

TEXAS ASSOCIATION AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT

20
21

Annual Report

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2021 TAASA Board

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-
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Access and Inclusion
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Virginia Rueda
Program Support
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Ted Rutherford
Director of Operations

Katherine Strandberg
Criminal Justice Analyst

Mike Sweeney
Human Trafficking
Specialist

LETTER FROM CEO

The year of influence.

The year of 2020 altered life as we know it and presented challenges, barriers, and an emotional toll spanning into 2021.

The unpredictability of 2020 shattered precedence and normalcy; however, TAASA's solid infrastructure and core values stood the test of COVID uncertainty, and overcoming the challenges of 2020 helped sustain us in our work in 2021. Hoisted by TAASA staff's resolve, the year yielded impactful influence across a multitude of disciplines.

TAASA's policy efforts ushered in historic strides for survivors of sexual assault. Our legislative team led the passage of significant bipartisan legislation and collaborated on task force recommendations on behalf of the Sexual Assault Survivors Task Force and with the Texas Children's' Advocacy Centers.

Training and Programs specialists embarked on a partnership with an independent school district to train 100% of staff and to review and recommend updated sexual assault and sexual harassment policies as well as Title IX updates.

TAASA answered the call as national media outlets sought sexual assault expertise in their coverage of high-profile cases. And we established impactful partnerships that led to work such as content development for the inclusion of a first-ever sexual assault section in the Basic Police Officer Curriculum (BPOC) at the request of the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE).

These are only a few examples of the influence TAASA exerted across the state on behalf of sexual assault survivors. This annual report seeks to provide membership with a comprehensive year in review while showcasing TAASA's ongoing commitment to our mission.

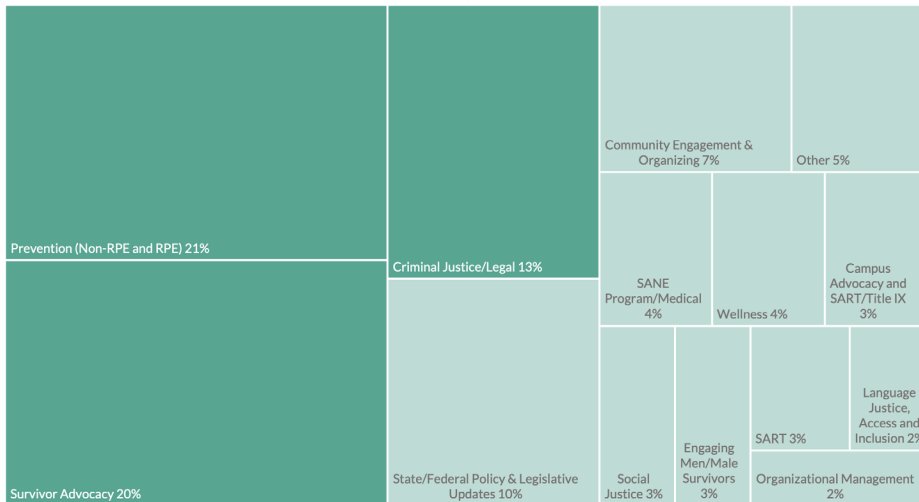
There is a famous Navy SEAL team saying: "Individuals play the game, but teams beat the odds." In reflecting on our work in 2021, it is this sentiment that best exemplifies the magic of TAASA's staff and our collective work to ensure a brighter future for all in Texas.



Rose Luna
CEO

TRAINING THE MOVEMENT

In 2021, the most common topics covered in trainings were **Prevention, Survivor Advocacy, and Criminal Justice/Legal.**



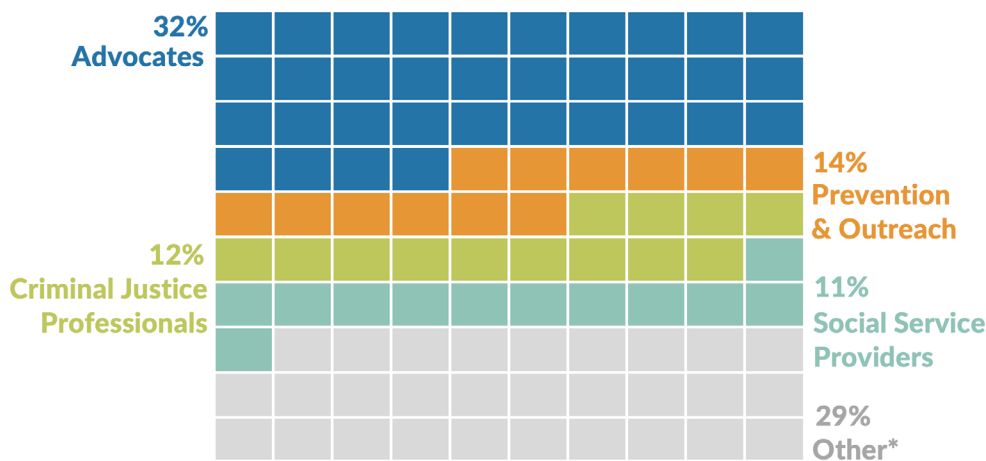
9,208
Attendees

219
Trainings

7
Spanish Trainings

27
Bilingual Trainings

We train a diverse movement with over a third of our audience being **advocates.**

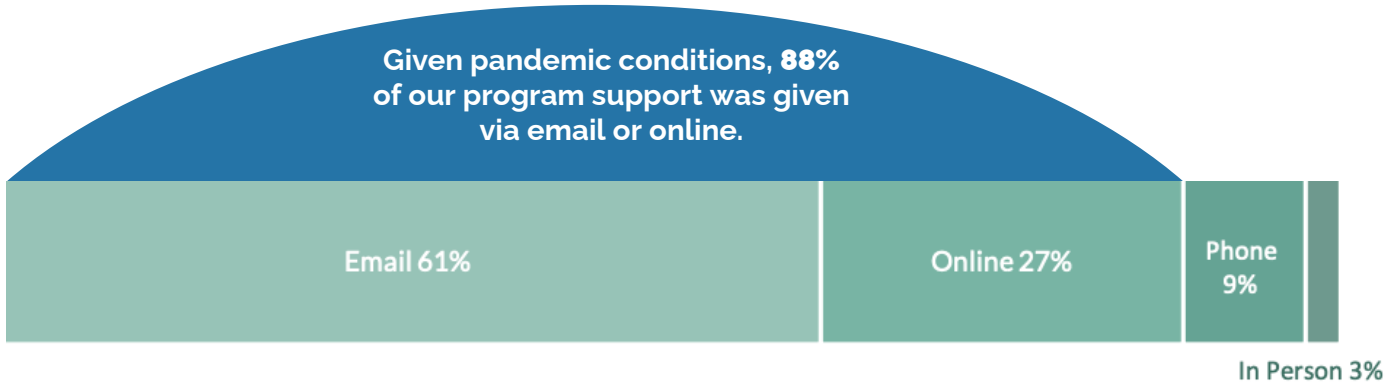


*Audience in the 'Other' category include Medical Professionals/SANE, Military, Higher Education, K-12, Grassroots community, and Government staff.

"I resonated so deeply with the multicultural and intersectional pieces that go into our reproductive health. I thought all of the facilitators spoke so passionately and [were] knowledgeable on this topic. It was truly inspiring. I look forward to future panels or webinars where these women speak."

"Thank you for providing very clear, concise, timely, and actionable information."

SUPPORTING THE MOVEMENT: PROGRAM SUPPORT AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE



The word below cloud represents the variety of issues we addressed with program support.



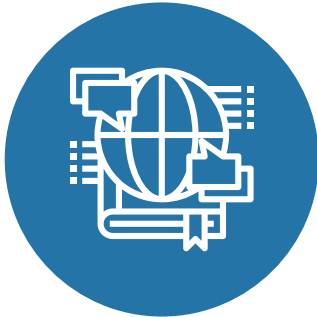
"I'm so glad to hear that I will be able to go to you for feedback, and suggestions regarding our programs. I am definitely wanting all the support I can get as I begin to navigate [funders and programming]."

-Program staff

"You are a lifesaver. You are the reason for the new ED's success. My board asked for you specifically to come down and provide [technical assistance]."

-Member program

SPOTLIGHT: BILINGUAL SPOTLIGHT



Once upon a time, in the not so distant past, like many agencies in the anti-violence movement, TAASA had no clear or transparent process for translating our communications. Social media posts, website materials, brochures, membership communications, etc., were often left floating in space, dreaming of being translated.

Tired of things floating in space, we challenged ourselves to put the ideas of access and inclusion into action. We started by building our capacity with staff members who identified as bilingual (English/Spanish), cultivating a strong team to co-create a clear and transparent process for making our communications more linguistically accessible. We co-created an overall process that would alleviate the stress and guesswork of trying to translate materials. This infrastructure ensured work was equitably shared and that everyone on staff knew how to go about requesting translations.

As we began putting our understanding of language justice into practice more broadly at TAASA, we saw a definitive change in how we approached our work. This shift was noticeable in many ways, from the way we supported programs to how we provided training. For instance, we provided intense TA, in Spanish, translated state and federal required reports, created a Spanish dashboard on Salesforce, and provided opportunities

to attend training, with simultaneous English to Spanish interpretation. We carried that success over to our annual conference. We offered a steady track of 6-7 Spanish language workshops and offered live simultaneous interpretation for 18-20 additional designated workshops. The joint Healer Series with allgo and Collective Healing Initiative (CHI) hosted 13 sessions with live simultaneous interpretation in a virtual format. In addition to the serious infrastructure building that has allowed us to host multilingual spaces on a far larger scale, we also co-created organizational HR policies to ensure equity in pay and work distribution. Our CEO Rose Luna has committed to prioritizing funding our efforts through pay equity and institutionalizing definitive line items in our organizational budget moving forward.

To learn more about language justice and what it could look like for communities of color and other communities most directly impacted by violence, email us at espanol@taasa.org.

STEERING THE MOVEMENT: POLICY

TAASA Talks the 87th

Developed as part of an overall communication strategy to provide information to membership about the status of legislative priorities, “TAASA Talks” involved conversations between our CEO, Senior Policy Advisors, and occasional guests about sexual assault-related bills and their progress. Content was broadcast biweekly to TAASA’s YouTube channel and shared on our social media platforms during the legislative session.



TAASA's 87th Legislative Agenda

The 87th Legislature was unlike any in recent memory, due to COVID protocols for social distancing, daily testing, and vaccine checks. Committee hearings were offered virtually and were regularly delayed. Notwithstanding these unusual and difficult circumstances, however, TAASA was able to achieve passage of the following priority items:



Sufficiently Fund Sexual Assault Programs

An additional \$4.7 million in funding was appropriated to rape crisis centers in the state’s budget.



Ensure Confidentiality Protections for Victims

Survivors can now claim a privilege for confidential information shared with an advocate in civil, criminal, administrative and legislative proceedings.



Enhance Trauma-Informed Investigations

Law enforcement officials may no longer polygraph survivors during an investigation, nor may they decline forensic medical exams if the report is made within 120 hours of assault. Additionally, law enforcement must offer a survivor the presence of an advocate at an investigative interview.



Update the Language of Non-consent

Punishment for rape of a person in custody is elevated to a second-degree felony from a state jail felony.



Strengthen Community Responses to Sexual Assault

Every county in Texas is mandated to have a Sexual Assault Response Team.



Expand Access to Healthcare for Survivors

Community-based clinics providing forensic exams are now codified as SAFE-ready facilities, enhancing their sustainability by making them eligible for grant funding and for reimbursement for emergency medical care.

Sexual Assault Survivors Task Force (SASTF)



Established by the 86th Legislature with a goal of improving Texas’ response to sexual assault, the SASTF is a statewide collaboration of state agencies, criminal justice professionals, and service providers who are charged with studying and identifying systemic issues and making policy recommendations to the Legislature. TAASA is privileged to serve on the SASTF and is proud of the important work being done by this multidisciplinary team.

In 2021, the SASTF focused on law enforcement and prosecutor training efforts, and through subcommittee-style working groups, created groundbreaking guiding materials designed to improve system response to survivors: Basic Peace Officer Sexual Assault Training, a Trauma Informed Rubric and a Safety Planning Framework.

BPOC Training: The Basic Peace Officer Course has never included specific information about the dynamics and realities of sexual assault, nor about how to properly investigate this crime. The SASTF determined that this was a gap in learning for our first responders, and set a plan to author a curriculum to be included in that course. TAASA partnered with DPS and the Office of the Governor to achieve this goal, and the curriculum was submitted to TCOLE at the end of 2021. Police academies across the state will now for the first time be teaching brand new cadets about sexual assault.

Trauma-Informed Rubric: Professionals in the anti-sexual violence movement routinely use the term “trauma informed” to describe a best practice for working with survivors, but how often do we stop to consider what the term actually means? Guided by that overarching question, the Trauma-Informed Working Group developed a rubric to help professionals understand and evaluate whether a program, organization, system or policy is truly trauma-informed. There is no checklist or uniform approach for achieving a trauma-informed approach, but rather consistent critical thinking, intentional response, and ongoing evaluation that centers around the following trauma-informed principles:



Safety Framework: The Safety Planning Working Group had a similar goal in mind: to create working guidelines for trauma-informed, survivor-centered, safety planning processes for survivors of sexual violence. Their work led them to the formulation of an Individual Safety and Wellbeing Plan Framework, designed to empower survivors and their supporters with strategies, resources, and tools to address immediate and longer-term physical safety, emotional safety, economic safety, security, and healing.

Together, these guiding materials will inform the work of advocates, criminal justice professionals, forensic nurses, and others who engage with survivors to ensure that responses will be more survivor-centered and trauma-informed.

SPOTLIGHT: SARTS ACROSS TEXAS

Sexual Assault Response Teams Improving Services and Criminal Justice Outcomes

"If we do this thing right, then survivors who muster the courage to report won't regret doing so, because the resources and support will be there."
- County Judge

It began with a statewide audit and a vision: a bold idea that we can do better for survivors of sexual assault in Texas. In 2020, the State Auditor issued a report finding that sexual assault investigations involving adult victims may benefit from a multi-disciplinary team approach. This finding supports discoveries in communities with operational Sexual Assault

Response Teams: cases are reported more quickly, have more evidence, and have higher levels of survivor engagement. This leads to increased offender accountability and a higher level of procedural justice and healing for the survivor. But implementing such a drastic change within a state of 254 counties was daunting, even more so considering that less than 10% of those counties had an active SART.

Enter Senate Bill 476: establishing a SART mandate for every county in Texas.

TAASA partnered with Senator Nelson, advocates, survivors, and community leaders to develop a policy that meets the needs of survivors and the community, with an emphasis on victim care, accountability, transparency and collaboration. SB 476 was signed into law and took effect on September 1, 2021. The law requires commissioners' courts to formally appoint statutory members to a county SART and establishes duties and deliverables, including mandatory quarterly meetings, a written protocol for the community's response to sexual assault and a biennial report of sexual assault case data.

The key to TAASA's success in implementing this initiative was the formation of a SART Steering Team, is composed of representatives from TAASA, Senator Nelson's office, the Office of the Governor, Texas Association of Regional Councils, Texas Association of Counties, Texas District and County Attorney's Association, International Association of Forensic Nurses (Texas chapter), and Texas Council of Community Centers. Through monthly meetings

and coordination, these agencies built out a plan for communication, and support for counties and new SARTs.

We are proud to report that since the passage of SB 476, the number of SARTs in Texas has more than doubled to over 50 teams. Rape crisis centers are stepping up to support teams. Relationships are broadening and strengthening in support of survivors, and it is working. Most recently, an officer from a rural community shared that they are connecting all survivors with a rape crisis center in a nearby community, a practice that was not routinely done before the passage of SB 476, stating: "We decided if we were going to do this thing, we were going to do it right."

It is heartening to see this new policy reveal an open mind and new commitment on the part of our system partners to do right by survivors, from law enforcement to county officials to prosecutors. We can do right, and we will. Our vision is becoming a reality, one county at a time.

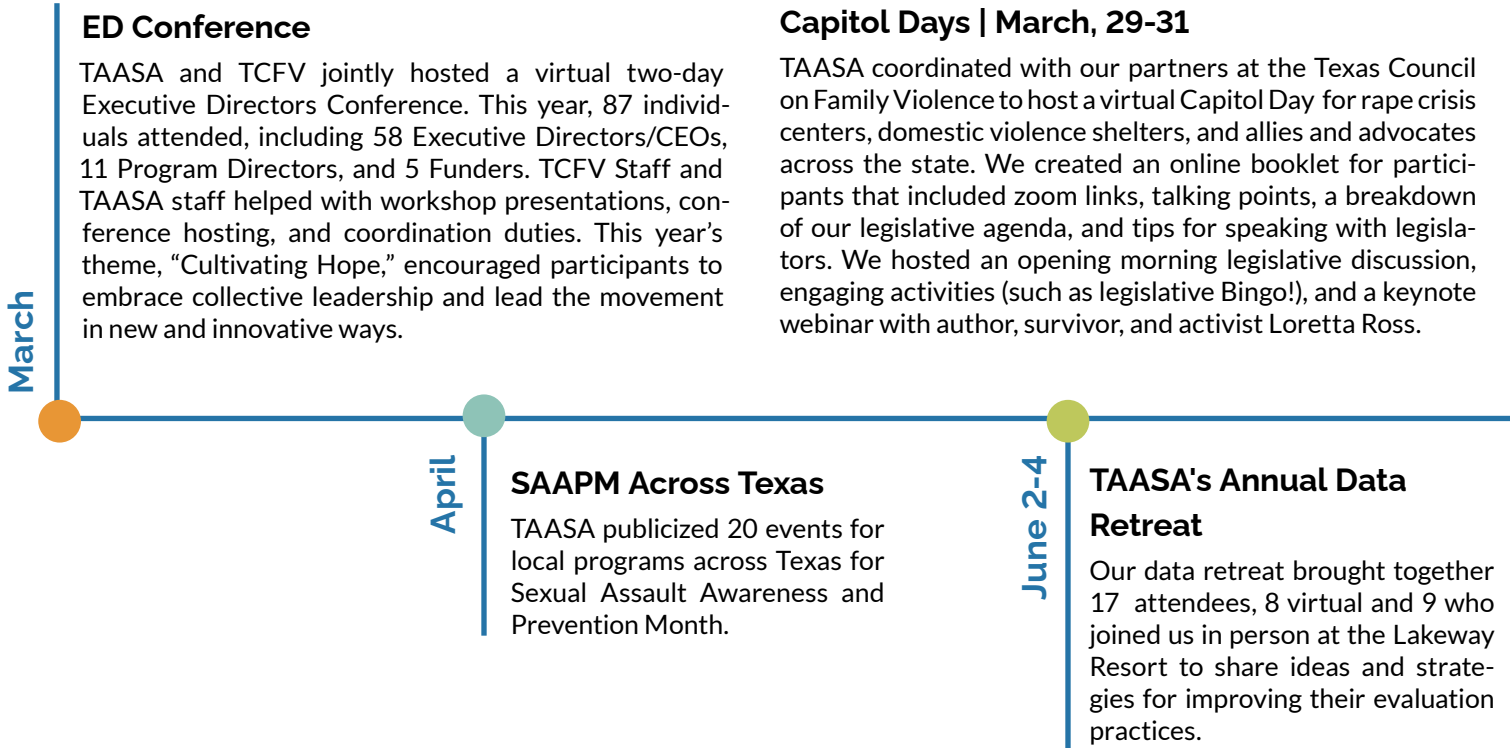
BROADENING THE MOVEMENT

Working Across Sectors to Prevent and Address Sexual Violence



This chart represents a year of work collaborating with, training and providing assistance to different types of organizations across Texas. While sexual assault programs account for over half of our work, we are expanding the attention to sexual violence by partnering with different types of non-profits and community organizations, key partners within federal, state and local agencies, education, military, medical, and even national organizations.

GATHERING THE MOVEMENT: EVENTS



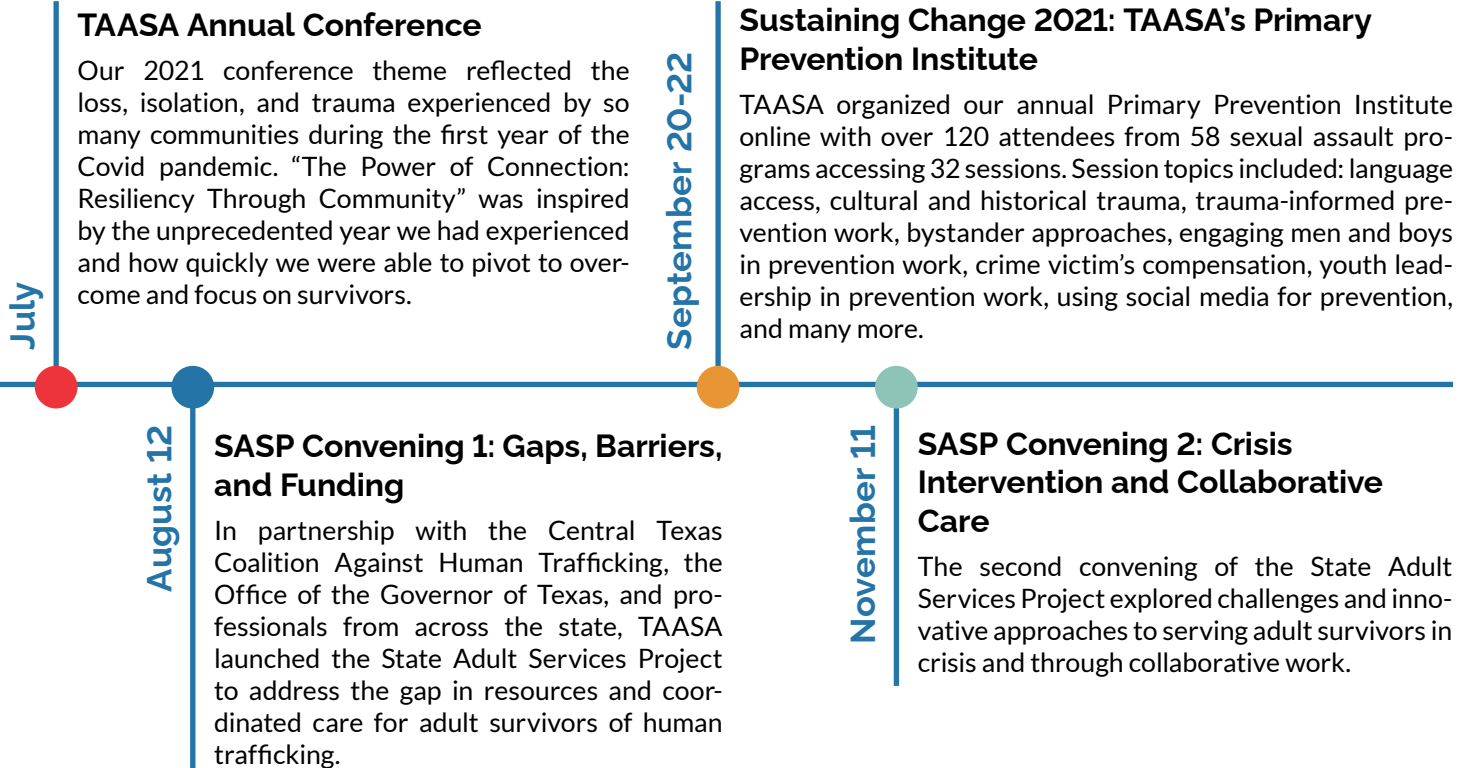
Throughout the Year

State Adult Services Project Convenings: Town Hall Meetings to Identify Scope of Services for Trafficking Survivors

TAASA hosted virtual town hall meetings to 125 participants to survey capacity for human trafficking services, identify resources and trends, and opportunities for increased accessibility, and introduction into CSEY Advocacy and conversations about care coordination of adult human trafficking cases.

Texas Men S.P.E.A.K. (Supporting Prevention Education, Advocacy & Knowledge)

TAASA hosted monthly gatherings in 2021 with male-identified people who are engaged in anti-sexual violence work in Texas to explore various topics related to masculinities, violence, and allyship as they seek to help end violence against women, children, and men. Each meeting addressed different topics, including: mentoring, media advocacy, bystander intervention, fathering and caregiving, and accountability of male-identified allies.



Online Prevention Spaces

TAASA hosted 18 different online spaces for prevention workers in the field in 2021. These included prevention worker-facilitated conversations and resource sharing related to prevention work, four workshop groups to explore TAASA's Virtual Reality Guidebook, and ten informal spaces that allowed prevention workers to connect and support one another while building community.

Survivor Advisory Board

In 2021, TAASA's Survivor Advisory Board (SAB) explored ways to build communities of support for survivors around Texas. The SAB developed three action pillars – Outreach and Support, Speak Out, and Policy Change. Guided by these pillars, we hosted two ‘Survivor Takeover’ events on social media, participated in a TAASA conference workshop, participated in all working groups of the Sexual Assault Survivors’ Task Force, and held monthly meetings with our board members.

SPOTLIGHT: THE POWER OF SURVIVOR-LED COLLABORATION



Julie Heilrayne's experience helps demonstrate how TAASA works to amplify the voices of survivors as they drive change within the movement.

Julie Heilrayne reached out to school officials after being sexually assaulted by a classmate. Rather than being met with support and compassion, she was blamed and threatened with suspension if she continued to speak up about the assault. Julie refused to be silenced and reached out to TAASA for support, and TAASA partnered with Texas Legal Services Center (TLSC). This was the beginning of an arduous journey as well as an impactful collaboration between the survivor, TLSC, and TAASA. TLSC's Impact Litigation Team represented Julie in a civil suit which uncovered that AISD's policies and procedures were insufficient and none of its staff had received the proper training to address incidents of sexual assault effectively. Knowing that TAASA had a team of experts willing to provide technical assistance and training to AISD, TLSC convinced AISD to improve its policies and train

all its staff. Last year TAASA began a rigorous training effort to provide an 8-hour course on sexual assault and harassment to every one of AISD's 12,000+ employees, from teachers to police, bus drivers to the Superintendent herself. TAASA has also begun a review of AISD's policies and will suggest changes to help create a trauma-informed response to survivors. Thanks to TAASA, TLSC, and one brave student survivor, 75,000 students, 12,000 staff, and countless members of the AISD community are now taking steps to better support and believe survivors. Julie Heilrayne's experience helps demonstrate how TAASA works to amplify the voices of survivors as they drive change within the movement.

INFORMING THE MOVEMENT: NEW RESOURCES AND MATERIALS

Collective Healing Initiative Online Healing Anthology

With valued partner, algo, we share examples of culturally-grounded collective healing and shine a light on the vibrant community of healers in our Community Healing Series. We invited these healers to contribute a virtual offering for those beginning their healing journeys or seeking to further it.

taasachi.org/healing-anthology

Older Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Violence

The Older Survivors report is a collaboration between the University of Texas Medical Branch and the University of Central Florida in partnership with TAASA; the Texas Council on Family Violence; and the Health and Human Services Commission. The report includes information on the prevalence and impact of domestic and sexual violence for female-identified survivors in Texas, an assessment of needs and service recommendations.

bit.ly/oldersurvivorstx

Groundswell Report

In 2018, The Groundswell Project went on a tour of listening sessions across the state with local programs community groups, and culturally specific organizations and identified the need for culturally-affirming healing options for survivors. This short report shares the learning from the project that evolved into the Collective Healing Initiative.

bit.ly/groundswellchi

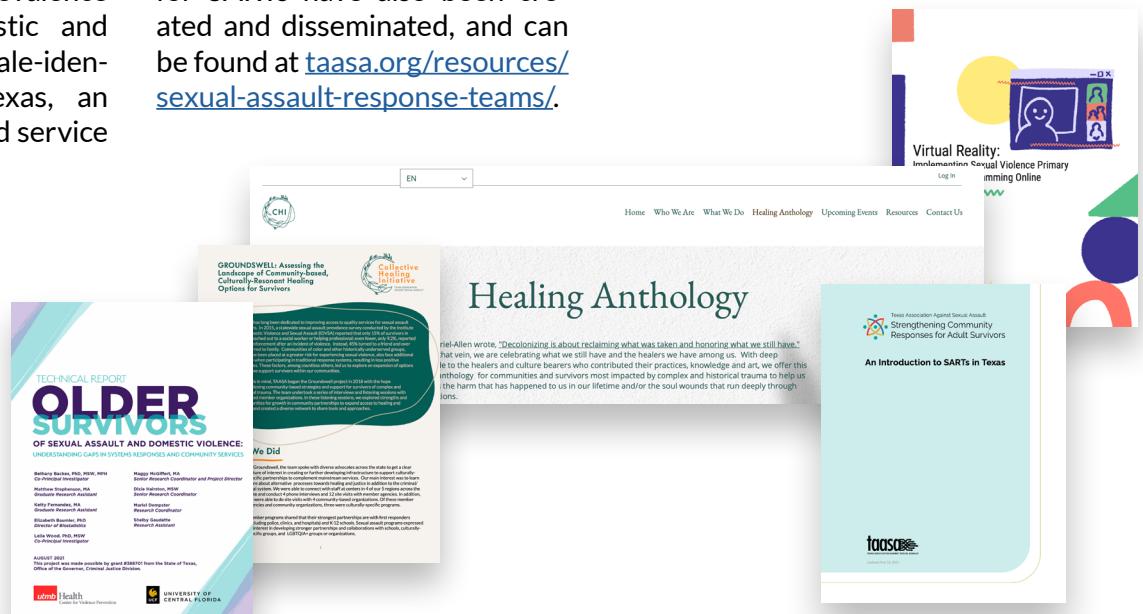
An Introduction to SARTs in Texas

SB 476 mandated every county in the state to form a Sexual Assault Response Teams specifically for adult cases. This guide contains information about the new law, best practices and templates for teams. Additional guidance materials for SARTs have also been created and disseminated, and can be found at taasa.org/resources/sexual-assault-response-teams/.

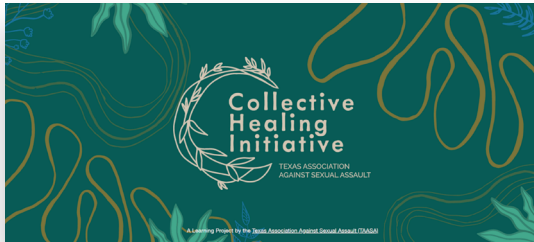
Virtual Reality: Implementing Sexual Violence Primary Prevention Programming Online

This guidebook provides resources and strategies on how to implement sexual violence primary prevention programming in online spaces and shares examples of online activities and campaigns from the Texas sexual assault programs. The document includes sections on: trauma-informed practices for online prevention spaces, practical advice from prevention workers in the field, sample strategies, and tips for adapting prevention education curricula for online implementation.

taasa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/virtualreality-implementing-sexual-violence-primary-prevention-programming-online.pdf



SPOTLIGHT: THE COLLECTIVE HEALING INITIATIVE AND CULTURALLY-GROUNDED HEALING



What started as a way to reach mutual understanding grew into different ways of virtually sharing healing knowledge rooted in culture, respect and ancestral wisdom.

The Collective Healing Initiative (CHI) is a group of Black, Indigenous, Latina, and Asian TAASA staff members working to expand healing options while centering our communities' experiences. Inspired by the Sexual Assault Demonstration Initiative encouraging sexual assault programs to think beyond the “menu” of advocacy and counseling, a group of TAASA staff of color began working to expand culturally-resonant healing options for Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) survivors. In the summer of 2020, our work plans were scattered to the winds, our worlds turned upside down and our Black, Indigenous, Asian and Latinx communities were in crisis and engaged in active resistance. It was the perfect time for CHI to consider the healing we, ourselves, and our communities needed.

What started as a way to reach a mutual understanding of collective healing and care grew into different ways of virtually sharing healing knowledge rooted in culture, respect and ancestral wisdom. In May of 2020, TAASA partnered with allgo, a statewide queer people of color organization to focus on supporting and highlighting our healers. The virtual Community Healing Series would spotlight a different healer who would share how they came to their work, share a healing offering to introduce attendees to their healing art, and an opportunity to consider what we mean by collective healing.

Since its beginnings, allgo and TAASA have spotlighted over 15 healers spanning the rich traditions rooted in Black and African, Indigenous, and Asian healing arts. Eager to share this more broadly, we reached out to our healers to create an online healing anthology. They shared with us unique parts of their journey which provide powerful glimpses into the rich and expansive nature of our healing arts. These can now be explored at taasachi.org.

We are in our final year of the Community Healing Series and will continue to add to the Healing Anthology. We also offer community and solidarity for BIPOC advocates through monthly virtual Tea Time meetups. We welcome our indigenous members and members of color to join us for these and our remaining Community Healing sessions. We invite our broader community to explore our webpage and healing anthology at taasachi.org to learn more about our work. If you have any questions, write us at collectivehealing@taasa.org.

TAASA IN THE NEWS

It is the goal of statewide nonprofits to become a go-to resource for media outlets when a story breaks that's relevant to their field. And while TAASA has prioritized media outreach and communications since its inception, 2021 proved to be a banner year for TAASA in the news.

From national outlets like USA Today and Rolling Stone to well-known statewide publications like Texas Monthly and the Houston Chronicle, news organizations

called upon us to weigh in on issues ranging from the sexual assault scandal involving Houston Texans Quarterback Deshaun Watson to the importance of training administrators on how to address sexual assault in public schools.

We circulated multiple statements throughout the year, too. TAASA spoke out in support of the women accusing Watson of sexual assault; called upon our communities to provide direct relief rape crisis centers and shelters

who were struggling after Winter Storm Uri; and highlighted the work of the Austin Independent School District in their first-ever sexual assault training for district leadership. We shared statements on social media, with media outlets, and through our email distribution list regarding the racially-motivated shootings in Atlanta, the alleged drugging accusations by a Capitol lobbyist, and the passage of Senate Bill 8.

2021 Headlines

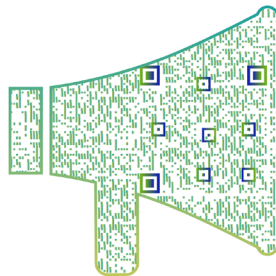
- *After Mishandling a Student's Assault, AISD Stalls on Training Staff* – Austin Chronicle, January 2021
- *Texas lawmakers reformed key sexual assault laws in 2019. Advocates hope the progress continues this session despite the pandemic* – Texas Tribune, February 2021
- *A New Group of Sexual Assault Survivors in Texas is Seeking Systemic Reform* – Texas Monthly, March 2021
- *Texas lawmakers react to date rape drug allegation* – Spectrum News, April 2021
- *Attorney says what happened between Lance Armstrong's arrested son, 16-year-old 'not a crime'* – April, 2021
- *Lance Armstrong's son arrested and accused of sexual assaulting 16-year-old girl* – The Daily Mail, April 2021
- *Police, advocates agree: Child sexual abuse reports on the rise amid pandemic* – KBMT/Beaumont, April 2021
- *Watson allegations highlight Texas' lax punishment for unwanted sexual contact* – Houston Chronicle, April 2021
- *Rusty Hardin Responds to Deshaun Watson Allegations in Court Documents* – Houston Chronicle, April 2021
- *Doctor accused of groping, harassing 22 women let off easy by Texas law, critics say* – Fort Worth Star-Telegram, April 2021
- *The Problems in the Deshaun Watson Cases Go Beyond Deshaun Watson* – Sports Illustrated, May 2021

- *Austin schools to adopt new training on sexual assault response after alumna comes forward* – Austin American-Statesman, June 2021
- *A year after Vanessa Guillén's death, lawmakers and advocates call for Congress to pass military sexual assault reform bill* – Texas Tribune, June 2021
- *How should Austin police investigate sexual assault cases? Here are the changes that could happen* – KXAN/Austin, June 2021
- *Austin ISD Will Train Staff To Better Handle Reports Of Sexual Assaults* – KUT/Austin, June 2021
- *Austin ISD reaches agreement with sex assault survivor; mandatory training coming for all staff* – KXAN/Austin, June 2021
- *Austin ISD alum's experience leads to policy change; AISD starts new sexual assault training in response* – KVUE/Austin, June 2021
- *Jury in Baylor sexual assault trial finds Baylor, football players not responsible* – Houston Chronicle, June 2021
- *Explaining the NFL Commissioner's 'Exempt List' and Why Texans QB Deshaun Watson Isn't On It* – Houston Chronicle, August 2021
- *Cuts in services to sexual assault victims feared, SARC seeks donors to offset funding losses* – Insite/Brazos Valley Magazine, August 2021
- *Experts say Texas Gov. Greg Abbott's rape comments perpetuate a dangerous stereotype about sexual violence* – USA Today, September 2021
- *Does the Texas abortion law protect victims of sexual assault?* – Austin American-Statesman, September 2021
- *Fact Check: Texas Gov. Greg Abbott's Misleading Remarks on the State's Abortion Law* – NPR, September 2021
- *5 Things to Know About the Deshaun Watson Trade Rumors* – Sports Illustrated, October 2021
- *Potter County Commissioners' Court approves measure on Sexual Assault Response Team* – Amarillo Globe-News, November 2021
- *Man arrested for sex assault has arrest history for the same crime* – WOAI/San Antonio, December 2021

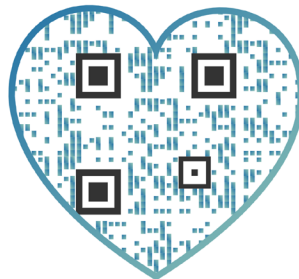




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