



Office of the Texas Governor Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force

Greetings all and welcome to the September edition of the Governor's Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force (SASTF) newsletter. In addition to our usual information on SASTF activities and upcoming trainings, we are excited to announce the creation of the SASTF's Services for Male Survivors Working Group, as well as spotlight current SASTF member, Rebecca Vieh, and local community efforts and successes of the City of Austin's Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI).

We are pleased to introduce the new Administrative Assistant, Jessica "Jess" Henderson and give special thanks to our summer intern, Hannah Tyler, and former SASTF members, Dr. Bruce Budowle and Joanna Golliday. In this issue, we also include an article about supporting survivors and a link to the Health and Human Services Commission's (HHSC) new guidance letter for freestanding emergency medical care facilities.

As we prepare for the 88th Legislative Session, we must continue to stay visionary, and solution focused to become more survivor-centered and trauma-informed. While also recognizing our work goes beyond making policy recommendations for the improvement of state laws to truly transform Texas' response to sexual violence. We must remind ourselves about the importance of being self-reflective and challenge ourselves to have courageous conversations with our co-workers, our family members, and our friends. By talking about sexual assault and bringing awareness to this issue, we will help others better understand the nuances of sexual violence and recognize the importance of working collaboratively together to support the "whole survivor."

We are so grateful for each of you and your contributions and dedication to supporting all survivors!

Nicole Martinez – SASTF Administrator

Welcome the new Administrative Assistant: Jess Henderson



Jessica “Jess” Henderson is a United States Air Force Veteran. She served from 2011-2018 as a Security Forces member. During her service she was awarded 2016 Flight Level Airman of the Year for Cape Canaveral Air Station, two Achievement Medals, the Air Force Good Conduct Medal, among many others. After her service she attended Texas Lutheran University (TLU) as a First-Generation student. She holds two Bachelor of Science degrees in Psychology and Kinesiology. During her time at TLU she was a Veteran Services Liaison, Academic Disability Assistant, and coached for the Cat Osterman Softball Academy through RBI Austin. She was also a member of The National Society for Leadership and Success (NSLS), a member of the Dean’s List, 2021 Distinguished Veteran Student Leader, and a 2022 TLU Student of the Year Nominee.

Task Force Member Spotlight: Rebecca Vieh



Rebecca Vieh
Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS)
Program Manager of the Sexual Assault
Evidence Tracking Program

Rebecca Vieh is the Sexual Assault Evidence Tracking Program Specialist for the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) Crime Laboratory. Rebecca is primarily responsible for overseeing the Texas Sexual Assault Evidence (SAE) tracking system (Track-Kit). She also supports the Non-Reported Sexual Assault Evidence Program and other sexual assault kit initiatives in the DPS lab system. She has been employed by the DPS since 2006 and with the Crime Laboratory since 2009. From 2009-2017, Rebecca served as the CODIS Interagency Liaison providing training to criminal justice agencies while promoting the Texas CODIS Program. In this role, Rebecca reviewed procedures and training methods and provided recommendations for program improvement. Rebecca is a graduate of Sam Houston State University, earning both Bachelor and Master of Science degrees in Criminal Justice.

Rebecca is honored to serve on the Governor's Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force with subject matter experts and survivors dedicated to improving Texas' response to sexual assault. The commitment of her fellow task force members inspires her to continue to approach all aspects of her work with a survivor-centered, trauma-informed lens. She also represents the DPS on the Texas Evidence Collection Protocol Advisory Board.

Community Efforts & Success

The City of Austin's Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (COA SAKI) grant is part of a national movement to address the backlog of previously unsubmitted sexual assault forensic examination kits. Funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, this initiative also seeks to create a more coordinated approach to sexual assault response among service providers and the communities they serve. With this mission in mind, the COA SAKI program began a formal collaboration with the Office of the Governor's Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force (SASTF) in 2021. The partnership outlined four areas of improvement: victim notification, community outreach, data sharing, internal policies, practices, and clinical responses.

As part of the COA SAKI program, staff and local stakeholders drafted the "City of Austin's Police Department Survivor Notification Protocol" (SNP) in 2020. The SNP outlines the steps to address survivor outreach for cold cases. With this protocol, Austin Police Department (APD) employees from the Victim Services Division, Sex Crimes Unit, leadership, and support roles update the case files with laboratory analysis results, review investigative

leads, and attempt to locate the survivors. Victim Services counselors partner with APD detectives and the Travis County District Attorney's Office to provide accurate information on individual cases for these notifications. After two years of applying the SNP, a formal review began to update the protocol. In addition to SASTF feedback, the review includes the Austin/Travis County Sexual Assault Response and Resource Team (A/TC SARRT) and nationally recognized research and policy organizations.

For more information on the COA SAKI program or the SNP update, please visit www.AustinSAKI.com.

SASTF Members in the Field

Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) Harold Cottle Justice Award:

SASTF Member Detective Kamesha Baker of Houston Police Department was recently awarded the Harold Cottle Justice Award at the 2022 Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) Conference. This recognition is awarded to someone who demonstrates outstanding support for victims and a willingness to educate self and colleagues within the criminal justice system about sexual assault. Det. Baker was recognized for her valor, dedication, and ongoing advocacy for survivors of sexual violence. Congratulations Det. Baker - we are so grateful for your tenacity and commitment to improving law enforcement's response to sexual assault in your community and beyond!



(left to right: Det. Kamesha Baker and Rose Luna - TAASA CEO)

SASTF Services for Male Survivors Working Group

We are excited to announce the creation of the new Services for Male Survivors Working Group. Task Force members have highlighted a need to establish a working group comprising adult male survivors of child sexual abuse, adult male survivors of sexual assault, parents/guardians of survivors of child sexual abuse, and male-specific services providers.

This working group will identify and explore the needs and/or gaps to supporting male survivors and opportunities to improve resources and services for working with male survivors.

- **Discussions:** hold focused discussions on how to create and foster a safe and supportive culture of care for male survivors of sexual victimization to disclose and seek services, including survivors from more vulnerable populations;
- **Awareness:** develop strategies to raise public awareness about the prevalence, realities, and dynamics of sexual victimization of males including how traditional norms of masculinity may impact male survivors' ability to seek help;
- **Education:** identify trainings currently available for first responders and service providers and make recommendations with the goal to improve response and enhance service provision to male survivors;
- **Healthcare:** provide recommendations for healthcare best practices and guidance to help improve male survivors' experiences when interacting with mental health professionals and medical providers, including Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs);
- **Resources:** continue to identify providers that have male-specific services available and establish best practices for use of male-specific language to be incorporated in resources and services; and
- **Funding:** determine gaps in funding for services for male survivors and discuss ways to improve financial support in these areas.

Supporting Survivors

Things I've learned working with Survivors of Sexual Assault

By: Tonia Cunningham, TAASA Survivor Advocate

In the Spring of 2022, I joined the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) to serve as the Survivor Advocate for the Governor's Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force (SASTF). Working in this field for over 20 years, I have learned so much as I walked beside survivors as they made their way through the criminal justice process. Working with the Survivor Leaders on SASTF, means my education is ongoing, which I truly appreciate.

Over the years I feel like I have learned something from every survivor I have worked with. In many of my conversations a survivor has shared something with me...a thought, a mantra, a belief, something that helps them get through the day. These "somethings" are so powerful. On many occasions I have asked permission to share their "something" with another survivor and with their permission, I have done so. This sharing of their "something" as one survivor told me helps to heal from her pain, knowing that she has been able to share "something" that has benefitted someone else.

One thing I have learned that stands out is "justice" does not look the same for everyone. We are taught in school that justice can only come from a conviction, but for many survivors a conviction never comes. I also learned justice can come from being heard and believed. It is vital to ask the survivor what justice looks like for them and how you can best support them be able to move towards a place of healing and peace.

The Survivor Leaders on SASTF choosing to put themselves out there, to share their pain, all in the hopes of creating a better response for future survivors, is awe inspiring. This group of individuals are elevating and sharing their "something" to a whole new level. Being an advocate is not just what you do, it becomes who you are. This work is a calling, it is not just a job. Working with survivors is ever humbling.

To all the survivors I have worked with, thank you. Thank you for sharing your space with me, allowing me to walk beside you, and for teaching me how best to support you. It is an honor to know you, to serve you.

Special Thanks



SASTF Summer Intern: Hannah Tyler

We would like to extend special thanks to Hannah Tyler, our Summer Intern, for her amazing work and contributions during her time working with us. Below Hannah gives us a glimpse into her experience interning for the Task Force.

My name is Hannah Tyler and this summer I had the privilege of interning with the Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force (SASTF) and the Child Sex Trafficking Team (CSTT) in the Office of the Governor. I'm originally from Houston and this fall I will be a senior at the University of Texas at Austin, where I am studying Human Development & Family Sciences, Families & Society and minoring in Social Work.

Over the course of my 10-week internship, I was provided with many opportunities to attend meetings, virtual and in-person, with remarkable people and participate in tough conversations regarding sexual assault in the state of Texas and beyond. I was assigned meaningful projects that made me feel confident that my time here was worthwhile. Furthermore, when presenting my work, I was met with enthusiasm and encouragement. As I leave this internship, I am more hopeful and fired up, as someone who is passionate about this work and as a survivor, than I was when I arrived. Interning here has been an honor and I cannot wait to see the continued impact of the SASTF in the future.

Task Force Members: Dr. Bruce Budowle and Joanna Golliday

We offer special thanks and gratitude to two SASTF members, Dr. Bruce Budowle and Joanna Golliday, who have left their roles on the Task Force due to changes in their careers.

- Bruce Budowle was an original SASTF member representing the Texas Forensic Science Commission and a member of our SASTF Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE)/Forensic Expert Working Group. Bruce will be deeply missed for his technical expertise, his humanity, his humor, and his ongoing commitment to centering survivors in all discussions related to forensic evidence collection and processing.
- Joanna Golliday joined the SASTF in July of 2020 representing the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). Joanna's commitment to centering child survivors who have experienced sexual abuse and assault, along with the impact on those children of involvement in the child welfare system, brought additional depth to our discussions about how to best serve children who have been impacted by sexual violence.

*Joanna and Bruce, we will miss you so much!
Our very best wishes to both of you on your respective new chapters.*

Health Care Regulation Guidance Letter

The Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) has released new guidance on emergency services and care for sexual assault survivors. HHSC's new guidance letter references recent legislative changes along with guidance for compliance with changes made to standards of care in previous sessions.

HHSC Health Care Regulation Guidance Letter

Training Opportunities

- Institute for Coordinated Community Response (ICCR) Rural Communities Virtual Conference
October 3 – 4, 2022 from 8:30am to 5:00pm

ICCR Rural Communities Virtual Conference

- NYC Health+Hospitals 2nd Annual Sexual Assault Regional Conference: Addressing the Medical, Legal, and Social Needs of Our Communities
October 12, 2022 from 7:30am to 2:30pm
More information can be found on the [Conference Flyer](#).

2nd Annual Sexual Assault Regional Conference

- Texas Council on Family Violence (TCFV) 2022 Conference: DV and...Exploring Intersections
October 19 – 21, 2022 from 9:00am to 1:00pm

TCFV 2022 Virtual Conference

- Interdiction for the Protection of Children (IPC) Course
Hosted by: Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS)
DPS Headquarters – Austin, Texas
October 24 – 25, 2022
More information can be found on the [Training Flyer](#).

[IPC Training Course](#)

- 2022 Texas Victim Services Association (TVSA) Victimology Research Symposium
Hilton College Station – College Station, Texas
October 27 – 28, 2022

[TVSA Victimology Research Symposium](#)