

The VICTIM'S INFORMER

TEXAS CRIME VICTIM CLEARINGHOUSE

DECEMBER 2016/JANUARY 2017 VOL. 21, NO. 4

ROCKY CARR

By Angie McCown, Director
TDCJ Victim Services Division



Rocky Carr

Anyone who has ever attended a Tree of Angels Ceremony either knows or has heard of Verna Lee Carr, who initiated this memorable tradition in 1991, while volunteering with People Against Violent Crime (PAVC). Verna Lee understood how difficult the holiday season could be for surviving family members of homicide victims, and she

wanted to do something special for them to honor those victims and provide them some comfort.

This Tree of Angels tradition grew beyond Texas, and then beyond the United States. Many communities reached out to Verna Lee for assistance with their Tree of Angels, and for over 25 years she assisted those communities while also taking the lead at PAVC to assist victims of violent crime. Verna Lee would tell you that she would never have been able to accomplish all of this had it not been for the support from her family, and in particular from her husband Rocky Carr. He not only supported her work, he also took on many PAVC responsibilities and worked alongside her.

I have known Verna Lee and Rocky for 20 years, and have watched them support victims of violent crime and the criminal justice professionals who serve them, while also supporting each



Angie McCown

other. Rocky was the calm, gentle, stabilizing force behind Verna Lee's frenzy of activity. Whenever I interacted with him I could feel his peaceful compassion. Rocky was a 25 year cancer survivor when he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in July, and in spite of a courageous battle Rocky died at home surrounded by family and friends on November 12, 2016. TDCJ Victim Services would like to thank Rocky for his friendship to us and his dedicated service to victims of violent crime. We would ask that you keep Verna Lee and her family in your thoughts this holiday season.★

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The Texas Department of Criminal Justice Victim Services Division is excited to announce the in-person TVAT Academy!

Dates: March 7 - 10, 2017

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The

VICTIM'S INFORMER

SPOTLIGHT ON



By: Keri Ward, Attorney, Advocates for Victims of Crime

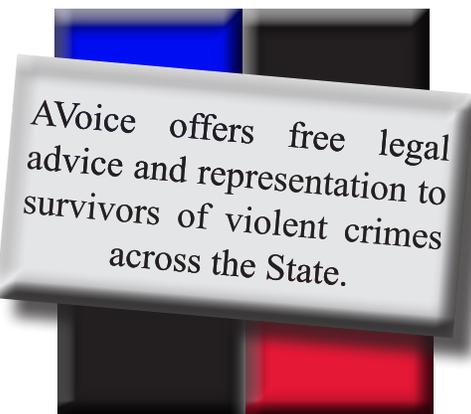
Texas Legal Services Center (TLSC) is a non-profit organization formed in 1977 to facilitate communications between legal aid programs and to work on client issues of statewide concern, primarily through policy advocacy and limited litigation assistance. The primary focus of TLSC's mission was to provide training and disseminate publications that pertained to legal matters affecting Texans statewide. Since then, the mission of TLSC has expanded to include many projects that assist individuals in Texas and, in some cases, nationwide.

Advocates for Victims of Crime (AVoice), a program of TLSC, began as the Victim's Initiative for Counseling, Advocacy and Restoration of the Southwest (VICARS) in 2008. VICARS initially was a project dedicated to providing legal services to victims of identity theft. Realizing that victims of identity theft were often victims of other crimes, a crime victims' rights program emerged

and AVoice was born. Composed of a team of attorneys, an intake counselor, a victim advocate and a paralegal, AVoice offers free legal advice and representation to survivors of violent crimes across the state. In addition, in order to meet the unique needs of victims of sexual assault, TLSC operates a statewide Legal Aid for Survivors of Sexual Assault hotline where survivors can speak directly with an attorney to receive legal advice and referrals to other organizations. The TLSC also partners with the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault to provide direct legal assistance to survivors. Hundreds of women and men have been helped with protective orders, privacy and safety issues, and related legal concerns.

AVoice attorneys educate legal advocates, law enforcement officials, and attorneys throughout Texas in an effort to ensure that crime victims are afforded all of their rights as provided by the Texas Crime Victims' Rights Act.¹

A survivor of a violent crime may not be aware of their rights or that they may have options available to them. For a survivor of violent crime, safety is often a top priority and a protective order may be a solution for them. The Texas Family Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure provide a remedy whereby a victim of family violence, sexual assault, sex trafficking or stalking can obtain a protective order if they can prove that family violence has occurred and is likely to occur in the future or, reasonable grounds exist to believe that they have been a victim of sexual assault or stalking.²



1. Texas Code of Criminal Procedure chapter 56 (2013); Tex. Const. art. 1 § 30.

2. Texas Family Code, Title IV; Texas Code of Criminal Procedure art. 7A (2003).

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AVoice is dedicated to providing assistance to survivors of violent crimes such as assault, child abuse, domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking, and stalking. AVoice attorneys can provide advice and/or direct representation in areas of law including but not limited to housing, employment, immigration, Title IX, family, crime victim's compensation, the criminal justice process, and protective orders.

January is National Stalking Awareness month and AVoice has helped survivors of stalking all over the state of Texas. One AVoice attorney was able to help a woman free herself from her ex-husband when he began stalking her after they divorced.



Image provided by AVoice staff.

Her ex-husband had always been controlling but when the marriage ended he continued to think that she belonged to him. He constantly called her phone and sent her text messages and would often call her job in an attempt to get her fired. The victim's ex-husband followed her to work, doctor's appointments, and many other places. He seemed to know exactly where she would be and this terrified her.

When she took her car in for a routine oil change she was shocked to find out that a GPS tracker had been attached to her car, and she realized how her ex-husband was tracking her every move. She went to the police station and reported the stalking and they referred her to our office. With the assistance of the AVoice attorney, she obtained a lifetime stalking protective order against her ex-husband and was able to terminate her lease so that she could move to a safe location where her ex-husband could not find her.

AVoice operates a statewide legal hotline. Our intake counselor answers calls during business hours on weekdays, and AVoice attorneys follow up with callers, usually within one business day, to answer callers' legal questions and/or provide them with direct representation in lawsuits related to their victimization.★



AVoice staff.



If you, or someone you know, are a victim of a violent crime and you need assistance, or if your agency would like a customized training on legal issues related to crime victims, please call our hotline at 888-343-4414.



By: Julie Jespersen, Program Specialist, Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse

During the month of January each year, the Stalking Resource Center of the National Center for Victims of Crime, in partnership with the Office on Violence Against Women, the United States Department of Justice work to raise awareness about the realities of stalking with the National Stalking Awareness Month campaign.¹

January 2017 will mark the 14th anniversary of the observance of the National Stalking Awareness Month. Raising awareness and spreading the word is as important as ever. Research regarding stalking has shown that it continues to be a widespread problem in our country. Data published by the Centers for Disease Control shows that 7.5 million people age 18 and older were stalked in a one-year period.²

Stalking Victimization

Stalking is linked to intimate partner violence and sexual assault and this crime has a significant traumatic effect on its victims.³ A stalker can be someone you know

well or not at all. Many stalkers have dated or been involved with the people they stalk.

While the legal definition of stalking varies from state to state, the Stalking Resource Center offers this general definition of stalking: “a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear.”⁴

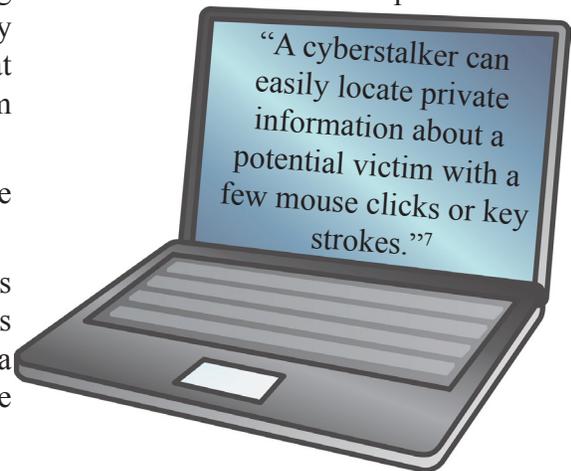
The following are additional facts provided by the Stalking Resource Center’s Stalking Fact Sheet:⁵

- 15 percent of women and 6 percent of men have experienced stalking victimization in which they felt fearful or believed that they or someone close to them would be harmed or killed.
- Individuals age 18 to 24 face the highest rates of stalking.
- 61 percent of female victims and 44 percent of male victims of stalking are stalked by a current or former intimate partner.

- 25 percent of female and 32 percent of male victims are stalked by an acquaintance.
- Both women and men can be victims of stalking but women are more often victimized.
- Most stalking cases involve men stalking women, but men do stalk men, women do stalk women, and women do stalk men.

Technology and Stalking

The use of technology in stalking continues to grow. The term cyberstalking refers to “the use of the Internet, e-mail, or other telecommunication technologies to harass or stalk another person”.⁶



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1. Stalking fact sheet. Stalking Resource Center of the National Center for Victims of Crime. 2016. http://victimsofcrime.org/docs/default-source/src/stalking-fact-sheet-2015_eng.pdf?status=Temp&sfvrsn=0.994206007104367. Accessed 10/3/2016.

2. Stalking fact sheet. Stalking Resource Center of the National Center for Victims of Crime. 2016. <http://www.victimsofcrime.org/our-programs/stalking-resource-center/stalking-information/stalking-statistics>. Accessed 10/3/2016.

3. Trudy M. Gregorie. Cyberstalking: Dangers on the Information Superhighway. National Center for Victims of Crime, 2001

4. Stalking Resource Center of the National Center for Victims of Crime website. 2016. <http://www.victimsofcrime.org/our-programs/stalking-resource-center/stalking-information>. Accessed 10/3/2016.

5. Stalking fact sheet. Stalking Resource Center of the National Center for Victims of Crime. 2016. http://victimsofcrime.org/docs/default-source/src/stalking-fact-sheet-2015_eng.pdf?status=Temp&sfvrsn=0.994206007104367. Accessed 10/3/2016.

6. Ibid and the U.S. Department of Justice. (August 1999). Cyberstalking: A New Challenge for Law Enforcement and Industry — A Report from the Attorney General to the Vice President. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, pp. 2, 6, 8.

7. Ibid and Trudy M. Gregorie. Cyberstalking: Dangers on the Information Superhighway. National Center for Victims of Crime, 2001.

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Cell phones and personal computers are just a few of the many technological devices people use daily as tools for cyberstalking. Extensive research in the field reveals that the personal information available through the Internet allows stalkers to easily locate private information about a potential victim.⁷

“The use of technology to stalk, sometimes referred to as “cyberstalking,” is a widespread and significant problem that may include the use of any electronic or digital means to harass, intimidate, threaten, follow, monitor, or make unwanted contact with a victim.”⁷

For more information including online training on the use of technology to stalk, visit the Stalking Resource Center at www.victimsofcrime.org/src.★

More Information

For additional information about Stalking Awareness Month, you may visit the Stalking Resource Center’s website by clicking the following link: <http://stalkingawarenessmonth.org/about>

7. Stalking Resource Center of the National Center for Victims of Crime website. 2016. <http://www.victimsofcrime.org/docs/src/cyberstalking---dangers-on-the-information-superhighway.pdf?sfvrsn=2>. Accessed 10/3/2016.

8. Ibid

PROTECTIVE ORDER EXTENSIONS

By Brooke Ellison, Manager, TDCJ VSD - Programs

In *The Victim’s Informer* (vol. 21, n. 2), an article was published regarding post-conviction safety planning. The article provided an overview of many different safety planning tips and information for victims of crime, one of which was the extension of protective orders. In this edition, we want to elaborate on the extension of protective orders.

Victims of family violence, dating violence, sexual assault, sexual abuse, stalking and trafficking are eligible for the different types of protective orders. When assisting victims of crime with the extension of protective orders, it is important to acknowledge:

- there are different types of protective orders, some of which are not eligible for the automatic extension;
- if the protective order is

automatically extended, the data in the national and Texas crime information centers (the NCIC and TCIC) is not automatically updated to reflect the new expiration date; and

- a referral to a county that issued the protective order and/or a legal advocacy organization is important to ensure the new expiration date is entered in the NCIC and TCIC systems.

1. Texas Family Code § 85.025(c) and Code of Criminal Procedure art. 7A.07(c) - Please consult with the county that issued the order, a legal advocacy organization or an attorney to determine if the extension applies to a specific protective order.

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PROTECTIVE ORDER EXTENSIONS

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Types of Protective Orders

Magistrate's Order for Emergency Protection, also referred to as EPO:

An EPO can be issued from 31 to 91 days to provide protection after an offender has been arrested. A magistrate, another term for judge, can issue this type of protective order on his/her own motion. In addition, the victim of the offense, the guardian of the victim, a peace officer or the attorney representing the state may apply for an EPO. For those victims seeking a final protective order, an EPO can provide protection while the victim applies for a final protective order. An EPO is not eligible for the automatic extension.

Temporary Ex Parte Order

A temporary ex parte order provides protection between the date an application is filed for a final protective order and the hearing date set by the court. The temporary ex parte order is typically valid for up to 20 days and can be extended for 20-day periods on the court's own motion or the request of the applicant (victim). The offense does not have to be reported to law enforcement for the court to issue the order. Temporary Ex Parte Orders are not eligible for the automatic extension.

Final Protective Orders

Final protective orders provide protection for a specified period of time. While final protective orders may be issued for any duration, up to the duration of the life span of the victim (applicant) and offender (respondent), they are typically issued for two years. Final protective orders are eligible for an automatic extension.

Challenges of the Automatic Extension

Texas law mandates that the final protective order be extended if an offender is the subject of a protective order and is confined or imprisoned on the date the protective order expires or if the protective order would expire not later than the first anniversary of the date the person is released from confinement or imprisonment.² However, the data in NCIC and TCIC is not automatically updated to reflect the new expiration date.

If the new expiration date is not in NCIC and TCIC it can cause challenges with enforcing a protective order. For instance, if a victim calls a law enforcement agency to report a possible protective order violation, the law enforcement agency will more than likely check the TCIC and NCIC systems. If the new

expiration date is not entered, the law enforcement agency may conclude the protective order has expired. Not only will this cause challenges in investigating the possible violation, it can also be a safety concern for the victim, which may confuse victims or result in a lack of confidence in the criminal justice system.

Assisting Crime Victims

It is important that victims whose protective orders are required to be extended by Texas law are provided accurate information and assistance in updating the protective order with the new expiration date, thus also updating TCIC and NCIC.

For victims registered in the Victim Notification System (VNS), the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Victim Services Division (VSD) provides notification prior to an offender's release from the TDCJ regarding protective order extensions as well as legal assistance referral information.

The Victim Impact Statement (VIS) form was also updated after the last legislative session to include a question regarding the issuance of a protective order as shown on the following page.

2. Texas Family Code § 85.025(c) and Code of Criminal Procedure art. 7A.07(c).

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PROTECTIVE ORDER EXTENSIONS

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The VIS form is completed by a crime victim and follows the offender through the criminal justice system. If an offender is sentenced to the TDCJ Correctional Institutions Division (CID) (adult prison system), the county is required to forward the VIS form in the

offender's penitentiary packet. Once received by TDCJ, the VIS form is processed by the TDCJ VSD. The victim will be registered on the VNS, if selected on the VIS form. To collect the protective order data from the VIS form, the TDCJ VSD updated the VNS. With this data, trained TDCJ VSD

staff can provide more detailed information regarding the possible protective order extension to the crime victim.

To assist crime victims, the TDCJ VSD routinely provides referrals to the Texas Legal Service Center's AVoice Program at 888-343-4414 and the Texas Advocacy Project at 512- 476-5386 or 888-325-SAFE (7233). These organizations or the county that issued the protective order can assist crime victims in obtaining an extension of a protective order with the new expiration date – thus updating TCIC and NCIC. ★

SECTIONS 1 & 2 TO BE COMPLETED BY VICTIM, PARENT/GUARDIAN OR CLOSE RELATIVE		
SECTION 1. NOTIFICATION / NO CONTACT		
If you are an adult, do you want to be notified about:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• relevant court proceedings, or• the defendant's status if the defendant:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ is placed on community supervision (probation), or○ is sentenced to prison (Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Correctional Institutions Division) or is considered for parole or release?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
If the defendant is sent to prison, do you want the defendant to be prohibited from contacting you?		<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Do you have a protective order against the defendant?		<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO



AMERICAN CORRECTIONAL ASSOCIATION STANDARDS

By: Mark Odom, Deputy Director, TDCJ VSD

The American Correctional Association (ACA) was founded in 1870. Their mission statement reads: "The American Correctional Association provides a professional organization for all individuals and groups, both public and private, that share a common goal of improving the justice system."

ACA accredits over 900 prisons, jails, community residential

centers (halfway houses) and various other corrections facilities in the U.S. and internationally, using their independently published standards manuals.

The correctional standards created and refined by the ACA represent fundamental national correctional practices that improve the functioning of correctional facilities and agencies at all levels. The ACA

standards address other functions such as parole, training, central administration and victim services.

The ACA Restorative Justice/Victims Committee was tasked with reviewing and updating the current ACA Standards pertaining to victim services in corrections and to propose new standards in line with current national practices. At the ACA Conference in Boston this past

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August, the ACA Standards Committee approved a new standard for Victim and Offender Dialogue:

Where a facilitated victim offender dialogue program exists, written policy, procedure and practice

provide that there is a program initiated and requested only by a victim or victim/survivor that provides an opportunity for such victims or survivors to meet face-to-face or by other means with the inmate responsible for their victimization in a safe, secure, and confidential setting after

thorough preparation, and with the assistance of a properly trained facilitator.

The Restorative Justice/Victims Committee has also proposed updating and expanding the ACA Standards regarding victim notification.★

Please note: For more information regarding the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Victim Services Division (VSD) Victim Offender Mediation Dialogue program, please visit the following link: <http://tdcj.state.tx.us/divisions/vs/index.html> You may also contact the TDCJ VSD VOMD program by calling (800) 848-4284 or via email at vsd.vomd@tdcj.texas.gov

TDCJ VSD RVSC SERVICES DURING NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH



By: Christina Alcorn, Administrative Assistant, TDCJ Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse

“During National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, we shine a light on this violation of the basic human right to be free from violence and abuse, pledge to ensure every victim of domestic violence knows they are not alone, and foster supportive communities that help survivors seek justice and enjoy full and healthy lives.”¹

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Victim Services Division (VSD) Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse (TxCVC)

staff attended National Domestic Violence Awareness Month events, provided training and staffed informational booths.

The TDCJ VSD TxCVC staff includes Regional Victim Service Coordinators (RVSCs) located strategically throughout Texas, in Dallas, Lubbock, and Corpus Christi.

During National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, the RVSCs attended events and provided victims with information

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RVSC Rose Trevino provided an information table at the Hidalgo County “Go Purple” Day Awareness Event on Tuesday, October 4, 2016 in Edinburg, Texas. The observances included an information fair in which various organizations, to include the TDCJ VSD TxCVC, provided information regarding resources, available services for victims of domestic violence and those who advocate for them.

1. Presidential Proclamation - National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, 2016. Released on September 30, 2016. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/10/01/presidential-proclamation-national-domestic-violence-awareness-month>

NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

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about services and available resources.

The RVSCs provide direct services to crime victims and training to criminal justice and victim services professionals within their respective regions.

Training topics include the Victim Impact Statement, services offered by the TDCJ VSD and post-conviction crime victims' rights.

In addition, the RVSCs provide information, assistance, and direct services to victims of crime to include support



RVSC, Rose Trevino provided training on assisting victims through the parole process at the San Antonio Police Department's (SAPD) Violence Intervention Conference on October 11, 2016. The above photo in order from left to right: San Antonio Police Officer Hodge, RVSC Rose Trevino and SAPD Crisis Response Team Member Cynthia Salinas.

You may contact the TDCJ VSD Headquarters by email at tdcj.clearinghouse@tdcj.texas.gov or by phone 800-848-4284.

and accompaniment. Accompaniment services include attending meetings with victims at the Board of Pardons and Paroles, parole revocation hearings, and victim impact panels and assisting victims during the execution process.★

“We all have a role to play in building a bright and safe future for each other and for future generations. This month, we recommit to standing with survivors of domestic violence and to doing our utmost to extend hope and healing to all who need it.”²

2. Presidential Proclamation - National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, 2016. Released on September 30, 2016. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2016/10/01/presidential-proclamation-national-domestic-violence-awareness-month>

NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE



By: Julie Jesperson, Program Specialist, Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse
Material submitted by: Anne Garza, POMC San Antonio Chapter

Tragically, each year more than 14,000 persons are murdered nationwide.¹ In 2007, Congress designated September 25th as the National Day of Remembrance for all murder victims. The National Day of Remembrance for Murder

Victims provides survivors of homicide an opportunity to honor their loved ones and provides public awareness about the impact of violent crime on families.

Initially, September 25th was chosen as it marked the anniversary of the 1978 murder of Lisa Hullinger, daughter of Robert and Charlotte Hullinger.² The Hullinger's are the founders of the National Organization of Parents of Murdered Children (POMC).

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1. FBI Annual Crime Report 2014 <https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s/2014/crime-in-the-u.s.-2014/tables/table-1>. Accessed October 17, 2016.

2. National Parents of Murdered Children website. 2016. natlpomc@pomc.org. Accessed 10/3/2016.

NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE



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Teri Cleborne provided an overview of the events held by the POMC San Antonio chapter.

It is bitter sweet that the main purpose of the National Day of Remembrance is to keep our children's memories alive. At the beginning of the San Antonio chapter's service, we had a slideshow that showed our children who have been murdered followed by a guest speaker and a few songs. The event ended with a candlelight vigil. The event also provided refreshments and door prizes to make it a little fun and we were able to talk about our children without anyone feeling uncomfortable.

Ms. Cleborne also provided the following thoughts she has about being a parent of a murdered child. In addition to the thoughts provided below, she says, "it doesn't matter if your child was six months old or 40 years old - he/she is still your child."

People stop saying your loved one's name. My daughter, Valerie, was murdered at the age of 23. She had two small children ages three and five. People tend to stop saying her name, they say things like the child's "mama" or "your daughter" and I want to scream,

"Her name is Valerie, say her name!" You are not going to remind me she died because I haven't forgotten, you aren't going to make me cry, I cry everyday. I could never in my wildest dreams have imagined this kind of pain was possible. It helps so much being with other people who feel your pain or know how you feel.

Someone made a list of things to never say to a grieving parent and it is so true.

- In time, things will get better.
- You need to be strong.
- They are in a better place.
- At least you have other children.
- Time to start living again, it's been long enough.
- They will never suffer again.
- Put the past behind you.
- You still have your child here, in his/her children.
- I know how you feel. ★



A Face in the Crowd

I thought I saw you in the crowd,
They walked like you, their stance was proud.
Their hair the same their profile too,
I really thought it could be you.
Then I remembered you were gone,
My heart fell flat as I moved on.
I see your face wherever I go,
Guess I just thought that you should know.
Still hear your laugh, and see your smile
Though you've been gone for quite awhile.
I miss you more than words can say,
Wish it had been you I saw today.³

3. Poem provided by Teri Cleborne of the POMC San Antonio Chapter. The author was listed as being unknown.



T • V • A • T ACADEMY

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice Victim Services Division Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse is excited to announce the Texas Victim Assistance Training (TVAT) Academy!

The TVAT Academy is an in-person, foundational level victim services training.

DATES: March 7 - 10, 2017

LOCATION: Public Safety Operations and Training Center
3500 D B Wood Rd.
Georgetown, TX 78628

REGISTRATION: <http://www.tdcj.texas.gov/php/tvatacademy/index.php>

REGISTRATION FEE: There is no registration fee to attend the academy. Travel, hotel, and meal costs are the responsibility of the attendee.

Benefits of Attendance:

- Acquisition of foundational skills necessary to serving people who have been victims of traumatic crime;
- Recognition of specialized victim service training and experience;
- Demonstration of commitment to victim-centered service delivery and professional development; and
- Opportunity to network with other professionals.

Please note that individuals applying to the TVAT Academy will be required to complete the TVAT Online before attending the TVAT Academy. The TVAT Online provides four hours of baseline victim assistance training for free and is available anytime online at <https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/php/tvatonline/>.

Funding for the TVAT Academy is provided through a grant from the Criminal Justice Division of the Office of the Governor.

More information regarding the in-person TVAT Academy, including the location of hotels and registration information, is available online at <https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/php/tvatacademy/index.php>.



TEXAS CRIME VICTIM CLEARINGHOUSE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Webinar Highlights:

Victim Impact Statement: Recommended Processing Procedures

The Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse (TxCVC) along with other state and local agencies develop the Victim Impact Statement (VIS) and the VIS Recommended Processing Procedures. This webinar provides information regarding the VIS Recommended Processing Procedures developed by victim services and criminal justice professionals with the goal to help ensure that completed VISs are submitted to the correct supervising entity and to assist individuals that handle the VIS to meet the statutory mandates regarding the VIS processing. To register and view this previously recorded webinar, please click [here](#).

The Victim Impact Statement: The Victims' Voice in the Criminal Justice System

The VIS is key to ensuring victims are afforded their rights in the criminal justice system. This training discusses recent revisions to the VIS and offers valuable information for individuals working with crime victims and those handling VISs, including judges, prosecutors, victim assistance coordinators, district clerks, court coordinators, probation officers and law enforcement personnel who assist victims or assemble pen packets. To register and view this previously recorded webinar, please click [here](#).

In-Person Trainings:

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Victim Services Division (VSD) TxCVC staff provides training on a variety of topics, which can be tailored to the needs of the requestor. If you would like to host a training in your community, contact the TxCVC at tdcj.clearinghouse@tdcj.texas.gov or 512-406-5931.

Webinars:

The TDCJ VSD TxCVC hosts a webinar series. Upcoming webinars include Grief and the Holidays; The Victim Impact Statement: The Victims' Voice in the Criminal Justice System; and Services and Programs Provided by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Victim Services Division. Webinar descriptions and registration information, as well as recordings and related documents for past webinars may be accessed on the TDCJ VSD website: http://www.tdcj.texas.gov/divisions/vs/victim_webinars.html

TVAT Online:

Texas Victim Assistance Training (TVAT) Online is a statewide online victim assistance training focused on victim-centered service delivery and professional development that enables new advocates to acquire baseline professional skills and competence. To register or obtain more information, visit: <https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/php/tvatonline/>

TVAT Academy:

The TVAT Academy will provide a three-and-a-half- day, in-person, foundational training for victim assistance providers.

More information regarding the in-person TVAT Academy is available online at <https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/php/tvatacademy/index.php>

Texas Victim Assistance Training Online

T ★ V ★ A ★ T

CALENDAR

The Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse wishes to remind our readers that a calendar feature is available on the Texas Victim Assistance Training (TVAT) Online.

Criminal justice and victim services professionals can [view, search, and submit](#) victim-related trainings and events on the TVAT Calendar webpage.

www.tdcj.state.tx.us/php/vscalendar/

COPING WITH THE HOLIDAYS

Reprinted with permission by: *Concerns of Police Survivors (C.O.P.S.)*

C.O.P.S. knows how traumatic holidays can be for survivors. Here are a few suggestions on how to reduce your holiday stress and make the holiday season more bearable for you.

To avoid the crowds, shop early or over the Internet. You may find it difficult to shop in malls with all their holiday decorations, carols, and smiling faces. Survivors say hearing Christmas songs can be depressing and can bring about grief spasms.

If you've always spent Christmas at home, plan a trip. There is no written rule that says you must be home for the holidays.

Attitude will play a major role in your holidays. If you have predetermined that the holidays will be terrible, they will be. If you allow yourself to enjoy the holidays, they may be more enjoyable than you would ever believe.

Pity parties are OK as long as they don't last the entire holiday season.

If you need to visit the cemetery, visit early in the day. If you want to have a good cry, set aside some time in the morning, too. That will free up the rest of the day for better things.

Honor your deceased loved one. Make a donation to a worthy cause, work at a soup kitchen, buy flowers for the church, and do it in memory of your loved one.

If you feel up to it, make meaningful Christmas gifts. Giving scrapbooks, a compilation of stories about the deceased, valued belongings of the deceased which, when presented with "I know they would want you to have this", will make the holiday so much more memorable.

Remember that everyone grieves in their own way.

Don't be afraid to make your loved one part of the holidays. Christmas ornaments they loved or a special memorial candle – anything that your family is comfortable with is acceptable.

Talk about holidays past, happy shared moments that happened, etc. And remember, if other people don't think your deceased loved one's inclusion in your holidays is appropriate, that's their problem – not yours.

Consider prayer. Many aren't able to handle what has occurred in their lives without prayer. Visit your place of worship more often during the holiday season.

Laugh. Laugh as long and as hard as you dare to laugh! Give yourself permission to laugh. Sometimes

grieving people forget that laughter is a great stress reliever and healer.

Party if you want to. Don't party if you don't feel up to it.

Honesty is the best policy. If it isn't a good day, accept it and don't apologize for it.

Don't overdo. If you want to make a fancy meal, make it. If you aren't up to a big meal, cook a small meal, or eat out!

Alcohol is a depressant. Limit your consumption of alcohol during the holidays.

Strengthen your ties with other family members. If you've had family problems, make amends. What a wonderful gift an honest attempt to make amends can be.

While all these suggestions may be right for some people, they may not be right for you. Nobody knows what you want to do for the holidays better than YOU! Just remember that everyone is different and these suggestions, though well-meaning, may not work for you.

The most important thing is to be kind and compassionate to yourself.★

This article was featured in the C.O.P.S. quarterly newsletter.¹ Please note that these are reminders and suggestions for coping with the holidays but remember that everyone grieves in their own way.

1. Article featured in the quarterly publication of Concerns of Police Survivors for Survivors, Agencies and Supporters. Reprinted with permission from the Fall 2015 edition.

THE TEXAS BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES

85TH LEGISLATURE OUTLINE

By Ed Robertson, Board Member
Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles



The Texas Legislature meets every two years in odd numbered years, with the session beginning at noon on the 2nd Tuesday in January and lasting 140 calendar days. Topics to be covered in future sessions are not explicitly stated, however some resources produced by the Legislature can provide insight into issues that are gaining importance for the upcoming sessions.

In between legislative sessions, the Speaker of the House and the Lieutenant Governor issue a list of items for members to study, called "interim charges." Members are organized into committees to study the interim charges and committees often issue interim reports based on the charges. Reviewing interim charges and interim reports can provide insight into what topics might be covered in the next session.

The Board of Pardons and Paroles (BPP) has created a Legislative Coordinating Team, assuming several duties before, during and after the 85th legislative session, the duties of this committee will include but not be limited to:

- Daily review of bills filed by the House and Senate by searching the Texas

Legislature Online (TLO) website and identifying bills that may pertain to the Board;

- Monitor bills for potential Board impact;
- Receive and distribute Committee notice alerts, including hearing notices;
- Develop Bill Impact Summaries and coordinate the review of these summaries through the General Counsel, Board Administrator, Budget Director, and Presiding Officer;
- Respond to Legislative Budget Board (LBB) requests for bill analysis and fiscal impact;
- Prepare Implementation Plans for passed bills after the legislative session ends; and
- Monitor the Implementation Plan through completion.

Throughout the session, the Legislative Coordinating Team will review the TLO website for newly filed bills. Bill captions are scanned for text or keywords that may relate to the Board; the keyword search is designed to catch terms in bill text that may impact the Board, even if the keyword does not appear

in the bill caption. Sample keywords used include: Clemency, Commutation, Criminal Justice, Deferred Adjudication, Expunction, Mandatory Supervision, Pardon, Parole, Sex Offender and Summons, to name a few.

Last session over 11,000 bills were filed in both the House and the Senate, with BPP tracking 204 bills with 160 of them being "Priority" or "Marginal" interest.

The Legislative Coordinating Team sends a list of identified bills for possible tracking to the Board's General Counsel. The General Counsel makes a determination if the bill is applicable for tracking. The bill list includes a bill text hyperlink to the TLO, information about the current bill, comments about keywords and notations about similar or identical bills filed this session or during the prior sessions which include hyperlinks to prior session bills and their impact summaries.

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THE TEXAS BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES

85TH LEGISLATURE OUTLINE

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Once a bill has been identified for tracking, information about the bill is entered into the Legislative Database. In the database, BPP tracks the status and progress of Priority and Marginal interest bills from filing date until it reaches a last action, which may include becoming law. If a bill is passed into law, the Legislative Coordinating Team will create an Implementation Plan.

After BPP submits its fiscal impact status to governor's office, if requested, they respond directly to him for clarification or additional information. Included in the many constitutional and statutory duties of the Governor, he signs

(approves) or vetoes bills passed by the Legislature.

Upon receiving a bill, the governor has 10 days in which to sign the bill, veto it, or allow it to become law without a signature. If the governor vetoes the bill and the legislature is still in session, the bill is returned to the house in which it originated with an explanation of the governor's objections.

A two-thirds majority in each house is required to override the veto. If the governor neither vetoes nor signs the bill within 10 days, the bill becomes a law. If a bill is sent to the governor within 10 days of final adjournment, the

governor has until 20 days after final adjournment to sign the bill, veto it, or allow it to become law without a signature.

The team will monitor this action plan through completion of the session. BPP anticipates a very active 85th session and looks forward to working with new and existing legislators and their staffs! ★

This article is provided by the Board of Pardons and Paroles; Board member Ed Robertson. Additional information about factors the Board considers, decision reasons and other topics is available on the Board of Pardons and Paroles website: <http://www.tdcj.state.tx.us/bpp/>.



*Carol Tompkins, Vice Chair,
People Against Violent Crime*

The Tree of Angels (TOA) is a meaningful Christmas program held in memory and support of victims of violent crime. The TOA is an opportunity for your community to recognize that the holiday season is a difficult time for families and friends who have suffered the crushing impact of a

**“The Tree of Angels
has given me a
place to honor my
daughter’s memory
during the holiday
season...”**

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WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

OUR GOAL IS TO PRINT NEWS OF
INTEREST FOR VICTIMS AND VICTIM
ADVOCATES

The Victim's Informer newsletter is published quarterly. Articles, meeting notices, and other submissions should be sent to the TDCJ Victim Services Division, Texas Crime Victim Clearinghouse, 8712 Shoal Creek Blvd., Suite 265, Austin, Texas 78757-6899; faxed to 512-452-0825; or e-mailed to tdcj.clearinghouse@tdcj.texas.gov. If you would like to submit materials, the deadline dates for articles, meeting notices, and other submissions are identified in the box on this page. For questions or comments, please call us at 800-848-4284 or 512-406-5931.

Please Note:

You may access the publication at the TDCJ VSD internet website. If you wish, we will notify you via e-mail each time The Victim's Informer becomes available on the TDCJ VSD internet website and provide an electronic link to The Victim's Informer. Send your e-mail address to: tdcj.clearinghouse@tdcj.texas.gov

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Tree of Angels™

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violent crime. This special event honors and supports surviving victims and victims' families by making it possible for loved ones to bring an angel ornament to place on a Christmas tree. The first TOA program was implemented in December 1991 by People Against Violent Crime (PAVC) in Austin.

Over the past 25 years the TOA has become a memorable tradition observed in many communities, providing comfort, hope, support and healing. This year the designated Tree of Angels week is December 4th - 10th.

**For a list of Tree of
Angels ceremonies, or for
additional information
regarding the program,
please visit
www.treeofangels.org**

The Victim's Informer newsletter is published quarterly. If you would like to submit materials, the deadline dates for articles and other submissions are:

December 18, 2016

Vol. 22, no. 1 (Mar./Apr. 2017)

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