



HARRIS COUNTY SEXUAL ASSAULT RESPONSE TEAM

2nd Biennial Report 2023-2025

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Since its inception, individuals and organizations across disciplines have contributed to both the development and the ongoing sustainability of the Harris County Sexual Assault Response Team (HCSART) infrastructure. Their continued leadership, expertise, and collaboration have been essential to ensuring that protocols are not only followed but also continuously reviewed, refined, and strengthened over time.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the Harris County Commissioners Court, with special appreciation to Adrian Garcia, Harris County Commissioner for Precinct 2, for his unwavering commitment to adult survivors of sexual assault and for leading the charge in establishing and sustaining the Harris County Sexual Assault Response Team.

We also thank the Office of County Administration, formerly the Justice Administration Department (JAD), with special recognition of Veronyka James, Ph.D., now serving as Senior Policy Advisor in the Office of the Harris County Judge Lina Hidalgo, for her continued leadership, policy expertise, and enduring support of the Harris County SART since its inception.

Our appreciation extends to the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) for its ongoing advocacy, guidance, and technical resources, which have been instrumental in supporting the implementation, review, and continuous strengthening of HCSART protocols and practices.

We are deeply grateful to the Houston and Harris County leaders across each represented discipline for their continued commitment to collaboration and for supporting staff in the shared responsibility of maintaining a coordinated, survivor-centered sexual assault response. We also recognize the core members of the Harris County Sexual Assault Response Team, both those who have served since its inception and those who have joined over time, whose expertise, experience, and knowledge make this work possible. Their dedication to survivor safety, offender accountability, protocol fidelity, continuous improvement, and collective problem-solving reflects the strength of a truly multidisciplinary response. Without the commitment and partnership of leaders and members across Houston and Harris County, this coordinated effort to support survivors and strengthen system response would not be possible.

We extend our sincere appreciation to Kajuana Webb of the Houston Area Women's Center for managing logistics, documenting meetings, and helping organize HCSART's work. We also recognize Priscilla Gray, who began as an intern from the University of Houston and continued her involvement after graduation, supporting meeting documentation, development of a welcome and onboarding packet, and creation of the team's website. Their dedication has helped strengthen HCSART's infrastructure and ongoing work.

Finally, we honor survivors for their courage and leadership in sharing their experiences. Their voices remain central to this work and continue to guide and inform the ongoing evolution of systems designed to promote safety, healing, and justice. Their strength, insight, and willingness to engage help shape a more responsive, accountable, and survivor-centered community.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sexual violence is a public health crisis affecting 6.3 million Texans, 33.2% of adults, over their lifetime.¹ Sexual assault remains significantly underreported and affects individuals across all communities. Survivors deserve access to justice, resources, compassion, and respect when engaging in services and navigating the criminal justice system. Sexual assault is a profoundly traumatic experience with both immediate and long-term impacts on survivors, highlighting the importance of coordinated, survivor-centered systems of response and support, as well as prevention.

In the 21st century, attention to sexual violence has increased due in part to the sustained efforts of rape crisis programs, college campuses, social media advocacy, legislative action, and the work of local, state, and federal advocacy organizations committed to advancing survivor-centered policy, accountability, and systems reform. These efforts have been further strengthened by the expansion of specialized units and system-based advocates within law enforcement and district attorney offices, the continued leadership of community-based advocacy programs, and advances in medical forensic services. Despite these gains, sexual violence persists within a broader culture that too often blames survivors and continues to struggle to consistently hold those who commit sexual assault accountable.

The Harris County Sexual Assault Response Team (HCSART) was established on November 10, 2021, to ensure a coordinated, survivor-centered, multidisciplinary response to adult sexual assault in compliance with SB 476. Led by Commissioner Adrian Garcia and the Harris County Commissioners Court, the team is administered by the Houston Area Women's Center (HAWC), which provides coordination and support. This report represents HCSART's second biennial report and reflects continued implementation and refinement of its work.

Consistent with statutory requirements and guidance from the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA), adult survivors are at the center of Harris County's multidisciplinary response to sexual assault. The mission of the Harris County Sexual Assault Response Team is to provide a multidisciplinary, collaborative response to all survivors of sexual assault that is individualized and trauma-informed; increases safety; promotes continuity of care; supports and empowers survivors; and holds offenders accountable within a fair and just system. HCSART's vision is to create a safe, equitable, and violence-free society where all lives are valued and respected.

Since the publication of the initial report, HCSART has continued to build upon its foundational work through ongoing review and strengthening of established protocols. The team exceeded the required meeting frequency by convening monthly, creating regular and structured opportunities for cross-disciplinary dialogue, collaborative problem-solving, and shared accountability. These efforts have strengthened inter-agency coordination and reinforced an integrated, systems-based approach to sexual assault response.

The team also has remained intentional about continuously refining current protocols. While each participating entity maintains strong internal protocols, HCSART has worked collaboratively to examine shared pain points, particularly key survivor touchpoints across systems, and to ensure ongoing alignment in

1 Busch-Armendariz, N., et al. (2015). Health and Well-being: Texas statewide sexual assault prevalence study. Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, School of Social Work, The University of Texas at Austin. <https://sites.utexas.edu/idvsa/files/2019/03/TX-SA-Prevalence-Study-Final-Report.pdf>.

how agencies respond when survivors seek support. Recognizing both areas of strength and opportunities for improvement, the team continues to deepen coordination across systems to ensure a more seamless and consistent survivor experience.

Training remained a core priority throughout the reporting period, including cross-disciplinary education on trauma-informed care, vicarious trauma, system accountability, and multidisciplinary collaboration. During the biennium, HCSART exceeded the mandated training hours through intentional cross-training designed to increase knowledge and shared understanding among multidisciplinary partners to better support survivors of sexual assault. Training strengthened understanding of trauma and its impact on survivor engagement, clarified the role of community-based advocates, and enhanced multidisciplinary knowledge of forensic evidence, drug-facilitated sexual assault, and investigative processes.

These efforts strengthened relationships among multidisciplinary partners and helped identify opportunities for continued improvement in the coordinated response to sexual assault. They supported dialogue, increased shared understanding across advocacy, healthcare, law enforcement, forensic, and prosecutorial systems, and reinforced the importance of consistent, trauma-informed, survivor-centered practices. Collectively, this work strengthened collaboration, informed ongoing protocol development, and reinforced the foundation for continued system effectiveness and offender accountability.

As part of its continued evolution and commitment to accountability, the Harris County Sexual Assault Response Team (HCSART) operates under its established governance structure, including an Executive Committee that supports shared leadership, continuity, and effective coordination across disciplines. The current Executive Committee includes Sonia Corrales, Presiding Officer and Deputy CEO of the Houston Area Women's Center; Wykeshia Dixon, Vice Chair and Deputy Director of Bay Area Turning Point; Sally Henin, MD, CMQ, FACEP, Secretary and Chief of Medical Operations for Forensic Nursing Services of Memorial Hermann Health System; Amy Castillo, Member-at-Large and Chief Operating Officer of the Houston Forensic Science Center; and Lieutenant John A. Klafka, Member-at-Large of the Criminal Investigations Bureau of the Harris County Sheriff's Office.

Tiffany Larsen, Immediate Past Vice Chair and former Chief of Adult Sex Crimes and Human Trafficking of the Harris County District Attorney's Office, is acknowledged for her leadership and contributions during this reporting period. She transitioned out of her role with the Harris County District Attorney's Office and the Harris County Sexual Assault Response Team in October 2024.

In addition to the Executive Committee, HCSART members demonstrated leadership by chairing and actively participating in standing and ad hoc committees and workgroups aligned with the team's core functions and statutory responsibilities. These committees and workgroups included Membership, Nominating, Data, Training, Survivor Engagement, and Case Review. Committee and workgroup leads played a critical role in advancing the team's work between full SART meetings and ensuring progress on recommendations outlined in prior reports.

The team strengthened the inclusion of survivor voices by developing a survivor engagement survey and enhancing the case review protocol. This work was intentionally paced to protect survivor confidentiality, ensure data integrity, and support the ethical use of information. The case review process is designed to assess whether HCSART partner agencies are adhering to established protocols and to identify opportunities for system improvement. Case reviews are scheduled to begin in early 2026.

HCSART ensured ongoing compliance with SB 476 by maintaining required membership, documenting protocols, and preparing biennial reports for Commissioners Court. The team also incorporated a review of requirements under SB 47 and SB 608, including new biennial reporting elements related to the handling and timeliness of sexual assault forensic evidence. This includes data on Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) exams and associated forensic evidence not picked up or transferred within statutory timelines.

For this biennial reporting period, the Harris County Sexual Assault Response Team (HCSART) again expanded its multidisciplinary data collection to better understand the landscape of sexual violence and strengthen a coordinated, survivor-centered response. While sexual assault remains widely underreported, data shared by HCSART partners provides important insight into both the scope of sexual violence in Harris County and the range of services available to survivors.

The data below reflects key points along a survivor's journey, from reporting and investigation to medical care, advocacy, and case outcomes, illustrating how multiple systems intersect to respond to sexual violence in Harris County.

Across the reporting periods shown, participating law enforcement agencies received **4,709** reports of sexual assault and conducted **3,866** investigations. As part of these investigative processes, **1,759** adult forensic interviews were conducted by trained, non-law enforcement professionals in a trauma-informed, neutral setting to document survivor statements and support investigations. During the same period, prosecutors filed **665** charges, with **602** indictments returned and **349** convictions secured.

Forensic laboratories received **3,528** sexual assault kits for testing and completed testing on **3,848** kits, while healthcare providers conducted more than 3,300 forensic medical exams for adult survivors.

Advocacy services remain a critical component of the coordinated response. During this period, system-based victim services programs served **3,485** survivors, supporting survivors in navigating the criminal justice system, while community-based sexual assault programs served **4,008** survivors, provided **1,125** hospital accompaniments, and responded to **11,957** hotline calls and chats, offering **24-hour access** to confidential crisis intervention, advocacy, safety planning, and connection to services.

Together, the data illustrate both the scale of sexual violence and the coordinated response across law enforcement, forensic laboratories, healthcare providers, prosecutors, and advocacy organizations. HCSART remains committed to strengthening collaboration, improving data collection, and ensuring survivors have access to the full continuum of care, support, and justice options so they can make informed choices about their path forward.

As part of its continued efforts to improve access to information and system transparency, HCSART will finalize and launch its website in 2026. The website will serve as a centralized resource for survivors, professionals, and community members, providing clear information about available services, system roles, and what survivors can expect when engaging with different parts of the response system.

This report reflects progress on prior recommendations and incorporates them throughout, including interagency coordination, survivor engagement, offender accountability, governance development, data and reporting, and sustainability. The findings and system observations presented in this report inform the focus areas outlined below, which will guide HCSART’s work in the next biennium.

NEXT BIENNIUM FOCUS AREAS

- Develop and implement a unified, survivor-centered protocol
- Establish sustainable funding to support long-term coordination and operations
- Finalize and launch the HCSART website
- Strengthen cross-system data coordination
- Expand cross-disciplinary training on collaboration and conflict resolution
- Elevate survivor voice to inform system learning and improvement
- Meet more frequently than required to identify system gaps and opportunities
- Strengthen HCSART’s role as a central forum for multidisciplinary decision-making and systems change
- Ensure ongoing compliance with applicable legislation
- Establish and sustain a continuous improvement process

EXTENT OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

According to the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), in 2024, there were an estimated 126,888 rapes² reported to law enforcement.³ However, this may underestimate the extent of sexual assault since many survivors do not report their victimization to law enforcement. Only about 23.6% of survivors of rape/sexual assault reported their victimization to law enforcement in 2024 nationwide.⁴

Other research has attempted to examine sexual assault and get a better estimate of the extent of this victimization. An estimated 1 in 5 women in the United States (or 25.5 million women) reported a completed or attempted rape at some point during their lifetime.⁵ For men in the United States, approximately 27.6 million (or 24.8%) experienced some form of sexually violent contact in their lifetime.⁶ However, these still underestimate the extent of sexual assault. Even if the actual extent of sexual assault is not known, it is a serious problem affecting many individuals, and there needs to be better responses for survivors.

2 This is the revised definition used by the UCR. “The revised UCR definition of rape is penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim. Attempts or assaults to commit rape are also included in the statistics presented here; however, statutory rape and incest are excluded” (<https://le.fbi.gov/cjis-division/cjis-link/ucr-program-changes-definition-of-rape>).

3 <https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#/pages/explorer/crime/query>;
<https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#/pages/explorer/crime/crime-trend>.

4 Tapp, S. & Coen, E. (2025). Criminal victimization, 2024. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/cv24.pdf>.

5 Smith, S. G., Zhang, X., Basile, K. C., Merrick, M. T., Wang, J., Kresnow, M. J., & Chen, J. (2018). The national intimate partner and sexual violence survey: 2015 data brief—updated release. <https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/60893>

6 Smith, et al., 2018.

In Texas, in 2024, there were 11,453 rapes reported to law enforcement.⁷ Yet, again, this is only capturing those cases reported to law enforcement, so this would still underestimate the actual extent of the crime. In Harris County, in 2024, there were 3,172 rapes reported to law enforcement.⁸

The Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) estimates that more than 2 out of 3 sexual assaults go unreported. Further, of sexual assault incidents not reported, 20% of victims stated their reason for doing so was fear of retaliation, and 13% believed the police would not do anything to help. These barriers persist even when survivors do seek justice: investigations and the court process can be re-traumatizing, arrest rates are low for reported sexual assault, case outcomes do not always result in jail time for the offender, survivor experiences with courts are not survivor-centered, and many survivors are not provided with connections to long-term stabilization support.

SART OVERVIEW

LEGAL MANDATE

Senate Bill 476, enacted by the 87th Texas Legislature and effective September 1, 2021, requires Texas counties to establish multidisciplinary Adult Sexual Assault Response Teams. Under this statute, response teams are responsible for developing county- or region-wide interagency protocols that are sensitive and responsive to the needs of adult survivors of sexual assault, as set forth in the Texas Local Government Code, Chapter 351, Subchapter J, §351.251. In alignment with these statutory responsibilities, the Harris County Sexual Assault Response Team (HCSART) stays abreast of and monitors new and evolving legal mandates and incorporates applicable requirements into its policies, protocols, and coordinated response practices, with guidance from the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA)

ABOUT SEXUAL ASSAULT RESPONSE TEAMS

Survivors of sexual assault have traditionally not received the best treatment by the criminal justice system. In recognition of improving the treatment of sexual assault survivors, the use of Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs) was first developed in the 1970s. These were created to improve the community response to sexual assault. SARTs are community-level interventions that provide a holistic and collaborative approach to responding to and treating survivors of sex crimes. “Many SARTs adopt a ‘victim-centered’ philosophy in their work, meaning their fundamental priorities are to ensure victims’ choices regarding their participation in these systems are respected, and all victims are treated with sensitivity and consideration by all systems.”⁹ Currently, there are hundreds of SARTs in the United States.¹⁰

7 Texas Department of Public Safety (2025). Crime in Texas, 2024. <https://www.dps.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/crimereports/24/2024cit.pdf>.

8 Not all departments reported data for all months in 2024 within the Texas Department of Public Safety (TX DPS) data. Thus, these data are an underestimation of the exact extent of sexual assault in the County, <https://www.dps.texas.gov/section/crime-records/crime-texas>.

9 Greeson, M. & Campbell, R. (2012). Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs): An empirical review of their effectiveness and challenges to successful implementation. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, p. 84

10 Greeson & Campbell, 2012; Greeson, M. R., Campbell, R., & Bybee, D. (2015). Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) Functioning and Effectiveness: Findings from the national SART project. https://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/2015-05/publication_researchbrief_sexual-assault-response-team-functioning-effectiveness.pdf

These teams include individuals from different disciplines, community organizations, and criminal justice system agencies such as law enforcement, forensic nurse examiners, victim advocates, and prosecutors.¹¹ “SARTs work together as a group for the welfare and benefit of the victim in an attempt to eliminate confusion, anxiety, and negative experiences.”¹² These teams also work to ensure survivors receive the necessary services at every stage of their case (i.e., from report to final disposition) and that survivors are treated with respect and dignity.

There is variation in the way SARTs work and many different ways of operating a SART. Some are highly formalized collaborative groups, while others rely on informal information sharing and relationship building with the various systems. Many facilitate cross-disciplinary training to understand roles and share knowledge. Most “engage in regular collaborative meetings [which] may be used to discuss issues with their community’s response to sexual assault, delineate the desired response, create ways to implement and institutionalize the desired response (e.g., training responders, adopting policies, and protocols), and create accountability to the desired response.”¹³ SARTs also vary in their organizational structure. Most have a formal leader to facilitate and coordinate meetings, though not all do. Even though SARTs vary in organization and operation, their core mission is the same: to prioritize victims’ needs and improve community response to sexual assault.¹⁴ Although there is limited research on the effectiveness of SARTs, one study found that improvements associated with the SART included shorter reporting delays, more types of forensic evidence collected, higher arrest rates, high victim participation in the criminal justice system, and higher charging rates. There are mixed results on whether having a SART impacts conviction rates with some indicating they did not make a difference while others find SARTs help to increase conviction rates.¹⁵ Additionally, “studies have yet to ask the victims themselves about their experiences to see whether from their perspective, the SART has had a positive impact.”¹⁶

WHY A SART IS NEEDED

Two out of three sexual assaults will go unreported to law enforcement.¹⁷ Additionally, research by the University of Texas-Austin showed that only 9.2 percent of Texans reported their assault to law enforcement, and even less to other service providers, consistent with other national findings on reporting.¹⁸ Many survivors do not seek formal services following victimization either because they are not aware of these services, fear the systems will not be helpful or will be hurtful to their well-being, or believe the services are inaccessible. Even for those who report their victimization to law enforcement, many survivors live without feeling safe or supported enough to seek services and assistance. Additionally, “survivors who do seek help are often denied services, treated negatively, and inadequately supported

11 Marcum, C. & Richards, T. (2015). *Sexual victimization: Then and now*. SAGE Publications

12 Marcum & Richards, 2015, p. 47; National Sexual Violence Resource Center [NSVRC], 2011

13 Greeson & Campbell, 2012, p. 84

14 Greeson and Campbell, 2012; NSVRC, 2011; Moylan, C., Lindhorst, T., & Tajima, E. (2017). Contested discourses in multi-disciplinary sexual assault response teams (SARTs). *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 32(1), 3-22. doi:10.1177/0886260515585530

15 Greeson, Campbell, & Bybee, 2015; Moylan, Lindhorst, & Tajima, 2017

16 Greeson, Campbell, & Bybee, 2015, p. 7

17 <https://www.rainn.org/statistics/criminal-justice-system>

18 Texas Association Against Sexual Assault [TAASA], 2021; University of Texas at Austin, Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (2015). *Health and wellbeing: Texas statewide sexual assault prevalence study*. <https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/bitstream/handle/2152/32721/idvsa-2015-texas-statewide-sexual-assault-prevalence.pdf?sequence=2>

by systems personnel.”¹⁹ Further, even of those assaults that are reported to law enforcement, many perpetrators are not held accountable for their actions. Case outcomes for sexual assault are very poor. A recent study showed that even for those who reported, there was only a 19 percent arrest rate, with 6 percent pleading guilty and 2 percent going to trial.²⁰ Conviction rates for sexual assault are also low with only 7-16% of cases resulting in the incarceration of the offender.²¹ In order to empower survivors with choice, it is incumbent upon the government systems stakeholders to create policies and procedures that are trauma-informed and survivor-centered. With coordination of services, such as with a SART, this provides opportunities to improve response to survivors and their cases, improve help-seeking rates, legal outcomes, and survivors’ experiences with the criminal justice system.

HARRIS COUNTY SEXUAL ASSAULT RESPONSE TEAM

Since its establishment, the Harris County Sexual Assault Response Team (HCSART) has remained active in fulfilling its statutory responsibilities. On October 12, 2021, Harris County Commissioners Court approved a motion by Commissioner Adrian Garcia directing the Justice Administration Department (JAD) to coordinate with stakeholders to establish a Sexual Assault Response Team in compliance with SB 476, authored by Senator Jane Nelson.

JAD was directed to return to Commissioners Court with recommended inaugural members and to support the formal launch of the team. On November 10, 2021, Commissioners Court formally established HCSART and designated the Houston Area Women’s Center (HAWC) as the administrative entity, responsible for coordination and administrative support. HAWC convened the first SART meeting on November 19, 2021, in advance of the statutory deadline.

On January 21, 2022, Sonia Corrales was elected by the team to serve as Presiding Officer. Since that time, HCSART has continued to advance its work and meet its statutory responsibilities throughout the biennium.

PURPOSE AND CHARGE

In 2021, the 87th Texas Legislature passed SB 476, requiring every county in Texas to form an adult Sexual Assault Response Team (SART). A SART is comprised of community partners, including law enforcement, advocates, and healthcare providers, who bring subject matter expertise to improve the coordinated, trauma-informed response to adult survivors of sexual violence.

Now in its **second biennium**, the Harris County Sexual Assault Response Team (HCSART) has continued to strengthen a multidisciplinary, survivor-centered approach by bringing together system stakeholders with subject matter expertise to support a coordinated and trauma-informed response to adult sexual assault. During this reporting period, HCSART developed, maintained, and refined countywide interagency protocols that guide the coordinated response to adult sexual assault across Harris County.

19 Greeson, M. & Campbell, R. 2012, p. 83.

20 Morabito, M., Williams, L., & Pattavina, A. (2019). Decision making in sexual assault cases: Replication research on sexual violence case attrition in the U.S. <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/252689.pdf>

21 Greeson & Campbell, 2012

These protocols establish shared policies, procedures, and agreements designed to identify system gaps and opportunities, promote continuous improvement, clearly define roles and responsibilities, and strengthen collaboration among response partners. The protocols supplement individual agency policies and procedures and are made available to participating law enforcement agencies and treatment providers throughout Harris County. In developing and revising the protocols, HCSART considers applicable provisions of Chapter 56A of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure and incorporates guidance from the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault

MEMBERS

In accordance with Senate Bill 476, the Harris County Sexual Assault Response Team, HCSART, established a multidisciplinary response team composed of practitioners and individuals with subject matter expertise in responding to and providing services for survivors of sexual violence. The Harris County Commissioners Court appointed the inaugural HCSART members listed below. This list includes individuals who participated on behalf of their respective agencies, as well as members who were added subsequently and former members.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR OF A SEXUAL ASSAULT PROGRAM

HOUSTON AREA WOMEN’S CENTER (HAWC)

- Sonia Corrales, Deputy Chief Executive Officer — Appointed Member
- Emilee Whitehurst, President & CEO — Former Member
- Leticia Manzano, Director of Violence Prevention & Training — Member
- Celinda Guerra, Director of Hotline & Crisis Intervention — Member
- Kajuana Webb, Administrative Assistant — Member
- Priscilla Gray, Intern, University of Houston — Member

BAY AREA TURNING POINT, INC.

- Brenda Sykes, Executive Director — Appointed Member
- Wykesha Dixon, Deputy Director — Appointed Member
- Crystal Franklin, Sexual Assault Coordinator — Member

THE BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATERS, INC.

- Olivia Rivers, CEO/Executive Director — Appointed Member
- Kristi Wheelless, Advocacy Manager — Member
- Clarita Gonzalez, Advocacy Director — Member

FAMILYTIME CRISIS & COUNSELING CENTER

- Christina J. Allen, JD, Chief Executive Officer — Appointed Member
- Robin Gandara, Director of Client Services — Member

A PROSECUTOR WITH JURISDICTION OVER ADULT SEXUAL ASSAULT CASES IN THE COUNTY

HARRIS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY’S OFFICE

- James Gordon, Chief of Adult Sex Crimes, Harris County District Attorney’s Office — Appointed Member

- Tiffany Larsen, Chief of Adult Sex Crimes and Human Trafficking Division, Harris County District Attorney's Office — Former Appointed Member
- Celeste Byrom (Back-up), Division Chief and Director of Victim Services Division, Harris County District Attorney's Office — Former Appointed Member
- Denise Oncken, Bureau Chief of Special Victims and Mental Health Bureau, Harris County District Attorney's Office — Former Member
- Janna Oswald, Division Chief of Adult Sex Crimes and Human Trafficking Division, Harris County District Attorney's Office (replaced Johna Stallings, former Division Chief) — Former Member
- Angela Weltin, Bureau Chief, Special Victims Bureau, Harris County District Attorney's Office (replaced Denise Oncken, former Bureau Chief) — Member
- Lisa Calligan, Division Chief, Adult Sex Crimes Division, Harris County District Attorney's Office (replaced Janna Oswald, former Division Chief) — Member

THE CHIEF OF THE LARGEST MUNICIPAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY, IF ONE EXISTS, OR THEIR DESIGNEE

HOUSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

- Elizabeth R. Lorenzana, Captain, Special Victims Division — Appointed Member
- Julie Pleasant, Police Administrator, Victim Services Division — Appointed Member
- Olga Gonzalez, Lieutenant, Victim Services Division — Member
- Adrian Jones, Lieutenant, and Tamika Davis, Lieutenant, Special Victims Division, Adult Sex Crimes Unit — Member
- Meulen Bajo, Senior Victim Advocate, Victim Services Division — Member

THE SHERIFF OF THE COUNTY, OR THEIR DESIGNEE

HARRIS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

- John Klafka, Lieutenant, Criminal Investigations Bureau, Adult Special Crimes Section — Appointed Member
- Tommy Smith, Sergeant, Criminal Investigations Bureau, Adult Special Crimes Section, Adult Sex Crimes Unit — Appointed Member
- Teresita Castro, Sergeant, Criminal Investigations Bureau, Adult Special Crimes Section, Adult Sex Crimes Unit — Appointed Member
- Oscar Cisneros, Detective, Criminal Investigations Bureau, Adult Special Crimes Section, Adult Sex Crimes Unit — Appointed Member
- Vivian Hernandez, Victim Advocate, Criminal Investigations Bureau, Victim Assistance Unit — Member

OTHER LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

PASADENA POLICE DEPARTMENT

- Scott Michael, Sergeant, Family Violence Division — Member
- Mercedes Santillanes, Crime Victim Liaison — Member

A SEXUAL ASSAULT NURSE EXAMINER / MEDICAL FORENSIC EXAMINER WHO PROVIDES EXAMS WITHIN THE COUNTY (OR REPRESENTATIVE OF THE LARGEST HEALTHCARE PROVIDER)

MEMORIAL HERMANN HEALTH SYSTEM — FORENSIC NURSING SERVICES

- Sally Henin, MD, CMQ, FACEP, Chief of Medical Operations — Appointed Member
- Jamie Ferrell, MBA, BSN, RN, CA/CP-SANE, SANE-A, SANE-P, DF-IAFN, F-AAFS, Director, Forensic Nursing — Appointed Member

HARRIS HEALTH — FORENSIC NURSING

- Sandra Sanchez, PhD, RN, SANE-A, SANE-P, AFN-C, Forensic Program Nursing Director — Appointed Member
- Joslyn “Joey” Fisher, MD, MPH, Co-Medical Director, Harris Health System Forensic Nursing Program and VIVA — Member

TXFNE: FORENSIC CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

- Khara Breeden, DNP, MS, RN, SANE-A, SANE-P, AFN-BC, Chief Executive Officer — Appointed Member
- Dani Hernandez, AFI Coordinator — Member
- Amanda Amore, MSN, RN, SANE-A, SANE-P, CA/CP-SANE, Clinical Director — Member
- Brookley Delbosque, MBA, BSN, RN, SANE-A, SANE-P, CA/CP-SANE, Chief Operating Officer — Member

HOUSTON METHODIST — FORENSIC NURSING SERVICES

- Andrea Cressy, MSN, RN, CEN, SANE-A, Forensic Nursing Program Director — Member
- Dr. Jasmine Bookert, Forensic Nursing Medical Director — Member

A MENTAL OR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROVIDER WITHIN THE COUNTY (OR REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT)

THE HARRIS CENTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND IDD

- Wayne Young, Chief Executive Officer — Appointed Member
- Jennifer Battle, The Harris Center for Mental Health and IDD — Member

OTHER PERSONS OR PROFESSIONALS THE SART CONSIDERS NECESSARY FOR THE OPERATION OF THE RESPONSE TEAM

HOUSTON FORENSIC SCIENCE CENTER

- Amy Castillo, Chief Operating Officer — Appointed Member
- Courtney Head, Manager of Forensic Biology — Appointed Member

HARRIS COUNTY INSTITUTE OF FORENSIC SCIENCES

- Katie Welch, Senior Director of Crime Lab Services & Forensic Genetics Director — Member

HARRIS COUNTY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE COORDINATING COUNCIL (HCDVCC)

- Barbie Brashear, Executive Director — Appointed Member
- Amy Smith, Sr. Director of Operations and Communications — Member

HARRIS COUNTY PUBLIC DEFENDER’S OFFICE

- Monica Gonzales, Senior Litigator, Felony Trial Division — Former Appointed Member
- Cheri Duncan, Special Assistant Public Defender — Member

AID TO VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE (AVDA)

- Maisha Colter, Chief Executive Officer— Member

DAYA

- Nusrat Ameen, PhD, Senior Legal Director — Member

ADDITIONAL MEMBERS

The Harris County Sexual Assault Response Team (HCSART) recognizes the value of including additional essential partners to strengthen the coordinated community response to adult sexual assault. These partners may include agencies whose primary role or mandate involves responding to adult survivors of sexual assault, as well as allied professionals whose expertise supports survivor safety, access to services, and system accountability. Consistent with Senate Bill 476, additional members may be included based on the recommendations of the presiding officer and current SART members, and do not require approval from Commissioners Court. To support effective onboarding and consistent engagement, a Welcome Packet for new members was developed by the SART intern, Priscilla Gray, providing an overview of HCSART’s purpose, structure, expectations, and survivor-centered principles.

In addition to members appointed by the Harris County Commissioners Court, member organizations designate representatives to participate in HCSART activities. To support intentional and inclusive engagement, HCSART developed a membership matrix and rubric that establishes various levels of participation and guides the identification of potential new members across multiple disciplines. This framework provides clarity regarding roles, expectations, and engagement and allows the team to adapt to emerging needs and evolving system priorities. We believe that any person or organization whose work aligns with the HCSART mission is welcome to participate in whatever capacity is most appropriate and meaningful.

Since the last biennial report, the HCSART Membership Committee met on an ad hoc basis to review and expand team membership using the established rubric. The committee was led by the Chair, Celinda Guerra of the Houston Area Women’s Center, and included Sandra Sanchez of Harris Health System; Julie Pleasant of the Houston Police Department Victim Services Division; Kristi Wheelless of The Bridge Over Troubled Water; and Dani Hernandez and Amanda Amore of the Texas Forensic Nurse Examin-

ers. Using the membership matrix, the committee invited agencies to participate at appropriate levels of engagement and will continue to recruit new members across sectors. Each level of membership is recognized as essential to the effectiveness and sustainability of HCSART.

Since the last report, HCSART added the following members: DAYA, represented by Nusrat Ameen; Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse (AVDA), represented by Maisha Colter; and the Pasadena Police Department, represented by Scott Michael and Mercedes Santillanes. DAYA provides culturally specific, survivor-centered services and community education to empower South Asian survivors of domestic and sexual violence and to support communities free from family violence. AVDA has served the Houston community for more than 40 years and works to end family violence by advancing survivor safety and self-determination, promoting accountability, and delivering multilingual, life-saving services to survivors and their families.

The Pasadena Police Department serves the City of Pasadena within Harris County and contributes law enforcement expertise to the multidisciplinary response. Sexual assault cases are investigated through the department's Violent Crimes Division, which is responsible for serious offenses and conducts follow-up investigations on cases initially reported by patrol officers. The department's Victim Assistance Program provides access to a Crime Victim Liaison who offers advocacy, support, and connections to community resources for survivors of sexual assault.

Disciplines represented or eligible for participation in HCSART include, but are not limited to, law enforcement, civil legal assistance, sexual assault service providers, healthcare systems, forensic laboratories, clergy, and social service agencies.

VISION, MISSION, AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Harris County SART developed a vision and mission statement and guiding principles that continue to serve as a foundation for the team's work, providing clear parameters for accountability, direction, and focus.

VISION

To create a safe, equitable and violence free society where all lives are valued and respected.

MISSION

To provide a multi-disciplinary collaborative response to all survivors of sexual assault that is individualized, trauma informed, increase safety, promotes continuity of care, support and empowers survivors while holding offenders accountable in a fair and just system.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Harris County SART developed the following Guiding Principles to demonstrate our commitment to providing a trauma-informed, healing-centered response to victim/survivors of sexual assault.

- Upholding victims' rights, including privacy and confidentiality.
- Pursuing justice for victims and the community (regardless of legal outcome)
- Recognizing the experience of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities with the criminal justice system and committing to building trust and providing safety when seeking services

- Honoring cultural, physical, mental, emotional, and language needs of victims
- Valuing victim/survivors' voices within the criminal justice system
- Remaining professional, innovative and curious
- Working with transparency and collaboration
- Communicating effectively, openly and respectfully
- Treating everyone with dignity
- Continuing to improve the response to sexual violence at the individual and systemic levels.
- Ensuring responses are victim-centered and trauma informed.
- Prioritizing the safety and wellbeing of victim/survivors
- Holding offenders accountable
- Recognize that “victim” and “survivor” are terms that are appropriate within the criminal justice system and community-based services.

BYLAWS

Since the inception of the Harris County Sexual Assault Response Team (HCSART), the team has adopted formal bylaws to govern its operations and guide its work. Members intentionally selected a structured governance model and collaboratively developed and adopted these bylaws to support effective coordination and accountability. The bylaws are intended to be a living document and may be reviewed and amended as needed to reflect the evolving needs of the team, legislative requirements, and best practices.

HCSART believes that a clearly defined yet adaptable structure strengthens multidisciplinary collaboration and is essential to improving survivor-centered services and criminal justice outcomes for sexual assault cases in Harris County.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

The Harris County Sexual Assault Response Team (HCSART) is committed to continuously improving the system's response to sexual assault. To formalize this commitment, HCSART developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that establishes shared expectations, roles, and accountability among members. The MOU is intended to strengthen consistency, coordination, and survivor-centered practice across disciplines.

MEETINGS

Since its establishment, the HCSART has consistently met and continued to convene on a regular basis. Although the Harris County Sexual Assault Response Team (HCSART) was required to meet at least quarterly, the team exceeded this requirement by convening monthly. Meetings were held on the third Friday of each month for two hours.

Every effort was made to distribute agendas in advance of each meeting, and minutes were recorded and made available to all members to support transparency, continuity, and accountability. To facilitate broad participation across disciplines and agencies, meetings were offered in a hybrid format, with both in-person and virtual attendance options. This approach supported consistent engagement while accommodating the operational demands of participating organizations, with most members attending meetings either in person and/or virtually throughout the reporting period.

Meeting agendas, minutes, and access to other relevant SART materials were provided to all members through a dedicated Harris County SART Microsoft Teams channel, supporting timely access to infor-

mation and collaboration between meetings. The team also identified opportunities to improve information access for members whose agency security protocols limited connectivity from work-issued devices and actively explored additional methods to ensure consistent and equitable access for all participants.

In addition, standing and ad hoc committees met outside of regularly scheduled SART meetings to advance specific areas of work. Committee meetings supported progress on protocol development and review, data and reporting, training, survivor engagement, case review preparation, membership, and sustainability planning, allowing for more detailed discussion, coordination, and problem-solving beyond full SART convenings.

ADVANCING EQUITY AND JUSTICE

Sexual violence affects people of all genders, ages, abilities, socioeconomic backgrounds, racial identities, and ethnicities. Every survivor faces significant challenges in the aftermath of assault. Survivors from historically marginalized communities often encounter additional stigma, discrimination, and systemic barriers that can compound trauma and make it more difficult to seek support. A survivor's experience of violence is shaped not only by the assault itself but also by how individuals, organizations, and systems respond.

Within the sexual violence field, responses have often been centered on what happens after harm occurs, through crisis intervention, advocacy, and counseling, alongside risk-reduction and awareness efforts. At the same time, many partners within HCSART, including local non-profit sexual assault programs, have long been engaged in efforts to address the conditions that exist before sexual violence occurs through education, prevention, and community-based strategies.

The Harris County Sexual Assault Response Team (HCSART) embraces this full continuum of prevention because achieving equity and justice for all survivors requires both effective support after harm and meaningful efforts to prevent it. HCSART recognizes that a coordinated, collective response is essential to ensuring survivors have access to the safest and most appropriate options available. The team is committed to equitable survivor-centered practice and to strengthening knowledge and skills across partner agencies. Through ongoing collaboration, HCSART works to identify and address policies, practices, and barriers that limit access to care, particularly for those most impacted by marginalization, with the shared goal of creating a more just, equitable, accessible, and effective system for every survivor.

INTERAGENCY INFORMATION SHARING

The Harris County Sexual Assault Response Team (HCSART) is committed to interagency information sharing, in accordance with applicable state and federal law, including provisions outlined in the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), to support the timely exchange of relevant information and strengthen the response to survivors. The team has established processes to ensure informed consent, appropriate releases of information, and the consistent application of confidentiality policies and practices where required, while safeguarding survivor privacy and autonomy.

HCSART considers how each partner agency trains its staff on information-sharing requirements and promotes cross-training among team members to foster a shared understanding of varying legal and organizational standards. Where necessary, partner agencies assess and update internal policies to align

with coordinated response expectations. In addition to complying with the agreements outlined in the Harris County SART protocols, each member agency continues to adhere to its own confidentiality policies and procedures.

MANDATED TRAINING

Pursuant to Section 351.254(c), members of the Harris County Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) are required to complete cross-training related to sexual assault. During the biennium, Harris County SART members exceeded the statutory training requirements through intentional, multidisciplinary training efforts designed to strengthen the collective response to adult sexual assault survivors.

Sexual assault is any act of a sexual nature committed without consent, including sexual harassment, sexual touching, and rape. It is an act of violence, not sex. Many survivors do not report sexual assault to law enforcement due to fear of retaliation, concern about not being believed, or prior negative experiences with systems. Sexual assault has profound and long-term impacts on survivors, affecting their mental, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Survivors often describe a lasting loss of power and control following sexual violence.

For multidisciplinary responders, understanding trauma and its effects on survivor behavior, communication, and decision-making is essential to effective response. Trauma can shape how survivors share information, engage with systems, and access services. Without a trauma-informed approach, survivor responses may be misinterpreted, increasing the risk of unintended harm, re-traumatization, or barriers to justice and healing. For this reason, ongoing, cross-disciplinary training is critical to ensuring responders are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and shared understanding necessary to serve survivors effectively and ethically. Trauma-informed, survivor-centered responses therefore require continuous education and shared learning across disciplines to ensure survivors are met with consistency, understanding, and support at every point of contact.

Understanding sexual violence as a public health issue further strengthens the effectiveness of a multidisciplinary sexual assault response team. This perspective recognizes that sexual violence is not only an individual crime, but a community-wide issue influenced by social norms, attitudes, systems, practices, and access to prevention and response resources. A shared public health framework supports coordinated strategies to raise awareness, shift harmful attitudes, educate communities and jurors, and promote prevention alongside response. Framing sexual violence through a public health lens allows the team to move beyond individual case response toward system-level solutions, strengthening collective accountability and improving outcomes for adult survivors.

Through the Sexual Assault Response Training Series, the Harris County SART Training Committee continues to identify, develop, and coordinate multidisciplinary training opportunities that strengthen the community's response to adult sexual assault survivors. The Training Committee is chaired by Leticia Manzano of the Houston Area Women's Center and includes representatives from key partner agencies, including John Klafka; Oscar Cisneros of the Harris County Sheriff's Office; Amy Castillo of the Houston Forensic Science Center; Jamie Ferrell of Memorial Hermann; Wykeshia Dixon of Bay Area Turning Point; and Sally Henin of Memorial Hermann, as well as former members Desi Rios and Tiffany Larsen.

The following section outlines the trainings delivered through the Sexual Assault Response Training Series and reflects the Harris County SART's continued commitment to cross-disciplinary learning, trauma-informed practice, and a coordinated, survivor-centered response.

TRAINING OVERVIEW

TITLE: UNDERSTANDING VICARIOUS TRAUMA

Presenter: Rebecca Campbell, Ph.D — Professor of Psychology, Michigan State University

A nationally recognized researcher with more than 25 years of experience studying sexual violence and system responses. Dr. Campbell has led major national research initiatives and regularly trains multi-disciplinary professionals.

Format: Three sessions, two hours each

Focus: Supporting responders and preventing burnout

Purpose

This training examined how ongoing exposure to trauma affects professionals who respond to sexual violence and explored strategies individuals and organizations can use to support staff wellbeing and resilience.

Key Topics

- The cumulative impact of trauma exposure
- Effects of vicarious trauma on health, well-being, and job performance
- Strategies to support staff at both individual and organizational levels

TITLE: SEXUAL ASSAULT RESPONSE AND THE ROLE OF ADVOCATES

Presenters:

- Caitlin Sulley, LMSW — Director of Research and Operations, IDVSA, The University of Texas at Austin
- Amanda Elkanick-Oder — Chief Advocacy and Education Officer, Texas Advocacy Project

Both presenters bring extensive experience in survivor services, research, training, and statewide systems coordination.

Format: Three-session series, open to SART members and community partners

Focus: Strengthening multidisciplinary coordination and advocacy

Purpose

This training strengthened understanding of the role of community-based advocates and how advocacy improves survivor experiences within a coordinated, multidisciplinary response.

Learning Objectives

- Understand the role and responsibilities of sexual assault advocates
- Recognize how advocacy impacts survivor outcomes
- Identify the advocate's unique role within multidisciplinary teams
- Apply best practices for collaboration across systems

TITLE: DRUG-FACILITATED SEXUAL ASSAULT (DFSA)

Presenter: Teresa Gray, Ph.D., F-ABFT —Forensic Toxicology Director, Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences

A nationally respected expert in forensic toxicology with extensive experience in sexual assault cases.

Format: Two hours

Focus: Improving investigative and forensic response

Purpose

This training enhanced multidisciplinary understanding of toxicology testing in DFSA cases and clarified evidence collection practices, limitations, and result interpretation.

Key Topics

- Fundamentals of forensic toxicology
- Common substances used in DFSA
- Local case trends in Houston and Harris County
- Evidence collection best practices
- Challenges and limitations in DFSA testing

TITLE: FORENSIC BIOLOGY / DNA

Presenter: Courtney Head — Manager of Forensic Biology, Houston Forensic Science Center

Format: Two hours

Focus: Improving investigative and forensic response

Purpose

This training enhanced multidisciplinary understanding of Forensic Biology/DNA testing in Houston Forensic Science Center cases and clarified evidence collection practices, limitations, and result interpretation.

Key Topics

- Fundamentals of Forensic Biology/DNA and the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS)
- Understanding DNA reports and conclusions issued by Houston Forensic Science Center
- Evidence collection best practices, challenges, and limitations in testing
- New Texas bills associated with CODIS match information

OTHER TRAINING:

To support tailored training across various cities and communities, the Houston Police Department (HPD) and the Houston Area Women's Center (HAWC) co-developed a co-facilitated training for investigators. Grounded in a public health and trauma-informed framework, the training emphasizes multidisciplinary collaboration, survivor engagement, officer credibility, and strong case outcomes in sexual assault investigations.

Through applied instruction and scenario-based learning, investigators gain practical tools to enhance interviewing techniques, documentation, decision-making under stress, and cross-system coordination. SART members can adapt and implement this training to meet the specific needs of their communities while maintaining a consistent standard of investigative excellence. The training can also be tailored for domestic violence investigations.

DATA

For this biennial report, the Harris County Sexual Assault Response Team (HCSART) continued to broaden its data collection to include information from participating disciplines to better understand the landscape of sexual violence in Harris County and center the experiences and needs of survivors. This approach provides a more comprehensive picture of who is accessing services, where gaps may exist, and how systems respond across the county. In addition to the data required by statute, participating partners voluntarily shared additional information from their respective systems to provide a more complete understanding of sexual violence and the coordinated response across disciplines.

The required data included in this report are the number of sexual assaults reported to law enforcement, the number of investigations conducted as a result of those reports, the number of indictments presented in connection with a report and their disposition, and the number of sexual assault reports for which no indictment was presented or an explanation of why that information could not be provided. These data help illustrate how sexual assault cases move through the criminal justice system, recognizing that investigations and prosecutions do not always progress in a linear manner or within a single reporting cycle.

To align with recent legislative changes under Senate Bill 608, HCSART reviewed requirements related to the timeliness of sexual assault forensic evidence pickup and transfer to crime laboratories. While individual partner agencies collect information related to these processes and have informally reported timely practices, and systems exist to track elements of this activity, HCSART was not prepared to report systemwide findings in this biennial report. This is due to the need for additional coordination to identify the most accurate data sources and to establish consistent data collection and verification practices across agencies.

HCSART remains committed to strengthening coordination among partners to support accurate, consistent, and comprehensive reporting in future reports in compliance with statutory requirements.

Building on findings from the previous biennial report, the HCSART Data Committee led a structured effort to better understand ongoing challenges related to sexual assault data across disciplines. The Data Committee, led by Chair Amy Castillo of the Houston Forensic Science Center and composed of Sonia Corrales of the Houston Area Women's Center; Priscilla Gray, University of Houston intern; Elizabeth R. Lorenzana of the Houston Police Department; Oscar Cisneros and Tommy Smith of the Harris County Sheriff's Office; and former member Tiffany Larsen of the Harris County District Attorney's Office, guided this work by facilitating dialogue among SART members, convening regular meetings, and applying the SBAR framework as a shared analytic and problem-solving tool.

Through this process, HCSART identified that partner agencies collect and record sexual assault information differently due to their distinct missions, legal obligations, data systems, confidentiality requirements, and operational workflows. Government agencies, including law enforcement, prosecutors, crime laboratories, and public healthcare systems, often maintain data systems designed to support investigative or statutory reporting requirements. Community-based organizations and other partners, including healthcare providers, may collect data for service delivery, survivor confidentiality protections, grant reporting, or program evaluation purposes. These differences can affect how cases are defined, tracked, and reported across systems.

Ensuring that reported data are limited to adult survivors, defined as individuals 18 years of age and older, is a critical statutory requirement. Variations in how agencies define and count cases, as well as differences in data systems, underscore the need for continued coordination to support consistent identification and reporting of adult-only data across agencies.

The Data Committee also identified opportunities to strengthen consistency across agencies, including aligning data collection practices, improving access to timely and accurate data, and ensuring that data requests better reflect how cases move through investigative, forensic, and prosecutorial systems.

As HCSART continues this work, members are collaborating to better understand these variations and identify opportunities to strengthen consistency, coordination, and overall data quality across agencies. Insights generated through the Data Committee's SBAR process informed both the selection of data included in this report and recommendations to strengthen systemwide data consistency and usability.

The data presented reflect how survivors may engage with multiple systems across Harris County, including law enforcement agencies, forensic interview programs, healthcare providers, forensic laboratories, prosecutors, and advocacy organizations. Harris County is the third most populous county in the United States, and its size and complexity are reflected in the number of agencies operating within it, including dozens of municipal police departments, constable offices, and school district police departments.

Given this scale and the number of agencies involved, data collection and coordination can be challenging, as agencies maintain different data systems and reporting practices. Continued collaboration among HCSART partners remains essential to strengthening data consistency and developing a more comprehensive understanding of sexual violence and system response across the county.

During this reporting period, law enforcement agencies, including the Houston Police Department, Harris County Sheriff's Office, and Pasadena Police Department, received a combined total of 4,709 adult sexual assault reports and conducted 3,866 investigations, reflecting significant investigative activity across the region. As part of these investigative processes, 1,759 adult forensic interviews were conducted by trained non-law enforcement professionals in a trauma-informed, neutral setting to document survivor statements and support investigations. As cases progressed through the criminal justice system, the Harris County District Attorney's Office filed 665 sexual assault charges, resulting in 602 indictments returned and 349 convictions secured. Law enforcement reports and investigations do not necessarily align directly with prosecutorial outcomes within the same timeframe, as cases may take months or years to move through investigation, charging, and resolution.

Healthcare partners also served a substantial number of survivors during the reporting period. Across participating healthcare providers, 3,390 adult sexual assault medical forensic exams were conducted, providing trauma-informed medical care, forensic evidence collection when appropriate, and connections to advocacy and support services. These exams address the immediate health needs of survivors and may support investigative and prosecutorial processes when survivors choose to engage with the criminal justice system.

Forensic laboratories received 3,528 sexual assault kits for testing and completed testing on 3,848 kits, while healthcare providers conducted more than 3,300 forensic medical exams for adult survivors.

Advocacy services remain a critical component of the coordinated response. System-based advocates embedded within law enforcement agencies served 3,485 adult survivors. Community-based sexual assault programs operate 24 hours a day, ensuring survivors have access to confidential support at any time. During this reporting period, these programs served 4,008 adult survivors and responded to 11,957 hotline calls and chats, providing crisis intervention, safety planning, counseling, legal advocacy, medical accompaniment, and connections to resources.

Across Harris County, the coordinated response to sexual violence involves multidisciplinary partners, including law enforcement, prosecutors, healthcare providers, advocacy programs, and mental health organizations. Each partner plays a distinct role while working collaboratively to ensure survivors are connected to appropriate services across systems. Survivors may enter the response through different points, such as law enforcement reporting, medical care, or community-based advocacy services.

The data included in this report provide important insight into the scope of sexual violence and the multidisciplinary response across Harris County, while also highlighting opportunities to strengthen how partners collect, share, and analyze information. Current data reflect the number of survivors served within individual disciplines but do not fully capture how survivors move across systems after initial contact. For example, while the report reflects survivors served by advocacy programs, medical forensic exams completed, and forensic interviews conducted, it is not always possible to determine whether these services were accessed by the same survivor or whether referrals between partners occurred as intended.

This presents an opportunity for HCSART partners to align on how survivor information is tracked across disciplines, helping ensure that survivors are connected to the full range of available services and that each partner understands the role of other agencies within a response that centers survivors' needs. Strengthening coordination and improving the ability to track referrals across systems will help HCSART better understand how survivors move through the response and whether they are successfully connected to services that support their safety, healing, and access to justice. These insights informed the focus areas and recommendations outlined later in this report.

LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

The Houston Police Department and the Harris County Sheriff's Office are the two largest law enforcement agencies serving the region. Harris County is the third most populous county in the United States, and the City of Houston is the fourth largest city in the nation. Reflecting this scale, Harris County is served by dozens of law enforcement agencies.

Since the last biennial report, the Pasadena Police Department has been added as a participating partner and is recognized as an important contributor to the coordinated response. All three agencies included in this report maintain specialized units responsible for investigating sexual assault cases and operate victim services programs that support survivors throughout the investigative process. These agencies also have a long history of collaboration with community-based advocacy organizations, healthcare providers, and other criminal justice partners to strengthen coordinated responses to sexual assault across the region.

This report includes required law enforcement data reflecting activity from September 1, 2023, through August 31, 2025. The data presented include the number of sexual assault and aggravated sexual assault reports received, investigations conducted, indictments presented, and investigations for which no indictment was presented. The report also includes data on victims served by advocates.

In alignment with Senate Bill 608, HCSART continues to strengthen coordination related to the timeliness of forensic evidence handling, with further detail provided in the Data section.

HOUSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Houston Police Department (HPD), the largest municipal law enforcement agency serving the City of Houston and one of the largest in the nation, plays a critical role in responding to sexual assault. The Houston Police Department's Special Victims Division (SVD) manages five investigative units, including the Adult Sex Crimes Unit. The division's mission remains rooted in delivering trauma-informed investigations by framing sexual assault cases through a victim-centered lens. SVD continues to prioritize collaboration with victim support services through HPD's Victim Services Division, forensic partners, and community-based advocacy organizations to ensure survivors are treated with dignity, support, and timely response.

Special Victims Division – Sexual Assault Case Activity

SERVICE CATEGORY	9/1/2023 – 12/31/2023	1/1/2024 – 12/31/2024	1/1/2025 – 8/31/2025	TOTAL
Sexual Assault Reports Received*	984	1,105	666	2,755
Investigations Conducted as a Result of Reports	893	1,016	629	2,538
Indictments Presented (with case disposition)	Not collected	Not collected	Not collected	Not collected
Reports with No Indictment Presented	Not collected	Not collected	Not collected	Not collected

Source: Houston Police Department, Special Victims Division

*Includes aggravated sexual assault.

*Cases received and assigned provided are for victims 17 and older. Currently, SVD does not track indictments.

During the reporting period, the Houston Police Department's Special Victims Division received a total of 2,755 sexual assault reports and conducted 2,538 investigations. While the Harris County Sexual Assault Response Team's (HCSART) goal is to collect and report data specific to victims 18 years of age and older, HPD tracks cases involving victims age 17 and older, and those figures are reflected in the totals above. Additionally, HPD does not track indictments or prosecutorial outcomes; those data are reported separately by the Harris County District Attorney's Office.

These data highlight the scope of sexual assault reporting and investigative activity within the City of Houston and reinforce the importance of coordinated response, survivor-centered investigative practices, and cross-agency data alignment across law enforcement and prosecution partner. In 2024, SVD implemented a restructured case workflow that includes early case triage through a centralized Case Management Unit (CMU) and prompt assignment of incoming reports for investigative follow-up and survivor outreach. This model has resulted in faster engagement, streamlined evidence collection timelines, and improved interagency coordination. In the calendar year 2024, SVD received 1,644 NIBRS-Classi-

fied Sexual Assault Reports. Of the 1,105 reports involving victims aged 17 and older, 1,016 cases were assigned for investigation, a reflection of HPD’s strengthened investigative capacity and focus on early intervention.

While HPD does not track prosecutorial outcomes directly, it continues to maintain strong partnerships with the Harris County District Attorney’s Office and participates in multidisciplinary teams and charging discussions. The department also reports consistent coordination with the Houston Forensic Science Center regarding Sexual Assault Kit (SAK) submissions, as well as collaborative efforts to reduce testing delays and improve turnaround times for key forensic evidence.

HOUSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT- VICTIM SERVICES DIVISION

The Houston Police Department’s Victim Services Division (HPD-VSD) manages seven units, among them is the VSD - Sexual Assault Task Force (SATF). This is a dedicated system-based advocacy task force comprised of Senior Victim Advocates (SVAs) who focus on survivors who have experienced complex crisis and trauma cases. The SVAs are dedicated to positively affecting the lives of sexual assault victims.

These SVAs take the lead on cases where using a trauma-informed, victim-centered approach is critical to survivor engagement, interaction, and recovery. They work hand in hand with survivors and investigators to bridge the gap of trust and explain “what happens next” specifically in the survivor’s case and the overall criminal justice process. SVAs may provide accompaniment during investigative interviews as well as conduct needs and safety assessments at a hospital or residence. They also work closely with various social services and legal agencies within the City of Houston and Harris County.

Over the last year, VSD and Special Victims Division (SVD) worked to develop an effective method for case referrals while awaiting the new case management system. After collaborative analyses, improvements were made to enhance the referral process to increase victim access to safety and services. This newly implemented protocol will increase the number of survivors who have direct access to SVAs to assist them with applying for Crime Victims’ Compensation and their chosen service providers.

Victim Services Division – Service Summary

SERVICE CATEGORY	9/1/2023 – 12/31/2023	1/1/2024 – 12/31/2024	1/1/2025 – 8/31/2025	TOTAL
Adults Served	613	1,068	353	2,034
Hospital/Medical Forensic Exam	1	12	2	15
Emergency Shelter Assistance/Transportation	11	12	9	32
Law Enforcement Interview Accompaniment	2	4	2	8

Source: Houston Police Department, Victim Services Division

During the reporting periods shown, the Houston Police Department Victim Services Division provided support to 2,034 adult survivors, reflecting sustained demand for advocacy and support services. Victim Services assisted survivors with hospital and medical forensic exam accompaniment, emergency shelter and transportation, and law enforcement interview accompaniment, helping survivors navigate critical systems during and after victimization. System-based advocates often serve as one of the first points of contact following a report, ensuring survivors receive immediate support and are informed of available resources, including referrals to community-based programs. Community-based advocates play an equally critical role in survivor-centered support throughout the healing process. Together, these roles are complementary and essential to a coordinated response.

As part of ongoing collaboration and efforts to strengthen relationships, HPD system-based advocates participate in HAWC's 55-hour certified Crisis Intervention Training. This training reinforces trauma-informed practices, deepens cross-system understanding, and strengthens partnership between system-based and community-based providers, enhancing survivor access to services and supporting a coordinated, survivor-centered criminal justice response.

HARRIS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE (HCSO)

The Harris County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) has jurisdiction over sexual assault cases that occur within unincorporated Harris County. HCSO sets forth procedural guidelines to ensure deputies uphold the trauma-informed and victim-centered approach when responding to sexual assault investigations.

The Adult Sex Crimes Unit investigates complaints that involve adult victims of sexual assault, aggravated sexual assault, and other sexual offenses.

Since the last SART Report, the HCSO Adult Sex Crimes Unit has added five detectives, bringing our total number of detectives to ten, and one additional sergeant, for a total of two sergeants. Additionally, we have added two part-time deputies:

- One deputy is dedicated to handling mandated CODIS notifications to victims and will also focus on obtaining DNA samples from suspects identified through CODIS hits.
- The second deputy primarily assists with viewing forensic interviews, as well as collecting video evidence and witness statements.

In most instances, patrol deputies are responsible for taking the initial report. There may be instances where a detective takes the initial report.

Adult Sex Crimes Unit – Sexual Assault Case Activity

SERVICE CATEGORY	9/1/2023 – 12/31/2023	1/1/2024 – 12/31/2024	1/1/2025 – 8/31/2025	TOTAL
Sexual Assault Reports Received*	341	1,060	411	1,812
Investigations Conducted as a Result of Reports	139	555	498	1,192

Adult Sex Crimes Unit – Sexual Assault Case Activity (continued)

SERVICE CATEGORY	9/1/2023 – 12/31/2023	1/1/2024 – 12/31/2024	1/1/2025 – 8/31/2025	TOTAL
Indictments Presented / Charges Accepted**	55	88	33	176
Reports with No Indictment Presented^	131	627	525	1,283

Source: Harris County Sheriff's Office

* Includes aggravated sexual assault.

** Charges accepted by the Harris County District Attorney's Office as a result of the investigation.

^ Includes administratively closed cases (no offense or elements of crime not met), HCDAO declinations, or lack of complainant participation.

The HCSO received 1,330 sexual offense-related calls (calls for service), and of those, 754 reports were generated, with 498 cases assigned for investigation. Of those investigated, 41 cases had criminal charges accepted by the Harris County District Attorney's Office (HCDAO). Of the total number of reports received, 525 were either administratively closed, closed due to the complainant not cooperating, closed due to lack of prosecution, or closed due to not meeting the elements of the crime.

The primary challenges reported by HCSO include managing the volume of incoming cases and reducing the existing backlog. As the primary law enforcement agency for Harris County, HCSO also receives referrals of sexual assault cases from other local law enforcement agencies for investigation.

While staffing remains a widespread challenge across law enforcement and many other sectors, the HCSO Adult Sex Crimes Unit has successfully doubled in size. Continuing this growth by adding more detectives would remain beneficial. The data referenced above does not capture the full scope of sex crime-related cases currently assigned to detectives within the unit.

To ensure continued victim support, procedures are in place for a victim advocate to promptly contact sexual assault victims to connect them with services. This outreach is intended to reassure victims that their cases are taken seriously and will be thoroughly investigated. The victim advocate also provides resources and assistance throughout this process.

HARRIS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE-VICTIM ASSISTANCE UNIT

The Harris County Sheriff's Office maintains a specialized Victim Assistance Unit staffed by system-based advocates dedicated to improving the quality of life for Harris County's citizens. The Victim Assistance Unit supports victims/survivors and their families through crisis intervention, advocacy, and access to resources designed to reduce the impact of trauma on individuals and their loved ones.

Victim Assistance Advocates envision a community in which victims, survivors, and witnesses of crime and crisis are not alone; receive trauma-informed services; experience compassionate, choice-centered support; and are supported by the criminal justice system, social service agencies, and community partners. Through close collaboration with women's centers in Harris County and neighboring jurisdictions,

these services are delivered with integrity and respect throughout Harris, Montgomery, and Fort Bend Counties and the surrounding region.

The overall purpose of the Victim Assistance Unit is to empower victims/survivors by enhancing their awareness of available rights, resources, and services. The unit provides law enforcement advocacy, personal advocacy, information and referrals, and other support services as needed, including assistance to affected family members of crime victims.

Victim Assistance Unit – Service Summary

Service Type	9/1/2023 – 12/31/2023	1/1/2024 – 12/31/2024	1/1/2025 – 8/31/2025	Total
Number of Adults Served	*574	635	242	1451
Hospital / Medical Forensic Exam Accompaniment	NA*	NA*	NA*	NA*
Emergency Shelter Assistance / Transportation	9	16	14	39
Law Enforcement Interview Accompaniment	19	6	24	49

Source: Harris County Sheriff’s Office, Victim Assistance Unit

* Hospital/Medical Forensic Exam accompaniment is provided by outside service providers.

Note: * YTD activity through August 31, 2023, figures are estimates

During the reporting periods shown, the Harris County Sheriff’s Office Victim Assistance Unit served 1,451 adult survivors in person and by phone, reflecting sustained demand for advocacy and support services. The unit provided 39 instances of emergency shelter assistance or transportation and accompanied survivors to 49 law enforcement interviews, supporting survivor safety and access to the justice system. System-based advocates often serve as one of the first points of contact for survivors following a report, playing an important role in ensuring individuals are connected to available resources, including community-based advocacy services. These services are critical in helping survivors navigate complex systems and ensuring a trauma-informed, coordinated response across agencies.

PASADENA POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Pasadena Police Department serves the City of Pasadena within Harris County and contributes law enforcement expertise to the multidisciplinary response. Sexual assault cases are investigated through the department’s Violent Crimes Division, which is responsible for serious offenses and conducts follow-up investigations on cases initially reported by patrol officers. The department’s Victim Assistance Program provides access to a Crime Victim Liaison who offers advocacy, support, and connections to community resources for survivors of sexual assault.

Sexual Assault Case Processing – Summary

SERVICE CATEGORY	9/1/2023 – 12/31/2023	1/1/2024 – 12/31/2024	1/1/2025 – 8/31/2025	TOTAL
Sexual Assault Reports Received	20	78	44	142
Investigations Conducted	19	74	43	136
Indictments Presented (with case disposition)	5	26	9	40
Reports with No Indictment Presented	14	36	18	68

Source: Pasadena Police Department, Family Violence Division

Notes:

- Indictments Presented (with case disposition):
 - 2024: 26 total (12 charges filed; 14 declines)
 - 2025: 9 total (2 charges filed; 7 declines)
 - 2023: Disposition breakdown not specified
- Totals reflect cumulative counts across all reporting periods shown.

Between September 2023 and August 2025, the Pasadena Police Department received 142 sexual assault reports and conducted 136 investigations. During this period, 40 cases were presented for indictment, while 68 reports did not result in an indictment. As with other jurisdictions, the number of investigations and indictments does not necessarily correspond directly with reports received within the same time-frame, as sexual assault cases may take extended periods to progress through investigation, charging decisions, and court proceedings. Overall, the data reflect a high rate of investigation following reports and illustrate the complexity of sexual assault case processing within the criminal justice system.

FORENSIC LABS

HOUSTON FORENSIC SCIENCE CENTER

The Houston Forensic Science Center (HFSC) is the forensic lab that provides forensic testing services for HPD cases. HFSC conducts forensic testing in 7 disciplines, one of which is Forensic Biology. Forensic Biology test facilitates testing on all sexual assault kits collected that are taken to HPD. The kits represented in this report include children and adults. HFSC was not able to separate adults and children. The current process is that once a kit is tagged into the HPD property room, it is automatically picked up by HFSC for testing. Once testing is complete, HFSC sends a report back to HPD HFSC also ensures that any eligible profiles from the testing go into CODIS. HPD is dependent on HFSC for the test results (both the reports and the CODIS hits) from kits to aid in their investigations- when HFSC has a backlog, it does negatively impact the speed at which HPD can move sexual assault cases forward. Over the last reporting period, HFSC has been focused on increasing staffing to build the capacity needed to test incoming kits within 90 days. HFSC also used federal grant monies along with funding from the City of Houston to outsource the testing of sexual assault kits to ensure while the section is training there is less impact on the turnaround time of testing.

Sexual Assault Kit (SAK) Testing – Summary

SERVICE CATEGORY	9/1/2023 – 12/31/2023	1/1/2024 – 12/31/2024	1/1/2025 – 8/31/2025	TOTAL
Total Sexual Assault Kits Received for Testing	377	1,397	1,015	2,789
Total Sexual Assault Kits with Testing Completed	506	1,715	884	3,105
Total Sexual Assault Kits Pending Testing (end of period)*	571	235	376	—
Sexual Assault Kits Pending Testing > 30 Days	477	163	258	—
Sexual Assault Kits Pending Testing > 90 Days	302	9	24	—
Average Time for Testing to be Completed (Days)**	202	103	95	—

Source: Houston Forensic Science Center

** Represents both children and adults; HFSC does not separate out adult and juvenile SAKs at this time

** Average reflects reported period averages; a weighted overall average can be calculated if needed.

Across the reporting periods, the Houston Forensic Science Center received 2,789 sexual assault kits for testing and completed 3,105 kits, reflecting increased testing capacity over time. HFSC made significant progress in reducing backlog and improving timeliness, as evidenced by substantial decreases in kits pending more than 90 days and more than 30 days, as well as a steady decline in average testing time. These trends demonstrate strengthened forensic capacity and improved system performance in processing sexual assault evidence. It should be noted that data provided by the **Houston Forensic Science Center** (HFSC) includes **both adult and children’s sexual assault kits**, as their laboratory data systems do not separate kits by age.

HARRIS COUNTY INSTITUTE OF FORENSIC SCIENCES

The Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences’ Crime Laboratory performs analyses for the agency’s Medical Examiner Service and for law enforcement agencies in Harris County in the following five distinct forensic disciplines:

- Drug Chemistry
- Firearms Identification
- Forensic Genetics
- Forensic Toxicology
- Trace Evidence

The Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences Crime Laboratory provides forensic testing for approximately 84 law enforcement agencies within Harris County, excluding HPD. The vast majority of DNA analysis on sexual assault kits is completed by the laboratory in less than the state-mandated 90 days, and all eligible DNA profiles are uploaded to the State and/or National CODIS databases.

Sexual Assault Kit (SAK) Testing – Summary (Adult SAK only)

SERVICE CATEGORY	9/1/2023 – 12/31/2023	1/1/2024 – 12/31/2024	1/1/2025 – 8/31/2025	TOTAL
Total Sexual Assault Kits Received for Testing	117	371	251	739
Total Sexual Assault Kits with Testing Completed	104	352	287	743
Total Sexual Assault Kits Still Pending Testing (end of period)	72	86	60	—
Sexual Assault Kits Pending Testing > 30 Days	22	58	38	—
Sexual Assault Kits Pending Testing > 90 Days	0	1	0	—
Average Time for Testing to be Completed (Days)	71	75	73	—

Source: Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences

During the reporting periods shown, the Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences received 739 adult sexual assault kits for testing and completed 743 adult kits. The higher number of completed kits reflects, in part, the continued processing of kits received during prior reporting periods. It should be noted that the reported metrics include only SAKs from adults and represent only 53% of the SAK testing done by HCIFS during the reporting periods. From September 2023 through August 31, 2025, HCIFS received 1,396 kits (adults and children) and completed 1,414. Even with adults and children combined, the average turnaround times and number of kits pending testing for the periods did not change.

HARRIS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

The District Attorney of Harris County, Texas, represents the State of Texas in the Harris County courts. The District Attorney has assigned the prosecution of certain felony Adult Sex Crimes to the Adult Sex Crimes Division, made up of one Division Chief prosecutor, two Chief prosecutors and six felony level 2 prosecutors, four investigators, one social worker, and one victim assistance coordinator. The Adult Sex Crimes section meets weekly with officers from HPD, HCSO, and other law enforcement agencies to review their investigations for charges. Once an adult sexual assault charge is accepted, the Adult Sex Crimes section receives the case for prosecution, where it is assigned to a dedicated Adult Sex Crimes prosecutor to handle in one of the twenty-nine Criminal District Courts and/or the Emergency Relief Docket (ERD) court system through the resolution of the case. For purposes of this report, the following data was collected:

Sexual Assault Case Outcomes – Summary

SERVICE CATEGORY	9/1/2023 – 12/31/2023	1/1/2024 – 12/31/2024	1/1/2025 – 8/31/2025	TOTAL
Sexual Assault Charges Filed*, ***	115	336	214	665
SA Indictments Filed (True Bill) ***	123	350	129	602
SA Indictments Rejected (No Bill)	5	26	10	41
SA Charges Convicted**, ***	56	153	140	349
SA Charges Dismissed**, ***	55	166	71	292

Source: Harris County District Attorney's Office

* Does not include investigations for which law enforcement has not yet presented charges or cases in which charges other than sexual assault were accepted, including family violence assault, aggravated assault, burglary, robbery, prohibited sexual conduct, indecent assault, or sexual performance.

** Does not include cases in which the defendant was convicted of offenses other than sexual assault arising from the investigation

*** Includes charges accepted for attempted sexual assault, aggravated sexual assault, burglary of a habitation with intent to commit sexual assault, indecent assault, and sexual assault

From the period between August 31, 2023 and August 31, 2025 the Harris County District Attorney's Office has increased its team and manpower. Where it was previously staffed by one Chief prosecutor and four felony level 2 prosecutors, it is now staffed by one dedicated Division Chief, two Chief prosecutors, and six felony level 2 prosecutors significantly increasing our ability to more effectively and efficiently intake and prosecute sexual assault cases.

Across the reporting periods shown above, the Harris County District Attorney's Office filed 665 sexual assault charges. During that same time period, 602 sexual assault cases were indicted by a grand jury

accepted for prosecution. It should be noted that many cases are filed as arrest warrants. Typically indictments on these cases are not sought until an offender has been taken into custody which can be seen for reporting periods where more indictments were obtained than charges were accepted by the HCDAO, and why in the most recent reporting period there are significantly fewer “indictments” than accepted charges. During this period, 349 sexual assault charges resulted in convictions, while 292 cases were dismissed, underscoring both the complexity of sexual assault prosecutions and the length of time cases may take to resolve. The vast majority of our dismissals come as part of a plea bargain for the Defendant pleading guilty in another sexual assault (or other) case.

Because outcomes such as convictions and dismissals often occur well after charges are filed, these figures may reflect cases initiated in prior periods. Together, the data highlight the importance of coordinated system response, thorough investigation, and survivor-centered practices throughout the prosecution process.

SEXUAL ASSAULT COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMS

The Harris County Sexual Assault Response Team (HCSART) includes four core community-based sexual assault programs located in Houston, Pasadena, Webster, and Humble. All four organizations are dual-service agencies, providing both sexual assault and domestic violence services. Each program meets the definition of a sexual assault program under Chapter 420.003 of the Texas Government Code. Collectively, these organizations have decades of experience providing sexual assault services in the nonprofit sector, with services in the community dating back to 1977.

These programs provide comprehensive, survivor-centered services at no cost, including access to a 24-hour hotline and/or chat, hospital accompaniment, legal advocacy, economic empowerment, behavioral health services, and both emergency safe shelter and longer-term housing.

The community-based sexual assault programs have long histories of service in the region and maintain strong collaborative relationships with healthcare systems, multiple law enforcement agencies, and other allied professionals across Harris County and surrounding areas. While all four programs serve survivors throughout Harris County, several also serve multiple neighboring counties and work with numerous law enforcement jurisdictions to ensure survivors across the broader region have access to advocacy and support services.

HOUSTON AREA WOMEN’S CENTER (HAWC); HOUSTON, TEXAS

Founded in 1977, the Houston Area Women’s Center (HAWC) is a community-based nonprofit organization in the City of Houston that provides comprehensive services to survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, and sex trafficking 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, primarily in Harris County. Healing-centered and trauma-informed services for survivors of sexual violence range from immediate crisis intervention and advocacy to long-term healing and empowerment. These services include safety planning, hospital accompaniment, emergency housing, and connection to resources that address survivors’ immediate safety needs.

Longer-term services include counseling, case management, legal advocacy, court and law enforcement accompaniment, housing stability, and economic empowerment. HAWC’s Sexual Assault Hotline serves as a gateway to services, providing crisis intervention, advocacy, information, and support to survivors, their family members, and friends at any time of day. Survivors who seek assistance may or may not report the crime to law enforcement, which is consistent with the known underreporting of sexual assault.

Hospital accompaniment staff are available 24 hours a day to provide crisis intervention, advocacy, and emotional support to survivors and their loved ones. HAWC staff work closely with healthcare providers and law enforcement partners to help ensure survivors receive trauma-informed services through a multidisciplinary approach. Advocates also provide information and referrals and inform survivors of their legal rights and options, including access to Crime Victims' Compensation and the Texas SAVNS/VINE notification system.

Sexual Assault Program Services – Summary

SERVICE CATEGORY	9/1/2023 – 12/31/2023	1/1/2024 – 12/31/2024	1/1/2025 – 8/31/2025	TOTAL
Adults Served	491	600	474	1,565
Hospital Accompaniment (survivors only)	123	378	309	810
Criminal Justice Accompaniment	0	4	2	6
Hotline Calls & Chat	1,207	4,460	3,060	8,727

Source: Houston Area Women's Center (HAWC)

Between September 1, 2023 and August 31, 2025, the Houston Area Women's Center (HAWC) provided sexual assault advocacy and support services to 1,565 adult survivors, reflecting sustained and significant demand for trauma-informed care. During this period, HAWC provided 810 hospital accompaniments, ensuring survivors had access to medical forensic exams, emotional support, and information about their rights and available resources.

HAWC also responded to 8,727 hotline calls and chats, demonstrating the organization's critical role as a primary access point for survivors seeking immediate crisis intervention, safety planning, and connection to services. HAWC provided criminal justice accompaniment in a small number of cases during the reporting period, and advocates observed a decline in requests for law enforcement accompaniment compared to prior periods. Additionally, the introduction and expanded use of forensic interviews conducted by non-law enforcement personnel at Texas Forensic Nurse Examiners (TXFNE) has contributed to a shift in referral pathways, resulting in fewer direct accompaniment requests to community-based advocates. This trend highlights an important opportunity to strengthen coordination and ensure survivors are consistently informed of and connected to community-based advocacy services, which provide confidential, independent, and survivor-centered support. To support this effort, HAWC meets quarterly with partners, including TXFNE, to discuss successes, challenges, and opportunities for improvement. Incorporating focused discussion of referral pathways and survivor connection to advocacy services into these meetings may further strengthen collaboration and help ensure survivors have access to the full range of available support.

Overall, these data highlight HAWC’s essential role in Harris County’s coordinated response to sexual assault, providing survivor-centered advocacy, facilitating access to medical and legal systems, and supporting survivors throughout their recovery and healing.

THE BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATER (TBOTW); PASADENA, TEXAS

The Bridge’s services and programs are offered to help survivors heal mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. BOTW’s philosophy focuses on empowering individuals and families to make healthy decisions that will lead to productive lifestyles. Clients participate in all services on a volunteer basis. Immediate crisis intervention and advocacy are available on a walk-in basis during our regular business hours (9am-4pm). The hotline is available 24 Hours.

Designated direct service staff will respond to designated hospitals and TBOTW onsite clinic 24 hours/7 days a week for survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence, teen dating violence and stalking on a rotational schedule of 24-hour shifts.

Sexual Assault Program Services – Summary

SERVICE CATEGORY	9/1/2023 – 12/31/2023	1/1/2024 – 12/31/2024	1/1/2025 – 8/31/2025	TOTAL
Adults Served	77	170	208	455
Hospital Accompaniment	45	135	85	265
Criminal Justice Accompaniment	31	26	7	64
Hotline Calls	159	483	428	1,070

Source: The Bridge Over Troubled Water (TBOTW)

Between September 2023 and August 2025, the program served 455 adult survivors of sexual assault, reflecting steady and increasing engagement over time. The number of adults served grew each period, indicating expanding reach and sustained demand for advocacy and support services.

Survivors received 265 hospital accompaniments, ensuring access to medical forensic care and emotional support during critical moments following an assault. The program also provided 64 criminal justice accompaniments, helping survivors navigate investigative and legal processes. In addition, staff responded to 1,070 hotline calls, underscoring the importance of crisis intervention and confidential support as a key entry point for survivors seeking safety, information, and connection to services.

Overall, these data highlight the program’s essential role in providing trauma-informed, survivor-centered advocacy and supporting Harris County’s coordinated response to sexual assault.

BAY AREA TURNING POINT (BATP); WEBSTER, TEXAS

Bay Area Turning Point (BATP) is a community based nonprofit dual agency that provides immediate crisis intervention and wrap around services to individuals impacted directly or indirectly by domestic violence and/or sexual assault. BATP has service locations in Webster, Texas and a satellite location in Anahuac, Texas stretching services amongst four different counties to include Harris, Galveston, Chambers and Brazoria County. BATP provides residential and non-residential services that include 24-hour crisis hotline help, counseling services, short- and medium-term housing, victim advocacy and support and outreach, education, and prevention. Collaborations help with bridging services for survivors. BATP works closely with Webster, League City, Nassau Bay City, Lakeview, Dickinson Police Departments. Being on the outer limits of Harris County there are few hospitals available to support survivors needing specialized services as it relates to sexual assault.

Sexual Assault Program Services – Summary

Service Category	9/1/2023 – 12/31/2023	1/1/2024 – 12/31/2024	1/1/2025 – 8/31/2025	Total
Adults Served	271	698	580	1,549
Hospital Accompaniment	5	15	12	32
Criminal Justice Accompaniment	10	5	5	20
Hotline Calls	283	916	628	1,827

Source: Bay Area Turning Point (BATP); Webster, Texas

During the reporting periods shown above, Bay Area Turning Point provided services to 1,549 adult survivors, reflecting sustained demand for survivor advocacy and support. Survivors received hospital accompaniment and criminal justice accompaniment to support access to medical care and engagement with the justice system, while 1,827 hotline calls demonstrate ongoing community reliance on crisis support and information services. These data highlight the organization's critical role in providing survivor-centered, trauma-informed services within the coordinated community response. Due to increased efforts in outreach, education, and visibility in the community, along with intentional staffing practices, Bay Area Turning Point had an increase from 2023 in adults served and hotline calls. BATP also developed better data collection and accurate categorization of services previously undercounted. While hotline calls are on the rise for sexual assault survivors seeking services, there is a decline in law enforcement and hospital accompaniments. Having transparent conversations and diving deep within the Harris County Sexual Assault Response Team allows for sexual assault programs to identify gaps in collaborations and or victims feeling the safety of choosing to report.

FAMILY TIME CRISIS & COUNSELING CENTER

FamilyTime Crisis & Counseling Center has served in North Harris County and beyond for over 46 years by providing: emergency shelter to individuals and families, crisis intervention, a 24-hour crisis helpline, holistic case management, comprehensive mental health and wellness therapy, medical accompaniment, and community education to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and to the larger community. Since June 2020, FamilyTime has done so while being laser-focused on equity, fidelity, and integrity and being client centered, culturally competent, and trauma informed.

FamilyTime has partnered with many organizations over the years to assist survivors in accessing supportive services. We know that sexual violence is underreported, and many individuals do not realize that they have experienced sexual assault and as a result do not seek supportive services or report to law enforcement. Often, individuals are unaware of their rights as a victim of crime and have no knowledge of a SANE exam.

Sexual Assault Program Services – Summary

SERVICE CATEGORY	9/1/2023 – 12/31/2023	1/1/2024 – 12/31/2024	1/1/2025 – 8/31/2025	TOTAL
Adults Served	188	144	107	439
Hospital Accompaniment	2	4	12	18
Criminal Justice Accompaniment	1	0	0	1
Hotline Calls and CHAT	127	117	89	333

Source: FamilyTime Crisis & Counseling Center (Humble, Texas)

Between September 2023 and August 2025, FamilyTime Crisis & Counseling Center served 439 adult survivors of sexual assault, reflecting the continued need for advocacy and support services in North Harris County and surrounding communities. During this period, the program provided 18 hospital accompaniments and 1 criminal justice accompaniment, ensuring survivors had access to medical care, emotional support, and guidance through the legal process. FamilyTime has experienced an increase in hospital accompaniment requests from hospitals located in Northeast Harris County and Liberty County, highlighting growing demand within those service areas.

In addition, FamilyTime responded to 333 hotline calls, demonstrating the ongoing importance of crisis intervention and confidential support as a critical entry point for survivors seeking information, safety planning, and access to services. While the number of adults served declined across reporting periods, the rise in hospital accompaniments in 2025 suggests strengthened coordination with medical partners and sustained survivor engagement. Together, these data underscore FamilyTime’s essential role in delivering trauma-informed, survivor-centered services as part of Harris County’s coordinated response to sexual assault.

FORENSIC NURSE EXAMINERS

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs) and physicians with specialized training play a critical role in the response to and care of victims of sexual assault. Emerging from the broader movement to improve medical and legal responses to sexual violence, the SANE model was developed to ensure survivors receive trauma-informed, compassionate care while strengthening the quality of forensic evidence collection.

These healthcare providers understand how trauma impacts individuals and recognize that empowerment, dignity, and survivor choice are essential to recovery following sexual assault. Through their collaboration with advocates, law enforcement, and prosecutors, SANEs have become a cornerstone of coordinated community responses to sexual assault.

MEMORIAL HERMANN HEALTH SYSTEM

Memorial Hermann Forensic Nursing Services provides compassionate, trauma-informed care for individuals affected by sexual violence across the Greater Houston area. Specially trained forensic nurse examiners conduct medical forensic examinations, document injuries, preserve evidence according to evidence-based practice, established guidelines, and support survivors' physical and emotional healing. Services are available 24/7 and include medical/forensic assessments, collaboration with the criminal justice system, and professional and community education.

Within its adult program, the Forensic Nursing team provides care for sexual assault patients age 18 and older at Sexual Assault Forensic Examination (SAFE)-Ready designated Memorial Hermann hospitals throughout the Greater Houston area. For the purposes of this HCSART report, only data related to adult patients are included.

Forensic Nursing Service – Service Summary

Service Category	9/1/2023 – 12/31/2023	1/1/2024 – 12/31/2024	1/1/2025 – 8/31/2025	Total
Number of Adult Survivors Who Received an Exam	174	515	373	1,062

Source: Memorial Hermann Health System

Note: Data for the specified periods will be populated upon availability. **Data represents Harris County adults only.**

During the reporting periods shown, Memorial Hermann Health System provided 1,062 medical forensic assessments to survivors of sexual assault age 18 years and older, reflecting the critical role healthcare providers play in the immediate response to sexual violence. Forensic nursing services ensure survivors receive trauma-informed medical care, injury documentation, and forensic evidence collection when requested. These services are an essential component of the coordinated community response, supporting survivor and community health and safety while preserving evidence and facilitating connections to advocacy and other supportive services.

HARRIS HEALTH

Harris Health is a safety net hospital system in Harris County that provides medical services and medical forensic examinations (MFEs) to adult patients with a complaint of sexual assault. These services are available at Ben Taub Hospital and Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) Hospital 24 hours a day. In addition, services for the sexual assault patient can be provided at any of the 20+ health centers located in Harris County.

Sexual Assault Medical Exam Services – Summary

SERVICE CATEGORY	9/1/2023 – 12/31/2023	1/1/2024 – 12/31/2024	1/1/2025 – 8/31/2025	TOTAL
Number of Survivors who received SA exam with kit	80	227	165	472
Number of Survivors who received SA exam no kit	20	99	53	172
Number of Survivors who declined SA exam	57	211	135	403

Source: Harris Health

During the reporting periods shown, 1,047 survivors presented for sexual assault medical services. Of those, 472 survivors received a forensic exam with evidence collection, while 172 received a medical exam without a forensic kit, reflecting survivors who sought medical care but chose not to collect evidence. Additionally, 403 survivors declined a sexual assault exam, highlighting the importance of survivor choice and autonomy in medical decision-making. These data demonstrate the critical role healthcare providers play in delivering trauma-informed care, while also connecting survivors to community-based advocacy programs and other partners who can provide ongoing support, resources, and safety planning.

TEXAS FORENSIC NURSE EXAMINERS (TXFNE)

TXFNE: Forensic Center of Excellence (TXFNE) brings together the region's most highly qualified forensic nurses and is pioneering services to make forensic exams accessible to victims in their own communities. The need for these services continues to grow, with patients including survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, human trafficking, child maltreatment, and elder abuse.

TXFNE partners with hospitals and clinics to provide on-demand access to specially trained forensic nurses. As services expand and the mission of meeting patients where they are continues, TXFNE has seen a steady increase in the number of forensic exams completed and in the victims receiving the care they need.

In addition, the Forensic Center of Excellence offers innovative victim services, including the first of its kind, Adult Forensic Interviewing (AFI) program. An AFI is an investigative conversation and not an interrogation, conducted in a safe, neutral, and non-judgmental environment in collaboration with law enforcement. This approach allows participants to share their experiences in their own words.

AFIs are observed in real time by members of the investigative team and recorded to reduce the number of times a participant must recount their experience. Interviews are conducted by specially trained and unbiased professionals who are not part of law enforcement.

Sexual Assault Medical Exam Services – Summary

SERVICE CATEGORY	9/1/2023 – 12/31/2023	1/1/2024 – 12/31/2024	1/1/2025 – 8/31/2025	TOTAL
Number of Adult Survivors Who Received an Exam	162	573	374	1,109
Adult Forensic Interviews	212	957	590	1,759

Source: TXFNE

Between September 2023 and August 2025, 1,109 adult survivors received sexual assault medical forensic exams, reflecting the important role healthcare providers play in responding to sexual violence. These exams provide trauma informed medical assessment and documentation of injuries while supporting the collection and preservation of forensic evidence. During the same period, trained non law enforcement professionals conducted 1,759 adult forensic interviews, offering a safe and neutral setting for survivors to share their experiences while supporting investigative processes.

HOUSTON METHODIST HOSPITAL SYSTEM

Houston Methodist Forensic Nursing Services has specialty-trained nurses at all Houston Methodist Emergency Departments to provide forensic medical exams to survivors of sexual abuse, interpersonal violence, sex, and labor trafficking, as well as elder abuse. Houston Methodist strives to ensure that patients receive quality health care. The goal is to lessen the impact of violence by empowering survivors to find strength in taking control of their health and well-being following a traumatic act of violence and to provide a safety net system to Harris County encompassing trauma-informed patient-centered care to all victims of sexual and physical violence presenting at all Houston Methodist Hospitals.

Sexual Assault Medical Exam Services – Summary

Service Category	9/1/2023 – 12/31/2023	1/1/2024 – 12/31/2024	1/1/2025 – 8/31/2025	Total
Number of Survivors Who Received an Exam	82	298	195	575

Source: Houston Methodist Hospital System

Between September 2023 and August 2025, 575 survivors received a sexual assault medical exam through the Houston Methodist Hospital System. Service volume increased substantially in 2024 and remained elevated in 2025, reflecting both sustained need and continued access to forensic medical services.

Houston Methodist forensic nursing teams provide trauma-informed medical care, document injuries, and preserve forensic evidence when requested. Survivors are also informed of their rights and connected to community-based advocacy organizations that offer crisis intervention, safety planning, counseling, and other supportive services.

PROTOCOLS, ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND COMMITMENT

The Harris County SART protocol is multidisciplinary, discipline specific, inclusive of all member voices, including survivor voices. This protocol is a living document and will be updated and amended based on the needs of Sexual Assault Response Team. It is intended to supplement individual agency policies and procedures. Pursuant to SB 476, the Harris County SART will update and review a minimum of once every 2 years. The protocols include roles, responsibilities, commitments, expectations and standards for each member's response and different points in time. The protocol identifies points of collaboration between disciplines. In developing this protocol, the SART members considered Chapter 56A, Code of Criminal Procedure; provided different procedures for use within a particular municipality or area of the county served by the response team; and prioritized the health and safety of survivors. The goal of the protocols is to identify and eliminate gaps and define and clarify roles. Each partner agency process of where they may interact with other members of the SART and how to make those interactions productive and supportive for the survivor is included.

ACCESS TO SEXUAL ASSAULT PROGRAM ADVOCATES CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR OF A RAPE CRISIS CENTER

Chapter 420.003, Government Code; Sexual Assault Prevention and Crisis Services promotes the development throughout the state of locally based and supported nonprofit programs for the survivor's sexual assault and to standardizes the quality of services provided. It defines a requirement to ensure survivors are offered access to sexual assault program advocates. Pursuit to Tex. Code of Criminal Proc. 56A.351, 56A.3515, survivors of sexual assault are required to be provided with a community-based advocate during the medical forensic exam, regardless of whether that survivor reports to police and during an investigative interview with law enforcement.

Confidentiality: Sexual Assault Programs are now subject to privilege on all written or oral communications with a survivor. Texas law (Texas Government Code Section 420.051 and 420.0715; Texas Health & Safety Code Section 44.051 and 44.071-44.075) states that sexual assault programs cannot share any information about a victim outside of the agency without specific written consent from that survivor. Additionally, any agency receiving funds from Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), or Family Violence Prevention Services Act (FVPSA) will have confidentiality restrictions and be forbidden from the use of blanket consent forms.

The following are protocols of Sexual Assault programs located and serve survivors within Harris County and represent Houston, Pasadena, Webster, and Humble. Each sexual assault center provides services and often works with multiple law enforcement agencies within Harris County and surrounding counties.

HOUSTON AREA WOMEN’S CENTER (HAWC) (HOUSTON, TEXAS)

Houston Area Women’s Center is a comprehensive service provider and advocate for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and sex trafficking. As an agency, HAWC envisions the day when intimate partners, families, communities, and social norms foster safe, healthy, and empowering relationships. To help bring about that day, we provide immediate access to 24/7/365 crisis intervention services, ongoing trauma-informed support programs, and violence prevention initiatives to survivors, their support networks, and communities.

Crisis Response:

1. Survivors access crisis support by calling the 24/7 hotline, CHAT, walk into any HAWC location, police drop them off at a HAWC location, or they go to the hospital due to injury or assault.
2. Trained advocates assess survivor’s situation and may help connect to medical exam and provide transportation if needed.
3. Once at the hospital, SANE gets consent from clients, contacts HAWC Hospital Accompaniment Advocate who will go to medical site and provide support for survivors.

Entry points for Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Exam:

1. Survivor calls hotline requesting information about next steps after a sexual assault.
2. Forensic Nurse or hospital staff call hotline requesting hospital accompaniment.
3. The survivor discloses at shelter that she needs an exam.
4. If a survivor is incarcerated, the Harris County Sheriff’s Office (HCSO) transports to hospital from jail.

On call advocates to respond to all sexual assault medical forensic exam requests in our service area 24 hours a day/7 day a week. Hospitals/clinics that we have partnerships with are listed below:

1. Memorial Herman Hospital – Medical Center
2. Memorial Herman Hospital-Greater Heights
3. Memorial Herman Hospital-Southwest
4. Memorial Herman Hospital-Memorial City
5. Memorial Herman Hospital-Pearland
6. Harris Health: Ben Taub
7. Harris Health: LBJ
8. Methodist-Medical Center
9. Methodist-Willowbrook
10. Texas Forensic Nurse Examiners (TXFNE)-HCA Locations & St. Luke’s Hospital

Hospital Accompaniment/Crisis Response Advocates

HAWC’s advocate will provide hospital accompaniment for medical forensic exams. Advocates may also interact and work collaboratively with the responding law enforcement agency at the medical facility. Services will be provided to adult survivors of sexual violence and their friends and family 24 hours/7 days a week in a hospital or community-based clinic setting. This is a formal process and advocate’s role is to provide the survivor with:

- Crisis intervention
- Education
- Emotional support

- Advocacy
- Safety planning
- Legal advocacy including information on their legal rights, as well as options regarding reporting to police department and having a medical forensic exam
- Information on and connection to area resources that can assist survivors with legal, medical and financial support
- Follow up with survivor within 48 hours

Emergency Safe Housing:

- Hotline staff will assess danger and safety plan. Hotline staff will connect survivors with emergency safe housing.
- If needed, emergency safe housing will be provided short term housing for survivors of sexual violence including sexual assault, attempted sexual assault and sex trafficking.

Behavioral Health, Advocacy & Support Services:

- An advocate will provide survivors with information about connecting to additional services. Survivor calls hotline requesting information about next steps after a sexual assault.
- Survivor screened at intake for other services regarding sexual violence experiences, identified and referred to sexual assault counseling program or other support services including external resources.
- Survivor discloses at any other point of service delivery, ex. in sexual violence support group, that she is needing support related to her experience with sexual assault.
- Survivor will be offered an appointment to speak with an intake counselor who will assess for the client's needs, register for supportive services including - counseling, housing, legal advocacy appointment with Adult Legal Services or, and economic empowerment services.
- Clients will be invited to participate in supportive group counseling sessions.
- Clients will be assessed for individual counseling sessions and staff will follow up with the client. Staff work with internal and external partners for warm hand offs.

Legal Advocacy Services

1. Referral is made to the legal advocacy services from internal and external referrals.
2. Legal advocacy referral is received by legal advocate and client is assessed.
3. Legal advocate completes proper referral forms with client and are sent to corresponding legal aid. Partner agencies can provide advice and/or representation based on clients' needs and eligibility requirements.
4. After 30 days legal advocate follows up with the client to ensure legal aid has followed up with victim and assess whether additional legal advocacy services are needed

Accompaniment Procedures

1. Staff from various departments within our agency refer clients requesting accompaniment (civil court/criminal court/law enforcement) to the legal advocacy department.
2. Pre-accompaniment safety plan is provided to client by legal advocate 24 hours prior to date set
3. Accompaniment by legal advocate is provided in person or virtually which includes emotional support, crisis intervention, resources, advocacy, coping skills and other services as appropriate
4. Post Accompaniment Follow Up is provided within 24hrs by legal advocate

Commitment:

1. Provide access to services 24/7 to survivors of sexual assault
2. Adhere to the HCSART protocol, evaluate, and identify opportunities for improvements in the to support survivors of sexual assault
3. Educate the public regarding sexual violence and resources available to support survivors
4. Commit to HCSART as a core member by attending meetings, providing necessary data, serving as subject matter expert, adhering to the protocols and fully participating in meetings
5. Protect the confidentiality and privacy of survivors of sexual assault
6. Center the experiences and voices of survivors

THE BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATER (TBOTW), PASADENA, TEXAS

The Bridge is the sixth largest crisis center of its kind in Texas, providing comprehensive services to survivors impacted by domestic & sexual violence, child abuse, and human trafficking. Our philosophy is grounded in empowerment, autonomy, and dignity, where survivors are respected as the experts of their own experiences and are supported with around-the-clock intervention, prevention, advocacy, and resource navigation.

Entry Points

The primary point of access for all sexual assault response services is The Bridge's 24-Hour Hotline at (713) 473-2801. Secondary points of access include online CHAT and in-person assessments via our advocacy locations.

These entry points allow survivors to receive real-time support and assistance with accessing services during regular business hours or scheduling after-hours response as needed. OAG-certified advocates will be dispatched to hospitals and the on-site clinic in rotating 24/7 shifts to provide crisis intervention, emotional support, safety planning, resource navigation, and accompaniment throughout the medical forensic exam process and related services.

Purpose

To provide crisis intervention, education, legal advocacy, support, lethality and safety planning to survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence, teen dating violence and stalking 24 hours/7 days a week in a hospital and or clinic setting.

Designated Hospitals - The following hospitals are being served by the TBOTW:

- HCA Houston Healthcare Southeast – (Formerly Bayshore) 4000 Spencer, Pasadena, TX at 713-359-1440
- HCA Houston ER 24/7 – (Stand-alone ER) 6002 Fairmont Pkwy, Pasadena, TX 77505 713-359-4949
- LBJ Hospital-5656 Kelley, Houston, TX at 713-566-5620
- St. Luke's Health – Patients Medical Center – 4600 East Sam Houston Pkwy S, Pasadena, TX 77505 713-948-7000
- Memorial Hermann Southeast -11800 Astoria Boulevard, Houston, TX at 281-929-6200- (Parking free).
- Texas Women's Hospital-7900 Fannin-Houston, Texas at 713-791-7100- (A charge for parking).
- Houston Methodist Baytown -4401 Garth Rd, Baytown, TX 77521- (No charge for parking).

- Texas Forensic Nurse Examiners (TXFNE)-2990 Richmond Avenue, Suite 190, Houston, Texas 77098 at 281-306-6893, press 1 and request a forensic nurse. TXFNE also facilitates medical forensic exams at St. Luke's Health and the HCA Southeast locations.
- Any other hospital or clinic in our service area.

Hospital Procedure

- When a survivor seeks intervention services from the hospital due to domestic, family and or sexual violence; the hospital staff and/or Forensic Nurse Examiner will call the TBOTW Hotline and request an Advocate On Call. Hospital staff and or Forensic Nurse will inform Bridge Advocate/Hotline staff of room number, gender, age and if survivor is accompanied by friends and or family members. Due to HIPAA laws, hospital some hospital staff may not release any name depending on hospital.

TBOTW Procedures

- Hotline staff will dispatch the On-Call Advocate with information provided by the hospital staff .If the on-call advocate does not respond within 15 minutes, hotline staff will contact the designated back-up Director or Manager.
- The Advocate will respond within 15 minutes of being dispatched . In the event the Advocate receives multiple calls at once; please see heading **Multiple Calls**.
- Hotline staff will provide the Advocate with the following information:
 - Room, gender and age of survivor
 - Domestic violence and or sexual assault survivor
 - Any family members accompanying the survivor
 - Name and contact number of personnel calling Hotline Staff (if available).

The Advocate will notify hospital staff of their estimated arrival time and must arrive within one hour.

- The Advocate will bring a care kit containing advocacy materials, referral information, required forms, and basic comfort items, as available, which may be provided to the survivor.

The Advocate will check in at the emergency department and notify staff of our arrival to respond to a domestic and/or sexual assault call.

Hospital staff will escort the Advocate to the survivor's room, where the Advocate will introduce themselves and their role.

- If a SANE exam is in progress, the Advocate will wait until the exam is complete unless invited in by the SANE nurse.
- The Advocate may engage with family members or friends to provide general information about The Bridge's services; no survivor-specific information will be shared without consent.
- The Advocate will review required and essential documents and obtain all necessary signatures. Survivor consent is required prior to releasing any information to family or friends; however, the Advocate may provide general support to those individuals as appropriate.
- The Advocate will explain the Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Exam process and ask whether the survivor would like the advocate present during the exam. If requested, the survivor will be informed of any limitations based on hospital policy or best-practice role assignments. In the interest of Best Practices, the Advocate who responded may not be assigned to the survivor. This depends on the position the advocate has at the Bridge.

- Advocate On Call may not be allowed in the room during the history portion of the sexual assault/medical forensic exam; this depends on the hospital.
- The Advocate will assess survivor safety and, if emergency shelter is needed, offer The Bridge Over Troubled Waters as an option and notify hotline staff of a pending shelter placement.
- Following the safety assessment, the Advocate will make appropriate referrals and assist with transportation arrangements as needed. For safety reasons, Advocates may only transport survivors to The Bridge Over Troubled Waters emergency shelter. All other transportation arrangements must be coordinated through hospital staff or the on-duty social worker, subject to availability.
- The Advocate will leave once intervention is completed and the needs of the survivor are met. Files will be forwarded to the Advocacy Manager the next day.
- The Advocacy Manager will conduct the initial follow-up and assign an Advocate for continued services.
- The Advocate will attempt follow-up within 48 hours of assignment; after three unsuccessful contact attempts, the non-residential file will be closed at the end of the current month and forwarded to the grant compliance clerk for data entry.

Onsite: Texas Forensic Nurse Examiners (TXFNE): TBOTW

TXFNE will provide medical forensic exams on site at TBOTW.

If the client initially contacts TXFNE, the TXFNE SANE will call the hotline and hotline staff will contact Advocate On Call. The Advocate On Call will follow aforementioned procedures.

In the event a client needs an exam during regular business hours, the On Call Advocate will call 281-306-6893, press 1 and request a forensic nurse.

In the event a client needs an exam after business hours, the Hotline Advocate will dispatch the On Call Advocate. The On Call Advocate will call 281-306-6893, press 1 and request a forensic nurse.

The Advocate will follow the aforementioned procedures.

Multiple Calls

In the event that an Advocate receives multiple calls during an accompaniment, the Advocate will determine depending on emotional and or physical limitations to call back-up Director or Manager to respond to call.

Documentation

Advocates are required to submit a Monthly Advocacy & Accompaniment Report to the Advocacy Manager by the last day of the month for data entry and reporting.

In the event the Advocate did not open a file, a call card will be completed and submitted to Hotline and Advocacy Managers within 24 business hours. In the event the Advocate spends 45 minutes or more advocating with a survivor on a sexual assault call, this can be counted as an accompaniment. This call will be documented in the Monthly Accompaniment Report.

Responding to Call

Hotline staff will call the Advocate with information provided by the hospital staff within 15 minutes of receiving the call.

The Advocate On Call will respond within 15 minutes of being called by the Hotline staff.

In the event the Advocate On Call does not respond to the call, Hotline staff will call the Director or Manager on back-up to respond.

Health & Safety Precautions

- Maintain social distancing; at least 6 feet between you and others.
- Wear a mask as required by the facility.
- Use hand sanitizer throughout the accompaniment.
- Use caution when entering any facility and follow all hospital or clinic safety protocols

Commitment:

1. Provide access to services 24/7 to survivors of sexual assault
2. Adhere to the HCSART protocol, evaluate, and identify opportunities for improvements in the to support survivors of sexual assault
3. Educate the public regarding sexual violence and resources available to support survivors
4. Commit to HCSART as a core member by attending meetings, providing necessary data, serving as subject matter expert, adhering to the protocols and fully participating in meetings
5. Protect the confidentiality and privacy of survivors of sexual assault
6. Center the experiences and voices of survivors

BAY AREA TURNING POINT (BATP), WEBSTER, TEXAS

Bay Area Turning Point (BATP) is a community based nonprofit dual agency that provides immediate crisis intervention and wrap around services to individuals impacted directly or indirectly by domestic violence and/or sexual assault. BATP has service locations in Webster, Texas and a satellite location in Anahuac, Texas stretching services amongst four different counties to include Harris, Galveston, Chambers and Brazoria County. We provide residential and non-residential services to those affected as they navigate resources and services to meet their need.

Collaborations help with bridging services for survivors. BATP works closely with Webster, Friendswood, League City, Nassau Bay City, Lakeview, Dickinson Police Departments. Being on the outer limits of Harris County there are few hospitals available to support survivors needing specialized services as it relates to sexual assault. On call advocates to respond to all sexual assault medical forensic exam requests in our service area 24 hours a day/7 day a week. We currently respond to HCA Houston Healthcare Clear Lake, Houston Methodist Clear Lake, Southeast Memorial Hermann and UTMB Clear Lake

Services Provided:

- 24-hour Crisis Response/Intervention
- Hospital, Law Enforcement and Judicial Accompaniments
- Emergency Shelter/Safe Housing
- Counseling, Advocacy, and Support Services
- Legal Advocacy
- Outreach, Education and Prevention

Commitment:

1. Provide access to services 24/7 to survivors of sexual assault
2. Adhere to the HCSART protocol, evaluate, and identify opportunities for improvements in the to support survivors of sexual assault
3. Educate the public regarding sexual violence and resources available to support survivors
4. Commit to HCSART as a core member by attending meetings, providing necessary data, serving as subject matter expert, adhering to the protocols and fully participating in meetings
5. Protect the confidentiality and privacy of survivors of sexual assault
6. Center the experiences and voices of survivors

Entry Point	Initial Responder	Responders Role/ Responsibilities	Next Steps
Survivor Calls the 24-hour Crisis Line. OR Walks into BATP Crisis Intervention Center.	Trained Hotline Advocate	• Hotline Advocate completes hotline form and obtains all pertinent information. • Informs survivor of rights, resources, options, and how to receive a sexual assault exam.	• If a survivor decides they would like to complete a SANE exam, they are connected to the on-call advocate. • On-Call advocate connects with the survivor and provides resources to include providing information to access SAFE-Ready Facility locations and other viable resources to have a SANE exam completed. • On-Call Advocate and Survivor will meet at, or the survivor will be provided transportation to the chosen location to complete SANE Exam.

Entry Point	Initial Responder	Responders Role/ Responsibilities	Next Steps
Survivor is a current client.	The current staff person that receives the initial notification. (Advocate, Case Manager, Counselor, etc.)	• Informs survivor of rights, resources, options, and how to receive a sexual assault exam.	• If a survivor decides they would like to complete a SANE exam, they are connected to the on-call advocate. • On-Call advocate connects with the survivor and provides resources to include providing information to access SAFE-Ready Facility locations and other viable resources to have a SANE exam completed. • On-Call Advocate and Survivor will meet at, or the survivor will be provided transportation to the chosen location to complete SANE Exam.
The Survivor is at the hospital/medical facility.	• Medical Professional on-site • Trained Hotline Advocate	• Medical Professional makes initial contact with BATP via the 24-hour hotline. • Hotline Advocate completes hotline form with Medical Professional (to include information needed for an on-call advocate to respond on-site.	• On-Call advocate is dispatched by Hotline Advocate to the hospital/medical facility • On-Call advocate will arrive within 45 minutes and follow up with the initial contact. • On-Call advocate will meet with the survivors to discuss rights, resources, and options.

Entry Point	Initial Responder	Responders Role/ Responsibilities	Next Steps
The Survivor is at the police station.	• Law Enforcement Professional on-site • Trained Hotline Advocate	• Law Enforcement Professional makes initial contact with BATP via the 24-hour hotline. • Hotline Advocate completes hotline form with Law Enforcement Professional (to include information needed for an on-call advocate to respond on-site)	• On-Call advocate is dispatched by Hotline Advocate. • On-Call advocate will arrive within 45 minutes to dispatched police station and follow up with the initial contact. • On-Call advocates will meet with the survivors to discuss rights, resources, and options. If a survivor decides to complete a SANE Exam • On-Call advocate provides information to access SAFE-Ready Facility locations and other viable resources to have a SANE exam completed. • On-Call Advocate and Survivor will meet at, or the survivor will be provided transportation to the chosen location to complete SANE Exam.

FAMILYTIME CRISIS & COUNSELING CENTER (HUMBLE, TX)

FamilyTime Crisis & Counseling Center has served North Harris County and surrounding communities for over 48 years. Services include: emergency shelter for individuals and families, crisis intervention, a 24-hour crisis hotline, case management, mental health counseling for children, adults, and families, support groups, medical, law enforcement, and court accompaniment, and community education for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking, as well as the broader community.

Since June 2020, FamilyTime has remained focused on equity, fidelity, and integrity while providing services that are client-centered, culturally responsive, and trauma-informed.

Pathways to Services - Survivors may access services through any of the following:

- Calling the 24/7 crisis hotline at (281) 446-2615
- Emailing info@familytimecccc.org
- Walking into the Counseling Center during business hours
- Law enforcement transport to the FamilyTime emergency shelter (if space is available) or Counseling Center

- Presenting at a hospital due to injury or assault
- Community referrals

Crisis Response

FamilyTime provides 24/7 crisis response services through trained hotline advocates.

Hotline Advocates:

- Inform survivors of confidentiality and mandated reporting requirements
- Assess the survivor's immediate safety and needs and develop a safety plan tailored to those needs
- Provide crisis intervention and emotional support
- Inform the survivor/victim of their rights
- Provide information about medical care and SANE exams, and offer hospital accompaniment
- Coordinate transportation through HAWC, Families to Freedom, or other resources if needed
- Provide information about available FamilyTime supportive services, including medical, law enforcement, and court accompaniment, emergency shelter, counseling, support groups, case management, and community resources, as needed

Medical Accompaniment Services

FamilyTime provides 24/7 medical accompaniment services for survivors of sexual violence. Hospital Accompaniment Response Team (H.A.R.T.) advocates are dispatched within 15 minutes of receiving a request through our hotline, from a hospital or law enforcement agency, or from a staff member.

H.A.R.T. Advocates:

- Inform survivors of confidentiality and mandated reporting requirements
- Provide crisis intervention and emotional support
- Provide a broad overview of the forensic exam process and medical care options
- Educate survivors about their rights and reporting options
- Assess safety needs and develop individualized safety plans
- Provide advocacy and support during medical care
- Provide information about available FamilyTime supportive services, including medical, law enforcement, and court accompaniment; emergency shelter; counseling; support groups; case management; and community resources

Emergency Shelter

FamilyTime provides emergency shelter services to women, men, and families who have experienced sexual violence, domestic violence, and/or human trafficking, based on availability and eligibility criteria. Survivors may inquire about shelter availability and complete an intake screening through our 24-hour hotline.

Shelter Advocates:

- Inform survivors of their rights to confidentiality and about mandated reporting requirements
- Assess the survivor's immediate safety and needs and develop a safety plan tailored to those needs
- Provide crisis intervention and emotional support
- Coordinate transportation to shelter through HAWC, Families to Freedom, or other resources if needed
- Coordinate shelter placement through DV Beds or other partner shelters when capacity is full or when the survivor does not meet eligibility criteria

- Provide information about available FamilyTime supportive services, including medical, law enforcement, and court accompaniment; counseling; support groups; case management; and community resources

Mental Health Services:

FamilyTime provides trauma-informed counseling services to survivors of sexual violence, domestic violence, and sexual assault as well as to the broader community.

Licensed Clinicians and Counseling Student Interns:

- Inform survivors of their rights to confidentiality and about mandated reporting requirements
- Obtain informed consent and provide professional disclosures
- Assess the survivor's immediate safety and needs and develop a safety plan tailored to those needs
- Provide crisis intervention and emotional support
- Provide up to 20 free trauma-informed counseling sessions (in-person or virtual) to survivors, with sliding-scale counseling available thereafter, if needed
- Provide information about additional FamilyTime supportive services, including support groups, case management, and emergency shelter
- Inform survivors about counseling and support services available to secondary victims, including friends and family members
- Provide referrals to additional community resources, as needed

Case Management Services:

FamilyTime provides trauma-informed case management services to help survivors increase safety, access resources, and build long-term stability. Referrals are received internally, through our 24-hour hotline, via email contact, or from community partners.

Case Managers:

- Inform survivors of their rights to confidentiality and about mandated reporting requirements
- Assess the survivor's immediate safety and needs and develop a safety plan tailored to those needs
- Educate survivors about their rights and reporting options
- Assess needs and assist with enrollment in FamilyTime supportive services and/or community resources
- Provide a broad overview of legal options and facilitate referrals to legal advocacy services
- Offer medical, law enforcement, and court accompaniment
- Offer information and application assistance for Crime Victims' Compensation, SAVNS, the Address Confidentiality Program, and related services

Commitment:

FamilyTime is committed to:

- Protecting survivor confidentiality and privacy
- Centering the experiences and voices of survivors in all services
- Providing trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and equitable services
- Serving as active, participating members of Harris County SART
- Educating the public about sexual violence and available resources

DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

HARRIS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE (HCD AO)

The District Attorney of Harris County, Texas, represents the State of Texas in the Harris County Criminal Courts. To better serve survivors of sexual assault, the District Attorney has assigned the prosecution of certain felony Adult Sex Crimes to the specialized prosecutors in the Adult Sex Crimes Section of the Adult Sex Crimes & Trafficking Division.

- The Adult Sex Crimes Section prosecutes felony complaints that involve adult victims of sexual assault, aggravated sexual assault, attempted sexual assault, and some other sex-related offenses.
- The Adult Sex Crimes prosecutors are available 24/7 to speak with investigators, and regularly and do so.
- The investigative agency is required to bring the prosecutors all available evidence to review prior to any charging decision, unless charges are being immediately accepted due to an imminent safety or flight risk concern.
- The Adult Sex Crimes prosecutors review all available evidence and work with the investigative agency to obtain any additional information or evidence needed for successful prosecution.
- Once all available evidence is received and reviewed, the prosecutors make a charging decision.
- Charging decisions are made at the sole discretion of the prosecutors.
- Legally and ethically, charging decisions are based on the evidence and whether or not the charge(s) can be proven beyond a reasonable doubt at trial.
- The investigative agency is the point of contact for the victim prior to any charging decision. In the case of any grand jury investigation or direct file, the prosecutors may communicate with the victim directly to prepare for grand jury.
- The investigative agency informs the victim of any charging decision. If charges are accepted, the prosecutors will reach out to the victim either through or along with our Victims Assistance Coordinators (VACs) and/or social workers to ensure the mandates of CCP Chapter 56A are met.
- The Adult Sex Crimes prosecutors educate the grand juries on the dynamics of sexual assault through grand jury orientation presentations and/or during presentations of cases to the grand jury.
- Decisions to decline, dismiss, or plea bargain charges are made with the input and approval of a chief prosecutor assigned to the Adult Sex Crimes Division.
- Adult Sex Crimes prosecutors are trained in how to read and assess lab & DNA reports.
- Victims are apprised of the case developments through proactive contact initiated by VACs, social workers, and the prosecutors.
- When victims initiate contact, prosecutors are available to meet and speak with them at a mutually agreed-upon time and place, including in-person, phone, and virtual meetings.
- When advocacy agencies or other dedicated professionals have a referral, it is first made to a law enforcement agency, who will then present the case to the Adult Sex Crimes prosecutors for consideration.
- Interpretation and transportation services are available for victims when meeting with the prosecutors or participating in trial through the HCD AO Victims Assistance Division and HCD AO investigators.

Commitment:

1. HCD AO will provide trained, competent intake services to law enforcement agencies that partner with the Adult Sex Crimes Section to ensure offenders are charged appropriately.
2. HCD AO will update appropriate Adult Sex Crimes partners on criminal court status as needed or

requested.

3. HCDAO will provide information about case status to team members as needed.
4. HCDAO will attend TXFNE Center for Forensic Excellence MDT Team meetings and other case reviews whenever there is a case on the agenda in which they have involvement and/or jurisdictional authority.
5. HCDAO will ensure the victim is aware of any proposed plea agreement and obtain feedback.
6. HCDAO will explain to the victim the right of victim input regarding victim loss, trauma, or restitution for possible presentation of evidence at the time of the plea hearing and/or to provide a Victim Impact Statement.
7. HCDAO will encourage and support the victim during this process through VACs and/or social workers and will inform the victim of their rights under Article 56A.051 of the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure.
8. HCDAO VACs and/or social workers will share what they learn about the victim's feelings/concerns with the assigned prosecutors and will follow up on this information as needed.
9. HCDAO VACs and/or social workers will arrange meetings with the assigned prosecutor and the victim, if needed, to discuss a potential plea agreement or case progress.
10. HCDAO will protect the privacy and confidentiality of victims whenever possible in court documents and court filings.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

HOUSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

The procedures to be used in investigating and prosecuting cases arising from a report of adult sexual assault.

- The Houston Police Department (HPD) has jurisdiction over sexual assault cases that occur within the City of Houston geographic areas. HPD sets forth procedural guidelines to ensure officers uphold the trauma-informed and victim-centered approach when responding to sexual assault investigations.
- The Adult Sex Crimes Unit investigates complaints that involve adult victims of sexual assault, aggravated sexual assault, attempted sexual assault, and other sex-related offenses.
- The Victim Services Division provides crisis intervention, emotional support, counseling, law enforcement advocacy, personal advocacy, information & referrals, case management, safety planning, and other services as needed to crime victims and witnesses.
- In most instances, patrol officers are responsible for taking the initial report. There may be instances where an investigator takes the initial report.
- When a police report is taken, victims are provided the following: (1) their case number and instructions on how to make contact with the investigative division, (2) information on how to obtain a Forensic Exam (Sexual Assault Kit/SAK), and (3) a Victim's Referral Card (Blue Card), which contains written notice of their legal rights, information regarding the criminal justice process, possible remedies, and the availability of social services and community resources.
- Because victims experience trauma in different ways, there may be varying times of "readiness" to proceed with the investigation. Victims have been provided information about where to call about their investigation (See Victims Referral Card above) and may do so when they are ready. Upon initial contact with patrol officers, victims are strongly encouraged to obtain a Forensic Exam as soon as possible. Victims are given several options where to obtain a Forensic Exam.
- Victims Services Division personnel receive cases that involve sexual violence and use the information in the report to contact those victims to provide resources.

- Once a victim agrees to proceed with the investigation, a victim interview will be scheduled at the victim's convenience.
- In accordance with HB 1172 (Sexual Assault Advocate Accompaniment), HPD uses community or system advocates depending on the needs or request of the victim during their interview.
- In most cases with a known suspect, HPD offers the suspect the opportunity to provide a statement in the case. The victim is notified at the beginning of the investigation, by the investigator, that the suspect will be given the opportunity to provide a statement.
- The below checklist from the HCDA's office includes most evidence that is required to be obtained in an investigation prior to the case being presented for charges:
 - Offense Report, including any evidentiary supplements explaining the absence of items included in this checklist, if not completed in a separate SB111 document
 - Any and All Extraneous/Case Related Report(s)
 - All Video/Audio/Surveillance from all relevant locations with Business Records Affidavit (BRA)
 - All Dash/Body Worn Camera (must ensure that BWC for any and all patrol officers connected to the case are attached and/or associate with the investigative incident number, for inclusion in the review and discovery pursuant to SB111 and Michael Morton Act).
 - All dispatch/MDT records (with BRA)
 - 911 calls (records and audio) with BRA
 - All Photos (scene and medical, if available)
 - Any EMT records with BRA
 - Full hospital medical records with BRA
 - Full SANE record with BRA
 - Any Consent to Search forms for Buccal Swabs
 - Buccal Search Warrants, if no consent
 - All Lab reports (CODIS and confirmatory DNA reports)
 - Any Social Media and/or Email returns with BRA
 - Any Hotel Records with BRA
 - Any Lease Agreement with BRA
 - Any Cell Phone Subscriber and other Records w BRA for each cell number
 - Any Cell Phone Forensics Report
 - Any Computer Forensic Report
 - Any Bank Records w BRA
 - All Search Warrants (certified copies)
 - All returns for all records and evidence gathered via Search Warrant
 - All Defendant's Statement(s)
 - Any Co-Defendant's Statement(s)
 - All Witness Statements
 - Any Juvenile Records w BRA
 - Any School Records w BRA
 - Any Therapy Records w BRA
 - Medical Records w BRA
 - Any Photo Array/Lineup
 - Any Witness Admonishment Form
 - Any Adult Forensic Interview (please indicate if one exists for your case here, and HCDAO will download)

- In addition to the previously mentioned items provided by patrol officers and Victims Services Division, a Pseudonym Form Sexual Assault form, in accordance with Article 58.102 of the Texas Criminal Code of Procedure (CCP) is provided to the victim to maintain confidentiality of the victim and the investigation with law enforcement, prosecution team, and victim advocates. Throughout the investigation, the victim maintains contact with the assigned investigator of the case.
- HPD has an automated process which notifies the Houston Forensic Science Center (HFSC) whenever a Sexual Assault Kit is tagged into the HPD's Property Division. Upon notification, the HFSC will obtain the SAK and initiate testing.
- HPD investigators receive training from the HFSC about how to read and interpret forensic exam reports. Additionally, investigators are trained so that they may consult with the HFSC whenever further explanation is needed.

Confidentiality requirements for HPD

- HPD has written policy in place to protect confidentiality of sexual assault victims in accordance with Texas Code of Criminal Procedure, Chapter 58, Subchapter C – Confidentiality of Identifying Information of Sex Offense Victims. HPD's policy not only protects the identity of the victims, but the confidentiality status extends to the details of the investigations.
- The Victim Services Division has a specific Code of Ethics to protect each victim's right to privacy and confidentiality except when agency guidelines state otherwise or when compliance with local, state, or federal laws is required. Victim advocates inform victims of the limits of confidentiality prior to the victim's disclosure.

Commitment:

1. Continual training on trauma-informed responses
2. Collaborate with partners to identify gaps in services to better support victims of sexual assault
3. Educate the public regarding sexual violence and resources available to victims

HARRIS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

- The Harris County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) has jurisdiction over sexual assault cases that occur within unincorporated Harris County. HCSO sets forth procedural guidelines to ensure officers uphold the trauma-informed and victim-centered approach when responding to sexual assault investigations.
- The Adult Sex Crimes Unit investigates complaints that involve adult victims of sexual assault, aggravated sexual assault, attempted sexual assault, and other sexual offenses.
- The Victim's Advocate Unit provides law enforcement advocacy, personal advocacy, information & referrals, and other services as needed to crime victims and in some cases witnesses of crimes.
- In most instances, deputies are responsible for taking the initial report. There may be instances where an detective takes the initial report.
- When a law enforcement report is taken, victims are provided the following: (1) their case number and instructions on how to make contact with the investigative division, (2) information on how to obtain a Forensic Exam (Sexual Assault Kit/SAK), and (3) QR Code which contains written notice of their legal rights, information regarding the criminal justice process, possible remedies, and the availability of social services and community resources. The QR Code is on the back of the victim's case card.
- Because victims experience trauma in different ways, there may be varying times of "readiness" to proceed with the investigation. Victims have been provided information about where to call about their investigation (See Victims Referral Card above [CrimeVictims—Harris County Texas Sheriff's](#)

[Office](#) or CrimeVictims—Harris County Texas Sheriff’s Office) and may do so when they are ready. Upon initial contact with patrol officers, victims are strongly encouraged to obtain a Forensic Exam as soon as possible. Victims are given several options where to obtain a Forensic Exam.

- Once a victim agrees to proceed with the investigation, a forensic interview is scheduled and conducted by a licensed interviewer of TXFNE. The forensic interview will be scheduled at the victim’s convenience.
- In accordance with HB 1172 (Sexual Assault Advocate Accompaniment), HCSO uses community or HCSO advocates depending on the needs or request of the victim during their interview.
- A Pseudonym Form Sexual Assault form, in accordance with Article 58.102 of the Texas Criminal Code of Procedure (CCP) is provided to the victim to maintain confidentiality of the victim and the investigation with law enforcement, prosecution team, and victim advocates. Throughout the investigation, the victim maintains contact with the assigned detectives of the case.
- Evidence collected by detectives or patrolman is submitted to the Harris County Institute of Forensic Science (HCIFS) for testing.
- HCSO detectives receive training from the HCIFS about how to read and interpret forensic exam reports. Additionally, detectives are trained that they may consult with the HCIFS whenever further explanation is needed.

Commitment:

1. Continual training on trauma-informed responses
2. Collaborate with partners to identify gaps in services to better support victims of sexual assault
3. Educate the public regarding sexual violence and resources available to victims

LOCATION AND ACCESSIBILITY OF SEXUAL ASSAULT MEDICAL FORENSIC EXAMINATIONS

MEMORIAL HERMANN HEALTH SYSTEM-FORENSIC NURSING SERVICES

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) and physicians with specialized training serve a critical role in the response and care to victims of sexual assault. These healthcare providers understand how trauma impacts individuals and respect the value of empowerment and choice as vital to recovery in the aftermath of sexual assault. SAFE-Ready facilities

Memorial Hermann Health System Forensic Nursing Services respond to victims of sexual violence within Harris County and are committed to providing high quality care and forensic evidence preservation while working with partner agencies to ensure the best interests of the victims.

Memorial Hermann Forensic Nursing Services provides holistic healthcare that addresses with dignity the physical, social, psychological, and spiritual needs of victims of interpersonal violence.

Memorial Hermann Forensic Nursing Services commit to:

1. Provide a trauma informed care response to adult sexual assault patients presenting at the SAFE ready designated Memorial Hermann Acute Care Hospitals:
 - a. Memorial Hermann Texas Medical Center Hospital
 - b. Memorial Hermann Southwest Hospital
 - c. Memorial Hermann Greater Heights Hospital
 - d. Memorial Hermann Southeast Hospital

- e. Memorial Hermann Pearland Hospital
 - f. Memorial Hermann Memorial City Hospital
 - g. Memorial Hermann Katy Hospital
 - h. Memorial Hermann Cypress Hospital
 - i. Memorial Hermann Northeast Hospital
 - j. Memorial Hermann The Woodlands Hospital
 - k. Memorial Hermann Sugar Land Hospital
2. Provide 24/7 availability of SANEs to conduct medical/forensic assessments with evidence collection for sexual assault patients respecting all diverse and cultural needs.
 3. Prioritize the physical and psychological well-being of patients who have experienced sexual assault by providing a safe and non-judgmental environment with an ongoing opportunity for informed consent throughout the medical/forensic comprehensive assessment, detailed injury documentation, and evidence preservation.
 4. Encourage sexual assault patients to connect with available community advocates in a private space prior to conducting medical/forensic assessments while also respecting the patient's informed decision.
 5. Memorial Hermann Healthcare providers assess the sexual assault patient for STI prophylaxis, HIV prophylaxis and Emergency Contraception according to CDC recommendations.
 6. Educate on follow up, referral options, and complete a safe discharge plan for sexual assault patients to foster positive patient health outcomes.
 7. Inform patients of Crime Victims Compensation sexual assault benefits.
 8. Provide an exceptional individualized patient experience with evidence-based quality care to sexual assault patients.
 9. Ensure high reliability with the identification, collection, documentation and preservation of evidence integrity.
 10. Participate with the legal system by providing required trial testimony, adhering to institutional policy and procedures.
 11. Collaborate with Harris County SART stakeholders for a trauma informed, compassionate, and victim-centered approach supporting healthy and safe communities.

HARRIS HEALTH FORENSIC NURSING PROGRAM

Harris Health is a safety net hospital system in Harris County that provides medical services and medical forensic examinations (MFEs) to patients with a complaint of sexual assault. The MFE is conducted by a certified sexual assault nurse examiner who utilizes trauma-informed care throughout the exam. These services are available at Ben Taub Hospital and Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) Hospital 24 hours a day. In addition, services for the sexual assault patient can be provided at any of the 20+ health centers located in Harris County. The hospital system employs a team of forensic nurses that provide the following services:

1. A comprehensive MFE including a detailed history, a head-to-toe physical examination, a detailed genital examination, and evidence collection including photographs;
2. Access to a sexual assault crisis advocate to the patient for accompaniment during the exam;
3. Sexually transmitted infection prophylaxis, HIV prevention medication (note: prescriptions are filled free of charge for patients without insurance), and for female patients of reproductive age, emergency contraception for pregnancy prevention;
4. Baseline testing for STI's;
5. Billing to Crime Victims Compensation on behalf of the patients if their assault has been reported

to law enforcement;

6. After care instructions including assurance that the patient has adequate medical follow-up [note: if the patient does not have a primary care physician or adequate medical follow-up, the Volunteer Initiatives against Violent Acts (VIVA) clinic will provide aftercare medical services]; and
7. Provision of information about services provided by the sexual assault crisis centers and encouragement to patients to seek counseling.

Commitment:

1. Provide MFE's to patients with interpersonal violence, including sexual assault, domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse, and human trafficking, at any Harris Health facility in a timely manner 24 hours a day/7 day a week by a certified forensic nurse
2. Utilize a trauma-informed approach in all interactions with patients
3. Provide access to and encourage the use of a sexual assault advocate for accompaniment during the MFE
4. Provide medications for the prevention of diseases and pregnancy
5. Provide information for aftercare to promote well-being and healing
6. Attend Harris County SART meetings and collaborate with community partners to improve care to sexual assault patients
7. Utilize best practices in the treatment and care of patients with interpersonal violence

TEXAS FORENSIC NURSE EXAMINERS (TXFNE)

Texas Forensic Nurse Examiners™ (TXFNE™) gathers the region's most qualified trauma nurses and is pioneering services to make the forensic exam accessible to victims in their geographic area. The demand for the forensic exam is at its peak with the population of patients to include sexual assault, domestic violence, human trafficking, child maltreatment, and elder abuse victims. TXFNE™ partners with hospitals and clinics by providing qualified forensic nurses on-demand.

TXFNE Commits to:

1. Designate a liaison to serve as a resource person for the SART and MDT meetings.
2. Provide medical forensic exams to victims who experience sexual assault, domestic violence, trafficking, and child and elder abuse.
3. Collaborate with hospitals in Harris County to provide contracted forensic nursing services 24 hours a day, with an arrival time average of 90 minutes
4. Provide acute and non-acute exams of victims of sexual and physical violence (TXFNE protocol - 7 days for physical assault exams).
 - a. Acute exam - medical forensic exam completed, evidence is collected within 120 hours of the incident.
 - b. Non-acute - medical forensic exam completed, evidence is not collected.
5. Conduct evidence collection when appropriate and with best practice standards
6. Forensic photography will be conducted for all consenting patients that have a medical forensic exam and will be secured and stored in a HIPAA-compliant manner
7. Provide testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections and referral for chronic infections.
8. Patients needing medical forensic exams will have their exam conducted in their preferred language and with culturally specific considerations.
9. Patients will be identified utilizing their preferred pronouns and identities.
10. Provide medical records to law enforcement and the District Attorney's Office within two weeks of subpoena request.

11. Allow nurses to meet with the District Attorney's Office for pretrial conference meetings, ensure nurses maintain contact with the District Attorney's Office when a case is pending or in process for hearings or trial and notify the District Attorney's Office of address and/or telephone number changes of any of the nurses no longer working with TXFNE.
12. Provide SANE education and precepting of SANE candidates and ensure all nurses maintain a high level of competency through ongoing education and case reviews that will apply to their certification renewal.
13. Agree to meet with the nursing team to discuss quality of care, peer and procedural review and provide ongoing process improvement information to the SART.
14. Maintain the availability of an Adult SANE specialist to provide adult medical forensic assessments at the following locations 24/7 with an average response time of 90 minutes to the following locations:
 - Aether Health - Spring Cypress ER
 - Baytown Medical Center North Hospital
 - CHI St. Luke's ER Holcombe
 - CHI St. Luke's Health McNair
 - CHI St. Luke's Health Medical Center
 - CHI St. Luke's Health Patient's Medical Center
 - CHI St. Luke's Health Springwood
 - CHI St. Luke's Health The Vintage Hospital
 - CHI St. Luke's Health Pasadena
 - HCA Healthcare Hospital Clear Lake
 - HCA Hospital ER Cypress Fairbanks
 - HCA Houston ER 24/7 - Atascocita
 - HCA Houston ER 24/7 - Cypress/ FM 1960
 - HCA Houston ER 24/7 Barker Cypress
 - HCA Houston ER 24/7 Bellaire
 - HCA Houston ER 24/7 Copperfield
 - HCA Houston ER 24/7 Fall Creek
 - HCA Houston ER 24/7 Fallbrook
 - HCA Houston ER 24/7 Fort Bend Parkway
 - HCA Houston ER 24/7 Fry Road
 - HCA Houston ER 24/7 Heights
 - HCA Houston ER 24/7 Memorial City
 - HCA Houston ER 24/7 Montrose
 - HCA Houston ER 24/7 Westchase
 - HCA Houston Fairmont
 - HCA Houston Healthcare ER Texas City
 - HCA Houston Healthcare North Cypress
 - HCA Houston Hospital Northwest
 - HCA Houston Medical Center
 - HCA Houston North Channel
 - HCA Houston Southeast
 - HCA Houston Tomball
 - HCA Houston TowneLake
 - HCA Houston West
 - HCA Houston Willowbrook

- HCA The Woman's Hospital of Texas
- Houston Medical ER
- MD Anderson
- Pasadena Clinic, TBOTW
- Texas Emergency Hospital System
- Texas Orthopedics Hospital
- TXFNE Clinic- Houston

HOUSTON METHODIST FORENSIC NURSING SERVICES

Houston Methodist Forensic Nursing Services has specialty-trained certified nurses at all Houston Methodist Emergency Departments to provide forensic medical exams to survivors of sexual abuse, interpersonal violence, sex, and labor trafficking, as well as elder abuse. Houston Methodist strives to ensure that patients receive quality health care. The goal is to lessen the impact of violence by empowering survivors to find strength in taking control of their health and well-being following a traumatic act of violence and to provide a safety net system to Harris County encompassing trauma-informed patient-centered care to all victims of sexual and physical violence presenting at all Houston Methodist Hospitals.

- Provide 24/7 availability of certified Forensic Nurses to conduct medical/forensic evaluations with evidence collection (if indicated) for sexual assault, interpersonal violence, strangulation, sex and labor trafficking, and elder abuse patients.
- Provide patients with a full medical head-to-toe assessment, and if indicated, psychiatric evaluation, by a board-certified Emergency Medical provider prior to conducting a medical/forensic exam.
- Respect all diverse and cultural needs of this special patient population, providing translation services by trauma informed licensed language specialists.
- Prioritize the physical and psychological well-being of patients who have experienced sexual and/or physical assault by providing a safe and non-judgmental environment with an ongoing opportunity for informed consent throughout the comprehensive medical/forensic assessment, detailed injury documentation, and evidence preservation.
- Houston Methodist Healthcare providers will assess the sexual assault patient for STI prophylaxis, HIV prophylaxis, Hepatitis status, and emergency contraception according to CDC guidelines. Perform any STI testing that may be indicated. And provide appropriate medications.
- Provide an exceptional individualized patient experience with evidence-based trauma informed care to the sexual assault, interpersonal violence, sex and labor trafficking, and elder abuse patients.
- Provide reliability with injury identification, evidence collection per Texas State Protocol, injury documentation, forensic photography, and preservation of evidence integrity through chain of custody.
- Educate patients on follow up medical care, referral options, and complete a safe discharge plan for sexual assault, interpersonal violence, sex and labor trafficking, and elder abuse patients to ensure positive patient health outcomes. Scheduled follow-up appointments are complimentary with transportation provided at initial visit to all Houston Methodist affiliated clinics.

Services offered at all Houston Methodist SAFE-Ready facilities

- Houston Methodist Hospital
- Houston Methodist The Woodlands
- Houston Methodist Willowbrook
- Houston Methodist Cypress
- Houston Methodist West

- Houston Methodist Sugarland
- Houston Methodist Baytown
- Houston Methodist Clear Lake

Collaboration with community partners:

- Provide access to a sexual assault crisis advocate in a safe and confidential manner prior to conducting a medical/forensic examination while also respecting the patient's informed decision for accompaniment during the exam.
- Inform patients of Crime Victims Compensation sexual assault benefits and advocacy resources to assist with securing these benefits. Aid with billing to Crime Victims Compensation on behalf of the patient without insurance if their assault has been reported to law enforcement.
- Join with law enforcement and the criminal justice system by ensuring fact and/or expert forensic nurse trial testimony through subpoena, adhering to institutional policy and procedures.
- Dedicate a representative from Houston Methodist to serve as a resource liaison for the Harris County SART committee. Collaborate with all Houston area SART participants for a trauma informed, compassionate, and victim-centered approach supporting healthy and safe communities for all.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES PROVIDER

Behavioral services are provided by several SART member agencies, including the sexual assault community-based programs and DAYA and AVDA. Services include, but are not limited to, crisis intervention, individual counseling, and support group counseling. Additionally, the SART includes availability of and access to additional mental and behavioral health services in Harris County.

THE HARRIS CENTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH & IDD

The Harris Center for Mental Health and IDD strives to provide high quality, efficient, and cost-effective services so that persons with mental disabilities may live with dignity as fully functioning, participating, and contributing members of our community, regardless of their ability to pay based on a sliding scale rate schedule.

- Ensure Harris County residents and visitors have access to 24/7 real time support for behavioral health needs through 24/7 Crisis Line and emotional support text line.
- Dispatch Mobile Crisis Outreach Team upon request from caller and/or community service partner 24/7.
- Provide access to trauma informed behavioral healthcare support via The Harris Center clinical care services array.
- Provide information and support on how to navigate the behavioral health system in Harris County.
- Provide information and support on how to connect with behavioral health systems in other Texas counties if needed.
- Provide Mental Health First Aid and Stress Management and Resiliency Training to community service partners.
- Attend Harris County SART meetings and collaborate with community partners to improve care to sexual assault survivors and their families.

FORENSIC LABS

HOUSTON FORENSIC SCIENCE CENTER

The Houston Forensic Science Center (HFSC) is the forensic lab that provides forensic testing services for HPD cases. HFSC conducts forensic testing in 7 disciplines, one of which is Forensic Biology. Forensic Biology test facilitates testing on all sexual assault kits collected that are taken to HPD. The majority of testing that relates to sexual assault occurs in Forensic Biology/DNA; however, any of our services can aid in the investigation of a sexual assault.

Commitment:

1. Provide forensic testing as requested for sexual assault response within the City of Houston
2. Update appropriate SART partners of our testing backlogs, turnaround times and issues the lab is currently facing that impact testing abilities. We will also bring forward opportunities that we see in our testing for improvement in the system.
3. Provide information about testing status to team members as needed.
4. HFSC representatives will attend Adult Sexual Abuse Review Team meetings and other case reviews unless the meeting or case review does not need input or updates from our representatives

THE HARRIS COUNTY INSTITUTE OF FORENSIC SCIENCES

The Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences' Crime Laboratory performs analyses for the agency's medical examiner service and for law enforcement agencies in Harris County in the following five distinct forensic disciplines:

- Drug Chemistry
- Firearms Identification
- Forensic Genetics
- Forensic Toxicology
- Trace Evidence

The Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences Crime Laboratory provides forensic testing for approximately 84 law enforcement agencies within Harris County, excluding HPD. The vast majority of DNA analysis on sexual assault kits is completed by the laboratory in less than the state-mandated 90 days, and all eligible DNA profiles are uploaded to the State and/or National CODIS databases. Toxicology analysis on drug facilitated sexual assault cases is completed upon request.

SEXUAL ASSAULT EVIDENCE TRACKING PROGRAM

DPS Crime Lab

The Sexual Assault Evidence Tracking Program was created by the Crime Laboratory Service after the 85th Texas Legislature passed [House Bill 281](#), which added Section 420.034 to the Texas Government Code, requiring DPS to develop and implement a statewide electronic tracking system for evidence collected in cases involving sexual assault or other sex offenses. The bill requires the system to track the status and location of each item of evidence through various stages of the criminal justice process, allow entities involved in the handling of the evidence to update and track the status and location of evidence, and allow survivors to anonymously track or receive updates on the status of evidence. Participation in the tracking system is required by any entity that collects evidence of sexual assaults or other sex offenses

or investigates or prosecutes such offenses. HB 281 required DPS to implement the tracking system by September 1, 2019.

Access the tracking system here: [Texas Sexual Assault Evidence Tracking System](#). The Crime Laboratory has released an important notice which will impact Sexual Assault Kit submissions beginning September 1, 2019.

Harris County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (HCDVCC)

HCDVCC creates collaborations that maximize community resources, increase safety for victims of domestic violence and hold perpetrators of domestic violence accountable.

HCDVCC must provide victims with a reasonable expectation of confidentiality with respect to their conversations and exchanges. In order to release any information to other parties, HCDVCC advocates must first obtain written permission from victims prior to contacting or sharing information with any other service providers, including law enforcement and criminal justice agencies.

Commitment to HCSART:

- Support HCSART by providing expertise in Multidisciplinary Teams. HCDVCC currently facilitates several MDTs.
- Provide services when appropriate, to a sexual assault victim who is also a victim of domestic violence.
- Attend monthly HCSART meetings and participate in sub-committee meetings as necessary.
- Provide information to the HCSART when needed, if a written release by the victim has been signed.

HARRIS COUNTY PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE (HCPDO)

The HCPDO is a member of the SART. Its primary responsibility is to represent indigent persons charged in the misdemeanor, felony, and juvenile courts of Harris County. The clients receive zealous representation from the combined experience of lawyers, investigators, social workers, and administrative staff. The office provides comprehensive service to its clients that goes beyond simply litigating their criminal cases. This office may interact with victims of sexual assault.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Diversity of perspectives, roles, and responsibilities is essential to the effectiveness of multidisciplinary teams. The Harris County Sexual Assault Response Team (HCSART) regularly addresses complex and multifaceted issues that require collaboration across systems. Within this context, conflict is both inevitable and, when managed appropriately, a necessary component of effective team performance.

To support constructive engagement and accountability, since its inception HCSART has utilized conflict resolution procedures developed by the **Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA)**. These procedures are designed to promote respectful dialogue, problem-solving, and shared understanding while maintaining the integrity of the multidisciplinary process. No changes were made to the conflict resolution process during this reporting period.

The adopted procedures emphasize confidentiality and require that information shared among response team members is protected in accordance with applicable laws and ethical standards.

Conflict Resolution Process Steps:

- Establish ground rules adopted by the team
- Commitment by all parties to participate in the process
- Develop an agenda that includes a clear statement of goals and expectations for each party
- Personal attacks are not tolerated
- Utilize a problem-solving approach rather than a win-or-lose framework
- Select a facilitator; if the conflict does not involve the presiding officer or other SART leadership, those individuals may facilitate the process
- When necessary, consult with outside experts (such as attorneys or discipline-specific leaders) and verify relevant information
- Generate potential options to resolve the issue, typically identifying two to three options and discussing the strengths and limitations of each
- Reach agreement on a preferred option
- Develop a plan for next steps

This structured approach supports respectful engagement, reinforces accountability, and ensures that conflicts are addressed in a manner consistent with HCSART's mission, values, and survivor-centered focus.

CASE REVIEW

During the first biennium of the Harris County Sexual Assault Response Team (HCSART), the team developed an initial multidisciplinary case review process in alignment with statutory requirements. As implementation planning progressed, HCSART members determined that the process required further strengthening to ensure robust survivor protections, clearly defined participation criteria, and strong safeguards related to confidentiality, consent, and document handling. Rather than advancing prematurely, the team intentionally prioritized strengthening the framework to support ethical practice, survivor safety, and system accountability.

In response, HCSART reconvened a multidisciplinary Case Review Working Group, chaired by Amy Smith of the Harris County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council. Members of the working group included Angela Weltin and Janna Oswald of the Harris County District Attorney's Office; Lieutenant John Klafka, Sergeant Mark Schmidt, and Detective Oscar Cisneros of the Harris County Sheriff's Office; Sgt. Scott Michael of the Pasadena Police Department; Mercedes Santillanes of the Pasadena Police Department; Dr. Sally Henin of Memorial Hermann Health System; Nusrat Ameen of DAYA Houston; and Wykeshia Dixon of Bay Area Turning Point. This group reconvened to review, refine, and strengthen the case review protocol with a focus on survivor-centered practice and legal defensibility.

For this biennial report, key amendments to the case review process included:

- Clarifying the necessity of participation and limiting involvement to essential, need-to-know members
- Strengthening survivor consent requirements to ensure participation is informed, voluntary, and survivor-directed
- Reinforcing confidentiality protections across all participating agencies
- Enhancing document-handling safeguards, including clear requirements for document return and destruction following case review and completion of any appellate processes

As a result of this work, the Case Review Committee finalized the protocol, which is reflected in this report. In accordance with the protocol, a case review was submitted and is currently undergoing the approval process. The full Case Review Protocol, Case Review Request Form, and SART Case Review Consent Form are included as appendices to this report

SURVIVOR ENGAGEMENT

The Survivor Engagement Committee is chaired by Muelen Bajo-Niebla of the Houston Police Department – Victim Services Unit and includes Leticia Manzano of the Houston Area Women’s Center; Julie Pleasant of the Houston Police Department – Victim Services Unit; Crystal Franklin and Wykesha Kelley of Bay Area Turning Point; Robin Gandara of Family Time – Humble; Vivian Hernandez of the Harris County Sheriff’s Office – Victim Assistance Unit; and Nusrat Ameen of DAYA.

Recognizing that survivor perspectives are essential to understanding system strengths, gaps, and opportunities for improvement, the committee worked collaboratively to develop a formalized survivor engagement survey to ensure consistent and meaningful opportunities for survivor input. The survey was developed over several drafts, with careful review, discussion, and refinement to ensure it reflects trauma-informed principles, survivor safety, voluntary and anonymous participation, and cross-system accountability. Robin Gandara of Family Time – Humble introduced a survey to the committee for consideration, and members collectively strengthened and finalized the instrument through this collaborative process.

Once finalized, the survey was presented to the HCSART membership for adoption and will be implemented in 2026. The survey is designed to safely and anonymously collect feedback from individuals who have engaged with medical, advocacy, law enforcement, and legal systems following a sexual assault. It will help HCSART better understand survivors’ experiences across systems and identify opportunities to improve coordination, responsiveness, and trauma-informed practices.

Participation is voluntary and anonymous. Survivors may skip any questions and are assured that choosing not to participate will not affect any criminal case, medical care, or support services. To support emotional safety, survivors are encouraged to complete the survey at their own pace and may ask someone they trust to assist them.

Survey responses will be compiled and analyzed as part of HCSART’s ongoing system evaluation and may be included in future reports to inform policy, training, and operational improvements. Reports may include anonymous, de-identified quotes to elevate survivor voices and provide meaningful context to system-level findings. Eligibility for participation is limited to individuals 18 years of age and older, consistent with statutory reporting requirements and HCSART’s focus on adult survivor response.

The survivor survey represents a critical step in Harris County SART’s continued commitment to centering survivor voices, strengthening accountability, and improving the coordinated community response to sexual assault.

LEGISLATION

The Harris County Sexual Assault Response Team (HCSART) is committed to monitoring and adhering to legislative changes that affect sexual assault survivors and coordinating community response efforts. In alignment with guidance developed for Sexual Assault Response Teams by the Texas Association

Against Sexual Assault, HCSART reviewed key legislative updates from the 88th Texas Legislature and has incorporated the applicable requirements into its reporting and accountability practices. These statutory changes require SARTs to include additional data related to the timeliness of sexual assault kit transfers to crime laboratories and reinforce expectations for transparency, data accuracy, and coordination across response partners. Compliance with these requirements supports survivor-centered systems, accountability, and continued eligibility for state-administered grant funding.

Building on the progress achieved during this biennium, and consistent with the Harris County Sexual Assault Response Team's commitment to a survivor-centered, multidisciplinary response, HCSART identified the following recommendations to guide continued system strengthening during the next biennium. During this reporting period, the team intentionally worked on recommendations from the prior biennium through regular monthly meetings, committee work, relationship-building across disciplines, and ongoing review and strengthening of protocols. Through this process, HCSART advanced foundational work while also identifying gaps, challenges, and opportunities for improvement. These recommendations reflect the team's focus on strengthening interagency relationships, supporting cross-disciplinary problem-solving, and advancing more integrated, coordinated, and effective responses for adult survivors of sexual assault in Harris County.

NEXT BIENNIUM FOCUS AREAS

Develop and Implement a Unified, Survivor-Centered Protocol

HCSART will continue work toward a unified, survivor-centered protocol that integrates the roles, responsibilities, and survivor touchpoints across all participating systems. While each entity maintains strong internal protocols, the team identified opportunities to further align responses to reduce fragmentation, clarify survivor pathways, and ensure consistency across medical, advocacy, law enforcement, and prosecutorial systems.

Establish Sustainable Funding to Support Long-Term Coordination and Operations

HCSART will continue advancing efforts to establish sustainable funding that supports core functions, including convening, training, data collection, survivor engagement, governance, and continuous improvement. Stable resources are essential to maintaining coordination, strengthening infrastructure, and supporting long-term system effectiveness.

Finalize and Launch the HCSART Website

HCSART will finalize and launch the HCSART website in 2026, building on the website already created to ensure information is accessible to survivors, professionals, and system partners. The website will serve as a centralized, survivor-centered resource that clearly explains available services, system roles, and what survivors can expect when engaging with systems.

Strengthen Cross-System Data Coordination

HCSART partners will work toward greater alignment in how sexual assault data are defined, collected, and reported across disciplines to improve coordination and better understand how survivors move across systems, with analysis focused on cases involving survivors 18 years of age and older.

Expand Cross-Disciplinary Training on Collaboration and Conflict Resolution

HCSART will expand mission-aligned training focused on collaboration, communication, and conflict

resolution. These efforts will build on trauma-informed and vicarious trauma training to strengthen trust, shared problem-solving, and effectiveness across disciplines, particularly when navigating complex system challenges.

Elevate Survivor Voice to Inform System Learning and Improvement

The team will continue elevating survivor voice through survivor feedback mechanisms, case review, and shared learning. Survivor experiences will remain central to identifying system strengths, gaps, and opportunities for improvement, ensuring changes are informed by those most impacted.

Meet More Frequently Than Required to Identify System Gaps and Opportunities

HCSART will continue convening more frequently than required by statute to support relationship-building, real-time problem-solving, and identification of system gaps and opportunities for improvement. Regular engagement strengthens coordination and responsiveness across disciplines.

Strengthen HCSART's Role as a Central Forum for Multidisciplinary Decision-Making and Systems Change

The team will continue strengthening HCSART's role as a trusted, multidisciplinary forum where system-level issues are discussed, aligned, and addressed collaboratively. This includes using the SART table to inform decision-making, policy alignment, and coordinated system improvements.

Ensure Ongoing Compliance with Legislation

HCSART will continue ensuring compliance with applicable legislation, including SB 476, SB 47, and SB 608, and will remain responsive to legislative changes affecting multidisciplinary response, data reporting, forensic evidence handling, and survivor protections.

Establish a Continuous Improvement Process

The team will continue developing and strengthening a continuous improvement process to ensure alignment, accountability, system learning, and progress tracking are consistently captured and used to inform future work.

LOOKING AHEAD

As the Harris County Sexual Assault Response Team enters the next biennium, the team remains committed to advancing a coordinated, survivor-centered, and multidisciplinary response to sexual assault grounded in collaboration, accountability, and continuous improvement. Building on the foundation established to date, HCSART will continue using its regular convenings as a forum to strengthen interagency relationships, identify system gaps and opportunities, and support shared problem-solving across disciplines.

As Houston and Harris County prepare to host the 2026 FIFA World Cup, HCSART recognizes the importance of strong, coordinated systems that are prepared to respond effectively during periods of increased population movement, visitor volume, and system demand. HCSART members will contribute to a coordinated, multidisciplinary approach to increase awareness of sexual assault resources before, during, and after the World Cup. This effort will focus on aligned messaging, cross-system readiness, and clear pathways to services to help ensure residents, visitors, and survivors are aware of available resources and know how to access support. While individual disciplines and partner agencies may implement their

own preparedness and outreach plans, HCSART will serve as a partner to support. HCSART will also collaborate with other planning groups and initiatives across Harris County, including coordination with the City of Houston and regional partners, to support a unified, survivor-centered approach and promote awareness of available resources during this significant event.

HCSART will remain responsive to legislative changes, emerging best practices, and lessons learned through implementation, data review, survivor feedback, and case review. By continuing to center adult survivors, align system responses, and invest in sustainable infrastructure, the team is positioned to deepen its impact and strengthen the community's capacity to respond effectively and ethically to sexual assault in Harris County.

Together, these efforts reflect HCSART's ongoing commitment to learning, adaptation, and collective responsibility in the service of adult survivors. It is through this collective resolve that individual efforts become systemic change. Individually, each response matters; together, we form a unified system where collaboration becomes strength, ensuring survivors are met not by isolated responses, but by the power of an entire community working as one and supported at every step.

APPENDIX A: HARRIS COUNTY SART CASE REVIEW PROTOCOL

PURPOSE

Pursuant to SB476, the Harris County Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) shall conduct case reviews at least once on a biennial basis as a mechanism to evaluate the effectiveness of each partner's response and interagency protocols and systems using a multi-disciplinary approach. The Harris County SART is committed to strengthening the community's coordinated response to sexual assault, minimizing victim/survivor trauma, and enhancing health and judicial outcomes for adult survivors of sexual assault using a multi-disciplinary approach.

GOALS

- Strengthen understanding of the roles and responsibilities of different professionals and agencies that respond to adult survivors of sexual assault within the community
- Identify successful practices
- Identify gaps and barriers
- Build trust and rapport with team members
- Seek opportunities to enhance sexual assault response policies and protocols

GUIDELINES

- Any SART member can submit a proposal for case review to the Case Review Committee.
- Only cases that have been fully adjudicated will be reviewed unless all parties agree to make an exception.
- Case reviews must be scheduled in advance and all agencies/parties involved must be notified.
- If the Case Review Committee and all parties agree to review the case, a survivor notification plan (process of getting informed consent) will be developed.
- Advocacy centers will work in partnership to make contact with survivors to obtain consent in an effort to provide advocacy services, immediate support and referrals/resources, along with explanation on why reviewing the case is important for a bigger cause.
- Survivors will be fully informed about the voluntary nature of the process. Where an exception is made by the Case Review Committee for a pending investigation or charge to be reviewed, an additional consent form will be acquired from the survivor informing them of possible risks/negative impacts associated with reviewing a case that has not yet been fully adjudicated.
- All documentation submitted to the Case Review Committee related to a case review will be kept confidential. After the review, all documentation that was submitted to the Committee will be returned to the appropriate agency. After the completion of any appellate reviews, other than the findings or recommendations, any documents left with the Committee will be destroyed.

CASE REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Case Review Committee will be multi-disciplinary and facilitated by a designated SART member. Core members should include law enforcement, prosecution, and advocacy. Depending on individual case scenarios and facts, the case review may include SANE, laboratory personnel, sexual assault nurse examiners, probation/parole officers and other individuals with critical information about the case. Participation of additional members will be left to the discretion of the Case Review Committee, and will need to be decided prior to receiving consent from the survivor.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND CONSENT

The Texas Local Government Code Sec. 351.258(f) requires that a response team only review a sexual assault case of an adult survivor with the signed, written consent of the survivor. The SART will develop and utilize a standardized consent form that includes instructions ensuring the survivor has informed consent prior to signing. That consent form does not substitute for those required by law for Rape Crisis Centers, VOCA/VAWA-funded agencies or Healthcare providers. If those entities wish to share information, they will need to obtain consents or court orders that are compliant with those requirements.

The consent form will specify the following:

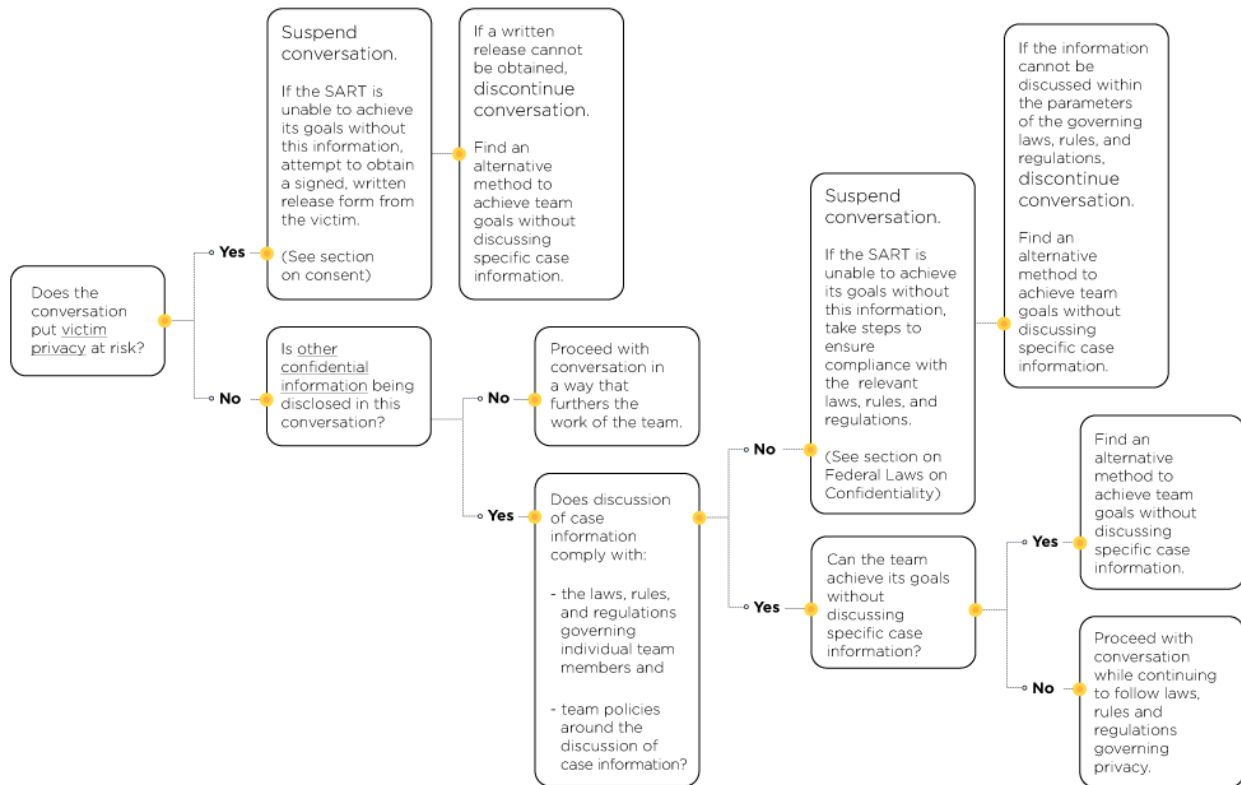
- The information or records covered by the release (Page 22) CCR-Toolkit.pdf
- The reason or purpose for the release
- The person/s or agency/s to which the information is to be released
- The consent will be a time-limited release indicating the general timeframe in which the information will be released and date when the terms of the release expire.
- That their participation is absolutely voluntary, and that the case review consent form is not tied to their willingness or ability to participate in the criminal justice investigation or receive services or support.
- That any information shared in the course of case review may be legally required to be disclosed to defense counsel pursuant to Brady v. Maryland and/or the Michael Morton Act.

TO SUBMIT A CASE

- SART member completes the Initial Case Review Assessment and sends it to the Case Review Committee: [Multidisciplinary-Sexual-Assault-Case-Review.pdf](#)
- Committee decides if case is eligible for review
- Committee designates a facilitator and begins case review process
- Case Review Summary and Post Case Review Summary must be completed for every case review conducted. [Multidisciplinary-Sexual-Assault-Case-Review.pdf](#)

Discussing Case Information

A Flowchart for SARTs



APPENDIX B: CASE REVIEW REQUEST FORM

Harris County Sexual Assault Response Team Case Review Request

SART Team Member Requesting Review: _____

Member Agency: _____

Law Enforcement Agency: _____

Law Enforcement Incident Number: _____

Name of Investigator (if known): _____

Investigator's Telephone Number (if known): _____

Additional Contact at Law Enforcement (if known): _____

Contact Telephone Number (if known): _____

Date of Offense: _____

Charges Filed: _____ Yes _____ No _____ Unknown

Cause Number: _____

Prosecutor's Name (if known): _____

Prosecutor's Telephone Number (if known): _____

Additional Contact at the District Attorney's Office: _____

Contact Telephone Number (if known): _____

Victim's Name: _____

Victim's Date of Birth: _____

Release of Information Signed by Victim: _____ Yes _____ No

Date Released Sign: _____

Was there a SANE Exam? _____ Yes _____ No _____ Unknown

Hospital: _____

Offender's Name: _____

Aliases: _____

Offender's Date of Birth: _____

Brief Summary:

Date Submitted to Case Review Committee: _____

Received by: _____

Date Sent to D.A.'s Office for Evaluation: _____

D.A. Evaluating Case for Review: _____

Date Evaluation Completed: _____

Case Reviewable: _____ Yes _____ No

Date Notification Sent to Team Member: _____

Date of Review: _____

APPENDIX C: CASE REVIEW CONSENT FORM

Harris County Sexual Assault Response Team Consent Form

According to the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA), a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) provides a community-based response to adult sexual assault through an intentional coordination of service providers and first responders. The Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill 476 in 2021 stating that every county in the state of Texas is mandated to have a SART.

The Texas Local Government Code Sec. 351.258(f) mandates that a SART may only review a sexual assault case of an adult survivor with the signed, written consent of the survivor. This consent form does not substitute for those required by law for Rape Crisis Centers, VOCA/VAWA-funded agencies, or Healthcare providers. If those entities wish to share information, they will need to obtain consents or court orders that are compliant with those requirements.

By signing this consent form, you agree to have the Harris County SART Case Review Committee consider your case for review. Your participation is absolutely voluntary, and the case review consent form is not tied to your willingness or ability to participate in the criminal investigation and/or prosecution or to receive services or support inside or outside of the criminal justice system. Where the Case Review Committee is seeking to review a pending investigation or a charge, an additional consent form will be requested informing you of the possible risks or negative impacts associated with reviewing a case that has not yet been fully adjudicated, including any information discovered in the course of the case review may be legally required to be disclosed to the defendant pursuant to *Brady v. Maryland* or the Michael Morton Act.

The Case Review Committee will be a multi-disciplinary team, and core members should include law enforcement, prosecution, and service providers who provide advocacy to sexual assault survivors. The team will be facilitated by a designated SART member. Depending on individual case scenarios and facts, the case review may include laboratory personnel, sexual assault nurse examiners, and other individuals with critical information about the case.

This Consent Form is valid for a period of _____ days after signature.

I understand that this Consent Form is valid when I sign it, and I may withdraw my consent to have my case reviewed by the Harris County Sexual Assault Response Team at any time in writing.

Client signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX D: SURVEY

VIEW THE 2026 SART SURVIVOR ENGAGEMENT SURVEY
BY SCANNING THIS QR CODE:

