

SAFVIC ON THE SCENE

9-1-1 Telecommunicators: The "True" First Responders

By: Tina Chaffin, CAPCOG 9-1-1 Systems Analyst

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The SAFVIC team would like to thank the following individuals for instructing the recent SAFVIC for Telecommunication Professionals Instructor Course.

- SAFVIC Instructor **Patt Hollingsworth**
- SAFVIC Instructor **Don Gallion**
- **Sherry Decker, NCTGOG 911 Training Coordinator**
- **Bobbie Villareal, Chief Prosecutor for the Dallas County District Attorney**

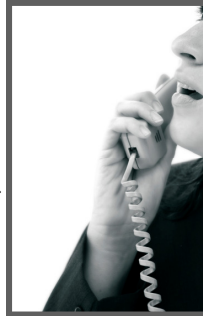
We couldn't have done it without you!

9-1-1 Telecommunicators across the state frequently answer calls reporting family violence and sexual assault. As calls of this nature increase, Telecommunicators must obtain vital information ensuring both the caller's safety and the safety of responding officers. For this reason, Telecommunicators are now considered the "true" first responders on family violence and sexual assault calls. Law enforcement and other emergency

personnel responding to the calls depend on Telecommunicators to relay imperative information before approaching the scene. This information includes a physical description of the suspect, a clothing description, and a vehicle description if the suspect is no longer at the location. It is also extremely important to gather information regarding any weapons the suspect may have or have access to, and if the suspect is under the influence of drugs or alcohol. In addition, Telecommunicators must make an effort to preserve evidence at the scene. This may require the Telecommunicator to give in-

structions to the caller asking them to take precautions to avoid disturbing evidence.

It is important that Telecommunicators understand the dynamics of family violence and sexual assault. While physical and sexual abuse are the most commonly reported, these two forms of violence are only a small portion of the abuse many victims suffer. Family violence and sexual assault are both acts of

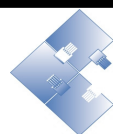


power and control. Many times victims suffer from other forms of abuse, resulting in a psychological inability to leave the relationship. Intimidation is common in abusive relationships and may include making gestures toward the victim to imply harm, smashing personal possessions, abusing pets, or displaying weapons. Many victims are emotionally abused, whether it be name calling, making the victim think they are crazy, humiliating the victim, or even playing mind games. Perpetrators of violence often isolate their victims not allowing them to perform daily functions

outside of the home without permission or supervision. Communication may be cut-off completely from family and friends, leaving the victim no one to turn to for help. Many times a victim feels trapped in a relationship because of economic abuse. Economic abuse happens when the victim has to ask for money, may be given an allowance, forced to give the abuser all their earned income, or may not be aware of the family finances. These forms of abuse prevent victims from reaching out for help in fear of more physical violence. It is imperative for Telecommunicators to understand these barriers in leaving the abusive relationship, as well as be aware of the fear and uncertainty a victim has when making a call for help.

Sexual assault calls may be less frequent, given that 82% of sexual assaults go unreported in Texas.¹ Fear of the rapist, embarrassment, and not considering their rape a crime or a police matter are the primary reasons victims choose not to report their victimization to the police.² Fear of victim blaming is another main reason victims do not report the sexual assault. This is a com-

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SAFVIC
For Cybercrimes

SAFVIC for Cybercrimes Instructor Course

August 24th – 26th, 2009

TRIPLE Training Facility - Austin, TX

SAFVIC is pleased to announce the 2nd SAFVIC for Cybercrimes Instructor Course will be held on August 24th – 26th. SAFVIC is in the process of re-vamping the existing 8-hour SAFVIC for Cybercrimes program based on instructor and student feedback. In addition we are working to incorporate the most up-to-date technology and social networking information in the new version. SAFVIC is once again working with Cindy Southworth (Director of Technology at the National Network to End Domestic Violence) and the Office of the Attorney General to make these curriculum updates. SAFVIC for Cybercrimes classes will resume after the Instructor Course.

More information about the course & the application can be found on the SAFVIC website, under the Instructor Login section. Application deadline is July 6th, 2009. **You must be an active 24-hr SAFVIC Instructors to apply.**

The SAFVIC for Cybercrimes 8-hr class will be held after the completion of the Instructor Course.

Check for classes in your area at www.safvic.org under Calendar.



TEXAS ADVOCACY PROJECT

Family Violence Legal Hotline
800.374.HOPE

Sexual Assault Legal Hotline
888.296.SAFE

Family Law Hotline
800.777.FAIR

www.TexasAdvocacyProject.org

New SAFVIC Program Assistant ... Cassie Peña ...

Behind classroom instruction, SAFVIC is made up of individuals who ensure that law enforcement officers in Texas receive the most up to date information concerning sexual assault and family violence. Recently SAFVIC has added a new member to its team in the role of Program Assistant, whose purpose is to process class work and provide credit and acknowledgment for their educational efforts. We would like to welcome Cassie Peña, who comes to SAFVIC from an education administration background. Her degree in Anthropology and Social Studies demonstrates her support of positive social justice, the kind that only educated & well trained law enforcement officers can provide. Help us welcome Cassie Peña to the SAFVIC team!

FEATURED AGENCY:

Texas Advocacy Project Legal Solutions To End Violence

Family violence destroys lives. Children, parents, friends, co-workers - even the economy - are all affected. The statistics in Texas are staggering. According to the Texas Council on Family Violence, 31 % of all Texans report they have been severely abused at some point in their lifetime. And 84 % of all Texans report they want to do something about it.

So what can be done to eradicate this problem? **Legal intervention** has emerged as one of the only solutions proven to halt domestic abuse. Texas Advocacy Project is a non profit organization that has been providing free, state-wide legal assistance to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking for over 25 years. Working directly with victims, shelters, law enforcement agencies, and courts across Texas, the Project's delivery of effective legal services is helping more victims become survivors, able to rebuild their lives.

There are several programs utilized by the Project to reach victims in need. The longest running program is their Legal Hotline Division. Operating out of three toll-free legal hotlines, Project attorneys advise clients on: filing for divorce, obtaining a protective order, obtaining temporary orders for child support, safety and com-

munity-resource information and referrals. Hotline callers under the age of 21 may be referred internally to their Teen Justice Initiative, which provides all of the legal advice available to adult hotline clients plus court representation for youth seeking a protective order, divorce or child custody. Their Assisted Pro Se Program accepts client referrals from Texas area shelter advocates only; APS attorneys provide more in depth assistance and support with preparing legal documents so that clients in rural areas can represent themselves effectively. Under their Emergency Protection Order Program (available in Travis county only), Project attorneys contact victims directly within 24 hours of a family violence arrest, providing information on legal resources available and safety planning and advocate to the magistrate for the granting of an Emergency Protection Order if requested.

Along with these programs aimed at direct services to clients, Texas Advocacy Project also offers free statewide trainings to law enforcement, prosecutors, judicial staff, and victim counselors. These trainings cover the main types of Protective Orders in Texas; an "EPO in a Box" (Emergency Protective Order In A Box) training guide is provided for all participants.

Free brochures are also available on a variety of topics including Safety Planning,



Protective Orders and Teen Dating Violence. The Project distributes these to schools, doctor's offices, shelters, law enforcement, retail establishments and other organizations where clients are likely to encounter them. Their most popular brochure is their pocket hotline brochure - designed to be no larger than the size of a business card so victims can more easily hide the information until they are in a safe place to call for help.

The Project accepts clients without regard to ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or county of residence. Along with having both English and Spanish-speaking attorneys, the Project utilizes a language interpretation service, allowing them to give legal advice in over 170 languages; they also employ a service for deaf callers.

Texas Advocacy Project is confronting abuse in Texas one client at a time. But they can't do it alone. With your involvement, the Project can reach more Texans in need, freeing them from a life of abuse.

To get involved with The Project to end violence, or to learn more about the services available at Texas Advocacy Project, please visit their website at www.TexasAdvocacyProject.org.

Article by Dana Vig of the Texas Advocacy Project.



TAASA's Open Letter to Sexual Assault Victims in Texas

Recent media reports have suggested that victims of sexual assault in the state of Texas are liable for the cost of their own rape exam kit. The Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) has released a statement to correct these allegations which have been perpetuated by the media and to highlight the difficulties caused by the dissemination of false information in regards to victim reporting.

The facts are as such: the cost of a forensic rape exam should never be billed to the victim in the state of Texas. The cost of investigation is always the responsibility of law enforcement who is reimbursed through the Crime Victim's Compensation (CVC) fund. For more information and to read TAASA's official statement on forensic/medical exams (rape kit) in Texas, please view their website at www.taasa.org or at www.safvic.org.

SAFVIC Welcomes New TCPs Instructors



We would like to congratulate and welcome our new SAFVIC for Telecommunication Professionals (TCPs) Instructors! They recently completed the 24 hour SAFVIC for TCPs Instructor Course in Austin, Texas on June 1st – 3rd.

The Sexual Assault and Family Violence Investigators Course for Telecommunication Professionals (SAFVIC for TCPs) is designed to provide 911 call-takers around the state with the tools they need to effectively identify and facilitate sexual assault and family violence calls. The SAFVIC for Telecommunication Professionals program consists of a comprehensive 8-hour curriculum covering crucial aspects of telecommunication professionals' response to these calls. Students attending the SAFVIC for TCPs will receive 8 hours TCLEOSE credit. For more information on upcoming SAFVIC for TCPs courses, please visit our website at www.safvic.org.

Top Row (left to right):

Judy Cervenka
Fort Bend County SO

Betty Palmer
Bexar County SO

Denise Jimenez
Montgomery County SO

Lisa Dodson
Harris County SO

Mary "Lynn" Allen
North Richland Hills PD

Gwinna Pedigo
Lewisville PD

Bobbie Sellers
Abilene PD & Fire

Tina Chaffin
Capital Area COG

Kathy Tapp
Hunt County SO

Deirdre Garrett-Harris
Dallas PD

Bottom Row (left to right):

Kellie Hayney
Lewisville PD

Christa Pierce
Travis County SO

Sara Wright
Cedar Park PD

Cindy Sanchez
Denton County SO

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mon community response that plagues our society. Questions regarding the whereabouts, dress, or actions of the victim prior to the assault perpetuate this phenomenon. Questioning the victim's role in an attack undermines the nature of the crime and detracts from the criminal element and intent of the perpetrator. Victim blaming in our community discourages reporting, investigations, and convictions, allowing criminals to remain in our society undetected. Sexual violence can include several kinds of crimes: rape, incest, sexual harassment, child molestation, marital rape, exposure and voyeurism. Both family violence and sexual assault calls should be handled with compassion and concern. Telecommunicators must make certain every effort is made to ensure a positive outcome for the caller.



Telecommunicators can build or destroy the confidence of some-

one calling for help. It is important when speaking to a victim of family violence or sexual assault that Telecommunicators are aware of what they say and the tone used in conversation. The Telecommunicator can very easily project blame onto the victim simply by their vocal inflection during the conversation. This is a form of re-victimization, and may decrease the chance of a victim reaching out for help again if they feel they were not responded to appropriately the first time they called. For the Telecommunicator, it is also easy in repeated situations of family violence to become critical or skeptical of the request for help. This is particularly true if the victim has not followed through with prosecution from previous incidents. However, each incident of family violence or sexual assault should be taken seriously and professionally, with no regard given to the previous calls.

The SAFVIC Program has created a new 8-hour training course

specifically designed to address family violence and sexual assault calls, and has recently certified 14 Instructors to teach "SAFVIC for TCPs" across the state. The goal of the course is to emphasize the important link Telecommunicators provide between victims and responders. The curriculum for the training includes:

- History and Statistics of Sexual Assault and Family Violence
- Dynamics of Family Violence, Sexual Assault, Stalking, and Human Trafficking
- Special Consideration when Taking Calls From Members of Vulnerable Population
- Understanding Victims & Safety Planning and Protective Orders
- How 911 Calls are used in Prosecution of Crimes
- Best Practices
- Texas Laws

SAFVIC hopes this new training will assist Telecommunicators to better understand victims who call for help and will use the knowledge gained to communicate appropriate and effectively.

1. Noel Bridget Busch, et. al. (2003) *A Health Survey of Texans: A Focus on Sexual Assault*. Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault, The University of Texas.

2. *Extent, Nature, and Consequences of Rape Victimization: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey*. National Institute of Justice, Centers for Disease Control (January 2006).

SAFVIC Courses

- Interested in hosting any of the SAFVIC courses? Please contact Brooke Hinojosa at brooke.hinojosa@safvic.org.
- To find a SAFVIC Instructor in your area, go to www.safvic.org and click on **Contact - SAFVIC Instructors**. An interactive google map with all of our Instructor's contact information can be found there.
- To find already scheduled classes, go to www.safvic.org and click on **Calendar**. Registration is online.

All SAFVIC courses are FREE!



"Piecing together the tools needed to effectively investigate and prevent sexual assault and family violence."

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We're on the Web @
www.safvic.org

SAVE THE DATE

2009 CASCI Conference

Dates: Wednesday, September 16th - Friday, September 18th, 2009

Registration: Online at www.casci.net

Registration Deadline: Friday, September 4, 2009

Conference Tuition: \$225

Location: Silvertree Hotel & Resort
P.O. Box 5009
Snowmass Village, CO 81615
800-525-9402 / 970-923-3520
www.silvertreehotel.com



Special Room Rates for conference attendees - \$69 per night!

Presenters:

- Chief Trial Attorney Ted Hunt Investigation and Prosecution of Cold Cases
Forensic Interviewer Stephanie Knapp Interviewing the Compliant Victim
Catherine Connell, LMSAW, ACSW &
FBI Special Agent Patrick Cunningham Case Study: Hornbeck & Ownby Abduction
Nancy Slicner, Ph.D., ABPP The Date Rapist
Detective Lisa Bracci Sex Assault Survivor

FEATURED BOOK:

RETHINKING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Rethinking Domestic Violence reviews research in the area of intimate partner violence. The research crosses disciplinary lines, including social and clinical psychology, sociology, psychiatry, criminology, and criminal justice research. The author, Donald Dutton, teaches in the Department of Psychology at the University of British Columbia.



By: Donald G. Dutton

He has written extensively on the subject of domestic violence. Since the area of intimate partner violence (IPV) is so heavily politicized, Dutton tries to steer through conflicting claims by assessing the best research methodology. As a result, he comes to some new conclusions about intimate partner violence. These conclusions include the finding that IPV is better predicted by psychological rather than social-structural factors, particularly in cultures where there is relative gender equality. Dutton argues that personality disorders in either gender account for better data on IPV.

After 20 years of viewing IPV as generated by gender and focusing on a punitive "law and order" approach, Dutton argues that this approach must be more varied and flexible. Treatment providers, criminal justice systems personnel, lawyers, and researchers have indicated the need for a new view of the problem—one less invested in gender politics and more open to collaborative views and interdisciplinary insights. Dutton's rethinking of fundamentals of IPV is essential reading for psychologist, policy makers, and those dealing with the sociology of social science, the relationship of psychology to law, and explanations of adverse behavior.