

# SAFVIC ON THE SCENE

## COORDINATED COMMUNITY RESPONSE

BY: NICOLE MARTINEZ

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>April is SAAM</i>	2
<i>Featured Book</i>	2
<i>New SAFVIC Instructors</i>	3
<i>Victim Service Survey</i>	3
<i>Featured Agency</i>	4

Since the 1960s, communities have been the center focus of many organized responses to social problems, including teen pregnancy, youth unemployment, and violent crime (Worden, 2000). Violence against women is another important social problem communities must face in today's world. For the past 25 years, efforts to deal with sexual assault and family violence have focused primarily on providing shelters and counseling for victims, and enhancing the response of criminal and civil justice systems (Klevens, et al., 2008).

By the 1990s, most laws that exempted offenders or justified violence against women had been replaced by more gender-neutral definitions of crimes (sexual assault), laws that expressly prohibited forms of violence that formerly were tolerated (marital rape), and even laws that created new offenses to target offenders whose victims were predominantly women (stalking statutes) (Worden, 2000). As attention focused more on these issues, laws and policies started changing and programs for victims began to multiply rapidly. Advocacy programs became more diverse, while more and more local, state, and federal entities began to provide funding to increase service availability in communities (Gwinn & Strack, 2006).

Even with substantial changes in statutory protections, many victims found it difficult to find safety, support, or resources to stop the violence in their lives (Worden, 2000). Communities contemplated why such services and resources were not being utilized by victims. Researchers found that most of the problem-solving efforts were system-centered, rather than victim-centered. The criminal justice process appeared to be more of an obstacle than a place of safety for victimized women (Worden, 2000). No one stopped to figure out how many places victims would need to go for help.

A number of communities began to study the number of agencies/services victims need to go to for help. Rural communities reported 5-7 agencies victims needed to go to seek help, while suburban communities reported 15-20 agencies. Metropolitan communities are finding even larger number of agencies where victims must go to obtain services. These agencies/services included:

- Medical Services
- Counseling Services for victims & their children
- Transportation Assistance
- Safety Planning
- Financial/Credit Counseling
- Criminal Prosecution Assistance
- Legal Services
- Law Enforcement Assistance
- Spiritual Support
- Job Training
- Shelter Services
- Home Security Advice
- Court Involvement

Victims are faced with traveling from place-to-place to tell their story again and again in an attempt to get the help they need. Instead of creating a system for the convenience of the victims and their children, a system was created for the convenience of system professionals (Gwinn & Strack, 2006).

Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott recognized the need for a coordinated community response and is dedicated to improving the quality of services for victims of sexual assault by developing and providing interagency training and promoting multi-disciplinary collaboration. The Crime Victim Services Division of the Attorney General's Office developed a program entitled Sexual Assault Prevention and Crisis Services (SAPCS). SAPCS offers services from funding and technical assistance to sexual assault programs, assists in the establishment of Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs) in communities, and certifies Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) and sexual assault volunteer training programs (Texas Attorney General's website, 2008).

A Sexual Assault Response Team is a multi-disciplinary collaboration of local sexual assault programs, law enforcement agencies, district/county attorneys, and medical facilities that assist victims through the criminal justice process. Developing a SART increases accountability for offenders by coordinating the community response to sexual assault from the time of the report through prosecution. Establishing a successful SART is the first step to developing a SANE program.

The Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner's program supports community efforts to address sexual assault by establishing a process for accurate evidence collection and support for sexual assault survivors. The Sexual Assault Prevention Crisis Services program facilitates this process by assisting communities in establishing SARTs, offering training to registered nurses (RNs) on completing sexual assault medical/forensic examinations, and certifying RNs who have completed the SANE Forensic Training Program (Texas Attorney General's website, 2008). A recent study conducted by the American Prosecutors Research Institute (APRI) and Boston College, indicated that compared to non-SANE/SART cases, SANE/SART cases are reported more quickly, have more evidence, particularly DNA, and have more victim participation, although SANE-only cases had the lowest participation levels. Other research indicates that SANE interventions increased victim participation in the justice process. SANE/SART intervention is also a factor in the identification and arrest of the suspect, the strongest predictor that charges will be filed

(Continued on page 4)

**For more information:**

**SANE/SART**  
call  
**512-936-2880**

**Family Justice Centers**  
visit

[www.adams2.org/  
startfjc.html](http://www.adams2.org/startfjc.html)



## UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Victims of domestic violence who must leave their job to protect themselves from family violence or stalking are eligible for unemployment compensation if they show:

- An active or recently issued protective order documenting the occurrence of or potential for family violence or stalking against the employee AND
- A police record documenting family violence or stalking against the employee AND
- A physician's statement or other medical documentation of family violence against the employee.

None of the above information may be disclosed to any person without consent of the employee.

Individuals may apply for unemployment on line at [www.twc.state.tx.us/ui/ucclaim.html](http://www.twc.state.tx.us/ui/ucclaim.html) or call 1-800-939-6631. For TDD users, call 1-800-735-2989.

# Sexual Assault Awareness Month

Designated as Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM), April brings an annual opportunity to focus awareness on sexual violence and its prevention. It is also an opportunity to highlight the efforts of individuals and agencies that provide rape crisis intervention and prevention services while offering support to sexual assault survivors, victims and their families. SAAM raises awareness of sexual violence and its prevention through special events while highlighting sexual violence as a major public health issue and reinforces the need for prevention efforts.

Visit the National Sexual Violence Resource Center's website at [www.nsvrc.org/saam](http://www.nsvrc.org/saam) for more information and resources on Sexual Assault Awareness Month.



Sexual Assault Awareness Month Teal Ribbon

## SAFVIC VICTIM SERVICE SURVEY 2007 SUMMARY OF REPORT

SAFVIC distributed just over 400 surveys to victim service agencies across Texas that serve sexual assault and family violence victims. With the help and cooperation of the respondents to this survey, SAFVIC will be able to identify local victim service's needs and will generate greater communication among local coalitions of victim service, prosecution and law enforcement.

This report studied victim service agencies based on the jurisdictions and populations they serve, as well as the relationship and interactions between victim service organizations and law enforcement agencies. Most of the respondents represented victim service organizations that serve a 'county/counties' (79%) or a 'city' (31%) jurisdiction that were mostly rural (77%). The approximate size of the population which each organization serve ranged just under 950 to the entire state.

Most of the victim service organization respondents indicated that they have an

'excellent' (26.1%) or 'very good' (37.7) relationship with local law enforcement agencies. Slightly less than a quarter of respondents reported having an 'average' (24.6%) relationship with law enforcement. Several respondents (66.2%) indicated that coalitions did exist in their communities.

Respondents were asked the following three questions about their relationship with law enforcement officers:

- What could law enforcement do to enhance its relationship with victim service's agencies in your community?
- What are the challenges you face when working with law enforcement?
- What types of victim service-related training would you like to see offered to law enforcement agencies in your area?

The responses to these questions were overwhelmingly similar. Respondents mentioned the need for an increased understanding of the services that they provide

(victim service agencies), working with their local task force or coalition to connect stakeholders, and having more sensitivity and compassion toward victims.

Regrettably, many respondents (61.3%) had not heard of the SAFVIC program until they received this survey. Of these respondents, many (88.4%) were from rural communities that may not have been exposed to this type of training. Although, many SAFVIC instructors work with local coalitions and victim service agencies, more work still needs to be done to "spread the word" and work to improve relations in rural communities. Promoting a more positive relationship between law enforcement agencies and victim service provider, will ultimately lead to greater communication among local victim service coalitions, prosecution and law enforcement.

To read the full report, please visit [www.safvic.org](http://www.safvic.org).

## SAFVIC WELCOMES 10 NEW INSTRUCTORS!



### TOP LEFT:

**Lydia Alvarado**

Matagorda County Sheriff's Office

**David Dillard**

Johnson County Sheriff's Office

**Kim Basinger**

Commerce Police Department

**Kirt Yarbrough**

Killeen Police Department

**Albert Perez**

Hidalgo County Sheriff's Office

**Dora Falls**

Dallas Police Department

### BOTTOM LEFT:

**Jim Blackburn**

Collin County Sheriff's Office

**Marte Martinez**

Fort Hood Police Department

**Steven Story**

Fort Hood Police Department

**Ron Stautzenberger**

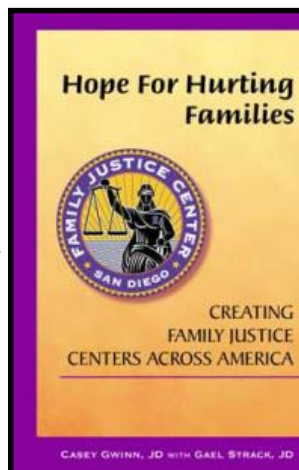
Bryan Police Department

We would like to congratulate and welcome our new SAFVIC Instructors! They recently completed the 40 hour SAFVIC Instructor Course in Austin, Texas on January 28<sup>th</sup> - February 1<sup>st</sup>. If you are interested in becoming a SAFVIC Instructor, please visit our website at [www.safvic.org](http://www.safvic.org) to find more information on our next SAFVIC Instructor Course.

## FEATURED BOOK: HOPE FOR HURTING FAMILIES CREATING FAMILY JUSTICE CENTERS ACROSS AMERICA

BY: CASEY GWINN, JD WITH GAEL STRACK,

From the San Diego Family Justice Center (SDFJC) comes the story of the creation of the most comprehensive "one-stop shop" in the nation for victims of family violence and their children. Now victims can come to one location to talk to an advocate, get a restraining order, plan for their safety, talk to a police officer, meet with a prosecutor, receive medical assistance, receive guidance from the chaplain, get transportation help, and obtain counseling. It is a unique, special, safe place.



The book, the philosophical foundation for the developing National Family Justice Center movement, is co-authored by former San Diego City Attorney, Casey Gwinn and Gael Strack, JD, Director of the SDFJC. It is a road map for the creation of Family Justice Centers in America and around the world in the years to come.

It is a book for men and women, victims and survivors, cops and prosecutors, pastors and counselors, priests and rabbis, employers and employees, citizens and immigrants, politicians and policy makers, moms and dads, fathers and mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers - a book that thoughtfully, carefully, and simply challenges the American people to come together and pursue a path toward hope and healing for violent families.

Taken directly from the Volcano Press website at [www.volcanopress.com](http://www.volcanopress.com).

## DID YOU KNOW?

*If a victim is living with an abuser in a rental property in Texas, they have the right to:*

- Terminate their lease without penalty by providing the landlord a copy of a protective order or a temporary injunction to stop family violence within a divorce.

## New Training Coming Soon

SAFVIC for  
Telecommunication  
Professionals



New 8 - hour Training  
for 911 Dispatchers to  
better understand the  
dynamics of sexual  
assault, family violence,  
and stalking  
coming soon!



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

**MITCH LANDRY**  
Deputy Executive Director of  
Grants & Special Programs

**JEFF OLBRICH**  
Director of Development

**JENNIFER GONZALES**  
Program Manager

**BROOKE HINOJOSA**  
Program Coordinator

**NICOLE MARTINEZ**  
Program Analyst

**BROOKS LOUTON**  
Program Assistant

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We're on the Web @  
[www.safvic.org](http://www.safvic.org)

## FEATURED AGENCY: BEXAR COUNTY FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER

Opening our doors in August 2005, Bexar County became the first and only county in Texas to house a Family Justice Center. Under the leadership of District Attorney, Susan D. Reed, Bexar County wrote and received one of fifteen federal grants through the United States Department of Justice to begin the Bexar County Family Justice Center (Center). The need for the Center was evident in Bexar County as it is across Texas – services for victims of domestic violence are scattered. The goal of the Center is to *Assist Victims of Domestic Violence in their Journey from Survivor to Thriver*. In order to assist victims, barriers for providing services must be removed. At the Center over 40 community partners came together, 15 on-site, to provide victims of domestic violence ease of access to the holistic realm of services they need.

Originally the Center anticipated serving 3,700 families per year. Within the first year of operation and in each year following the Center provides services to over 6,000 families each year. Located within the public health clinic in downtown San Antonio, the Center is home to a wide variety of services including but not limited to: protective orders, law enforcement, prosecution, civil legal services, victim advocacy, mental health services, medical services, military liaison, spiritual guidance, financial assistance, housing, basic needs, job training, employment assistance, and child protective services. All services at the Center are designed to fit the unique needs of each victim and their family.

Law enforcement at the Center is a key component providing victims access to their first need:

safety. The Center houses San Antonio Police Department, Bexar County Sheriff's Department, and University Hospital Law Enforcement. Victims can make reports, file charges, speak with a social worker, file crime victims' compensation forms all in the very same place they can receive counseling and file for a protective order. This integration of services provides victims of domestic violence the resources they need to take back control of their lives.

Bexar County has the only Operation JEDI program in the nation. Operation JEDI – Justice, Expedited Disposition, and Intervention is a proactive arrest policy for misdemeanor fugitives of domestic violence. Through Operation JEDI, the Center houses a victim advocate who contacts each victim of a non arrest misdemeanor case within 48 hours of the District Attorney's Office receiving the file from law enforcement. Bexar County Sheriff's Department has two specialized warrant officers who actively arrest approximately 100 misdemeanor fugitives of domestic violence each month. This program also funds expanded capacity within Adult Probation, District Attorney's Office, and County Court at Law #7. Through Operation JEDI, victims are provided with positive reinforcement and each perpetrator is held accountable.

The Center also employs two Certified Federal Law Enforcement Training Center Domestic Violence Instructors. These staff members provide trainings in the community to law enforcement, social workers, counselors, teachers, professionals, teenagers, and community members on the realities of domestic violence and the dangers involved. Trainings are provided free at various times

*Article provided by Anne Mace of the Bexar County Family Justice Center.*

*(Continued from page 1)*

and helps to increase the likelihood of a conviction. Overall, the SANE/SART programs are an effective and efficient tool in the criminal justice system (Nugent-Borakove, et al., 2006).

In October of 2003, President George W. Bush announced the creation of the President's Family Justice Center Initiative (PFJCI), which is administered by the Office on Violence Against Women. The Initiative created specialized "one-stop shops;" co-located, multi-disciplinary service centers for victims of family violence and their children. The PFJCI is a pilot program that has awarded more than \$20 million to 15 communities across the country for the planning, development, and establishment of comprehensive domestic violence victims' services and support. The centers, commonly referred to as "family justice centers," are based on the San Diego Family Justice Center model. The goal of the PFJCI is to bring together under one roof professionals who provide an array of services, thus making the search for help and justice more efficient for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and elder abuse. Family justice center models have been documented to have the following outcomes: reduce homicide, increase victim safety, increase autonomy and empowerment to victims, reduce fear and anxiety for victims and their children, increase efficiency in collaborative services to victims among service providers, increase prosecution of offenders, and dramatically increase community support for services to victims and their children (PFJCI, 2008).

In order to reduce the number of places where victims must go to obtain assistance, communities must start out small by co-locating services. By providing more services in one location, victims and their children are more apt to utilize these services in their community. Task forces and coalitions must assess the nature and magnitude of violence against women in their communities. The key to coordinating community response to sexual assault and family violence is to mobilize community leadership and resources, maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of existing resources, and avoid duplicative and counterproductive services (Klevens, et al., 2008). To learn more about what exactly a family justice center is, how they work, when a community should consider creating one, and a lot more check out our featured book, *Hope for Hurting Families: Creating Family Justice Centers Across America* by Casey Gwinn, JD and Gael Strack, JD. For more information on the SANE/SART programs in Texas, email [crimevictims@oag.state.tx.us](mailto:crimevictims@oag.state.tx.us) or call 512/936-2880.

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