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The Texas Board of Criminal Justice and the Victim Services Committee

By *Derrelynn Perryman, TBCJ Member*



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The mission of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Victim Services Division is to provide a central mechanism for crime victims to participate in the criminal justice system. The Victim Services Division is dedicated to providing direct, personal service to crime victims, surviving family members, witnesses who testified at trial and concerned citizens. The division also works closely with criminal justice and victim service professionals. Services provided include, but are not limited to, constitutionally and statutorily mandated notifications and programs. The division's goal is to assure victims that they are not left behind at the crime scene, but can be involved, if they so desire, in all parts of the criminal justice system. As a newly appointed member of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice and the Chair of the Victim Services Committee, I recently had the opportunity to spend a day with the division staff and I came away truly impressed with their dedication, compassion and the outstanding job they do.

I was appointed to the Texas Board of Criminal Justice in August 2015, and I have been selected to chair the Victim Services Committee. I am excited about this opportunity. Serving victims of crime has been my passion for more than 20 years. I am the Victim Services Coordinator for the Arlington Police Department, a position I have held since 1994. During my term of service, the Arlington Police Department has been twice recognized by the International Association of Chiefs of Police for excellence in providing victim services. I also serve as an adjunct instructor for the School of Social Work and the Criminal Justice and Criminology Department at the University of Texas at Arlington. I am a licensed clinical social worker and have worked with victims in private practice as well. I am also a certified peace officer instructor, providing training to officers and first responders, and I am a member of the Critical Incident Team with Arlington Police Department. I earned my bachelor's and master's degrees in social work from the University of Texas at Arlington.

Let me take this opportunity to remind everyone that National Crime Victims' Rights Week is coming up in April. Since 1981, communities across the nation have promoted

crime victims' rights awareness during National Crime Victims' Rights Week. This year National Crime Victims' Rights Week will be observed April 10 to 16, with the theme "Serving Victims. Building Trust. Restoring Hope." the worthy tasks victim services professionals have embraced as their life's work.

Serving victims starts with early intervention immediately following a victimization, providing victim services throughout the criminal justice system and, finally, safety planning with a victim prior to an offender's release and providing the victim with all of the requested referral information. Establishing trust with victims allows victim services professionals to build relationships and to better understand how to meet victims' needs and provide mandated services. When victim services professionals are successful in serving victims and building trust, healing and rebuilding of lives is possible, leading to a restoration of hope; the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Victim Services Division is dedicated to these goals and I look forward to working with the division on this mission during my tenure with the Texas Board of Criminal Justice. ●