

Texas Association Against Sexual Assault

2020

Annual Report



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2020 TAASA Board

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-
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2020 TAASA Staff

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Non-Profit Compliance Auditor

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Men's Engagement Specialist

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Graphic Designer

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Program Support Director

Laramie Gorbett
Human Trafficking Specialist

Kara Harrington
Human Trafficking Advocate

Mark Hernandez
CPA

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Prevention Team Specialist

Treasure Hoagwood
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Madison Jackson
Prevention Program Support Specialist

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Senior Policy Advisor

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Statewide Community Organizer

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Prevention Director

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Access and Inclusion Manager

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Edie Ortiz
Executive Assistant

Curtis Mueller
Client Database Support Specialist

Cecilia Perkins
Events Manager

Maya Pilgrim
Evaluation and Learning Director

Melanie Ramirez
Prevention Team Specialist

Ameila Romo
Evaluation Intern

Virginia Rueda
Program Support Specialist

Ted Rutherford
Operations Director

Passion Star
Prisoner Advocate

Katherine Strandberg
Senior Policy Advisor

Mike Sweeney
Human Trafficking Specialist

Dina Yup
Program Assistant



The Root of Our Strength

The year 2020 started off as an ordinary year.

TAASA was reveling in our 86th legislative session successes, and our work was on the upswing as we began cultivating new partnerships and restoring existing ones. We launched the plans to incorporate a more inclusive, survivor-centered approach to our work with the addition of the Survivor Advisory Board at TAASA. Our infrastructure was set to maximize efficiency with compliance mechanisms built in. Our vision was clear and our work plans were in motion. Then Covid-19 hit.

On March 13th President Trump declared a National Emergency in response to Covid-19. We were stunned and at a standstill – but not for long.

Despite the uncertainty of a looming global pandemic, the anti-sexual violence movement in Texas banded together and pushed through with our collective wisdom and grit. TAASA partnered with the Texas Governor's office to offer relief packages to assist sexual assault and domestic violence programs transition their services to maintain support for survivors of sexual assault.

TAASA successfully pivoted to provide virtual spaces to connect, webinar learning opportunities, focus groups to ensure policy initiatives were rooted in reality, and intense T.A. to assist with compliance to grant regulations and rules. We hosted a successful and well-attended virtual conference and continued the historic task of providing leadership for the inaugural Sexual Assault Survivor Task Force at the Texas Governor's office.

Our country and state were at the mercy of Covid-19, and if not for the courage of first responders, medical personnel, and essential workers, more lives and livelihoods would have been lost. To them, we are forever grateful.

But the revelations of the pandemic exposed another emerging group of first responders and unsung heroes: local sexual assault and domestic violence programs. While many businesses and nonprofits did not survive, we witnessed Texas SA/DV programs adapt their business models to safely and reliably continue serving survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence.

We learned that our consideration and concern for one another turned out to be the root of our strength. We survived the uncertainty and showed our unwavering commitment to survivors of sexual assault. TAASA's state-level efforts aligned with local programs, and together we overcame.

And although the year 2020 tested our work, families, livelihoods, and wellness, it revealed the strength of our movement in Texas and broadened our vision of inclusion, connection, and accomplishment.

Sincerely,



Rose Luna

CEO, TAASA

Program Support & Training

Membership remains extremely important to us and is the backbone of the work we do across the state, and TAASA remains committed to increasing visibility and accessibility to individuals and to our member programs.

2020 marked the 5th year of the renamed Program Support and Training Department, tasked with providing support, training, and technical assistance to member programs, law enforcement, community agencies, colleges and universities, as well as collaborating with the entire TAASA staff to ensure member's needs are met.

Program Support

In 2020, TAASA staff received over 3,000 requests for assistance. Over 2,000 requests came from advocates at sexual assault programs and community agencies working with survivors. With the summer addition of our Systems Change Advocate, TAASA was able to increase programs' access to specialized support and technical assistance on issues related to survivor advocacy, OAG minimum standards, and Texas Core Advocacy Training (TCAT) certification. Her position has been vital in ensuring that every quadrant of the state has access to TAASA staff.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, TAASA staff spent a lot of time conducting intensive technical assistance, support, and capacity-building geared at providing tele-advocacy and tele-counseling. We were also very intentional about checking in with program staff throughout the state in regards to self-care, vicarious trauma, anxiety, and burnout related to the pandemic and drastic shifts in how our work is done.

Our Director of Program Support & Training (San Antonio), Program Support Specialists (Houston & El Paso), and our Systems Change Advocate (Dallas/Fort Worth) worked with local programs and colleges and universities on both Community and Campus SART development. They also responded to nearly 500 on-site and telephone TA requests to every region of Texas from North to South and East to West. TA consisted of addressing issues on lack of reporting and lack of SANE options in an area, attending community coalitions and task force meetings, working with other culturally specific programs, and helping to advocate for survivors in certain regions. In addition, our Program

Support Specialist in El Paso, who also serves on the bilingual committee, played a large role in facilitating meetings and dialogue for a Bilingual Advocate Group as well as facilitating Spanish-language workshops, materials translations, and other bilingual work for TAASA.

Our Campus Sexual Assault Specialist also provided TA to 9 different public and private colleges and universities. Although the pandemic halted some of its work, The Texas Campus Initiative – a small task force of smaller Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) – continued to provide direction towards more culturally-specific prevention and response programming for students is still going strong after more than 3 years of its inception. With the help of other TAASA staff, TA and training were also provided to campus law enforcement, Title IX staff, students, faculty, and staff across the state on topics such as Trauma-Informed Programming and Response, Effective Investigations and Documentation Techniques, and Gender-Based Violence on College Campuses.

TAASA staff continued to work on the development of a core advocate training in line with OAG and minimum standards guidelines, and statutory rules for hospital accompaniment. The goal of this training is to support programs that may lack resources for comprehensive training of new advocates and staff. The Texas Core Advocate Training (TACT) will serve as an online training program to provide basic requirements for advocates and program staff on issues related to sexual assault and sexual violence. It is slated to be completed and available for use in late 2021 or early 2022.

Training

In 2020, TAASA staff and other community partners conducted 75 trainings to over 4,000 participants via webinars.

75
Trainings

4000+
Participants

With the addition of a Training Coordinator position, the number of requests for training sessions via webinars increased tremendously. We attribute this increase to Covid-19 which saw almost every program working from home and providing services via zoom and other online platforms. Our training coordinator played an important and integral part in helping facilitate the planning, implementation, and execution of our first-ever virtual annual conference. The training coordinator was also vital in the success of our annual Executive Director's Conference, a collaborative effort with our sister coalition, the Texas Council on Family Violence.

Our Law Enforcement Training Specialists continued their work by reaching out to local agencies as a way of maintaining relationships built in previous years. Although Covid-19 sidelined their travel, they both worked on new presentations and trainings, and assisted in webinar facilitation and the planning of future trainings once our travel ban was lifted.

We also continued meeting and engaging in dialogue and planning with Texas Legal Services Center (TLSC) and Austin Independent School District (AISD) to provide a six-hour comprehensive sexual assault training for all of the district's faculty, staff, and administrators. This training would start in 2021 and is in direct response to negotiations between TLSC and AISD after a former student's sexual assault report was mishandled.

Trainings requests and topics continued to vary by audience type, cultural relevancy, community and law enforcement need, and by the increase in response and prevention efforts by colleges and universities. TAASA staff trained on such topics as:

- Sexual Assault 101
- Creating Trauma-Informed Survivor-Centered Organizations
- Community Organizing Strategies with Men
- Cultural Resonance and Victim Services
- Culturally Grounded Self-Care for Advocates
- Dynamics of Human Trafficking
- Ethics for Advocates
- Cultural Sensitivity
- Program Evaluation
- Intersections of Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence
- Centering Primary Prevention and Prevention 101
- Healthy Masculinity
- Impact of Secondary
- Trauma on Service Providers
- Legal Rights of Minors
- Neurobiology of Trauma & Sexual Assault Dynamics
- Pretext Communications
- Trauma-Informed Response and Programming for College Campuses
- Trauma-Informed Investigations and Report Writing
- Sexual Harassment and Exploitation of Power
- Non-Stranger Sexual Assault
- Vicarious Trauma for Law Enforcement and First Responders
- And various other sexual-assault related topics via webinars

Despite the pandemic, 2020 continued to be a steady year for our support and training staff. We continue looking forward to new and exciting projects and capacity-building on a much larger scale in the coming year by increasing access for our members, law enforcement, and community agencies to webinars and other online learning platforms as we head back to in-person trainings and technical assistance.

Our goal of measuring the pulse of programs' support and training needs will continue to be met as we engage in more dialogue at the local, state, and national levels to increase awareness, capacity, and education across all systems.

Policy & Advocacy

From preparations for the legislative session to funding advocacy in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Policy and Advocacy team engaged in numerous, significant projects throughout 2020.

Pandemic Response and Funding Advocacy

The pandemic's effect on programmatic funding was substantial, and the policy team responded by assembling data from the field about the pandemic's impact. This data was then transformed into a comprehensive report to support an increase in funding for programs. Additionally, TAASA defended against the projected shortfalls in programmatic funding, based on OAG concerns around insecurity of the 5010 fund. Through legislative and legal advocacy, TAASA secured full funding to all SAPCS-funded programs for the FY2021 grant year, and argued through an amicus brief filed with the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals that the state tax on sexually oriented businesses is constitutional and a necessary component of full RCC funding.

Sexual Assault Survivors Task Force

TAASA is part of the Steering Team of the Task Force, which directs the mission, vision, values and overarching framework of this collaboration. The Task Force spent 2020 focused on the collection, preservation, tracking, analysis and destruction of evidence in sexual assault cases. Working groups met through the year to discuss issues and concerns with statewide systemic response to sexual violence, culminating in over 150 recommended changes. The Policy and Advocacy team participated in these discussions and developed 11 policy recommendations to be implemented in the 87th Legislative Session.

Preparing for the 87th Legislative Session

The pandemic moved interim meetings and hearings online, and so the policy team pivoted to provide written testimony and information to legislators to inform their work on the rape kit backlog and the SAPCS budget rider. In addition, the team coordinated and met virtually with a series of focus groups to guide TAASA's policy agenda. The team developed a series of priorities for an online membership vote to ratify TAASA's 87th Legislative Agenda. Those priorities were to:

- Sufficiently Fund Sexual Assault Programs
- Ensure Confidentiality Protections for Victims
- Enhance Trauma-Informed Investigations
- Update the Language of Non-Consent
- Strengthen Community Responses to Sexual Assault
- Expand Access to Healthcare for Survivors

The team proposed bill language for each of these priorities and secured interested sponsors before early filing began in November.

Making Sense of New Title IX Guidelines

The Department of Education released new rules interpreting Title IX in April of 2020, and the policy team quickly took action to provide a response and guidance to the field. The team drafted a comprehensive summary and comparison with the prior Title IX guidelines and shared it with legislators, RCCs and campuses across the state.

Launching the Survivor Advisory Board

The Survivor Advisory Board is the result of a long-standing goal to recruit and support a group of survivor leaders and activists to inform our internal policy work and provide feedback on the work of the Sexual Assault Survivor's Task Force. The Board was formed and met several times in 2020, and it is made up of survivor leaders and activists who aim to influence change through policy.



SURVIVOR ADVISORY BOARD

TEXAS ASSOCIATION AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT

Changing the Conversation About Consent in Sexual Education

TAASA collaborated with Texas Campaign to support changes in the sex ed curriculum for middle and high schoolers, specifically to include comprehensive information about consent. The team provided the State Board of Education with information and data about the importance of teaching healthy, safe dating and intimate relationship skills to adolescents as a protective factor against sexual assault. As a result, the SBOE made change to their curriculum to include language about healthy relationships and respecting boundaries.

Equipping Stakeholders to Assist Human Trafficking Survivors

TAASA's Human Trafficking specialists worked through 2020 in tandem with the Governor's Office to spread awareness about a new model of care for human trafficking survivors (the CSEY Advocacy Model) and provide support to programs seeking to implement this model. In doing so, they assessed gaps in services across the state and readiness of various programs to adopt the CSEY model and presented on the model virtually to stakeholders statewide. They also participated in a working group to research existing standards and best practices for organizations serving trafficking survivors. This research formed the basis for an extensive document on the Ethical Standards of Care for Survivors of Human Trafficking Survivors, which was then presented to state leaders. The team also finalized a tip sheet for service providers, creating a map of statewide coverage for the CSEY Advocacy Model.

ISAP (Incarcerated Survivors Advocacy Project)

In addition to responding to over 100 letters from incarcerated survivors, the team worked closely with Just Detention International (JDI) on a publication called the Inside Line, serving on a 12-person focus group to create an advanced guidebook for PREA hotline workers.

Operations

Under normal circumstances, the operational systems of an organization (when executed well) should be essentially invisible and devoid of friction or pain points. The systems should be comfortable for its users and things should just flow. As we know, 2020 was in no way considered “normal circumstances” – not even close. Global pandemics have a way of disrupting “flow” and TAASA’s operations systems were suddenly front and center.

COVID-19 Relief Packages

By February, the Covid-19 outbreak had our full attention, and it was clear that a full-blown pandemic arriving in Texas was not a matter of “if” but “when.” It was also clear that we were going to need to move quickly in developing and mobilizing our operational strategy to keep our staff, partners, and community safe while continuing to provide services and support to our constituents.

By mid-March, Covid-19 numbers were skyrocketing and entire cities were shutting down. With each passing week, it was becoming increasingly clear that we would need to install some semi-permanent processes and procedures for shifting entirely to remote work. We began developing a plan to roll out to our staff. The processes and policies we developed went on to serve as examples for our member organizations as well.

A big piece of the plan was ensuring our staff and constituents could continue to operate so there would be minimal interruption to the support and services survivors would need. We were able to secure funding to purchase supplies and equipment for our staff to furnish home offices so our work to support the people who support survivors would remain intact. We surveyed staff to determine exactly what was needed to perform their jobs at a high level over an extended (yet

undetermined) amount of time from home. From there, we procured and delivered those supplies to our staff. We also created flexible policies that allowed staff to adapt their workflows to suit this new way of working.

In addition, the funding that was secured allowed us to extend this support to TAASA’s organizational members and community partners. Ultimately, we hired a procurement coordinator to oversee the project and ensure that the identified needs were met to the best of our ability. This was an extremely broad project where we assisted in acquiring everything from furniture and IT equipment to Zoom Healthcare licenses and Employment Law guidance. In all, TAASA was able to provide roughly \$1.5M in equipment and services to 63 rape crisis centers and community partners as well as TAASA staff, specifically for Covid relief.

Along with being a logistical behemoth, executing this project was also quite the financial puzzle. This took tremendous coordination and attention to detail to ensure we could spend down such a large amount of money in a short amount of time without creating serious cash flow issues for our regular financial expenditures like payroll, rent, and bills.

Virtual Conference Pivot

The annual TAASA Conference was scheduled to take place in Houston in the summer of 2020. We had a phenomenal lineup of presenters and speakers in place and conference registration was in full swing when it became clear that an in-person conference was not in the best interest of the attendees, our staff, or the Houston community. After much deliberation, we decided to make the pivot to holding a virtual conference despite our lack of experience in hosting a fully virtual conference. From technology to logistics, this was truly uncharted water for the team and organization.

As quickly as we could, we chose a virtual conference platform called Whova and set out to learn as much as we could about it in a matter of days. It took a massive amount of effort, but we were able to make the shift and, much to our delight, most of the attendees who had already registered for the in-person conference were happy to go virtual with us. In addition, being a virtual conference opened the door to a national and international audience. In the end, the conference was a huge success. We also learned a great deal about how to host a virtual conference in the future.



525
Attendees



Sexual Assault Services Program (SASP)- Pass Thru

In addition to training, communication, technical assistance, policy and advocacy services offered by TAASA in 2020, TAASA successfully supported local programs across the state by providing a funding stream dedicated to healing and advocacy for teen and adult survivors of sexual assault outside the context of domestic partnership. The intention of this funding is to encourage a dedication of time, energy, and resources to a population of survivors often overlooked, under-reported, and that fall through the proverbial cracks. Acquaintance rape is highly misunderstood and affects the age group most often affected by sexual violence. This funding stream fit nicely within dual sexual assault/ domestic violence programs as it allows a percentage of time for flexible to meet the needs of survivors. TAASA was entrusted by the Public Safety Office of the Governor's office to manage the SASP funding stream.

Prevention

Connection and support were the overriding themes for the Prevention team in 2020. In addition to doing their work during a pandemic, they provided support as local sexual assault programs began to shift the focus of their own prevention work due to changes in grant guidance and requirements. Additional shifts in funding required the team to implement their own prevention programming and provide support to local programs doing both prevention and direct services work.

Technical Assistance (TA)

TA is grant speak for providing support to staff and organizations via coaching, strategic planning, brainstorming, resources, and general cheerleading. The Prevention Team continued its substantial focus on providing TA to local sexual assault programs regarding their prevention programming in 2020. Prevention Team staff also provided TA to program staff on improving direct services and advocacy for survivors of sexual assault, with a particular focus on advocacy for male-identified survivors of sexual violence.

Feedback

"This has been so helpful. I feel like I can actually grasp this now."

"You really helped me think outside the box. I am excited to see how the youth like it!"

"I appreciate that you take the time to have meaningful talks that make me feel so much more capable of doing things"

"Thank you so very much for your guidance and help today. It has made me relax and feel more at ease."

2020 TA Activities

137

Instances of TA

30+

Information & Resource Emails

12

Communities of Practice Sessions

5

Online Gatherings

4

Q&A Sessions with Funder

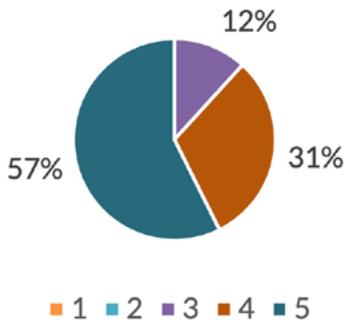
6

TA Office Hours

Communities of Practice (CoPs)

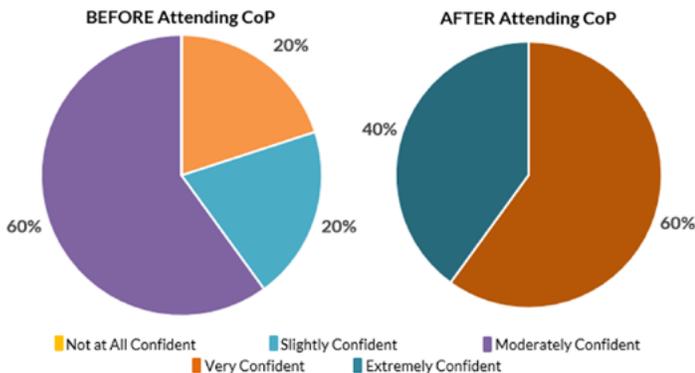
Communities of Practice, or CoPs, are gatherings that bring together prevention staff working on similar issues in similar communities or around common strategies. The gatherings are a combination of: TAASA training and TA; peer-to-peer training, support, and resource sharing; and facilitated dialogue. In 2020, the Prevention team hosted a CoP focused on community-level primary prevention programming and started a new CoP called the Approach and Curriculum Collective (or ACC). Through ACCs, we invited prevention workers from the field to host conversations, practice sessions, and resource-sharing. The graphics provide examples of the feedback and impact related to these CoPs.

Usefulness of Communities of Practice (CoPs)



Attendees were asked to rank the usefulness of each CoP on scale of 1 to 5: 1 = not at all useful and 5 = extremely useful

Confidence Level Identifying Potential Community Prevention Partners



Texas Men's Story Project (Tx MSP)

TAASA's Prevention team began implementing our own prevention work in June 2020. This work focused on engaging men and boys as allies in ending sexual and interpersonal violence. TAASA believes that engaging men in anti-violence work and promoting diverse and healthy notions of masculinity are important strategies in ending sexual violence in Texas.

Our primary prevention project in 2020 was a partnership with the Men's Story Project to develop the Texas Men's Story Project. As a part of the Tx MSP, 12 men explored the intersections of masculinity, health, interpersonal violence, and social justice as part of a series of workshops. They also developed, fine-tuned, and shared their own stories related to these topics through four live and online events with over 260 attendees. The videos of 10 of those stories were captured and will be shared via TAASA social media platforms in 2021.

TX MSP Participant:

"I gained a deep appreciation for the levels of sensitivity and the experiences of my fellow presenters. This has helped me reframe my own approach to my experiences with masculinity."

Tx MSP Attendee:

"I gained a sense of optimism--toxic masculinities can be unlearned; new, healthy traditions can be built. I think that each of the courageous men who participated in this MSP production helped, with their work, to make the world a kinder, more beautiful and more compassionate place."

Training

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Prevention team implemented trainings online. Training topics included: developing community-level prevention programming; implementing prevention programming; implementing TAASA’s own Building Health Relationships and Communities prevention curriculum; prevention theory and strategies; and supporting and advocating for male-identified survivors of sexual violence. We facilitated or co-facilitated trainings: to the Governor’s Sexual Assault Survivor’s Task Force; via Facebook live to over 320 people in partnership with Lone Star Legal Aide; and on incorporating prevention messaging to Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month activities during a pandemic.

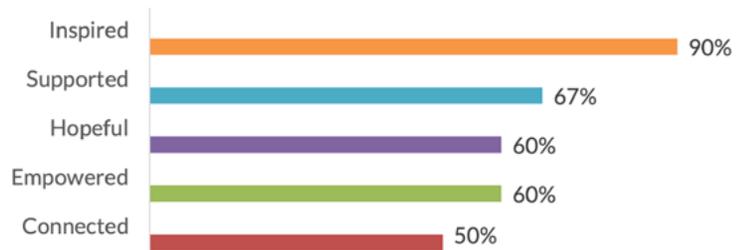
Sustaining Change 2020: Primary Prevention Institute

In 2020, we hosted our first-ever online Primary Prevention Institute. Hosting this event online gave us the opportunity to invite a larger number of attendees, and new funding guidelines allowed us to incorporate some direct service workshops. The Sustaining Change 2020: Primary Prevention Institute was spread over four days in September, and the feedback and impact were overwhelmingly positive.

Attendees were given a chance to answer how they felt during the Institute. They could choose as many words as they wanted from the following list: inspired, overwhelmed, bored, supported, hopeful, underwhelmed, excited, anxious, empowered, confused, energized, disinterested, connected, and alone. The chart below shows the top five words chosen and the percentage of respondents who selected each.

153
Registrants

27
Workshops



“I found great inspiration from so many during the sessions I attended.”

“I appreciated more detailed information on the core components of community level work. The guidance helped me to better understand how we will approach community level work and who to reach out to in our efforts.”

“I thought that there was lots of great information shared during the Institute - especially because I am still fairly new to the movement and anxious to learn.”

“I definitely felt a sense of connection with other attendees, which I didn’t think was really possible due to the virtual format.”

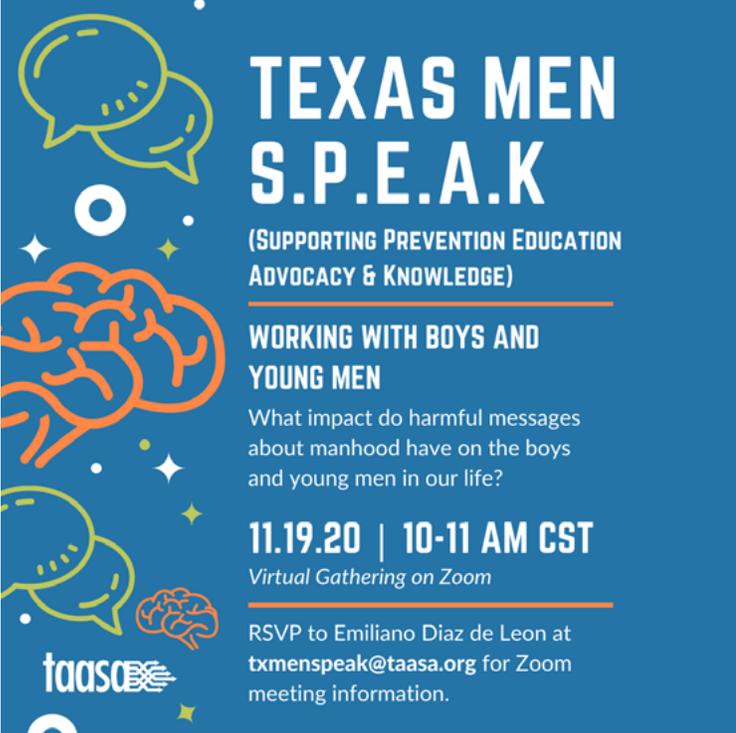
“Because it was the way each person made you feel. They make you feel as though you count and you are important.”

Statewide Prevention Dialogue

TAASA has long built up and cultivated its ability and authority to drive and inform statewide conversations about sexual violence, including conversations about sexual violence prevention. In 2020, that ground work paid off. We have been able to have conversations with funders about shifting grant expectations and allowable expenses to allow programs to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic and to prioritize the health and safety of their communities and their staff over the pressure to meet deliverables. Our continued work with the Texas Primary Prevention Planning Committee Steering Committee gives us voice to impact guidance and recommendations around primary prevention programming and funding in Texas. Monthly meetings with TA staff at the Office of the Attorney General allowed us to discuss the best ways to support local programs as they implement programming and communicate trends and concerns from the field with OAG staff.

Texas Men Speak

The Tx MSP project events wrapped up in September of this year. After the project's completion, we moved on to our next engaging men and boys sexual violence prevention project, the Texas Men SPEAK (Supporting Prevention, Education, Advocacy, & Knowledge) project. The goal of this project is to engage men, most of whom are doing interpersonal violence prevention work already, in group conversations and learning about healthy masculinities and about the work of being allies in anti-violence efforts. We hope to have conversations and share skills that attendees can apply both to their work and their day-to-day lives. We hosted meetings in October, November, and December, and will continue to host monthly meetings throughout 2021.



The poster features a dark blue background with white and orange text. On the left side, there are stylized icons: a yellow speech bubble, a white circle, an orange brain, and a yellow speech bubble with a brain inside. The TAASA logo is at the bottom left. The text is as follows:

**TEXAS MEN
S.P.E.A.K**
(SUPPORTING PREVENTION EDUCATION
ADVOCACY & KNOWLEDGE)

**WORKING WITH BOYS AND
YOUNG MEN**

What impact do harmful messages
about manhood have on the boys
and young men in our life?

11.19.20 | 10-11 AM CST
Virtual Gathering on Zoom

RSVP to Emiliano Diaz de Leon at
txmenspeak@taasa.org for Zoom
meeting information.

Learning & Evaluation

As with many folks, 2020 was a year of reflection and self-preservation with a focus on our communities' wellbeing. This reflection and self-preservation extended to the Learning and Evaluation team itself, given the tremendous challenges and losses we saw professionally and personally. It was a master course in trauma-informed care as a team, and the team supported each other through those challenges in a beautifully uplifting way. There was room for growth, figuratively and literally, as the team expanded to meet the increased workload.

In 2020, Learning and Evaluation was overjoyed to add their first-ever Data Analyst to the team.

Learning Projects

Collective Healing Initiative (formerly Groundswell)

The objective of the Collective Healing Initiative is to foster a network dedicated to the wellness and healing of black, indigenous, and other communities of color. By prioritizing culturally affirming practices, we hope to support the important work of healing from complex and historical trauma, including sexual violence. In 2020, the initiative quickly moved to create the Community Healing Series, which arose from our own need for explorations of holistic and culturally grounded ways to heal. TAASA partnered with allgo, a statewide queer people of color organization, and started building relationships with culturally-grounded healers across the state. Throughout the year, we spotlighted the stories and gifts of 9 different culturally-grounded healers and facilitated conversations about their modalities and what it means in the context of community healing. The initial data we collected highlighted the somatic and intergenerational nature of healing with rich matrixes of kinship and relationship, the importance of ancestral lineages and honoring the cultural origins of healing modalities. In 2021, we will continue the Series and continue to expand on those initial learnings.

Lift Up Listening Sessions on the Impact of Covid-19 on Programs

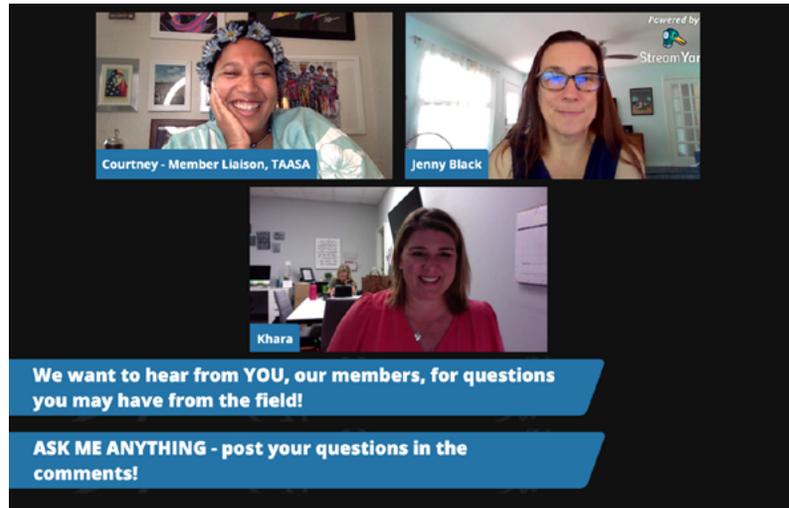
With the rapidly changing guidance and restrictions, shelter-in-place orders, and spikes in Covid-19 cases, the Learning and Evaluation team joined with the Program Support team to meet with programs regionally in April and May. Our goal was to fully understand the impact Covid-19 and related precautions were having on organizations working to support survivors. These listening sessions revealed the creativity and flexibility with which programs and service providers had pivoted. In our report on these sessions, we captured the impact, challenges, increase in survivor needs, and strategies that helped sexual assault programs rise to meet survivor needs. The full report can be found here: <https://taasa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/COVID-and-Sexual-Assault-Programs.pdf>

Internal Structures and Evaluation

The Learning and Evaluation team continues to work towards improving and making TAASA's data collection systems as efficient and utilized as they can be. The high levels of stress and pivoting in service delivery methods in 2020 definitely slowed that process as we focused on not only our own but our greater communities' wellbeing and resilience.

Membership Engagement

TAASA's Membership Liaison had her fair share of challenges with the cancellation of in-person gatherings and having to address technical challenges with our membership portal. Despite this, our Liaison cultivated our Social Media with almost 100 posts, assisted members over 85 times and hosted 3 Ask Me Anything events on Facebook live and YouTube in addition to coordinating a day of concurrent virtual Regional Meetings for our membership. She also spearheaded our annual Membership survey to get feedback on improving TAASA as a membership organization.



100
Posts

85+
Requests for
Assistance from
membership

3
Ask-Me-Anything
Events

Communications

Organizational Support

Early in 2020, the team was largely focused on communications for our April conference, which was rescheduled and shifted to a virtual format for July. Beginning in mid-March, Communications worked closely with management and other teams to draft and distribute nearly a dozen English and Spanish communications about what attendees could expect from the new virtual format.

The communications team also participated in early work around the development of a conference theme and initial logo and materials development. The steady drumbeat of conference communications continued until our July conference as the team created graphics and drafted newsletters and social media posts to highlight keynote speakers, workshops, and other notable conference events.

In another virtual pivot, we shifted a large part of our focus to planning for SAAPM online, creating a robust SAAPM social media toolkit for RCCs and other partners and conducting two Zoom calls in March with more than 70 attendees to review our toolkit and share social media strategies during SAAPM.

In the first half of the year, Communications lent support to the policy team, communicating with RCCs on a Congressional letter-writing campaign requesting FY21 appropriations for VAWA, VOCA and related programs. TAASA sent our own requests to the Texas Congressional delegation to request their continued support for these programs. In the second half of the year, Communications again served in a supporting role with the policy team to prepare for the upcoming

As our entire organization and the programs TAASA supports quickly learned to pivot and reinvent many aspects of their work, the Communications team followed suit in its efforts to support our teams and communicate pandemic-related changes to TAASA's varied audiences, from programs to social media followers to media outlets.

Just before the country began to shut down, TAASA's communications consultant was hired as our in-house Communications Manager; we retained the services of our outgoing Communications Manager in a social media consulting capacity.

legislative session, editing one-pagers, sharing social media posts, and preparing graphics. Our communications manager also participated in training and analysis of legislative bill filing.

Communications supported other departments across the organizations in ways big and small, from providing PSA content for National Crime Victims' Rights Week to drafting and distributing social media content for applications to the Survivor Advisory Board to helping promote the beginning stages of the Men's Story Project.

Communications also served as in-house editor on several communications pieces, such as external surveys, newsletters, and social media posts about a pandemic-inspired mid-year day of giving (Giving Tuesday Now) for nonprofits. Communications also drafted content for various projects, including TACT introduction and conclusion scripts and an In Your Own Backyard Toolkit for legislative advocacy. Communications and our member liaison also worked closely to develop a new system to streamline internal communications requests.

The team also trained on a new media platform, Streamyard, to produce our new TAASA Talks series, set to debut when the Legislature begins in 2021.

Finally, the team created our first-ever crisis communications plan to ensure TAASA has a detailed plan of action to address our most-likely future scenarios.

Media Relations

During a non-legislative year amid a global pandemic, news coverage was less accessible than in previous years. Nevertheless, TAASA weighed in on important issues of the day.

In the first half of the year, Communications crafted and distributed statements to the media and on social media regarding Title IX implementation, anti-racist policies in the wake of George Floyd’s murder, and Vanessa Guillen’s death and disappearance (the latter was translated and distributed to Texas-based Spanish outlets). TAASA also supported rape crisis centers in the Killeen area near our military base in their media outreach efforts.

In the second half, we drafted and distributed a statement on sexual assault in ICE detention centers and multiple press releases for the Men’s Story Project. We also received positive press and helped coordinate coverage on our newly formed Survivor Advisory Board and on stories surrounding sexual assault training within the Austin Independent School District.

Social Media & Graphics

In the first quarter of 2020, we focused our efforts on conference promotion with email communications, keynote announcements, and social media posts in English and Spanish. In February, we used our social media pages to promote Black History Month, highlighting six Black survivors and advocates. The series received nearly 300 likes across Facebook and Instagram as well as 50+ shares.

Our March content was more focused on Covid-19 and the rise in abuse cases as well as content planning for Sexual Awareness and Prevention Month (SAAPM), which included a “Turn Texas Teal” toolkit that was shared on social media and with membership. The toolkit included a SAAPM overview, sample social media copy, editorial calendar, and shareable graphics.

The second quarter of the year is when TAASA traditionally sees the most engagement across all social media pages. This year presented more challenges due to Covid-19 and the postponement of our conference. Our team navigated these roadblocks with proactive planning and simplified content creation.



In April, TAASA’s Facebook page had nearly 600 organic shares, which helped us reach over 47,000 people during the course of SAAPM, including nearly 500 likes to our fast-growing Instagram account.

Beginning in May and June, we started promotion for our virtual conference, in both Spanish and English,



across all social media channels and centered our PRIDE Month campaign on programs in Texas specializing in services for people in the LGTQIA+ community. The PRIDE spotlights reached over 5,000 people.

We used our social media platform to address causes that intersect with sexual violence. We shared information from the Black Lives Matter movement in Texas and worked with the staff on a Moment of Solidarity virtual event in remembrance of members of the black community who lost their lives to police brutality. We also amplified efforts to find Vanessa Guillen, a soldier who was kidnapped and murdered

near Fort Hood, with social media posts and a media statement.

The third quarter was our busiest season for social media in 2020. With the move to a virtual conference, we had to significantly ramp up our social media messaging to promote the new format and share important updates throughout the conference process. We created graphics highlighting keynote speakers, workshop topics and registration. Due to the virtual format, social media engagement was much higher and we were able to feature content from attendees on our Instagram stories.

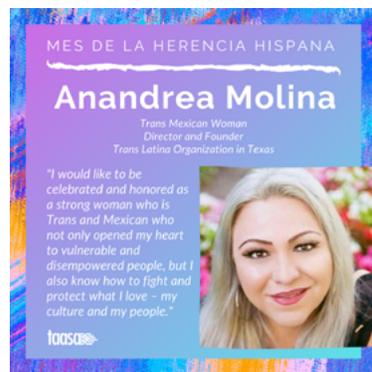
Immediately following the conference was a new initiative from the Prevention team, the Men's Storytelling Project, which included Facebook Live videos, social graphics and ongoing commentary on various social channels.

The first half of Hispanic Heritage Month (HHM) was also in September, and we centered the voices of Latinx sexual assault advocates in Texas. The primary difference for this year was language accessibility; all responses were translated in both Spanish and English.

October is always one of the busiest times for social media due to Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM) and HHM. We amplified information about DVAM from partner organization TCFV and RCCs around the state. We also finished up our HHM series with bilingual features on Latinx advocates from around the state. The series reached over 4,000 people on Facebook and garnered over 100 likes on Instagram.

Social media campaigns in November and December focused on Giving Tuesday and an end-of-year giving campaign, yielding mixed results. This last quarter also included the announcement of TAASA's first Survivor Advisory Board with individual graphics and introductions for each member.

Our most popular post of the year was unfortunately among the most tragic. Another soldier, Sgt. Elder Fernandes, who reported sexual misconduct at Fort Hood went missing and was later found dead. We created a graphic to raise awareness around his disappearance. The post and corresponding image reached 13,625 people and was shared over 120 times.



As in 2019, we shifted our content away from sensationalized stories and focused on promoting TAASA's work, providing resources, sharing news stories from reputable sources that are relevant to the movement, and creating original content that is survivor- and advocate-centric.

One of the barriers TAASA and other nonprofits faced in 2020 with social media is that algorithms continue to evolve and most engagement is being geared towards organizations that spend money on advertisements and boosted posts. The bulk of our engagement occurs through organic reach, and while it is lower than what it was when we paid to boost our content, it is higher than many of our allied coalitions and even national groups.

Access & Inclusion

Since our founding in 1982, incremental but steady progress has been made in centering communities and experiences of people and communities that have been historically minoritized.

2020 marks our first complete calendar year focused on institutionalizing our efforts to put accessibility and inclusion into action. We have prioritized recruiting and hiring bilingual and bicultural staff, developing culturally resonant materials, and providing Spanish-language training and technical assistance for rape crisis centers throughout Texas. Our efforts have culminated in tremendous strides forward and an incredible amount of work in just one year. While we have much to be proud of, we still have a long road ahead of us.

All Spanish language work was done with the help and support of the bilingual team, comprised of staff across departments.

SASP Grant and Grantees

Ongoing communications and updates to grantees ensured equitable and timely access to information for all grantees in Spanish and English. This included offering intensive TA and capacity-building in Spanish for Organización Latina Trans in Texas (OLTT), from facilitating meetings and webinars to assisting with Salesforce implementation, financial TA, and new portal training.

State reports, CJD Short money/Covid-19 relief packages, award letters, budget adjustments and reimbursements also fell under the umbrella of Spanish-language support.

“Ha sido y es una experiencia de mucho aprendizaje, gracias por el tiempo y toda su paciencia para todo este proceso.”

“Han hecho mucho trabajo por apoyarme y eso es muy apreciado.”

2020 Annual Conference

As we quickly shifted from planning an in-person conference to our first ever virtual conference, we knew we'd have to think creatively about how to create an accessible virtual space. During our planning stages we were intentional about creating and cultivating space to ask questions in Spanish, which encourages participants who are bilingual to do so as well. This also gives validity and balance to the Spanish language, which promotes diversity and welcomes inclusivity.

We were mindful to use inclusive language that did not 'other' those who might use interpretation

services; we asked everyone to choose the language channel that worked best for them rather than ask Spanish speakers to move to a different channel. For the first time in TAASA's history, we were able to offer 6 Spanish language conference workshops as well as simultaneous English to Spanish interpretation for 19 designated workshops and all three of our 3 keynote sessions. We are hopeful that these first steps speak to our commitment as an organization to take the time and do the work to include both English and Spanish. As we continue growing and building our capacity, our hope is to include ASL interpretation in the future.

The Access and Inclusion team worked to translate all conference communications and graphics, including updates our conference website. The team also organized and managed the entire Spanish-language RFP process.

“Great job! It was neat to have this in Spanish.”

“[I learned to] support my Spanish clients in a better way.”

“Me encantó!!!! Muy interesante y toca nuestras raíces, fuera de lo que hacemos cada día.”

“[I learned to] Take into account everyone’s background and how different it is.”

“Estas son conversaciones que tengo que llevar a mi familia y a mi trabajo. A veces batallo con trasladar el lenguaje de Ingles a Español y esta presentación me ayudo.”

Internal Infrastructure

We have gradually been building an audience to which our translated materials can be delivered while establishing ourselves as an organization with a reputation for having culturally resonant resources. For instance, our conference attendees for Spanish language workshops has steadily increased and easily doubled from last year. We have also made the conference as a whole more accessible by having live simultaneous English to Spanish interpretation for workshops that previously would have been English only. While working to accomplish this, we’ve also had our eye on building the organizational infrastructure to support this kind of growth and adequately compensate and support our staff members.

The bilingual team spent the bulk of 2020 collectively creating our procedural guidelines with a trauma-informed lens and a keen awareness of the historical and ancestral trauma involved with being bilingual and bicultural. As a team, we co-created the following:

- Organizational policies and procedures for our HR department
- Streamlined questions that will be asked during the interview process
- Different levels of bilingual work that take into account the nuances of being bilingual and/or bi-literate
- Evaluation process reflecting each level of work to be completed
- Expectations for each level of work
- Commensurate compensation for each level of work
- All HR documentation for staff files

We also understand that bilingual does not only mean English and Spanish. Toward that end, we have added a team member who speaks Persian Farsi to our team. Our hope is to continue expanding and better reflect the diverse communities in Texas.

Given the unique challenges of 2020, it was also important to find ways to stay connected with each other as staff. As a member of the Collective Healing Initiative (CHI), the Access and Inclusion Manager started hosting CHI Sponsored Staff Development sessions. The goal was to build community with one another and have fun together. We set aside time, first weekly, then biweekly, then monthly to chat and visit. We would watch a movie together that was BIPOC focused and chat afterward. It was an incredibly grounded space that allowed staff to drop in and out as they were able.

Spanish-Language Work

Overall, the Access and Inclusion team managed 130 translation requests, with approximately 60 percent of requests filled internally and 40 percent completed by TAASA's contractor.

These requests included all conference communications, social media posts, updated brochures, media statements, and promotion of a national Covid-19 survey.

The team facilitated 30 events with live simultaneous English<>Spanish interpretation, including 8 sessions of the Healer Series sponsored by our Collective Healing Initiative in partnership with allgo, and the Men's Story Project sessions with English to Spanish and ASL interpretation.

130

Translation Requests

30

Events with live simultaneous English<>Spanish

"Without being able to connect with others as we did in the office, the staff development days feel like more natural check ins with folks we don't get to work with on the regular. It's also has been a great way to decompress during the quarantine as life has taken dramatic shifts this year. On hard days or weeks, staff development has given me something to look forward to, even if I don't attend every week. I hope that we can continue to utilize the space as a way to bond, share, and release."

"I can bring in the practices of my ancestors and those from my community to make my home a place of healing. Community healing doesn't have to be expensive or overthought and it can even be simple yet profound in impact! The things I need can usually be found right around me."

"To me, collective healing means having community conversations like this where we can expand our knowledge and understanding about our place with and within nature."

