing keynote presentation on day 3 of the 2021 Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) Conference - *Power of Connection: Resiliency Through Community*.

[Hillary England - TAASA Keynote Presentation](#)

Survivor Voices: Brad Watson



Brad Watson

Consultant, Author, Advocate

brad@bradwatson.com

I'm a survivor of childhood sexual abuse and an advocate for other survivors and their families. My extensive first-hand experience with childhood sexual abuse and subsequent addictions to drugs and alcohol has allowed me to act as a trusted resource and mentor for many adults struggling to cope with the lasting impacts of their trauma.

My recently released memoir, *Prey: The Secret That Almost Killed Me*, documents my journey through the grooming and abuse I experienced, as well as the confusion and anxiety associated with keeping my secret into adulthood. Sharing my story has led to an extraordinary outpouring of support. An overwhelming number of male survivors and family

members have contacted me looking for answers. This entire process has renewed my passion for speaking up and bringing awareness to this important issue.

Today, my focus is on the insufficient resources for adult male survivors and the limited understanding regarding the link between childhood trauma and the undesirable actions of those survivors. We drink. We drug. We cheat. We lie. We steal. We end up with DUIs and disorderly conduct charges on our records. We end up in jail, in treatment, and many of us end up taking our own lives. We don't wake up with these things on our "to do" list. We are usually confused and bewildered by our inability to be normal and function like typical humans in society.

My goal is to get providers and authorities to ask the question, "What happened to you?" instead of "What's wrong with you?" My ultimate ambition is to promote better services so that male survivors feel comfortable seeking the care they need. I believe that educating ourselves and others on the relationship between childhood trauma and the coping mechanisms that we develop just to survive is the key to understanding the best way to help us. It's also important for us, as survivors, to realize that we aren't inherently bad people and that the events we endured as children had a huge impact on the rest of our lives.

Resources for Male Survivors:

<https://www.bradwatson.com>

<https://1in6.org>

<https://1in6.org/get-information/bristlecone/about-bristlecone/>

<https://menhealing.org>

Books:

Prey: The Secret That Almost Killed Me

By: Brad Watson

What Happened to You? Conversations on Trauma, Resilience, and Healing

By: Dr. Bruce D. Perry and Oprah Winfrey

New SASTF Survivor Advocate and Community Organizer

We are excited to announce that Amanda Lewis of the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) has assumed the role of Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force (SASTF) Survivor Advocate and Community Organizer. Amanda will be responsible for ensuring

that proper and adequate crisis intervention and support is provided to survivors engaging with the SASTF and will assist with establishing protocols, procedures and best practices to enhance sexual assault programs, system response, and other community-based supports for survivors. Amanda will work closely with the Task Force, Steering Committee, stakeholders, and communities across Texas to adequately meet the unique needs of survivors.

Amanda Lewis is a social worker with over 12 years of community education and advocacy experience in domestic violence, child abuse, and sexual assault intervention and prevention. She believes that sustainable social change starts small, building upon close bonds within communities, and is best led by those most impacted. Along with being the SASTF Advocate and Community Organizer for the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA), she serves on the Austin Justice Coalition board of directors, is an appointee to the Austin Public Safety Commission, and is a proud mama to a Chihuahua named Anansi and various indoor plant babies.



Welcome, Amanda!

News Articles:

The University of North Carolina's [Better Tomorrow Network](#) recently published findings from a Women's Health Study which looked at the short-term and long-term impact of sexual assault on patients.

- *"I still feel so lost": Experience of Women Receiving SANE Care During the Year after Sexual Assault* - Research Article [Link](#)
- *Understanding the long-term trauma of Sexual Assault Patients* - Editorial [Link](#)

A new study by two University of Maine researchers looks at the reasons why survivors of campus sexual assault never reported.

- *"I've Never Told Anyone": A Qualitative Analysis of Interviews With College Women Who Experienced Sexual Assault and Remained Silent* - Journal Article [Link](#)

- *UMaine study explores why college women decide not to tell anyone about being sexually assaulted* - Article [Link](#)

The New York Times published an article highlighting the low prosecution rates of sexual assault cases.

- *'Nobody Believed Me': How Rape Cases Get Dropped* - Article [Link](#)

The National Public Radio (NPR) released an article about how common it is for survivors of sexual assault to experience trauma which causes gaps in their immediate recall of a violent event, and details will often return weeks or even months later.

- *How Rape Affects Memory And The Brain, And Why More Police Need To Know About This* – Article [Link](#)

Training Opportunities:

[Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas \(CACTX\) Legislative Update Webinar](#)

[Texas Association Against Sexual Assault \(TAASA\) Legislative Update Webinar](#)

[Governor's Child Sex Trafficking Team \(CSTT\) Legislative Update Webinar](#)