



REVOLUTION

TEXAS ASSOCIATION AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT

TAASA Newsletter | Fall 2016

rev•o•lu•tion (rev'loō sh n) n. a sweeping and momentous change

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ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT AND MEDIA COVERAGE

A STATEMENT FROM TAASA

In light of intense media interest regarding the validity of sexual assault allegations, the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA), one of many coalitions committed to ending sexual violence, strongly feels the need to insert a voice for survivors into the conversation. We are disheartened with the trivialization of sexual assault and the false assumptions made about victims of sexual abuse. To that point, we provide the following context to the conversation and implore the media and others engaging in the current discourse to do the same.

Sexual assault is pervasive in our society - According to the University of Texas-Austin School of Social Work, 6.3 million Texans have experienced sexual assault at some point in their lifetimes.¹ This equates to 1 in 5 men and 2 in 5 women in our state. Sexual violence is a highly misunderstood public health issue. These skewed perceptions work against survivor disclosure and the public response to those disclosures.

Delayed and Under-reporting - According to that same study, only 9.2% of sexual assaults in Texas are reported to law enforcement. Reasons cited for not reporting included the fear of not being believed, afraid to report, and internalizing and minimizing their experience. Power and control are at the heart of sexual and domestic violence and help explain why delayed disclosures are so common.

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Fall is my favorite time of year, although admittedly the ugly campaign season has tempered my enthusiasm. This has been a hectic summer for TAASA staff, and we are beginning to get back to our more normal busy schedule. I suspect with the upcoming legislative session and national conference planning on the horizon “normal busy” will be short-lived.

Since the last newsletter we’ve had three new staff members join TAASA. Dukes joined our Prevention Team, Kim Farbo is training law enforcement, and Erica Gammill is advocating for incarcerated sexual assault survivors. All of these staff members come with a wealth of experience and are impressive additions to our TAASA family.

TAASA is pleased to be the host of the National Sexual Assault Conference (NSAC) for 2017. NSAC is scheduled for June 7-9th in Dallas. We will add a day (June 6th) for our Texas members so we can have time devoted to our annual meeting, annual awards, Primary Prevention Institute, as well as a few other opportunities tailored for our folks. This is an opportunity for our members to attend a conference with more than 1500 attendees from around the country and experience a scope of options seldom offered at a statewide conference. I think our members will also appreciate that the conference is not during Spring Break this year.

Pre-filing bills for our state legislative session will begin in mid-November. We have already found several legislators interested in carrying our bills and go into the session feeling there is a lot of interest in our issues. That being said, we also anticipate some real challenges ranging from potential budget cuts to fighting against knee-jerk, oppressive bills that are selling themselves as protecting women and children from sexual assault. We look forward to keeping you informed and engaged in the process throughout the session.

This past year TAASA has significantly increased the number of webinars we offer. We haven’t reduced the number of in-person trainings, but we did want to provide for additional cost-effective, time-efficient options for very busy folks across our state. This

summer we also hosted several webinars in Spanish as well. The participation for these webinars has been solid and evaluations positive. We plan to continue to offer a wide variety of relevant webinars including some that are geared towards non-profit management and finance, as well as others that are specific to certain populations, professions, or agency roles. If you have any recommendations for a webinar topic, please contact Wende at whilsenrod@taasa.org with that feedback. We want to make sure that we are using this platform to provide trainings that are useful to the movement.

We have received many inquiries over the past few years on if or when we plan to update the Speak Up, Speak Out awareness campaign. Well, good news! It is coming soon. We will begin shooting new PSAs in November, and the new campaign should be ready to debut during Sexual Assault Awareness & Prevention Month. We are excited to have the opportunity to add to this award winning campaign and look forward to the impact this campaign will continue to have statewide.

Always remember that TAASA is intended to be a resource for you and the people you serve. Never hesitate to make requests, offer suggestions or constructive criticism, or simply call for information, referrals, or support. We pride ourselves in working hard to meet your needs but have no illusions that we never fall short of this goal. We grow and improve through your feedback, so we look forward to hearing from you soon. In the meantime, I hope you enjoy our cooler weather.



ABClay

NEW STAFF

Dukes (pronouns: They/Them), couldn't be more honored to join TAASA. With a background in social work, some of their formative years began in the movement; interning and volunteering at Hays-Caldwell Women's Center. There, they assisted in the youth program and the provisional community assessment work to help guide primary prevention efforts. Aside from HCWC, Dukes carried multiple roles at Haven Women's Center, a SA/DV program in California. Outside of sexual violence prevention and intervention work, Dukes has work in crisis intervention, mental health, substance use, HIV and sexual health, trans and queer community specific health, and had the honor of serving 2.5 years in Costa Rica in the Youth Development Program for the United States Peace Corps. They are happy to be settling back into their Texas home and strive to enhance the social, racial, and gender justice lens of the primary prevention work in Texas.

Kimberly Farbo is the newest member of the training team at TAASA. Kimberly is retired from the Austin Police Department. While with APD she spent her last 12 years in the Sex Crimes Detail investigating misdemeanor and felony crimes. During her time in Sex Crimes, it was nationally recognized for its progressive approach toward investigating sexual assault and providing better service to victims. The unit was also named Unit of The Year in 2004. Farbo comes to TAASA hoping to share her experience and passion to help end sexual assault in our community.

Erica Gammill is the new Prisoner Advocate and will be responsible for the Incarcerated Survivor Advocacy Program (ISAP) at TAASA. She is formerly the Executive Director of the Prison Justice League, a membership organization working to amplify the voices of prisoners across Texas. Erica

has nearly ten years working as an advocate for incarcerated people in Texas, including working as a policy analyst for the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition and at the Texas Civil Rights Project. She also has years of experience as a community and labor organizer. She is deeply committed to ending all forms of oppression and building power in vulnerable and underserved communities. Erica is thrilled to bring her unique skillset and experience to end all forms of sexual abuse in Texas.

SAVE THE DATE

DIRECTING
THE WORKAnnual Executive Directors' Conference for
Family Violence & Sexual Assault Programs

February 15 - 16, 2017

AT&T Conference Center
1900 University Ave • Austin, TX**SAVE THE DATE – NSAC 2017 REGISTRATION OPENS**

FEBRUARY 8, 2017 We are excited to announce that registration for the 2017 National Sexual Assault Conference in Dallas, TX will open on Wednesday, February 8, 2017. Mark your calendars so you do not miss this wonderful opportunity to join more than 1,500 of your colleagues in the anti-sexual violence movement at NSAC 2017.

If you want to get ahead of the game, you can go ahead and reserve your hotel room at the Hilton Anatole by going to the NSAC page on our website at www.taasa.org/nsac. There you will find up to date information and a link to reserve your room NOW!

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The misnomer of false allegations - The prevalence of false allegations of sexual assault is between 2 – 10%.² This range is in line with false allegations of other crimes. To suggest women lie about sexual assault is dangerously misleading and contributes to a culture of silence and shame for all survivors.

Media coverage of sexual abuse allegations - As members of the media strive to objectively report allegations and incidents of sexual violence they must keep in mind the dynamics and external forces that enable sexual violence to occur. Although independent verification of allegations is routine, it can be extremely difficult to independently verify an incident that is grossly underreported, highly misunderstood, and most often occurs without a witness. Furthermore, sexual assault allegations are routinely and flippantly dismissed as a “he said/she said,” which only benefits the alleged perpetrator. The dynamics of power, privilege, and vulnerability positions survivors at a distinct disadvantage.

Sexual assault is not an easy subject to broach. Hats off to the many organizations working on behalf of survivors on a daily basis and to the survivors who bravely disclose in the face of ridicule and doubt. TAASA continues to advocate for survivor-centered policies in Texas. Included on TAASA's agenda for the 85th Legislative Session is a bill to increase the penalties for groping. Current law classifies the intentional touching of an adult's intimate parts without consent as a class C misdemeanor – the legal equivalent of most traffic tickets. Laws that classify groping so negligibly is one of many examples of how the culture of violence can trivialize sexual violence and impede a survivors' search for justice.

¹Busch-Armendaris, N.B., Olaya-Rodriguez, D., Kammer-Kerwick, M., Wachter, K. & Sulley, C. (2015). Health and well-being: Texas statewide sexual assault prevalence. Austin, TX. Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault, The University of Texas at Austin

² Lisak, D., Gardinier, L., Nicksa, S., Cote, A. (2010). False Allegations of Sexual Assault: Ten years of reported cases. Violence Against Women 16 (12) 1318-1334



HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT:

It's Time to End Prison Rape in Texas

It is generally accepted that nobody deserves to be sexually assaulted. Unfortunately, this belief does not hold true for some folks when talking about prisoners. All too often, prison-rape jokes are muttered, and comments like “Don’t do the crime if you can’t do the time,” or “Don’t drop the soap” earn laughs. As other fundamental human rights such as health care, freedom of speech, and the pursuit of education and employment can be stripped from prisoners while incarcerated, it is not hard to imagine why many would believe prisoners are also exempt from protection from sexual assaults. As a result of this prevailing belief, there has been a failure to acknowledge a despicably high number of rapes within jails and prisons across the country. Further, there has been a tremendous lack of support and resources for inmates who have been raped.

This year, TAASA partnered with the Prison Justice League (PJJ) to investigate the sexual assault epidemic in Texas prisons. Together, we gathered direct data and anecdotal evidence from inmates, consulted studies from the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, and researched policies and procedures in Texas facilities. The result is a 30-page report, authored by Erica Gammill and Elia Inglis, outlining the current state of

sexual assault in Texas prisons and offering recommendations for reform. We hope that this report will be read across the state and nationally, bringing critical awareness to this alarming issue and informing policy reforms for the benefit of sexual assault survivors behind bars.

ELIA INGLIS &
ERICA GAMMILL

For context, the federal Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) was enacted in 2003. The law spawned the creation of national standards for preventing and properly responding to instances of rape in jails and prisons, and every correctional facility receiving federal funds must abide by those standards. While lofty in its goals, PREA has not been implemented in a meaningful way in Texas. As a result, since the adoption of the final PREA standards, there has been little positive change in the Texas prison system. Based on TAASA’s and PJJ’s extensive correspondence with inmate survivors, as well as federal research, sexual assaults remain a serious problem in Texas correctional facilities.

We conclude that the State of Texas and the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) have failed to protect the Constitutional rights of inmates in correctional facilities under their control,

and the report also highlights many specific findings. For example, of all prisoners surveyed, 100% of respondents claimed that they had reported their sexual assault to some authorities, yet 0% resulted in a favorable punitive or protective outcome for the survivor. Also, 58.9% of prisoners surveyed reported that their sexual assaults were committed by a staff member. To be clear, more than half of sexual assaults were committed by staff members, not other inmates. When the very officials responsible for enforcing survivors' constitutional and statutory rights are so frequently to blame for violating those rights, we have a critical problem.

Another alarming finding was that LGBT+ individuals are targeted most often for sexual assaults. Among survivors surveyed, 41.2% identified as LGBT+ and were targeted for sexual assault because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. PREA standards acknowledge the particular vulnerability of LGBT+ inmates and expressly require special screening and protective measures for these inmates. Texas prisons are not sufficiently protecting this population.

When inmates who were sexually assaulted come forward to report, they are often dismissed outright. Unfortunately, due to rampant retaliation against survivors, the negligence and brutality of the system frequently does not end there. Regardless of whether officials take sexual assault reports seriously, offenders often find out about allegations very quickly, putting the victim in further danger. Among all survivors surveyed, 82.3% reported retaliation from the offending inmates, other inmates, or staff members after making a formal complaint. The most common

form of retaliation was a disciplinary report against the survivor, but threats, framing, physical altercations, theft, and continued sexual abuse were also common. As with any sexual assault survivor, continued retaliation and harassment exacerbate the trauma of rape. But for incarcerated survivors, who are isolated from any familial or support system, the physical and mental health impacts are even more acute.

It is clear that Texas has a major problem that needs to be addressed immediately. In addition to public awareness, we have made some recommendations. We advocate for an oversight committee to evaluate TDCJ facilities' implementation of PREA standards. Instead of PREA remaining a theoretical or aspirational framework, we recommend fully implementing it as intended. We also recommend that reporting protocols be available to all inmates at all times, with no barriers to access. Education to all prisoners about their rights around reporting sexual assault and feeling safe should be implemented. We advocate for the sharing of resources for victims of sexual assault from the PREA Ombudsman offices, and we recommend TAASA's contact information be posted in designated areas within correctional facilities. Lastly, the Offender Grievance System needs an overhaul. Sexual assault reports need to be taken seriously and be investigated within a timely, impartial, and trauma-informed manner.

For more information about this report or to see how you can get involved in stopping sexual assaults in correctional facilities, please contact Erica Gammill at egammill@taasa.org or Elia Inglis at einglis@taasa.org, or call us at 512-474-7190.



VOTE AMERICA

EVERY VOTE COUNTS



Every fourth year—for pretty much the entire year—we turn our collective attention to a single political race. It's an important one, for sure. The nation's president wields power to shape the Supreme Court, determine thousands of federal agency priorities and funding schemes, and veto most congressional legislation. The presidency also carries significant symbolic weight—by sheer strength of personality a president can help many to feel included and heard (or not), and, therefore, plays an important role in assuaging or aggravating civil unrest at home and abroad.

So, it's reasonable that presidential elections so easily capture our attention. They capture mine, anyway.

During the last few years, those of us doing anti-violence work have watched issues close to our hearts garner a lot of public attention, too: Sexual assault on college campuses. Rape cover-ups by athletic programs. Judicial words of sympathy for convicted rapists, but not for survivors. Sexual assaults by police officers. Federal investigations of systemic bias against rape and domestic violence survivors. Abysmal prosecution rates for sexual assaults. Outright failure to investigate reports of child abuse and neglect. Most of that isn't new to us. We see it every day. But it is new to see it reflected so frequently in mainstream media and discussed seriously among people who aren't part of this work. And, in its

own tragic way, that may be cause for optimism. Shedding light on these problems and dissolving taboos seems a necessary step in addressing the root causes of violence and institutional bias.

With greater public concern about these issues, I believe we have a crucial opportunity to educate about survivors' needs and experiences. Without a doubt, many of you reading this have already stepped up at this critical moment and accomplished a lot. We can't let up.



CHRIS
KAISER

Yet, amid the noise of perhaps the most contentious and divisive presidential election of our lifetimes, I fear that we risk losing sight of which elected officials have the most direct and significant impact on survivors—the local ones.

Who's responsible for how police investigate cases and what happens to forensic evidence? City mayors, council members, and sheriffs.

Who decides which cases to prosecute? District attorneys.

Who determines punishments for rapists and batterers, how survivors are treated in court, and whether domestic violence survivors can have custody of their children? Judges.

Who decides whether to fund specialized protective order courts? County commissioners, county judges, and district judges.

Who decides whether law enforcement should report survivors to ICE if they're suspected to be undocumented? Sheriffs.

Who's responsible for ensuring safe and trauma-informed responses for kids who are assaulted or abused in school? School board members.

As a culture and as an anti-violence movement, we spend so much of our scarce time and energy on presidents and Congress members who typically only affect survivors indirectly. They design massive grant programs that pass through multiple government bureaucracies before funneling down to direct service providers, but they have little to say about the on-the-ground practices that shape survivors' experiences. By the time we make it through nearly two years of presidential primaries and a general election, we tire of the often hollow rhetoric of national-level politics and arguing with our friends' friends on Facebook, and we have little energy left for the local elections that have graver and more immediate consequences for survivors in our communities.

Who wins, then, except those who would prefer to maintain the status quo, free from public scrutiny?

We have an ethical obligation to demand equitable treatment of survivors from our local officials and, absent that, accountability at the ballot box.

SURVIVORS' ISSUES ARE LOCAL ISSUES

Institutions ranging from criminal justice to civil courts to school districts and higher education have largely failed to engender trust among sexual assault survivors. Last year the Institute on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault at the UT-Austin School of Social Work found that 91% of sexual assaults in Texas have not been reported to police. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, many survivors who don't report make that choice because they believe the criminal justice system couldn't or wouldn't help. Many others say they fear the traumatic effects of a long, invasive legal proceeding. At the same time, constant stories of victim-blaming, retaliation, and indifference to survivors tend to confirm survivors' worst suspicions.

In my experience, our response to institutional dysfunction is often anger, frustration, dejection, or all three. The problem feels too big and immovable. We don't know how to direct our outrage constructively. Maybe that's just me, but I don't think so.

So, here is a challenge to myself and you. For the sake of survivors, let's find ways to channel our collective outrage into political accountability. What follows are brief sketches of how a couple of the most common, and seemingly entrenched, systemic problems facing survivors connect directly with local elections.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

In recent years the DOJ has investigated and entered into consent decrees with Missoula, Montana, New Orleans, Louisiana, and Puerto Rico concerning gender bias in police responses to sexual assault and domestic violence. Earlier this year, the DOJ published an extensive report on police practices in the City of Baltimore, including six pages describing systematic bias against sexual assault victims. Examples of bias in these jurisdictions included failures by detectives to interview witnesses; failures to seek evidence that would corroborate victim statements; dismissal of rape complaints as "unfounded" without adequate investigation; use of victim-blaming or minimizing language during victim interviews; and refusal to investigate complaints made by sex workers and transgender or gender-nonconforming people.

As advocates and allies, we can't assume these problems aren't happening close to us, and we can't depend solely on federal agencies to be our watchdogs. It's on us to examine whether survivors in our communities are experiencing similar biases. In fact, according to the most recent FBI statistics, four of the jurisdictions with the highest percentages of "unfounded" rape complaints in the US are in Texas: Pasadena (37%), Grand Prairie (36%), Bastrop County (27%), and Dallas (23%). The average percentage of unfounded rapes among police departments nationwide is 7%.

Building on its data analysis and lessons learned from its investigations, the DOJ published a guidance document earlier this year, entitled "Identifying and Preventing Gender Bias in Law Enforcement Response to Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence." The purpose of the document is to assist law enforcement agencies in responding effectively to sexual assault and domestic violence and to eliminate gender bias in their practices.

We need to ask whether our local law enforcement agencies are implementing the DOJ's recommendations and, if not, to demand an explanation from the mayor, city council, sheriff, or district attorney.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

For years we've heard about colleges and universities revamping their responses to sexual harassment and assault. The situation is still far from perfect, but a lot of good has come out of a renewed focus on survivors' civil rights protections under Title IX.

Although Title IX has always also applied to elementary, middle, and high schools, the discourse on those schools' legal obligations has mostly remained in the background. But those of us who advocate on behalf of survivors know that gender-based violence at school is a real problem for children and adolescents. Unfortunately, relatively few elementary, middle, and high schools seem well-equipped to investigate and address sexual harassment and assault against their students. Too often the response further traumatizes kids, instead of protecting them and helping them to heal.

We also know that, just as adult survivors who identify with certain vulnerable or marginalized groups often incur particularly skeptical or punitive responses from criminal justice officials, school-based responses to sexual assault aren't equitable for all students. It's thoroughly documented that throughout the country and in Texas, students of color—particularly Black students—and students with disabilities are much more likely to be subject to disciplinary action or referral to school resource officers than their white classmates for the same conduct. Tragically, this trend seems to bleed into school-based responses to sexual assaults. Schools' sexual assault response practices are unreliable across the board, but when students of color report sexual violence to their schools, they are more likely than white survivors to be sent home, punished for what the school determines was consensual sex, or forced to transfer schools.

SOAPBOX is an outlet for TAASA members to express their opinions on current events, social justice issues, and the national and local political climate. The views expressed in SOAPBOX do not necessarily reflect the opinions of TAASA, our board, members or affiliated agencies.

Department of Education officials, attorneys for survivors, and educators all agree about the need for more training and clearer policies at the local level. According to the Texas Association of School Boards, there are more than 7,000 elected school board members in Texas. They hold almost sole authority to determine the training and response policies that will apply when children at their schools are sexually assaulted. As their constituents, they are accountable to us.

OUR CHALLENGE AHEAD

Certainly, electing a president or congressperson also has consequences for survivors. The president appoints federal agency leadership, who, in turn, determine whether to prioritize things like gender bias in policing or sexual violence in educational settings. We ignore national-level politics at the risk of the most vulnerable among us.

Still, I hope that as a field and as a movement we keep sight of our potential impact at the local level. I've offered just a few examples here of how our action—or inaction—in local politics shapes support systems for survivors and, by extension, survivors' confidence in systems ostensibly maintained for their benefit. Undoubtedly, there are more.

I want to challenge us—myself included—to reclaim electoral politics as a mechanism for justice. Each time the system works against a survivor or we run up against a process rife with bias, I want to challenge us not to give into anger or resignation, but to identify the responsible official and work for change. Regardless of who becomes the next president, I expect that most of the time we won't be calling the White House.





Minimum Standards for Sexual Assault Programs

SHELLI COLLINS & CHRISTINA COULTAS

Why Minimum Standards? By November 2016 sexual assault programs across the state of Texas, funded by the Sexual Assault Prevention and Crisis Services (SAPCS)-State Grant Program will have completed for the first time a verification process of their core minimum services for survivors. The Minimum Services Standards for Sexual Assault Programs, first released in September 2014, were developed to provide a framework for the five core services programs provide. The standards outline for the first time a reasonable expectation that from center to center, program to program, that there is a certain basic level of services that provide advocacy, healing, and safety.

Communities across Texas began responding and providing services to sexual assault survivors in formalized settings as early as the 1970s. As such, sexual assault programs across the state grew out of a grassroots movement that incorporated the unique needs of their community. As the anti-sexual assault movement grew, there developed a consensus on the core components of services for survivors.

SHELLI COLLINS IS REGIONAL SUPPORT SPECIALIST AT TAASA

This consensus is reflected in the current statutory requirements which identify the minimum services to be provided by programs in Texas. The minimum services listed include:

- 24-Hour Crisis Hotline
- Crisis Intervention
- Advocacy
- Accompaniment to Hospitals, Law Enforcement Offices, Prosecutor's Offices and Courts
- Public Education

Across the state programs developed around those five services, however, there was no clear framework on the basic components or implementation of those minimums to assure a level of consistency and quality to survivors. In 2014, the Texas Office of the Attorney General (OAG) provided funding to the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) to convene TAASA staff, local sexual assault programs (SAP) from across the state, representatives from the OAG, and other community stakeholders to develop minimum standards for rape crisis programs. The goals of those minimum standards are:

1. To ensure that every survivor in the state of Texas has access to a minimum level of consistent services regardless of demographic characteristics or location in the state; and
2. To provide a formalized framework for describing and defining the components of each of the five minimum services that must be provided by sexual assault programs in Texas.

From January to August 2014 the committee sat down to face the difficult task of identifying and developing standards that every sexual assault program in Texas could meet despite their size, budget, location (rural, suburban, urban, border) or structure (dual service agency or stand-alone rape crisis center). To ground the work of the committee, they also articulated a guiding philosophy that could describe and define the unique nature of programs, while identifying the shared understanding and foundation at the core of programs that are victim-centered and support the expressed needs of sexual assault survivors.



These standards provide a blueprint for programs and centers in planning, developing, implementing and improving their core services for women, men, and children. Each of the five core services provided by programs will still be responsive to the unique needs of the context of their community, but with a strong foundation found in the minimum standards for policy and procedure development. The Texas Association Against Sexual Assault is available for technical assistance, training, and capacity building as programs further work to implement, grow and improve the services they provide.

This newsletter was developed and based on content from the Minimum Services Standards for Sexual Assault Programs in Texas and Tips & Strategies for Meeting the Minimum Services Standards for Sexual Assault Programs in Texas first published in September 2014 by TAASA based on the minimum standards committee work. Please see the documents on the TAASA website at <http://taasa.org/new-standards-for-sexual-assault-programs-on-the-horizon/> for the full list of participants that created this work. The development of the document this article is linked to was a project supported by grant No. 1447341 awarded by the Texas Office of the Attorney General, the state administering office for the Sexual Assault Prevention and Crisis Services (SAPCS)-State Grant Program. The opinions, findings, conclusions and recommendations expressed in the publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Texas Office of the Attorney General.

Working with LGBT Clients

If you have been serving survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence for long, chances are you have served an LGBT client, even if you weren't aware of it. Gay, Lesbian, and Transgender clients come from all walks of life, backgrounds, races, and socio-economic classes. Most research suggests that they face domestic violence and sexual assault at rates at least comparable to the non-LGBT population. However, they often face discrimination when seeking work, housing, or even medical care. Discrimination and rejection in the past may prevent them from seeking the services that they need to escape or recover from an abusive situation.

With recent expansions to LGBT rights and increased media attention, it is even more important for your clients to comfortable talking with you about their LGBT identity. Here are some helpful hints to make your organization more open and welcoming for LGBT clients.

Understand the Terminology

LGBT is an acronym meaning Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender. As in many communities, words often form a sense of identity and community. Therefore, while Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender are the most common terms, you should use the terms that your client prefers. It may be beneficial to provide training to all of your staff on LGBT issues so that they are more comfortable discussing LGBT issues and serving LGBT clients.

As a brief overview, the terms Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual refer to the sexual orientation of a person, or to whom that person is attracted. Transgender refers to a person whose gender identity (inner feelings) or gender expression (outward expression) does not match or conform to the gender assigned at birth. Many other terms exist that cover different segments of the LGBT community. For more information on these terms, visit: <http://www.lgbt.ie/information.aspx?contentid=84>.

Use inclusive language

Use language that does not assume the gender identity or sexual orientation of your clients. For example, instead of asking a client

if they have a husband or wife, ask if they have a spouse or partner. Instead of assuming a client wants to be addressed as Miss or Sir, ask how they would like to be called and what pronouns they prefer. Use the preferred name and pronoun of your client, and update intake forms to be more inclusive, such as including a transgender option for gender and allowing clients to designate a preferred name.

The only way to be truly welcoming is to use inclusive language with all your clients, not just those you think are LGBT. You may never know some of your clients are LGBT unless they feel comfortable talking to you about these issues, and even non-LGBT clients may refer their LGBT friends and family to you based on your inclusive language.

Make your office environment welcoming

Make your office environment welcoming by displaying posters, signs, or brochures that make it clear you are welcoming to LGBT clients. For example, display a small rainbow flag somewhere in your waiting room or post a non-discrimination policy that includes protections based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

Update your policies to be more inclusive

Many shelters have non-discrimination policies and other procedures to ensure that all clients have a positive, safe, and fair experience. However, some shelters have policies that are outdated or accidentally exclude the LGBT community. Examine your policies and make sure that sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity are included in your non-discrimination policies. Make sure that forms, intake procedures, and other applicable procedures do not discriminate against LGBT individuals. For more information about updating your policies, visit: <http://www.avp.org/resources/training-center>

Kelsey Snapp is an attorney at Texas RioGrande Legal Aid where ze manages their LGBTQ team. Ze can be reached at ksnapp@trla.org or 956-393-6205.



LEADERSHIP SUPPORT FOR PREVENTION

The staff at your agency doing prevention work want to change the world. They want to build and create a society where violence doesn't exist. They want to start a revolution, and they want to see change happen. As an executive director, it is difficult work to manage the realities of budgets, grants, boards, staff, let alone focusing on the end game – to end violence. Your prevention staff needs your support, and here are some things you can do to provide it to them.

INTEGRATE PREVENTION AS A CORE SERVICE

Far too often the work of prevention is simply left up to the staff who hold that “job description.” But imagine how much more effective your agency’s prevention efforts would be if prevention were fully integrated into the makeup of your organization. This is not to say that the services that support survivors on their path to safety, healing, and justice are not critical, but to imagine that at every turn each staff member, board chair, and volunteer equally understands that their work is also social change work. That preventing violence means changing our society and that they are part of a movement. Suddenly your entire organization can connect to the work beyond the daily crisis of hotline calls, hospital visits, and counseling, and utilize that sense of “purpose” to grow, thrive and continue to innovate creative strategies for the agency. Here are some steps to consider taking to integrate prevention as a critical element in your organization:

Assess your mission/vision statement. Is there a clear indication that the agency puts the core principles of prevention at the center of its work?

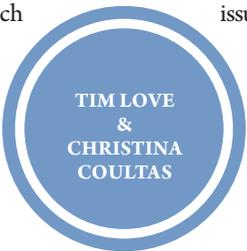
Take time to understand prevention. Prevention is about shifting and changing social norms that support sexual violence. Is there adequate time at staff trainings, volunteer orientations and board meetings to support space so that all who work and support the agency understand the framework of the larger movement to end sexual violence?

Plan for prevention. Does the strategic plan or goals of the agency include prevention work? As we work towards assuring the stability of our agencies, it can be very easy to side-step the hard work and the accountability of social change. How is the agency allocating

funds and prioritizing the need for undesignated funds to support prevention? As we are faced with the daily crises of supporting survivors and keeping the doors of our agencies open, it can be easy to lose sight of the long-term social change work that will end sexual violence. In addition to planning for prevention, it is important to dedicate resources to prevention work – both grant funding and undesignated funds.

- Create opportunities to involve all staff. Encourage courageous conversations at staff and leadership meetings around topics that ask all staff to see beyond direct intervention services and look at larger social justice issues impacting survivors, the community, and the agency.

This can be done by creating space for regular awareness or hot topic trainings for staff/volunteers, designating space on meeting agendas, and encouraging literature review of articles and books that allow for deeper understanding of social justice issues.



LEARN, CONNECT, & SUPPORT

The work of prevention requires staff members that are creative, with a critical mind focused on building healthy communities. They must often think outside of the box to solve complex challenges and create a meaningful path to engage others in addressing those complex challenges. They are eager to learn, to teach, and to support connection in their agency and community. Here are strategies to connect to, learn from, and support staff.

LEARN

Take opportunities to learn from staff. Schedule time to regularly meet with prevention staff to learn about what they are doing and to hear their plans, goals, dreams. Utilize their knowledge as a resource to understand better the barriers in your community and in society that continue to make change difficult. Their insights and point of view may lead to innovative collaboration and creative solutions for the agency.

Attend prevention trainings and events. Prioritize the time and create the space for you and the other leadership in your organization to receive prevention-focused training to deepen your understanding of key prevention theories and strategies, and to keep you abreast of current trends in prevention work. Show on-going support by attending the events and trainings put on by prevention staff.

CONNECT

Utilize talents throughout the agency. Prevention staff members spend a lot of time examining relationships, communities, and various systems to identify both problematic and positive norms. They focus energy and attention on building healthy, safe, and thriving communities. Prevention workers don't just shut down this focus when they are off the clock, utilizing their critical thinking skills to examine their relationships, the media they consume, and the organization in which they work. Why not utilize that talent and involve them in efforts to improve organizational function and environment? They are a great resource in helping agencies create a healthy and thriving workplace community that is consistently focused on improving programming and culture.

Support connection with other prevention workers. There are strong theoretical underpinnings for efforts in the prevention of sexual violence. We know quite a bit about what contributes to sexual violence in our communities, and we have some strong principles that when put into practice lead to the development of stronger programming. It is also true that the field of sexual violence primary prevention is relatively new, and that we don't have set programs that have been tested and proven to be effective for all audiences. Texas communities are so diverse and what works in one community can't be assumed to work in others. Because of this, prevention workers being able to connect to and learn from other prevention workers is critical. It is in these interactions that prevention staff find support, learn what programming and practices are showing signs of success, and are able to brainstorm solutions to challenges with people facing similar barriers. This happens regionally, statewide, and on the national level.

SUPPORT

Flexibility that supports the prevention worker. Like much of non-profit work, prevention is very rarely 9-5. Staff are often working outside of the office and on timing that is dictated by the environments they are going in to. As an example, community stakeholders, parents and other supportive adults may not be available until after work or on the weekends. Schools often start long before 9:00 am, and some students might only be available before school for the prevention worker to meet with. Be sure to

talk about prevention work, when it is happening, and its value with staff and management so they understand why prevention workers might not be in the office as much as other staff or during normal business hours.

Create room for failure. Primary prevention of sexual violence is not an exact science. As prevention workers look to innovate and to create programming that works for their community, they need to have room to fail – because they will. The learning that happens from both failures and successes is what will push prevention work ahead, both locally and statewide, and is at least as if not more important than actually having success. Particularly as prevention work goes through times of rapid change, as has happened recently with changes to RPE funding and structure, it will take some time for prevention workers to put together strong, comprehensive programming that is relevant for their communities. Encourage prevention workers to put together sound, well thought-out, and research and/or theory-based programming. Let them know that it is okay if it doesn't work out as they planned. Support and help them as they learn from both their successes and failures as they develop ever more effective prevention programming.

Prevention staff are valuable staff at an agency, and they have the same yearnings as all non-profit staff: to be given the opportunity to have a voice; to make a significant contribution to a cause that is meaningful to them; to be treated as a whole person and not just a "worker"; and to work with a supervisor to set goals and expectations. If you can acknowledge these needs as an organizational leader and provide your full support and agency resources to the efforts of your prevention staff, prevention staff will be empowered to contribute to a safe and thriving organization and community.

Please let us know how TAASA can support you in this vital work. For more information about the work of prevention, contact Tim Love at tlove@taasa.org. To seek support/resources for leadership and non-profit capacity building, contact Christina Coultas at ccoultas@taasa.org.

TAASA'S REGIONAL SUPPORT PROGRAM

Earlier this year, TAASA saw a tremendous amount of growth in staff. With that growth came folks that bring a wealth of knowledge and skill in best practices, technical assistance, training, outreach, and leadership development. Three of those positions have helped form a new department that TAASA is proud to announce.

Because membership is extremely important to us and is the backbone of the work that TAASA does across the state, we recognized the importance of increasing visibility and accessibility to individuals and our programs. To meet the needs of our members, and help you better serve survivors on all levels, TAASA has created the Regional Support Program Department.

This department consists of TAASA staff that are based geographically and remotely across the state to provide in-depth and comprehensive remote or on-site technical assistance and training to increase capacity, and as previously stated, TAASA's visibility. This is our way of making ourselves and our services more accessible to you and providing our membership with a point of contact when issues, concerns, or needs arise. The team consists of three staff who live and work in the area that they will be serving. It is our pleasure to introduce you to them and the work they will be doing.

RICK GIPPRICH, JR. – REGIONAL SUPPORT PROGRAM DIRECTOR/CAMPUS SEXUAL ASSAULT SPECIALIST – SAN ANTONIO

Rick serves as the director of the remote staff team and works regionally and statewide to provide technical assistance and training on issues related to advocacy, minimum standards, programming, and community engagement. He oversees and manages all of the remote staff positions, and will be available to assist them if and when the need arises.

Also, Rick works on issues related to campus sexual assault and Title IX compliance to ensure that both colleges/universities and community-

based sexual assault programs have access and capacity to work together to meet the needs of survivors on campus. If you are doing work with campuses in your area, or need support in your efforts, he is your point of contact.

Rick does work statewide, but because he is based in San Antonio, he will serve as the point of contact for South Texas, the Rio Grande Valley, and the border areas. You can reach him at 210-367-8976 or rgipprich@taasa.org.

SHELLI COLLINS – REGIONAL SUPPORT SPECIALIST – HOUSTON

Shelli comes to TAASA with an extensive and impressive amount of experience in advocacy and prevention in both the sexual assault and family violence movements. Shelli is based in Humble and serves the greater Houston and Coastal areas of the state, as well as some parts of East Texas. Her focus is on capacity building of sexual assault and other member programs to assist and meet the needs of survivors.

In addition, she can assist programs through training on sexual assault response and prevention, helping with community collaboration, assisting programs and communities in understanding and implementing legislative changes, and other needs as they come up. She will also visit new and developing sexual assault programs to evaluate needs and capacity and offer suggestions on ways to improve response and services if needed. If you would like to contact Shelli, she can be reached at 281-236-9271 or scollins@taasa.org.

CHRISTINA COULTAS – NON-PROFIT LEADERSHIP SPECIALIST – DALLAS

Christina comes to TAASA with an incredible understanding of the challenges that leadership at both rape crisis centers and dual agencies face. Her primary focus will be on technical assistance and training geared towards executive leadership and management on issues such as grant reporting and compliance, staffing and job descriptions, timesheets,



board engagement and recruitment, human resources and personnel management, conflict resolutions within agencies and programs, succession planning, and anything else that comes up as part of running an effective agency and program.

Additionally, she will provide in-person and web-based training on non-profit leadership topics focusing on administrative and management issues. She is available to provide training not only to program leadership and management, but to boards of directors, and development staff as well. She will also be working to develop materials and tools specifically designed to reinforce best practices for executive leadership. Christina works state-wide and is available to ALL programs across the state. Because she is based in Plano, she will also serve as a point of contact for Dallas, Fort Worth, and areas North and West of the DFW area. You can reach Christina at 214-603-1522 or ccoultas@taasa.org

Collectively, the Regional Support Department will also attend TAASA region meetings and can serve as a point of contact for media requests, press conferences, and interviews if needed to help further our mission and to help further our member program's reach to survivors in their area. And because both Christina and Shelli came to TAASA from dual pro-

grams, they both also understand the complexities and challenges that come up with the day-to-day issues of running sexual assault and family violence programs.

This is an exciting time for us, and after a summer spent planning and developing, we are eager to hear from you about how we can help and what we can do to serve better your needs. When we started our agency strategic planning a few years ago, we knew that we needed to do a better job of reaching out to our programs. We needed to be better at working alongside, helping you serve survivors and being a strong voice in the movement. We didn't want our programs to see us "that agency in Austin" who only works in particular communities and is not accessible to you. We hear you. We understand what you need. And we are working towards a process that makes it easier for you to reach out to us.

Although we've been extremely mindful in our intent with this new department, we look forward to all the new and exciting requests and challenges you will bring forth. There may be some bumps and bruises along the way, but there is no doubt that our goal is to continue to support your work and provide a direct point of contact for you and your agency.



6200 La Calma, Suite 110
 Austin, Texas 78752
 www.taasa.org (512) 474-7190

Mission Statement: The Texas Association Against Sexual Assault is committed to ending sexual violence in Texas through education, prevention and advocacy. In the meantime, we desire to support survivors on their paths to hope, healing and justice. TAASA is the voice of the sexual assault movement in Texas. We are a unifying force bringing together parties involved in and affected by sexual assault as a catalyst for change.

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