



Office of the Texas Governor Sexual Assault Survivors' Task Force

Greetings All!

As we approach the end of 2022 and begin planning for 2023, we wanted to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to all Task Force members, working group members, and subject matter experts who contributed to our work over the year. We would like to especially acknowledge and thank the survivors of sexual violence, and family members of victims/survivors, who have participated in Task Force meetings, discussions, and document reviews throughout the year. Your leadership in the work is critical and we greatly appreciate your voices. As the SASTF continues to embrace survivor inclusion as a guiding principle, we remain committed to gaining a better understanding of how to thoughtfully engage survivors and remain vigilant as we honor all survivor experiences.

In this issue of our newsletter, we are pleased to introduce *new* SASTF member, Dr. Michael Coble, and spotlight *current* SASTF Member, Dr. Ralph Riviello. We also feature the ***Sexual Assault Exam and Accompaniment Guidance***, created by the Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas (CACTX) and the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA), and the ***Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) Protocol***. Finally, we highlight the work of the Texas Advocacy Project, the Texas Department of Public Safety's Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI) Project, and funding opportunities through the Office of the Governor.

SASTF Activities – 2022 Summary:

- The Task Force held over **160 meetings** focused on a variety of topics tied to mandated deliverables and targeting improvements for Texas' child and adult survivors.
- A **male survivor** was added to the Task Force to ensure a comprehensive, holistic perspective and a stronger focus on survivors' voices.
- We contracted with TAASA to hire a new **SASTF Survivor Advocate** to provide peer support and advocacy for those impacted by sexual violence.
- We created a new **Services for Male Survivors Working Group**.
- The University of Texas at Austin's Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (IDVSA) completed **[Part 2 of its research](#)** into resources available to sexual assault survivors, which included interviews with 70 survivors and family members of survivors.

- The Trauma-Informed Working Group finalized the **Trauma-Informed Rubric**, which is an assessment tool used to evaluate policies, procedures, or recommendations using a trauma-informed lens.
 - The Survivor-Centered Working Group developed a **Survivors' Rights Guide**, which includes survivor rights and a glossary of terms.
 - The Law Enforcement Working Group created a **First Responder Guide for Adult Sexual Assault**, which includes best practices for initial interactions with an adult sexual assault survivor that is trauma-informed and victim/survivor-centered.
 - The Safety Planning Working Group created a **Safety and Well-Being Planning Framework**.
 - SASTF members submitted 50 recommendations for improving the **Information Sheets for Survivors of Sexual Assault** maintained by the Health and Human Services Commission.
 - Key SASTF members developed an **Emergency Preparedness Plan for Reduced Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kit Stock**.
 - Launched a comprehensive, statewide sexual assault survivors' [Resource Directory](#), which is now available on the Governor's website.
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New Task Force Member: Welcome Dr. Michael Coble!

Dr. Michael Coble

Executive Director of the Center for Human Identification
University of North Texas Health Science Center

Michael Coble, PhD, is an Associate Professor and the Executive Director of the Center for Human Identification at the University of North Texas Health Science Center in Fort Worth, Texas. Dr. Coble received his Bachelor's Degree in Biology from the Appalachian State University, his Master's Degree in Forensic Science (concentration in Molecular Biology) and his PhD in Genetics from The George Washington University. He has over 100 peer-reviewed publications in the areas of forensic DNA analysis and interpretation, and is co-author of the book, "Forensic DNA Profiling: A Practical Guide to Assigning Likelihood Ratios." He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences and a member of the International Society for Forensic Genetics.



Dr. Coble currently serves as a commissioner for the Texas Forensic Science Commission, is a member of the North Carolina Forensic Science Advisory Board and is an invited guest at the Scientific Working Group on DNA Analysis Methods (SWGDM). He is a co-editor of the Forensic Biology subject area of WIREs Forensic Science journal and is a member of

the editorial boards of Forensic Science International: Genetics and The Journal of Forensic Sciences.

Task Force Member Spotlight: Dr. Ralph Riviello



Dr. Ralph Riviello

Professor and Chair of Emergency Medicine

University Health and University of Texas Health San Antonio

Ralph Riviello, MD, MS, FACEP is Professor and Chair of Emergency Medicine at University Health and University of Texas Health San Antonio. Dr. Riviello graduated from Hahnemann Medical College in Philadelphia and completed an emergency medicine residency at Allegheny General Hospital in Pittsburgh. Dr. Riviello also earned a Masters Degree in Clinical Forensic Medicine from the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine. Dr. Riviello has lectured, written, and researched on the topics of sexual assault, domestic violence, strangulation, and other common emergency department complaints. He has served on several national committees and panels related to these topics as well. He is the author of the textbook, Clinical Forensic Emergency Medicine: a guide for clinicians. Dr. Riviello also serves on the Medical Advisory Panel and faculty of the Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention. While in Philadelphia, Dr. Riviello served on the Philadelphia Sexual Assault Advisory Committee for over 15 years and was instrumental in developing and running the Philadelphia Sexual Assault Response Center which was a free-standing center, co-located with the Special Victims Unit, providing sexual assault medical forensic examinations to patients 16 years of age and older. The center treated an average of 400 patients per year and employed approximately 15 Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners. Dr. Riviello has also served as Medical Director or Medical Consultant to three other SANE Programs during his career. He has served on several national committees creating medical care guidelines and SANE program guidance and is currently a member of the Forensic Nursing Subcommittee of the Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC) for Forensic Science. In his spare time, he enjoys traveling with his husband, baking, cooking, and spending time with his two rescue dogs, Homer and Brieenne.

Sexual Assault Exams and Accompaniment Considerations

Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas (CACTX) partnered with the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) to create a practical tool to help navigate the complexity of medical accompaniment for forensic medical exams.

Sexual assault programs/rape crisis centers (RCCs) and children's advocacy centers (CACs) across Texas are working together to serve survivors and often have overlapping service areas. Experience has highlighted that the greatest need for collaboration is in providing medical accompaniment services for child and adolescent survivors of abuse.

Below is the guiding document, *Sexual Assault Exams and Accompaniment: Legal, Medical, and Programmatic Considerations*, along with a joint letter that speaks to the intent behind this project.

We hope this resource will provide clarity on the statutory rights of survivors, an understanding of medical accompaniment and forms of advocacy, and guidance to develop community-specific protocols that comply with current statutes and standards. You are highly encouraged to share with medical partners and other interested stakeholders so that everyone can benefit from this resource. We ask that the joint letter is included in any dissemination.

Please contact Kasey Jackson at kjackson@cactx.org or Virginia Rueda at vrueda@taasa.org with questions and/or requests for technical assistance. And thank you for your continued commitment to our work!

[Sexual Assault Exams and Accompaniment: Legal, Medical, and Programmatic Considerations Guide](#)

Adult Sexual Assault Response Teams Protocol

With the passage of Senate Bill 476 (87th Legislature), Adult Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs) have been forming in counties across the state of Texas. SARTs are responsible for developing county or region-wide interagency sexual assault response protocols. These protocols serve as a crucial guide to the community's collective response, eliminating gaps, defining roles, and strengthening relationships between partners to better serve sexual assault survivors by enhancing collaboration.

Below you will find a protocol-building resource just released by the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) and TAASA's resources for SARTs page. This is a great resource to provide your teams for additional help in writing their protocols.

[SART Protocol Framework](#)

[SART Resources](#)

For more information about SARTs and resources, contact:

Deepika Modali
SART Project Coordinator
Texas Association Against Sexual Assault
512-474-7190 Ext. 136
dmodali@taasa.org

Statewide Resources: Texas Advocacy Project

Survivors of sexual assault deserve to have holistic legal and social services tailored to their unique needs, and Texas Advocacy Project (TAP) is one of the amazing organizations providing those services! TAP's mission is to end dating and domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, child abuse and human trafficking in Texas. TAP empowers survivors through free civil legal and social services, decreasing barriers to the justice system, and advancing prevention through public outreach and education. TAP's attorneys, social workers, and staff see firsthand the long-term effects of sexual assault on individuals and the legal and social issues affecting their recovery.

TAP is a member of Legal Aid for Survivors of Sexual Assault (LASSA) – a network of legal service organizations working to collaboratively ensure survivors have access to critical civil legal services throughout the state. Despite the prevalence of sexual assault, reporting remains low, and many survivors choose to cede criminal prosecution all together. Regardless of their decision to participate in the criminal legal system, most survivors have outstanding legal needs that a criminal court may not be able to adequately address. The search for justice in the civil courts may initiate immediately following a sexual assault, many decades later, or anytime in between. Some needs may be immediately apparent, while others will emerge only over time. Survivors' civil legal problems can include safety, employment, housing, education, family law, immigration, and financial matters.

TAP provides these services throughout the entire state, from El Paso to Sabine County. TAP also serves as Title IX advisors and advocates for student-survivors in crisis, ensuring their school, college, or university properly handles sexual assault or harassment claims as they are required under law. First and foremost, TAP works to ensure the safety of their clients by offering safety planning, crisis consultations, and sexual assault protective orders (SAPO).

[Texas Advocacy Project](#)

Community Efforts & Success: Texas Department of Public Safety Sexual Assault Kit Initiative

Texas Department of Public Safety's Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI) Project

In 2019, the Texas Rangers Division received two grants from the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). The BJA's Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI) grants received by the Texas Ranger Division are for the collection and entry of lawfully owed DNA into the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) and the investigation and prosecution of cold case sexually related *homicides* and *sexual assault* cases.

Lawfully Owed DNA Collection

A deficit of DNA samples lawfully owed to the state of Texas by felony offenders and sex offenders currently exists, and SAKI funds are being used to address the collection of these missing samples. By conducting a thorough census on lawfully owed DNA samples from convicted felons and sex offenders and gathering lawfully owed DNA samples, Texas Rangers plan to eliminate the existing deficit while simultaneously identifying the perpetrators of these unknown offenses in the form of CODIS hits upon sample entry to the CODIS database.

This effort has identified 3,300 registered sex offenders in Texas who owe the state a DNA sample for entry into CODIS. Texas Rangers are working closely alongside local law enforcement agencies to collect DNA from sex offenders and qualifying felons who owe a DNA sample for entry into CODIS.

Cold Case Investigation and Prosecution

As of 2019, the state of Texas possessed approximately 35,000 forensic samples in CODIS that have not been associated with a known individual. Further, Texas Rangers have identified unsolved serial sexual assault and sexually related homicide cases in CODIS without an association to a known individual.

Texas Rangers are using 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 will use the information obtained from the tests to investigate the cold case and partner with external law enforcement agencies and prosecutors to bring these violent offenders to justice.

Contact Information:

Lawfully Owed DNA Collection
Orlando C. Salinas, MBA, MHA
SAKI Program DNA Collection
Coordinator

Cold Case Investigation and Prosecution
Trampas Gooding, Staff Lieutenant
SAKI Cold Case Investigation and
Prosecution Coordinator

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Training Opportunities

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

[EVAWI Conference Website](#)

- **National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA) Campus Advocacy Training**
Wednesday, January 11 – Wednesday, February 22, 2023
30-hour advanced training, taught over 7 consecutive weeks.
Classes will take place every Wednesday from 10:00am – 3:00pm CST.

[NOVA Campus Advocacy Training](#)

- **Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) Interdiction for the Protection of Children (IPC) Course** upcoming training dates:
 - January 11-12, 2023, in Pecos, TX
 - January 17-18, 2023, in La Grange, TX
 - February 8-9, 2023, in Angleton, TX
 - February 21-22, 2023, in Greenville, TX
 - March 8-9, 2023, in Texarkana, TX
 - March 21-22, 2023, in Bridgeport, TX

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

Funding Opportunities

District Attorney Testing of Forensic Evidence Grant Program

- The purpose of this announcement is to solicit applications from district attorney offices for costs associated with the forensic analysis of physical evidence.

General Victim Assistance Grant Program

- The purpose of this program is to provide services and assistance directly to victims of crime to speed their recovery and aid them through the criminal justice process.

Sexual Assault Evidence Testing Grant Program

- The purpose of this announcement is to solicit applications from law enforcement agencies for costs associated with the forensic analysis of physical evidence in relation to sexual assault or other sex offenses.

Sexual Assault Forensic Exam (SAFE)-Ready Facilities Program

- The purpose of this announcement is to solicit applications from hospital facilities seeking to achieve or maintain a Sexual Assault Forensic Exam (SAFE)-Ready designation, as well as non-profit corporations seeking to operate or maintain a SAFE Program as defined in Chapter 323 of the Texas Health and Safety Code.

Violence Against Women Justice and Training Program

- The purpose of this announcement is to solicit applications for projects that promote a coordinated, multi-disciplinary approach to improve the justice system's response to violent crimes against women, including domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking.

These and other funding opportunities of interest can be found [here](#).