



# SAFVIC on the Scene

SoS Quarterly Newsletter

March 2020

## The Office of the Governor’s Sexual Assault Survivors’ Task Force (SASTF)

Hillary England

The State of Texas is committed to eradicating sexual assault, and state leadership is continually seeking ways to raise awareness, combat this heinous crime, and provide more support to survivors. A key component of this goal is the state’s Sexual Assault Survivors’ Task Force.

Created by House Bill 1590 during the 86th Legislative Session (Rep. Donna Howard and Sen. Kirk Watson), the Sexual Assault Survivors’ Task Force (SASTF) is housed in the [Office of the Governor’s Public Safety Office](#) and seeks to establish a survivor-centered, trauma-informed, collaborative and coordinated response to sexual violence experienced by adults and children in Texas.

“Texas continues to make great strides in the fight against sexual violence, and the 86th Legislative Session was one of the most significant in history for addressing the atrocity of sexual assault,” said Governor Greg Abbott. “The Sexual Assault Survivors’ Task Force is a crucial component of our enduring goal to raise awareness, combat this heinous crime, and secure justice for survivors. Together, we will continue to develop methods of prevention, support these courageous survivors, and ensure a brighter future for all Texans.”

The SASTF is led by a Steering Committee with representation from the Office of the Governor, the



[Texas Association Against Sexual Assault](#) (TAASA) and the [Children’s Advocacy Centers of Texas](#) (CACTX). The Steering Committee is charged with creating relevant working groups, ensuring the SASTF identifies systemic issues and solutions pertaining to survivors of all ages, and reviewing and approving all task force reports, recommendations, resources, protocols, advice, and other information before release or implementation. The OOG’s Public Safety Office serves as the main facilitator of the Steering Committee and task force, with responsibilities including facilitating SASTF meetings, disseminating information, documenting activities, and tracking progress.

To ensure a collective effort, HB 1590 mandated representation from agencies across Texas with duties related to the prevention, investigation, or prosecution

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**National Crime Victims’ Rights Week**

**April 19–25, 2020**

**Seek Justice | Ensure Victims’ Rights | Inspire Hope**

# April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month



## Upcoming Events

March 8-14, 2020:

[NO MORE Week](#)

April 1, 2020:

[Start by Believing Day](#)

April 7, 2020:

[Day of Action](#)—Show Off Your Teal

April 19-25, 2020:

[National Crimes Victims' Rights Week](#)

April 29, 2020:

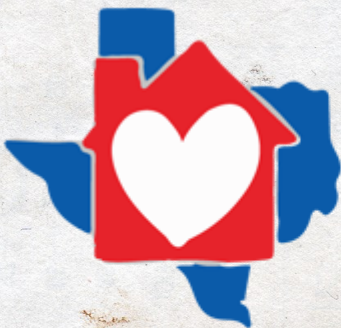
[Denim Day](#)—Wear Jeans with a Purpose

## SJRC Texas

This facility, located in Bulverde, San Antonio, and New Braunfels, TX, was established nearly 40 years ago. Their programs provide emergency placement, therapeutic residential foster care, pregnant and parenting teen services, Parents as Teachers program, community-based foster care services, training, and adoption services. The crisis center's website and contact information can be found [here](#).

*Mission:* To offer healing and hope to children and families affected by abuse, abandonment, or neglect.

*Vision:* Abuse and neglected children will be empowered to grow up to be happy, productive, and caring adults.



of sexual assault and other sex offenses, as well as agencies that provide services to survivors. The SASTF also includes other members as designated by the Steering Committee.

The SASTF held its inaugural meeting in Austin at the [Texas State Capitol](#) on February 6, 2020. The meeting included discussions on the structure and vision for the task force, and served as a kick-off for phase one of the task force—which will include the development of best practices for the collection, preservation, tracking, analysis, and destruction of evidence in sexual assault cases.

The work of the SASTF is divided into five project areas: forensic exams and evidence kits; policies and best practices for the prevention, investigation and prosecution of sexual assault; training and resources for law enforcement, prosecutors and judges; improvements to the collection and reporting of data related to sexual assault; and a statewide inventory of resources for survivors.

The task force will meet quarterly, with working group sessions in between. HB 1590 authorized the work of the task force for four years.

The first SASTF report, which will detail the work of the SASTF in its first year, will be presented to Governor Abbott and the Texas State Legislature on November 1, 2020.

**The task force includes representatives from the following organizations and agencies:**

[Office of the Governor\\*](#)

[Texas Association Against Sexual Assault\\*](#)

[Children's Advocacy Centers of Texas\\*](#)

[Office of the Attorney General](#)

[Texas Health and Human Services Commission](#)

[Texas Commission on Law Enforcement](#)

[Texas Forensic Science Commission](#)

[Texas Department of Public Safety \(DPS\) Crime Lab](#)

[Texas Association of Crime Laboratory Directors](#)

[Texas District and County Attorneys Association](#)

[Texas Society of Pathologists](#)

[International Association of Forensic Nurses Texas Chapter](#)

[Plano Police Department](#)

[North Richland Hills Police Department](#)

[Texas DPS Education, Training, and Research](#)

[Texas A&M College of Nursing](#)

[Austin's SAFE Alliance](#)

[Project Beloved](#)

*\*Member of the Steering committee*

**The Lone Star State will continue to support the courageous survivors of sexual assault, prevent and combat this heinous crime, and ensure a brighter future for all Texans.**

## 48 Hours: The Life and Death of Amie Harwick

In this recent 48 Hours episode, Erin Moriarty reports an investigation into the death of 38-year-old Hollywood therapist, Amie Harwick. Did the system do enough to protect her from alleged killer, Gareth Pursehouse? Her former fiancé, Drew Carey, calls for updated laws.

The 48 Hours episode trailer can be viewed [here](#), or the full episode can be viewed [here](#).

# RELEVANT RELEASES

## Consent: A Memoir of Unwanted Attention

In this book, Donna Freitas delivers a forensic examination of the years she spent stalked by her professor, and uses her nightmarish experience to examine the ways in which we stigmatize, debate, and attempt to understand consent today.

The book trailer can be viewed [here](#), or you may purchase the book [here](#).

## The Left Ear

Hosted by actress Dakota Johnson, The Left Ear is a podcast that features stories of assault, abuse, and harassment from survivors around the globe—no judgments, no editorializing, just listening. The Left Ear functions as an introduction into non-judgmental listening, and a space of refuge and healing for the survivors who called in droves in order to finally share their stories. In an effort to respect and protect the individuals, the stories will remain anonymous and the voices will be slightly altered.

The Left Ear can be listened to [here](#).



# ALLIES

AGAINST SLAVERY

## LIGHTHOUSE

in partnership with



[Allies Against Slavery](#) recently announced a new partnership with [AnnieCannons](#), an organization that works to transform survivors of trafficking and gender-based violence into software professionals. The Official Announcement can be read [here](#).



COFFEE. CALLING.

[A 2nd Cup](#) was established in 2012 to raise awareness of human trafficking issues in Houston, TX—and to develop resources that help create a second chance for survivors. A 2nd Cup was envisioned as a place where people could organize, collaborate, make an impact—or just make themselves at home in a modern café setting. They offer gourmet drinks, knowledgeable baristas and a spacious, relaxed atmosphere—all centrally located in the heart of The Heights. They're proud to offer a space that brings people together. They're proud to be a force for change in Houston. And they're proud to serve coffee with a cause. Find out more [here](#).



## Bo's Place

[Bo's Place](#) exists to offer support and community to those who have experienced the death of a loved one to share their stories, memories, experiences, thoughts, and feelings. A non-profit, free-of-charge bereavement center, Bo's Place offers multiple grief support services for adults, children, and families, and provides education and resources for those who assist people in grief. Bo's Place offers the only free on-going grief support program in the greater Houston area for children and their families. Find out more [here](#).



# Uber US Safety Report 2017—2018

In December of 2019, [Uber](#) released a US Safety Report related to data on safety incidents (i.e. traffic fatalities, sexual assault, etc.) reported in 2017 and 2018. Uber states that nearly 6,000 sexual assault cases were reported amongst those two years. From this, Uber is committed to taking numerous steps to improve safety for their drivers and passengers. The full report can be read by clicking the Uber logo (left).

“When we receive a report of sexual assault, we immediately remove the accused party’s access to the Uber app while support agents complete a review.”

 Stand up,  
don't stand by.

 NO MORE

## Free Upcoming Trainings/Conferences



### TEXAS SUMMIT *on* GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Formerly known as the *Statewide Training on Violence Against Women*, the Texas Summit on Gender-Based Violence will be hosting its 10th annual conference on August 3rd and 4th, 2020 at [Live! by Loews](#) in Arlington, TX. For more information about the conference, please visit [www.TexasSummitGBV.org](http://www.TexasSummitGBV.org) or call (512) 279-7150 / (512) 279-7155.



### HI TECH & DIGITAL INVESTIGATIONS CONFERENCE

The Hi-Tech & Digital Investigations Conference will be hosting its 2nd annual conference on August 6th and 7th, 2020 at [Live! by Loews](#) in Arlington, TX. For more information about the conference, please visit [www.TexasDIConference.org](http://www.TexasDIConference.org) or call (512) 279-7150 / (512) 279-7155.



### STATEWIDE STRANGULATION TRAINING PROGRAM

The Statewide Strangulation Training Program hosts periodic free trainings around the state of Texas for law enforcement, prosecutors, and victim services. This training focuses on the investigation and prosecution of strangulation cases. Additionally, a new vision for the program is coming soon. For more information about the program, please visit [www.SSTProgram.org](http://www.SSTProgram.org) or email [Brooke.Hinojosa@safvic.org](mailto:Brooke.Hinojosa@safvic.org).

# CALL FOR ASHPHYXIA CASES

**Co-Occurring Criminal Asphyxiation (COCA)** is defined as a criminal fatal or nonfatal assault involving *more than one* type of criminal asphyxiation. Some COCA incidents include poorly understood types of asphyxiation involving the use of water or other fluids to assault, torture, or kill victims.

Although more law enforcement and medical investigators are becoming aware of the physical signs and symptoms of strangulation, this is not yet true for aquatic and other types of criminal asphyxiation.

The first step to combating these crimes is *creating an awareness of their existence* within forensic, medical, and social work communities. The next step is the *creation* of effective, evidence-based, investigative questions and checklists that can be used by COCA-trained law enforcement, medical personnel, forensic interviewers, death investigators, and members of the jurisprudence community to identify cases and provide effective documentation of physical and psychological injuries and scene evidence that otherwise could be overlooked.

Please read more information about COCA cases [here](#).



If you have any cases that seem consistent with COCA cases, please send information to Attorney Kelsey McKay via email [here](#).



- 2 in 5 women experience online sexual harassment.
- 1 in 12 U.S. adults are victims of “revenge porn”.
- 1 in 3 undergraduate women experience cyber-harassment.

- 66% of women feel powerless when abused or harassed online.
- 146% increase in digital abuse calls to the National Domestic Violence Hotline from 2016—2018.
- 96% of all deepfakes feature nonconsensual pornography targeting women.

Check out the latest article by Adam R. Dodge for Medium: [10 Sobering Facts About Online Abuse](#) that are hard to believe.

## TDVAM WEAR ORANGE DAY



February is [Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month](#). On Tuesday, February 11, 2020, the SAFVIC Program, along with [TMPA](#) employees, wore orange to support Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month.

Kelly Forman (left) and Josie Matthias (right) did an excellent job in spreading the message that *everyone* deserves a healthy relationship!

#1 Thing



## EVAWI 2020

Register [here](#) for the 2020 EVAWI Conference hosted in Washington, DC from April 14—16, 2020.

# Weinstein Verdict: A Victory for Survivors

THE JURY DELIVERS A GUILTY VERDICT.



On Monday, February 24, 2020, after days of deliberations, a jury convicted Harvey Weinstein of third-degree rape and first-degree criminal sexual act. Weinstein now awaits sentencing. Weinstein's defense lawyer, Arthur Aidala, told reporters that "[they] will be appealing". Read about it on [RAINN's website here](#).

**"I am thinking about how it took 90 women coming forward for two guilty convictions..." -Ashley Judd**

## Harris County Sheriff's Office Challenge Coin



Recently, the SAFVIC Program Services Specialist, Brooke Balmos-Hinojosa, was gifted a challenge coin from [Harris County Sheriff's Office](#) by Sgt. John Klafka and Dep. Inv. Oscar Cisneros.

The coin represents the work done by investigators and victim advocates in their section. Sgt. Klafka stated that he "wanted to include the background of our state and agency" and help bring awareness to the issues of domestic violence and sexual assault.

The SAFVIC Program is thrilled to have individuals dedicating challenge coins to victims of these crimes.

## Meet Our Newest SAFVIC Program Instructors

From February 24—28, 2020, eight individuals attended the SAFVIC Instructor Course in Austin, TX. All individuals got to learn more about



the SAFVIC Program and were introduced to various experts in the field. Additionally, each individual had to present a PowerPoint presentation to the audience regarding family violence and sexual assault.

Congratulations to all SAFVIC (24 Hour) instructors and the SAFVIC Program looks forward to working alongside each one of you! Welcome to the team.



*Left to Right:* Mauro Matai, Sean Randolph, Oscar Cisneros, Dina Padovan, Audrey Rodriguez, Molly Davis, John Klafka, and Alvino Flores.



# SAFVIC

## Sexual Assault Family Violence INVESTIGATOR COURSE

### About Us

The Sexual Assault Family Violence Investigator Course (SAFVIC) is designed to provide Texas law enforcement officers and telecommunicators with the tools they need to effectively investigate, handle, and prevent sexual assault and family violence. The program is funded by a grant from the [Office of the Texas Governor's Criminal Justice Division](#) and the [U.S. Office on Violence Against Women](#). The program was developed in 2001 by a statewide steering committee composed of representatives from law enforcement, prosecution, and victim services. The SAFVIC Program uses a network of certified trainers to deliver trainings on a local basis, enabling accessibility to participate in this pivotal training.

### Contact Us

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Fax: (512) 454-8860

Interested in hosting a SAFVIC? Click [here](#) or scan the code on the right.



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