

SAFVIC ON THE SCENE

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The SAFVIC team would like to thank the following individuals for assisting with another successful SAFVIC Instructor Course.

Patt Hollingsworth
TCLEOSE Commissioner & SAFVIC
Advanced Instructor

Vangie Barefoot
Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner,
Johns Community Hospital - Tyler,
TX

Jana McCown
First Assistant District Attorney -
Williamson County, TX

*We couldn't have done
it without you!*

Family Justice Center Comprehensive Support Center for Victims of Domestic Violence

By: Bexar County Criminal District Attorney Judge Susan D. Reed

If you spend any time talking with law enforcement officers and prosecutors they will tell you that domestic violence cases are some of the most difficult to handle. For a peace officer there is always an underlying possibility that even the most routine domestic violence call can escalate into a dangerous or even deadly situation. Investigating and prosecuting these cases is treacherous as well. To insure a successful outcome of the case you must have victim involvement. The complaining witness must be able and willing to "stand up" and relate the details of violence and fear that they may have lived with for years. Therein lies the problem. As law enforcement and prosecution professionals how do we connect with the victim in a way that will convince them to trust us and participate in a process

that may change and/or end a relationship that, although dysfunctional, it is their life and all they know.

What can I do for my victim that will provide positive changes in their lives and the lives of their children that will enable them to rehabilitate their families and home and move beyond the constant worry and fear that domestic violence breeds? The answer is easy – involve them in a Family Justice Center. The Family Justice Center model is nationally recognized as a best practice in the field of domestic violence intervention and prevention. According to the Office of Violence Against Women (OVW) documented and published outcomes have included positive results, such as: reduced homicides; increased victim safety; increased autonomy and em-

powerment for victims; reduced fear and anxiety for victims and their children; reduced recantation and minimization by victims when wrapped in services and support; and increased efficiency in collaborative services to victims among service providers.

Originally developed in San Diego, California, the Family Justice Center idea is based on the concept of the children's advocacy center. The Family Justice Center ("FJC") provides a one-stop, comprehensive center for all victims of domestic violence to receive direct wrap-around services. Following the San Diego blueprint, then President George W. Bush provided funding for fifteen additional cities to open FJC's. Bexar County was one of the fortunate fifteen communi-

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Sexual Assault Awareness Month

The month of April has been designated Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM). The goal of SAAM is to raise public awareness about sexual violence (focusing on sexual assault and rape) and to educate communities and individuals on how to prevent sexual violence.

The SAAM website, offers information and materials for both the upcoming SAAM campaign as well as past campaigns. While the [National Sexual Violence Resource Center \(NSVRC\)](#) creates these campaign materials for SAAM, we encourage state and local organizations

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SAFVIC Courses

SAFVIC

- TCLEOSE Course #3264 (24 hour credit)
- Recommended for law enforcement officers, but victim advocates and prosecutors are encouraged to attend

SAFVIC for Cybercrimes

- TCLEOSE Course #3266 (8 hour credit)
- For law enforcement officers ONLY

SAFVIC for Telecommunication Professionals (SAFVIC for TCPs)

- TCLEOSE Course #3267 (8 hour credit)
- Recommended for telecommunicators and 911 dispatchers/call takers

All SAFVIC courses are FREE!

To register online for any of the SAFVIC courses, please visit www.safvic.org and click on **Calendar**.

WELCOME NEW SAFVIC INSTRUCTORS



(Left to Right)

Raul Serrata

Pharr Police Department

Michael Williams

Fort Worth Police Department

Chadley Krenak

Bay City Police Department

John Wilkerson

Knox County Sheriff's Office

Alberto Ponce

Weslaco Police Department

Gregory Pratt

Beaumont Police Department

Daniel Walden

Donna ISD Police Department

Katherine Smith

University of Texas System Police

David Welsh

Texas Alcoholic Beverage Comm.

We would like to congratulate and welcome our new SAFVIC Instructors!
They recently completed the 40 hour SAFVIC Instructor Course in Austin, Texas on February 8th - 12th, 2010.

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ties. In August of 2005 we opened the Bexar County Family Justice Center with expectations to serve approximately 3,000 families a year. Within the first year, we saw over 4,000 families come through the doors seeking services, and the numbers continue to grow.

The Bexar County FJC located in downtown San Antonio has emerged as a leader in the Family Justice Center movement nationwide and has grown highly effective in providing comprehensive service delivery programs that are achieving remarkable results in terms of improved services to victims and improved offender accountability.

Ensuring the safety of a victim and reducing the victim's dependence on the batterer by providing easily accessible, coordinated services has been shown to increase a victim's willingness to assist in holding the batterer accountable. Such on-site services include: protective order advocates and prosecutors; law enforcement; military advocates; civil attorneys; chaplains; counselors; child therapists; child protective services case managers; child care providers; life coaches; basic need providers; access to medical services; and much more. The co-location of police and protective order prosecutors facilitates the exchange of critical case information which is forwarded to the criminal court prosecutors. This enhances collaboration

during the investigative process and on filed cases and increases the opportunities for cross-training between criminal justice system providers and agencies serving victims of domestic violence.

Family Justice Center's report improvements in prosecution outcomes including an increase in filings and convictions, as well as reductions in case dismissals due to victim related issues. Pro-arrest/mandatory arrest policies in Family Justice Center communities also increase accountability for offenders. In Bexar County, comparing statistics one year before we opened the FJC and one year after it was opened, we experienced a thirty-three percent increase in the number of domestic violence cases filed

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SAVE THE DATE

10th Annual International Family Justice Center Conference



“Dream Big. Start Small.”

April 27 – 29, 2010

Crowne Plaza Hotel – Riverwalk*

111 Pecan Street East

San Antonio, Texas 78205

(210) 354-2800

**room rate is \$149/night; use "National Domestic Violence Conference" for discount*

The three-day conference, "Dream Big. Start Small." will include discussions on issues related to the handling of domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault, elder abuse cases, and funding in the context of the Family Justice Center model. The conference will focus on training matter within the contexts of leadership, accountability to survivors, guiding principles and promising practices in the rapidly evolving national and international movement toward Family Justice Centers and other approaches to co-located, multidisciplinary services for victims of family violence and their children.

The conference will include reports from successful and struggling Family Justice Center communities, including lessons learned from communities pursuing co-located services for victims using a variety of co-location models. The conference will also include practical, hands-on training for police officers, prosecutors, advocates, and medical professionals in the day to day handling of domestic violence cases.

The Family Justice Center Alliance welcomes law enforcement personnel, prosecutors, shelter staff, community-based victim advocates, civil attorneys, judges, counselors, policy makers, elected officials, board members, survivors, parole and probation officers, rape crisis workers, medical personnel, educators, and all others interested in the future of family violence prevention.

For more information about the 10th Annual International Family Justice Center Conference and to register, please visit www.familyjusticecenter.com.

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and groups focused on sexual violence awareness and prevention to tailor these campaign materials to their local communities.

By working together and pooling our resources during the month of April, we can highlight sexual violence as a major public health issue and reinforce the need for prevention efforts.

**For more information about
Sexual Assault Awareness
Month (SAAM) and to view
upcoming events in your
area, please visit**

www.nsvrc.org/samm



Texas Academy for Victim Assistance

Texas Academy for Victim Assistance (TAVA) is a 5-day foundation level training for victim service providers. Through a generous grant from the Governor's Criminal Justice division, all costs are covered for participants except travel to and from the training site, University of Texas Arlington. TAVA was created to provide baseline cross-education in Victim Services disciplines that promotes consistent and coordinated high-quality assistance to victims anywhere in the State. The Academy will provide a comprehensive, applied, practitioner-based education for victim service providers.

Who Should Attend

The academy invites victim service professionals from every discipline, with 3 years of experience or less in the field: OR those who have practiced in a single area for more than 3 years and desire cross-training.

Criminal Justice

- Police
- Sheriff
- Prosecutor
- Juvenile Justice
- Adult Probation
- Corrections
- Parole-based

Tuition & Other Costs

A grant from the Governor's Office, Criminal Justice Division, allows the Texas Victim Service Association to offer the Academy free of charge to those accepted into the program.

**Please visit www.txvsa.org,
to find an application.**

Applications will be accepted through April 30th. You will be notified of your application status no later than May 15th.

**For more information, please
contact Mary Lieberman at
marylieberman@uta.edu or
845-367-1877.**



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

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Featured Book

Hope for Hurting Families II



How to Start a Family Justice Center in Your Community

Gael Strack, JD and Casey Gwinn, JD

Hope for Hurting Families II

How to Start a Family Justice Center in Your Community

Casey Gwinn, JD and Gael Strack, JD

Hope for Hurting Families II is a manual designed as a practical "how-to" workbook for all kinds of communities - those with already operating Family Justice Centers and those are developing Centers, as well as those still evaluating whether the Family Center service delivery model is appropriate.

Developed during the first four years of operation of the San Diego Center, this manual is intended to assist communities in identifying issues and challenges as they move forward with their vision for Centers in their communities. It is set up in a work-book style with pages for notes and task list so that each member of the community can work through the manual individually and as a group during the planning and development.

"For over 30 years, we have seen effective programs developed to help abused women and children. But we cannot simply keep adding more programs without first assessing what works. We must set aside turf ego, and personality disputes in order to focus all our energy on helping victims and children stay safe. Hope for Hurting Families is a must read for anyone who wants to be a small part of changing the world for the terrorized, the hopeless, and the abused."

- Sarah Buel, Survivor, Author, National Trainer
Professor, Univ. of Texas School of Law.

To purchase this book, please visit

www.familyjusticecenter.com

and click on STORE.

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with the courts, and a dramatic fifty-five percent increase in our convictions. We attribute this increase to the total-care and case management services provided to victims through our FJC. Our experience mirrors national trends. Nationwide, Family Justice Centers report significant improvements in offender prosecution. Through increased victim awareness of the availability of services, as well as increased victim confidence in the system, gained through FJC services studies show an increased reporting of domestic violence cases. The FJC model also provides improvements in the fundamental quality and depth of law enforcement investigations. Both law enforcement and prosecution representatives di-

rectly attribute this to their co-location and the communication, collaboration, and training this enables.¹

Prior to the creation of the Bexar County Family Justice Center, victims of family violence were forced to navigate a fragmented system of services in locations scattered throughout Bexar County. Victims were forced to recall abusive incidents repeatedly while searching for and attempting to access the support they needed, often unaware of the full range of services available to them. With the creation of the Bexar County Family Justice Center victims have a one-stop, comprehensive center that exclusively focuses on their needs while also educating them on the psychology of power and control that enables domestic violence. At the Bexar County FJC,

victims learn the full range of their rights and the choices that empower them to make the decisions necessary to secure their safety, begin healing and to lay foundation which supports their long term dreams. All services at the Bexar County FJC are focused on supporting our goal: assisting victims in their journey from survivor to thriver!



For more information about the Bexar County Family Justice Center, please visit
www.bcfjc.org