



Office of the Texas Governor Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force

March 2023 SASTF Newsletter

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

In addition to our usual information on the SASTF activities, resources, and upcoming trainings, we wanted to highlight the "whole survivor" care guiding principles. These principles will be integrated into the work of the SASTF, as we develop a statewide standard of care for survivors of sexual assault in Texas.

"Whole Survivor" Care Guiding Principles:

1. ***First, Provide What is Necessary:*** A survivor's basic needs, including food, clothing, shelter, and transportation, must be met for the survivor to begin healing.
2. ***A Broader Vision for Advocacy:*** No survivor should ever be alone when attempting to understand and navigate the systems responding to her or his sexual assault.
3. ***Trauma Matters:*** A survivor must have access to therapy to process the trauma of sexual assault.
4. ***Healing Happens in Context:*** A survivor must have access to resources to treat mental health issues, substance use and misuse issues, and any other health care-related needs.
5. ***Every Survivor is Entitled to High-Quality, Expert Medical Forensic Care:*** Medical forensic exams conducted by a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner in a SAFE-Ready Facility must be standard of care for every sexual assault survivor.
6. ***Information Matters:*** Survivors who report their assaults must have consistent access to current, reliable information from advocates, law enforcement, and prosecutors about the status of

their case. All survivors must have consistent access to information about available services for support, recovery, and healing.

7. ***Every Survivor Counts:*** Texas must work toward full access to services for survivors across all Texas communities.

We recognize the necessity of working collaboratively together to successfully support the “whole survivor” and are eager to engage with each of you as we develop Texas’ statewide standard of care for sexual assault survivors.

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 Texas.

~ SASTF Team

Community Efforts and Success: Break the Silence Project



Marcus Reese, Taylor Area Tennis Association

The SASTF's new Services for Male Survivors Working Group holds 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. During a recent working group meeting, members shared current community efforts to raise public awareness about the prevalence, realities, and dynamics of sexual victimization of males. One member, Marcus Reese, shared a community effort to help raise awareness in his hometown and we are excited to highlight these efforts and share additional resources for those interested in engaging males in combating sexual assault.



The Break the Silence Project is a family and community 3K Run/Walk festival created to raise awareness of the sexual abuse of children and provide information on where to get help and support in Taylor, Texas. This event is organized under the umbrella of the Williamson County Children's Advocacy Center and will be held on Saturday, April 15th at Murphy Park from 7am – 3pm. [Click here to register!](#)

During this transformational event, participants will have an opportunity to hear directly from Marcus, as he shares his experience as a survivor. By sharing his story, he hopes to help others feel comfortable disclosing and seeking support and services to heal.

This event will also provide information to participants regarding ways to recognize and help vulnerable children within their community.

The Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) created a Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month (SAAPM) Toolkit with a focus on the engagement of males in the prevention and awareness of sexual assault. This toolkit is designed to include ideas and activities that engage males throughout the lifespan.

For more information on engaging males see TAASA's Prevention Month Toolkit: First Class Male Cultivating Change Through Male Involvement publication.

[SAAPM Toolkit](#)

Task Force Member Spotlight: Jarvis Parsons



Jarvis
District

Parsons
Attorney

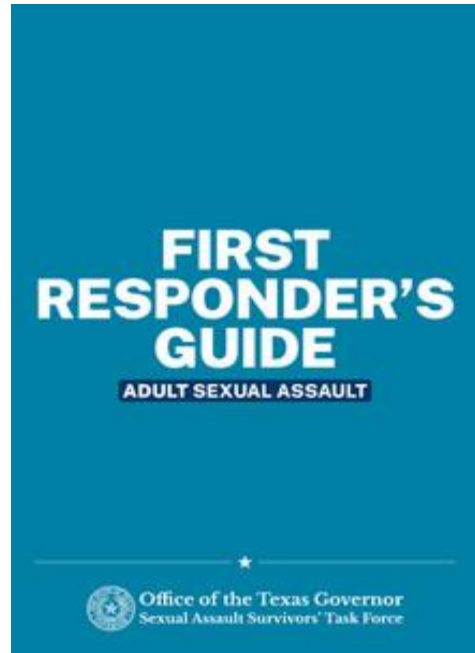
Brazos County District Attorney's Office

Jarvis Parsons is the current Brazos County District Attorney and is one of only three African American elected District Attorneys in the State of Texas. As District Attorney, Parsons created Brazos County's first ever Crimes Against Women Unit including prosecutors, investigators, and a victim assistance coordinator that reviews and prosecute domestic violence and sexual assault cases in Brazos County. Since the creation of this unit, Brazos County has increased the indictment and prosecution of sexual assault felonies by more than 1,400%. Additionally, Parsons partnered with local salons to institute the "Cut It Out" Program in the Brazos Valley, where his office trained over 200 hair stylists in recognizing the signs of domestic violence.

At the statewide level, Jarvis Parsons was appointed by Governor Greg Abbott to the Texas Forensic Science Commission, an agency that investigates allegations of professional misconduct that might affect the integrity of criminal cases. He also serves on the Executive Board of the Texas District and County Attorneys Association (TDCAA) which oversees training for over 1500 Texas prosecutors, and is the head of the TDCAA Diversity, Recruitment and Retention Committee, which focuses on encouraging young minority prosecutors to use their gifts and talents in the field of prosecution. At the local level, Parsons is a Board member of the Scotty's House Child Advocacy Center, the Sexual Assault Resource Center, and a member of the College Station Noon Lions Club.

New Resources: First Responder Guide

This recently published guide provides best practices for first responders during initial interactions with an **adult** sexual assault survivor using 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 Law Enforcement

New Task Force Members:



Honorable Mark Atkinson,
Chief Executive Officer
Texas Center for the Judiciary

Judge Mark D. Atkinson served 24 years on the Bench of a County Criminal Court at Law. After six terms of office, he retired and was named Judicial Resource Liaison under the Texas Center's Texas Department of Public Safety Traffic Safety Grant Program. He served two years in that capacity before being named CEO of the Texas Center for the Judiciary. During his years on the Bench, he served the Texas Center for the Judiciary and the judges of the state through leadership and educational roles. He served as Chair of the Texas Center for the Judiciary and the Judicial Section of the State Bar of Texas. First licensed in 1980, he practiced law for seven years before taking the bench where he developed a practice focused on criminal, family, and civil trial law. Judge Atkinson holds a BA from the University of Texas at Austin and JD from South Texas College of Law, in Houston.

Beth**Maeker**

BSN, RN, CA-CP SANE, SANE-A, SANE-P
President - Texas Chapter of the International
Association of Forensic Nursing (IAFN)

Beth Maeker is a Registered Nurse with specialized training in the assessment and treatment of patients of physical and sexual assault and abuse. Beth received her certification as a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) in March of 2013 and has since been certified by the Texas Office of the Attorney General as an Adult/Adolescent SANE and Pediatric SANE and has also received her international certification as an Adult / Adolescent SANE. Beth also works with Texas A&M Health Center of Excellence in Forensic Nursing as a Forensic Nurse Coach in their Adult Sexual Assault Simulation Lab.



Beth currently lives in Fort Worth, where she works for the Texas Health Resources as the System SANE Manager for Texas Health Southwest division. She has received extensive training in non-fatal strangulation, human trafficking and domestic violence and has conducted numerous trainings on these subjects in the West Texas area.

She has previously served as a member of the Lubbock Domestic Violence Task Group, Sex Trafficking Allied Response Team, Sexual Assault Response Team, and the Lubbock Human Rescue Coalition and as the Chairperson for the Lubbock Child Welfare Board. After serving the past 2 years as the President-Elect of the Texas IAFN Chapter, she began her term as the President in January of this year.



Leilani Valdes, MD, MBA, FCAP
President - Texas Society of Pathologists

Leilani Valdes is board certified in Anatomic, Clinical and Dermatopathology and is the Medical Director at Regional Pathology Associates and Chair of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at Citizens Medical Center in Victoria, TX. She is currently serving her first term as Governor on the board of the College of American Pathologists (CAP) and is Chair of the Council on Membership and Professional

Development. Prior to her election to the Board, Leilani served on numerous CAP committees including the chair of the Professional and Community Engagement Committee and a member of the Economic Affairs / Measure Development Committee. She is active in the Texas Society of Pathologists, currently serving as President, and represents the Victoria-Goliad-Jackson Counties at the Texas Medical Association House of Delegates.

Leilani is a graduate of the Keck School of Medicine at the University of Southern California and completed her Anatomic and Clinical Pathology training at Los Angeles County and the University of Southern California Medical Center, followed by a Dermatopathology Fellowship at Duke University Medical Center. Leilani completed an Executive MBA at the University of Texas at Austin McCombs School of Business in May of 2022, graduating as a Leadership Fellow. An active advocate for community and public health initiatives, Leilani works with local and national organizations to educate, inform, and collaborate on improving healthcare delivery.

Special Thanks

We offer special thanks and gratitude to SASTF Member Rebecca Fears, who was an original member representing the Texas Chapter of the International Association of Forensic Nursing. Rebecca's term as the President of the Texas Chapter of IAFN has come to an end and she is succeeded by Beth Maeker. Rebecca's commitment to providing high-quality medical forensic care with a trauma-informed approach has truly enhanced Texas' response to sexual assault and improved access to forensic medical exams. We are grateful for Rebecca's service on the Task Force and look forward to working together as she continues serving on various SASTF focused working groups.

Prevention Corner: Campus Accountability Map & Tool

[End Rape on Campus](#) has a new feature on their website which empowers current and prospective students, survivors, and their communities with the ability to view in-depth information on each institution's sexual assault investigation policies, prevention efforts, and available survivor support

resources, as well as high-level statistics on definitions, trainings, sanctions, and investigations. The map also allows users to compare these metrics between schools and gain a better understanding of what policies look like across the nation through a user-friendly interface.

[School Locator Tool](#)

New Staff Member: Jake Goodman

We want to express our many thanks to the new Creative Media Designer for the Public Safety Office, Jake Goodman. Jake is originally from Massachusetts but has lived in Austin since 2013. He received a Bachelor's Degree in Graphic Design from Santa Fe University of Art and Design and has been invaluable in the creation of our newly published guides and materials.

Training Opportunities:

- **End Violence Against Women International (EVAWI)
2023 Conference on Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, and
Fighting for Change**
April 11-13, 2023
Hilton Chicago - Chicago, IL

[EVAWI Conference Website](#)

- **Conference on Crimes Against Women**
 - *May 21 - **Preconference "How to Stop a Serial Killer"** (can be attended in addition to the main CCAW or on its own)*
 - May 22-25, 2023
Sheraton Dallas - Dallas, TX

[CCAW Conference Website](#)

- **Violence in Schools: Causes, Impact, and Prevention:**
A virtual webinar presented by the Crime Victims' Institute
March 29, 2023 9:30am-12:30pm CST

[Register for the CVI Webinar](#)

- **Trauma-Informed Advocacy Course (Self-Paced)**
Created in partnership with the [Justice Clearing House](#), this self-paced online course discusses the foundational topics of victim advocacy and providing trauma-informed services. Through this online course, you'll learn the fundamentals and best practices of trauma-informed advocacy and develop critical skills for being an effective victim advocate. From the neurobiology of trauma to ethical practice, and self-care, this course will give you the information you need to better communicate and succeed in this helping profession.

[Learn More](#)

- **Texas Department of Criminal Justice - Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse Webinar: Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force: Transforming Texas' Response to Sexual Violence**
Wednesday, April 19, 2023, from 9:30am – 11:00am

[Register for the Webinar](#)

- **Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) Interdiction for the Protection of Children (IPC) Course** upcoming training dates:
 - April 4-5, 2023, in Gainesville, TX.

- April 18-19, 2023, in Edinburg, TX.
- May 3-4, 2023, in Wichita Falls, TX
- June 6-7, 2023, in Brownwood, TX

For more information please contact: IPC@dps.texas.gov

If you would like to submit a training to be considered for inclusion, please email SASTF@gov.texas.gov.

SASTF Working Groups Currently Scheduled:

Focused working groups are smaller groups of SASTF members, subject-matter experts, and survivors that meet to discuss complex topics requiring specific expertise. The following focused working groups are actively meeting and concentrating their time on:

- **Campus** - Focuses on establishing best practices for responding to sexual assault on college campuses
- **Prosecutor** - Focuses on developing educational resources for improving the experiences of survivors who interact with prosecutors
- **Services for Male Survivors** - Our newest working group, which focuses on identifying opportunities to bring awareness about the prevalence, realities, and dynamics of sexual victimization among males
- **Survivor-Centered** - Comprised of subject matter experts with lived experience who help guide the work of the Task Force and establish best practices for ethical survivor engagement