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## Saluting Employees

### TDCJ Victim Services hosts Victim Assistance Training Academy

Fifty victim services professionals from across the state participated in the Texas Victim Assistance Training (TVAT) Academy hosted in March by TDCJ's Victim Services Division. During the four-day event, guest speakers presented information on topics such as crime victim rights, victim services ethics, stress management and effective communication skills for those who work with crime victims.

The Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse, overseen by the Victim Services Division, was awarded a grant from the Criminal Justice Division of the Office of the Governor to host the TVAT Academy. The Clearinghouse took advantage of this opportunity to collaborate with a variety of victim services experts and key stakeholders to determine the best training techniques for crime victim advocates and service providers.



Academy participants learn about difficulties endured by victims of domestic abuse. Here, Stephanie Martinez, client advocate with the Atascosa Family Crisis Center, attempts to navigate through the obstacles confronting a victim who has two children and is confined to a wheelchair.

Held at the Public Safety Operations and Training Center in Georgetown, the Academy was designed to provide entry-level victim assistance training for new victim services professionals and volunteers who routinely work with victims of crime and have less than three years' experience in the field.

The curriculum was based on the victims' experience with the criminal justice system and focused on their needs and rights from the moment of victimization through the investigation, pre-trial, trial and the post-conviction phases. Victim Services Director Angie McCown explained, "The goal of the Academy was to make sure that when these individuals leave, they really understand what a victim experiences through all phases of the criminal justice process and have the tools and resources to make a difference in the community."

Additional topics covered include the influence of culture when working to support crime victims, as well as workplace ethics and resiliency when dealing with difficult situations. Another TVAT Academy is scheduled to take place in Georgetown during the first week of October. ●